

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -



Works, Labors, and Services

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. Overview of What Is Considered “Works” According to the Scriptures

The theme addressed in this material is a sequence of the subjects from the series Suggestions for Reading and Studying the Bible, The Gospel, The Good News of God, and, more specifically, The Life of a Christian in the World, which is already preceded by the following themes:

- ⇒ 1) The Core Principle of Life for a Christian;
- ⇒ 2) The Law of Understanding;
- ⇒ 3) Fellowship of Christians in the World;
- ⇒ 4) The Christian in the World in General;
- ⇒ 5) Work out Your Own Salvation;
- ⇒ 6) Watchful in Prayer;
- ⇒ 7) The Christian and the Authority.

Each of the themes mentioned above is associated with specific objectives, but also cooperative with the others so that a broader and more detailed perception of the life of a Christian in the world may be built from several different points that complement each other.

For example, through the Gospel, God offers us salvation or redemption from the bondage of sin and death so that we can receive new life in Christ. Similarly, through the same Gospel or together with His grace, the Lord also offers us the instruction and power to be able to live and walk according to this newness of life.

Nevertheless, in the first theme of the series on The Gospel of God, we also seek to show that the reception and benefits of God's offer to human beings indeed become concrete or practical, in the life of the one for whom they are intended, only when the recipient effectually makes use of the offering granted by the Lord.

The new life in Christ is not a proposition of a new condition to be merely contemplated, nor is it theoretical or for the distant future. The newness of life available in the Gospel is also associated with immediate and progressive effects in the life of the one who receives it and remains in it. Through the newness of life granted to a person when one believes and receives Christ as the Lord in one's heart, God also offers him or her the conditions for experiencing a new living and walking according to the life that has been granted to this individual.

In this way, in the series on The Life of the Christian in the World, we aim to focus more emphatically not only on what God grants us through His Gospel, but also on the postures and cooperative actions that God awaits from those who received from Him “such a great salvation,” as we are exhorted in the Scriptures and of which we exemplify some texts below:

*Hebrews 6: 9 **But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.***

Hebrews 2: 1 **Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.**
2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,
3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,
4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

Hebrews 5: 13 **For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.**
14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

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

In the salvation that God offers us, through Christ Jesus, a whole new perception and perspective of life is offered to human beings, but also the very possibility of living effectively in a different way and in line with this new condition.

And when we come to consider the real possibility of a person being able to start adopting postures and actions in line with the salvation and life conferred on him or her by God in Christ Jesus, we are inevitably faced with what, more broadly, is called in the Scriptures as “works” or the “doing of works.”

In fact, **any broader and more detailed approach to the fundamental and practical points of the life of a Christian in the world obviously could not fail to enter into the theme of “works,” for the challenge of carrying them out is continually before each person in the present world.**

On the other hand, due to the demand or even the obligation and daily confrontations that people have to relate to works, the theme about them has also been one of the most controversial and challenging matters that humanity faces every new generation.

The theme of works is particularly challenging, and often even controversial, starting with two major basic needs associated with it, namely:

- ⇒ 1st) **The need to establish what is covered in the theme about works or considered as a work;**
- ⇒ 2nd) **The need for classification, characterization, or qualification of each of the works that people may come across.**

Both the first and second needs, mentioned in the previous paragraph, are particularly challenging, given that what the world conceptualizes as works, as well as what it defines about the parameters to classify or qualify them, can be very different from what the Scriptures declare about these same aspects.

Starting with the first need mentioned above, **if we look at the theme of works according to various concepts outlined in the Scriptures, we can observe in them, that in everything a human being does, one is also continually involved with the practice or accomplishment of something.**

One of the characteristics of the life of human beings in the world, from God's perspective, is that it is in a continuous state of production, meaning that people in the world are also continually choosing or doing works.

Although for many people, the term *works* may have a connotation more focused on the external activities they carry out or even, in the view of some individuals, their professional achievements, in the eyes of God, there are also works that are carried out inside people's hearts. For this reason, the Lord also sees every human being in constant activity regarding works.

According to the Scriptures, the very individual and personal action of believing in Christ Jesus, as the Lord and Savior, is the practice or accomplishment of a work or an activity.

Furthermore, **believing in God does not only refer to a work, but also refers to the most significant or vital work that a person can do in one's entire existence in the present world**, as presented more fully also on the subjects of The Gospel of God's Righteousness, The Gospel of Salvation, The Gospel of the Promise, and The Core Principle of Life for a Christian, and as recalled in the text that follows below:

*John 6: 28 **Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"***
*29 **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."***

God has given human beings a series of possibilities for choices and decisions regarding the type of work or deeds to which they want to dedicate themselves. However, faith or trust in the Lord is the work that should precede all others, as the Lord Jesus Himself exposed to those who heard Him when He explained to them the importance of not working focused only on the food that perishes, but on that which endures for everlasting life.

According to the Scriptures, "works" are not only those acts done externally and that generate something materially tangible. In the Scriptures, the reference to works is not limited only to external types of actions, nor do they primarily focus on material works or doings.

According to the word of God, there can be many works that have no direct or exclusive relationship with something materially palpable, but which are, in fact, seen by the Lord as "works" that are being practiced by the people in the world, as also exemplified in the following text:

*Galatians 5: 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.*

A person can keep and cultivate envy, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, dissension, or idolatry in one's heart without exposing, at least for a while, that one is involved in this type of work. However, because one is serving or dedicating time of one's life to them, this same individual, in the eyes of the Lord, is in direct activity regarding the choices that one decided to embrace and work in one's heart.

On the other hand, if we also look at disagreements or disputes that become external to the point of involving other people, we can see that this type of work can affect, in many cases, people's lives much more than some material work that was done.

In the world, there are many works that build material walls of protection or separation, but there are also works that raise walls of separation in the heart that are much more difficult to overcome than any material wall.

Continuing yet with the example of contention, according to the Scriptures, a person who generates contentions and sustains them is “working” an action, is doing, building, or supporting a work that may even determine the impediment of one's entry into the kingdom of God.

Materially tangible works can benefit people's lives in many ways. For example, they can grant them mobility, comfort, external security, etc. However, a work of dispute or contention, even if it is not materially visible, may extend far beyond. And because of its effects on an individual's heart, it may even come to have severe eternal implications for him or her.

*Proverbs 16: 28 A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates
 the best of friends.*

*Proverbs 6: 16 These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an
 abomination to Him:*

*17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,
 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to
 evil,
 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among
 brethren.*

*Proverbs 18: 19 A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city,
 And contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

Therefore, looking at the theme of works in a little more detail from the examples cited above about contentions, strife, or discords, we may note that **any sowing, whether of material seeds, thoughts, or spiritual seeds, also characterizes doing a work.**

And if we delve a little deeper into the same Scriptures, we can observe that **the very exercises of devoting time and thinking about something are also already considered, before the Lord, as acts equivalent to performing works.**

The expression *to devise*, used in the text of Proverbs 6 quoted above, expresses, among others, the idea of plowing or preparing the soil for sowing. That is, activities proper to the execution of a work.

Still looking at the considerations of the Hebrew lexicon in another text, we can verify that the verb *to devise* also has its origin related to the words *to do*, *to carry out*, or *to do as a worker does*, showing that also the exercise of imagining and making the mind work is performing works.

Micah 2: 1 Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, Because it is in the power of their hand.

According to the Scriptures, **the act of sowing ideas or propositions, the act of reaping actions resulting from this sowing, and the very exercise of devoting time to thinking about something are considered works before the Lord.** One of the reasons why the Psalmist also prayed the following prayer:

Psalms 19: 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

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

The breadth of what God considers to be a work extends far beyond what is merely apparent and tangible to the natural eye, just as what counts as a “good work” does not rest solely on what people themselves judge to be an acceptable or appropriate work.

The works and the criteria for their acceptance are not only what people define about them in their merely natural perspectives. On the contrary, just as it is the Lord who defines what His kingdom, His righteousness, His Gospel, and all the other aspects that He offers us through them are, so it is also the Lord who defines what He considers to be works and works acceptable before His eyes.

C2. The Need for a Classification Referential for Works

If we consider that works encompass people's actions from dedication to small thoughts to the elaboration of plans and the execution of these by external acts, we can observe in the Scriptures, and history in general, that human beings have always seen, and continue to see, in the works a great potential both to achieve the most basic aspects of their survival and what in the world is called achievements or accomplishments.

Nevertheless, just relating to the works because of the need for survival or the potential that can be achieved through their execution may not be enough to practice or use them properly.

Through works, people build, strengthen, and sustain many aspects of their lives and their surroundings, but also through works, they weaken, destroy, and lose many things that they built.

There are profitable and sound productions in the world, just as there are useless, vain, or even destructive productions. In life among human beings, there are productions with temporal benefits or productions with eternal benefits, just as there are doings with temporal losses or doings with eternal losses. For this reason, it is so important to know the will of God in the most diverse areas of life, as exemplified respectively below:

*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.***

*1 John 2: 17 **And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.***

*2 Corinthians 5: 10 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***

Although the physical body is not the whole essence of life itself, it is a means for the expression of the performance of acts of life that have their origin in the soul or spirit of the human being, and which will have weight in determining what a person will receive from the Lord when one stands before Christ for eternal judgment.

The expression “through the body of flesh and blood” is linked to the finite time that has been granted to each human being on Earth. There is a time given to the human being to carry out certain works, after which comes the accountability or a judgment of the acts performed in this finite time.

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

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Unfortunately, several times or most of the time, people start to do what they themselves understand as appropriate works, without even consulting God about what qualifies them before the Lord. Instead of consulting the Lord, many turn to the record of what they were taught through cultures and traditions about good works or resort to their own knowledge they created to define them. And so, they often oppose what the Eternal Lord establishes as something good, as was also exposed by the Lord Jesus Christ according to the following two texts:

- Matthew 15: 1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,*
- 2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."*
- 3 **He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"***
- 4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'*
- 5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God,"*
- 6 'then he need not honor his father or mother.' **Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.***
- 7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:*
- 8 **"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.***
- 9 **And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."***
- 10 **When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand:***
- 11 **Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."***
- 12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"*
- 13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.*
- 14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And **if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."***

or

- Mark 7: 1 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.*
- 2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault.*
- 3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.*
- 4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.*

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"

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

7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."

9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

11 But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—' (that is, a gift to God),

12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,

13 making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

14 When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand:

15 There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.

16 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"

As we also saw in the theme of The Law of Understanding, **God does not want people to just do works by mere repetition of what they learned routinely from their past generations. Instead, the Lord's will is for people to live with the due understanding to choose wisely the paths in which they will do works and to appropriately choose the actions and purposes because of which they intend to do what they want to accomplish.**

In Christ, a person can choose a life of works that is entirely different from a merely fleshly life. **In Christ**, a person can opt for a life associated with actions and purposes utterly different from what is done in a life dissociated from faith in God and fellowship with the Lord, as also testified by Peter, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ:

1 Peter 1: 13 **Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

14 **as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;**

15 **but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,**

16 **because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."**

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.*

+

- 1 Peter 4: 1 *Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,*
- 2 *that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.*
- 3 *For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.*
- 4 *In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.*
- 5 *They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*
- 6 *For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*
- 7 *But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious (sober) and watchful in your prayers.*

Therefore, given the breadth of what is associated with the theme of works and the fact that the word *work* itself does not contain a definition of whether what is related to it is good or evil, useful or useless, temporary or eternal, it is also necessary to add to the works a classification or characterization that defines them more precisely in distinct groups or types.

Together with the potential that is seen in the works, it is also essential to know the main aspects that qualify the works that can be done, so that one does not incur letting the non-beneficial works come to overwhelm the works that indeed are for the good of the people who practice them.

Nevertheless, classifying or characterizing works in advance into different types is also not such a simple task to be done by the human mind.

To classify or characterize a work as good or bad, for example, it would be necessary for human beings to have knowledge of the origin of the work, as well as future knowledge about the results of its practice, for the motivation with which a work is started and the effects it will produce in the long term also represent essential elements for defining its qualification.

One of the most challenging aspects related to the classification or characterization of a work, as to whether it is or is not beneficial, is the fact that many effects of its practice or accomplishment only manifest themselves with its completion, after its completion, or even only after the end of a person's life in the present world.

And, still, when we observe that the qualification of a work depends on criteria that go from the origin or the motivation with which a work was carried out to the effects that this work may cause in the future, even distant, we can also verify that human beings, from a mere natural point of view, do not have elements in themselves to assess the extent of the results that their works may achieve.

Thus, the classification or qualification of works is faced with a unique situation, for if, on the one hand, it is necessary to qualify the works beforehand in order not to incur the practice of fruitless or bad works, on the other hand, there is the need for prior knowledge of what the works will produce more ahead in order to be able to qualify them in advance as good or as inappropriate.

However, how can people evaluate the works available to them to be done if they are limited in their knowledge about the real motivation for starting a work and what may result from it in the future?

How can people assign an appropriate degree of value to the different types of works they may encounter? And how can they be duly grounded, in the present time, to make the option for good works if they lack real future knowledge of the consequences of their works?

Many people often require of themselves and others to do good or good deeds. However, based on what criteria do they evaluate or judge what is indeed appropriate or inappropriate to do?

Once again, considering that at the beginning of many works, one does not yet know the specific final effects of each one of them or the end to which they will lead those who practice them, how is it possible to categorize a work even before getting involved with its practice?

Therefore, faced with the dilemma of the need to choose in advance for some action or work, without actually knowing at the beginning the specific final effects of each choice, there is only one way to evaluate this type of pre-choice, which is the use of what we call, in this material, of a “works classification referential.”

After the relevant perception of the need to categorize or characterize works into different types, we also may note that before being able to make this classification effectively, it is necessary to have established, firstly, a “set of references on works in general.”

The “previous categorization of works,” whose effects and developments can only be known, in fact, in the future, can only be carried out if people also adopt some “previous reference,” and that is based on “similar works” with those regarding which they need or want to choose whether they practice or reject them.

In any society in the world, people, in one way or another, are exposed to a work classification referential. In several situations, people may even become simultaneously exposed to several classification references and that often still try to overlap each other.

In the paragraphs mentioned more above, we saw that one of the sets of classes of works is the traditions and cultures of peoples. However, there are still many other references, such as, for example, the laws of a nation, state, or municipality, the rules of a home, the regulations of the most diverse governmental or non-governmental institutions, and so on.

In the world, there is a sea of works that can be practiced, but there is also an enormity of classificatory references that seek to establish some previous type of categorization of the works that are found in it.

Thus, the perception that regarding the works there are also different references to classify or categorize them as good or evil, useful or useless, temporary or eternal, in addition to the actual practice of the works, is a practical aspect as crucial as the very possibilities to carry out the works.

Without the knowledge that there is a diversity of references for classifying works, resulting from different categorizations that are made about them, people may be led to think that they are doing good works according to the particular reference they adopt, but not realizing that the very frame of reference they use may be an inappropriate referential.

Being aware that there is a diversity of references in the world by which people evaluate choosing to carry out or not carry out certain works is very significant, for depending on the reference that a person adopts, one may be practicing evil or unprofitable works thinking they are good, as well as one may also stop doing good works because one thinks that these are bad or unprofitable.

A person, for example, may have the predisposition to perform good works, which is very appreciable. However, if one does not verify whether the classification or categorization of works one adopts is adequate, one may end up being intensely involved in the performance of evil works despite one's willingness to want to do good.

If a reference for classifying works is not based on an appropriate categorization of what indeed is or is not a good work, calling the evil work good, the one who does the wrong work, thinking one is doing good, continues to do an inappropriate work that will not bring the benefits one wants to achieve in the future.

Because of different classification references about works, people may dedicate themselves to works distinct from those practiced by those who have other references, and even opposed to them, thinking that both groups are doing what is appropriate. However, if the sets of classification references of these groups are wrong, the fact that they claim to have followed their own set of references does not make their evil works, which they qualified as good, into effectively good works.

If the mere establishment of a new set of references for classifying works could define what works are appropriate or inappropriate before God, each person could create one's own set of references and justify oneself based on it. This practice, however, is not accepted by the Lord, and may even be called by God as a work according to the throne of iniquity, as exemplified in the texts below:

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

Isaiah 5: 20 **Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**

21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!

As impressive as it may seem, and because they are excessively attached to what they practice, many people, in some situations, even go so far as to make a voluntary choice to reject a sober understanding of the classification references of their works. And so, they value their very works more than the results and future developments to which they point.

Let us see below three more texts that signal or exemplify the choice of inappropriate pre-qualifications about works:

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

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

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

2 Timothy 4: 3 **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;**

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Philippians 3: 18 **For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:**

19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things.

Either out of ignorance or because they are fond of inappropriate works, many people in the world have multiplied references of classifications of works with the purpose of finding a set of references that justifies the choices of what they practice or want to practice. And for this reason, considerations on this topic continue to multiply more and more in each new generation and under the most varied titles and approaches.

Since human beings estranged from fellowship with God are very limited in their knowledge of the depths of their own hearts and the specific results that will result from their works, many individuals are continually trying to accommodate the varying

opinions that people have about what is appropriate or inappropriate concerning the works before them.

Nevertheless, **when we turn to the Scriptures to verify what the Lord has to teach us about the theme of works and what the classification reference set on them that He proposes to human beings to follow is, we can observe that the foundations in the heavenly kingdom for this reference are firmly established and have remained constant since antiquity, however much for centuries people have sought to alter and corrupt them.**

When the Lord expresses His will that people do or perform “good works,” He does not do so without first also instructing people with firm and unchanging principles on how they can understand and evaluate which works are good and which indeed are not “good works” to be practiced.

And among the fundamental aspects established by the Lord for the characterization of works as profitable or not profitable, we find, for example, the principle that it is not merely the volume of works carried out and what the human being conquers with one's efforts that have value before God. If the volume of works and one's achievements are causing the loss of the more essential aspects of an individual's life, the entire set of works accomplished by him or her might be utterly devoid of benefit, as also exposed in the following texts:

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

Luke 9: 25 ***For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?***

Looking at the last texts above, we can note that **the works to be practiced by a human being, and which are truly good, are the works that indeed are also beneficial to the life of the one who practices them, especially when seen from the perspective of salvation and the eternal good of one's soul.**

Expressing the previous paragraph in other words, we can observe, in the last-mentioned texts, that **any work that the human being does, and that keeps him or her away from the eternal salvation of one's soul, is not indeed good for him or her, even if with them one could come to win or conquer the whole world for oneself.**

As we also have already mentioned, **one of the aspects about the works considered good before God is that the Lord does not want people to practice them merely because they think they should do them out of obligation. Instead, the Lord wants people to do works with an understanding of the good the Lord is extending to them if they do them.**

When the Lord calls people to perform good works, He calls them to do so with a firm believe that comes from an understanding of the essential principles that underlie all works that are good from the beginning, as is also explained in more detail in the theme on The Law of Understanding.

The works called good, according to the classification referential established by the Lord, are opportunities for a person to do good for oneself, as well as for one's fellow men. And the Lord's call for people to do good works is an invitation for people to practice what is profitable for them not only in their lifetime in the present world, but also for eternal life.

There are people, for example, who claim that they, through their works, do no harm to anyone and that they behave honestly towards others, judging by this that they are fulfilling the performance of good works. However, by not using the referential of categorizing works as good or bad for eternal life according to the Scriptures, people may be keeping away from the most essential works for their own good.

The Scriptures do not affirm that a person's seeking not to harm others and to be honest are acts that are sufficient for one's eternal remission, nor do they teach that a life based merely on unblemished moral conduct can provide eternal salvation for an individual. Thoughts similar to these do not come from God and, therefore, are references contrary to what the Lord has established for appropriately categorizing works.

In their attempts to define what a good or bad work is, people, over the centuries, have already created countless extremely crazy and inappropriate works, naming them by themselves as appropriate or inappropriate, such as, for example, selling and buying false indulgences invented by human beings supposedly in favor of those who died before them.

When human beings begin to want to define, by themselves, what is good and what is evil, they are subject to an evil work and a work of pride. A work in which they try to elevate themselves to the status of God and eternal judge of their lives and of others, instead of remaining in the humble condition of a creature or creation of God.

Since the Lord is the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, and of all that is in them, it is also the Lord's exclusive prerogative to reveal to His creation which are the good ways to salvation and which are the evil ways to the perdition of those who choose evil, as well as what are indeed good works or bad works.

Just by the mere fact of trying to establish their own classification references for works, human beings have already spent time, resources, and countless potential of their lives on works that they could avoid if they only listened and paid due attention to the qualification references of works established by the Lord.

Repeating once again, the fact that a person says that one is doing a work for God, in the name of God, or dedicated to God, but that the Lord has not indeed instructed him or her to do, does not make the work that this person does into a work that indeed is good before God.

Thus, many works that people try to categorize as good, because they claim they are doing them for God, are, in the eyes of the Lord, works classified as “dead works” or even as an abomination.

Let's see below some more texts that mention the inappropriate condition of many works that people falsely claim to be doing as for the Lord:

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

Isaiah 1: 11 **"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats.**

12 *When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts?*

13 *Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.*

14 *Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.*

15 *When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.*

16 *Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, ..."*

Jeremiah 7: 8 **"Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit.**

9 *Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know,*

10 *and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations?'"*

...

22 *"For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.*

23 *But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.'*

24 *Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward."*

Since their first generations, human beings have tried to attribute their own classifications to the works they practice or intend to perform. However, they repeatedly forget, or sometimes choose to ignore, that one of the predominant aspects of recognizing an appropriate classification or categorization of works depends on what they associate in their hearts with what they want to accomplish externally.

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

A satisfactory understanding of the classification of works, according to the will of God, depends on a person's heart being under heavenly peace and one's mind being kept in Christ by fellowship with the Lord Jesus, as exposed in Paul's text and the text from the author of Proverbs presented below:

*Philippians 4: 5 **Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.***

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

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

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

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

*Proverbs 4: 14 **Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.***

*15 **Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on.***

*16 **For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall.***

*17 **For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence.***

*18 **But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.***

*19 **The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.***

*20 **My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.***

*21 **Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart;***

*22 **For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.***

*23 **Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.***

A set of classification references of works cannot be defined merely by an external list of what is good and what is evil, as was proposed, for example, in the condition of life under the Law of Moses, but whose practice has shown itself, time after time, unproductive and characterized by the Lord as “dead works of the Old Covenant.”

The works performed under the Old Covenant or the Law of Moses are not classified as “good works” by the Lord, for through them, people could

not and still cannot reach the perfecting of their hearts and consciences towards the Lord. Consequently, through them, they also cannot achieve the benefit of eternal life, as recalled in some texts below:

Hebrews 7: 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.

Hebrews 10: 1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

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."

More than specifying a list of works that a person should do or refrain from doing, it is crucial for a person to learn “the works or practices of relationship with the Lord that lead him or her to continually discern what is good and prudent to practice and what is not beneficial and wise to engage.”

God did not create human beings for them to walk dissociated from fellowship with their Creator, nor for a set of rules of conduct to replace the presence and direction of the Lord in each person's life.

The citations that the Lord wants people to make wise choices regarding the works they will choose to do, and that He also gives them points of reference for discerning which works they should do and which they should not do, never meant that the Lord would grant them a set of references to be used independently of a life of fellowship with Him.

In everything the Lord calls people to follow His will, He also offers them His living and present direction, cooperation, protection, and support.

In the following chapters, we will then seek to explore more widely some of the aspects through which the Lord is ready to help people in choosing works according to His will, as well as to discern and reject the aspects that oppose this same will.

C3. Precedent Works and that are Prerequisites for Other Works

After seeing that an appropriate option for works also previously requires an adequate works classification referential, we can move more objectively to some aspects according to the kingdom of God that are directly associated with this reference point. For this reason, the Lord also instructs us to practice the work of seeking His kingdom and His righteousness first.

And once a person does the work of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, one will soon be able to realize, with the Lord's help, that there are some works in this kingdom that are crucial for evaluating and choosing other works.

According to the kingdom of God, there is a variety of good works to be done by people in the world. However, these are only considered good indeed if they are practiced according to proper alignment with other works that precede them. Thus, according to the heavenly kingdom, there are works that act as prerequisites for other works.

In life in line with the heavenly kingdom, as seen in the previous chapter, the practice of outward works is also validated by the works that an individual practices in one's heart. Unlike in the world, where people can even do external works according to their civil laws and still have their hearts far from what is good, works before God are measured, first, from what is in the people's hearts.

Before the Lord, an individual's inner and outward works are equally visible or patent.

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

Psalms 94: 11 **The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are futile.**

The understanding that both good and evil works before God are already known from within a person's heart is one of the points that also led the Psalmist to practice the prayer described in the psalm presented below:

Psalms 139: 1 **O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.
3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways.
4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.**

...

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;

24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Thus, once an individual understands that the inner works are prerequisites for the outer works, one can also conclude that the inner works are those that need to be well known and practiced first so that the others are also profitable.

The Lord wants people to practice seeking His kingdom first, both to be cleansed of inward works that do not come from Him and to be filled with the good gifts that come from the heavenly kingdom, for the outward works that an individual practices end up expressing much of what one's heart is full of, as we also exemplify in the following texts:

Mark 7: 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

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

James 4: 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Ephesians 5: 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ...

Luke 6: 45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

In this way, it is in the work of seeking a personal relationship with Christ, and with His heavenly kingdom, that a person can effectively prepare oneself to be able to correctly choose the practice of good works, as well as to reject the works that oppose the will of the Lord.

We remember here yet that more aspects about seeking, in the first place, the kingdom of God and His righteousness are described in a more detailed and extensive

way in the subjects on the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and The Gospel of God's Righteousness.

Finally, in this chapter, to further emphasize the importance of seeking the Lord and His kingdom to come to live a new inner condition for the accomplishment of works, we present below one more last text to emphasize what has been said in this chapter about the works that serve as a precedent reference for the other works:

- 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 (or be manifested) with Him in glory.**
- 5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.**
- 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,**
- 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.**
- 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.**
- 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.**

C4. The Work of Faith in God and Christ Jesus

Among the works that have a prerequisite function in the appropriate choice of the practice of the others that follow them, we find a work that was mentioned especially, explicitly, and singularly by the Lord Jesus Christ, thus highlighting the priority and fundamental condition that this work has before of the other works that people do or intend to do in their lives on Earth.

Let us look again at the text that mentions this work so definitely highlighted by the Lord Jesus Christ:

John 6: 24 ***When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.***

25 ***And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?"***

26 ***Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.***

27 ***Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."***

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

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

From the point of view of the kingdom of God, the central work to be done by a person on Earth, before doing other works, is the work of faith in God and Christ by believing in Him as the Son of God who was given by the Heavenly Father for the salvation of everyone who believes in Him. That is, it is the work of believing and trusting in Christ Jesus to the point of having Him as the Lord and Savior of one's life.

Also in another text, John, one of the apostles of Christ, writes to us that the very works of the Lord Jesus Christ were also performed and recorded in the Scriptures so that we, through the knowledge of them, could indeed fulfill the central work that we are called to practice while we are still in the present world, namely:

John 20: 30 ***And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;***

31 ***but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.***

The work of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a work that should precede all other works that a person intends to do, for it is from the faith in Christ that a person effectively has life in the name of Jesus and also starts to be able to practice the works that are according to the will of the Lord.

When we see the text in which the Lord Jesus Christ states that the work of faith in Him is “the work” that every human being should do, some people might think that this is the only work the Lord expects a person to do. However, when we compare this same text with other texts of the Scriptures, we see that the work of faith in Christ is unique in the sense that it comes before others and is unique in the sense that it should never be left aside because of the practice of other works.

According to the Lord's teachings in His Scriptures, the work of faith, in the sense of precondition to other works, is exclusive and cannot be replaced by any other work.

There is no other work in the world that can be equated with the work of faith or the work of believing in Christ Jesus to the point of receiving and abiding in Him as Him being the personal Lord of the life of the one who believes in Him.

Not even the sum of all other works, including those counted as good in the sight of the Lord, can be considered sufficient to take the unique place of the work of believing in Christ Jesus as the Son of God sent to save and to be Lord of whoever willingly believes in Him.

*Ephesians 2: 4 **But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,**
5 **even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**
6 **and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**
7 **that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**
8 **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,**
9 **not of works, lest anyone should boast.***

The grace of God is the causing aspect of the offer of salvation and its accomplishment, which can be accepted or received by the work of faith in God and His goodness. And in this sense, believing in Christ for salvation is “*the work of God to be done or worked by people*” or is the unique work that a person is called to do to be saved.

Thus, if, in addition to the work of believing in Christ as Lord, a person tries to classify or qualify any other human work as a work of salvation, one is trying to pervert the sense of what good works are and is seeking to equate works in general with an exclusive work with which the others can never be equated.

The work of believing in Christ Jesus as the Lord and Savior of life is a work of an exclusive category and distinct from other good works that a person may practice. And in this sense, the Lord made it clear that this is the central, preceding, unique, or singular work that every human being should practice and keep practicing first throughout one's life.

Except for the work of believing in Christ and receiving Him as Lord, no other work a human being does can lead a person to experience the new

birth in Christ accomplished by the Spirit of God. No other work done by a human being, except the work of believing in Christ as the gift of divine salvation to humankind, can lead an individual to be constituted, still on Earth and also for eternity, as a child of God.

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

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

A person on Earth can only come to work for food that does not perish, which is given by the Son of God and lasts for eternity, if one believes in Christ Jesus as the Son of God and Lord of one's life. And in this respect, it is “the exclusive work” that continually needs to be practiced.

We can also see the uniqueness of the work of faith in Christ when we look at the same theme from the aspect of God's righteousness. It is only because of Christ's work of righteousness that a sinner can, through the unique work of faith in the Lord, find forgiveness and redemption from bondage to sin and the Law according to Moses, which condemns an individual because of one's sins, as exemplified in the following two texts:

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

*20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.
21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,
26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

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."

An individual receives one's soul's salvation by believing in Christ as God's provision and "gift of righteousness" for one's salvation, as well as continues to be sustained in salvation through abiding in faith in this same eternal "gift of righteousness."

Even after a person has found salvation in God, through faith in Christ, and has been constituted as a child of God, one continues to be saved by grace and through faith in Christ and the righteousness He provided for redemption, and not by the "good works" that one may practice or do.

As for salvation, no person can do a meritorious work other than believing in the provision offered from Heaven. In this regard, then, it is up to the human being to practice the work of believing and remaining believing in Christ Jesus as the Lord, the Redeemer, and the Righteousness of one's life.

Colossians 2: 6 ***As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,
7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.***

Before dwelling on the performance of any other good work, every human being should be aware of the preponderant work for one's salvation, knowing that this, due to its degree of importance and uniqueness, is also the work most fully highlighted in the Scriptures, according to the text we have already seen above and mention once again below:

John 20: 30 ***And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;
31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.***

Finally, in this chapter, we would like to inform that we will not go into more detail here about the unique work of faith in God, and not comparable to any other work, considering that a comprehensive approach to believing in Christ Jesus for salvation, justification, and becoming a child of God is already exposed in the themes of The Gospel of the Kingdom of God, The Gospel of the Righteousness of God, The Gospel of God's Grace, The Gospel of Salvation, The Gospel of the Promise, and The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ.

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."***

*John 11: 25 **Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.***
*26 **And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.***
Do you believe this?"

*John 14: 1 **"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me."***

C5. The Works Resulting from the Work of Faith in Christ

In the previous chapter, exemplified by several texts of the Scriptures, we could observe that the work of faith in God and Christ is a unique work and characterized, regarding salvation and becoming a child of God, as an exclusive work and precedent to the other good works to be practiced by a Christian. It is a work, regarding which, no one can establish another work that matches its characteristics and the beneficial effects that only it causes.

However, as we have already seen, **the work of faith in Christ, despite its exclusivity regarding salvation, justification, and becoming a child of God, does not introduce a person who practices it to a condition of inhibition or restriction regarding practicing or doing other good works. On the contrary, the work of faith in Christ, in turn, allows a person to move to a condition for the practice of good works as one could never do if one remained dissociated from this first work.**

Thus, when we observe that the work of faith is a preceding work and that it brings people into a favorable condition for doing the other good works that God prepared beforehand for us to walk in them, we can also begin to see more clearly one of the first classificatory aspects of works. An aspect that shows us that there are works that are considered good only if they are done as a result of the work of faith in God, and not as an attempt to produce the work of faith itself.

Although people in the present world are not able to do any work to attain salvation in God, other than believing in Christ as Lord, these same people, once they become saved by the grace of God, through faith, are also called to practice or do various good works as a result of the salvation they have received, as shown in the text that we saw in part in the previous chapter and to which we add the verse that follows it:

*Ephesians 2: 8 **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,**
9 **not of works, lest anyone should boast.**
10 **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.***

When a person comes to believe in the Lord Jesus and receives the gift of salvation that God gives in Christ, one also comes to a new condition for the performance of good works. Along with salvation, a person also has at one's disposal a new inner life and reconciliation with God, in Christ Jesus, to be guided by the Spirit of the Lord in the most diverse areas of one's life.

Pointing out again, **regarding salvation, the new birth, and abiding in salvation, there is only one work that God requires of human beings: to believe or trust in Christ as Lord. However, once an individual finds oneself in the condition of a saved individual and abides in Christ by faith in Him, one is made fit to be called and prepared by the Lord to perform the good works that God has prepared beforehand for people to walk in them.**

Therefore, it is crucial to dissociate the points mentioned in the previous paragraphs regarding the categorization of works so that a person does not mix two very different aspects of practicing or doing good works that are exposed in them.

In the matter of aiming to perform good works, it is vital to know that the work of faith for salvation and the works that can be practiced after salvation has already been granted to a person deal, respectively, with different moments and objectives.

The works that can be done as derived from or resulting from the work of faith in God express a very significant aspect of the greatness of salvation. However, they can never produce what the work of faith for salvation can produce and should never be confused with the very work of faith for salvation in Christ.

If people saved in Christ are called to walk in the good works that God has prepared beforehand, walking in the good works prepared in advance by God does not save people, for without the previous salvation itself, the good works, prepared beforehand, cannot be effectively “practiced in Christ.” An aspect exposed in the text of Ephesians 2, quoted above, as well as in the verses that precede it when they state that, before salvation, a person walks according to the course of thoughts dissociated from the will of God.

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

The salvation provided and offered by God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, has some main aspects from which a whole range of significant new factors can derive. The reverse, however, is neither acceptable nor possible.

The primary aspect of God's salvation is to redeem people's souls from the eternal bondage to which they have been subjected so that they may find salvation and receive the condition of eternal life in the Lord. And in this sense, there is nothing that human beings can add to what the Lord has already accomplished. An individual only can believe in Christ and receive Him as Lord of one's life so that no one can boast before God of having been saved by human works.

A person is born again by the Spirit of the Lord when one receives salvation through faith in Christ as Lord. And in this condition, one is also called to walk, by faith, according to the good works prepared beforehand by God. However, the practice of good works prepared in advance is not what makes an individual reach this new birth or the condition of a new creature in Christ.

For instance, a child, a son or a daughter, is born to live a life with many actions, but it is not the acts that one practices, after being born, that generate one's conception.

Eternal salvation by the grace of the Lord, through faith, is always the central point to be achieved by a person and to be maintained by a Christian while living on Earth. A primary point that no one should ever lose sight of.

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.

1 Peter 1: 9 ... receiving the end of your faith: the salvation of your souls.

Nevertheless, **once the salvation of God has been received in the heart and an individual has been made a child of God through it, the Lord also grants a made-alive spirit to the one who receives Christ in one's life so that one can start to live and to walk no longer guided by the flesh, the trespasses, and the sins to which one was enslaved, but according to the instruction and strengthening of the Lord, as exemplified in another list of texts presented below:**

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

John 5: 21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

Psalms 119: 88 Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.

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

2 Corinthians 3: 4 **And we have such trust through Christ toward God.**
5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being
from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,
6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not
of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives
life.

Romans 8: 11 **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead**
dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life
to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.
12 **Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live**
according to the flesh.
13 **For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the**
Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
14 **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.**
15 **For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you**
received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."
16 **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are**
children of God.

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?

After receiving salvation in Christ Jesus, which grants an individual the status of a child of God and a quickened spirit for one to be led by the Spirit of God, it becomes evident, and even very obvious, that the Lord expects that His children, with a new inner heavenly nature, also start to live and walk according to His good, perfect, and acceptable will.

Ephesians 4: 15 **But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all**
things into Him who is the head, Christ,
16 **from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what**
every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which

every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But you have not so learned Christ,

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

27 nor give place to the devil.

28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

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.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

So, going a little further, **what, then, are the good works that God prepared in advance for us to walk in them after we have already received salvation by His grace and through faith in Christ Jesus?**

The good works that the Lord prepared beforehand for those saved by grace to walk in them are all the actions derived from faith in Him, truly good for people, according to the light of Christ, and in line with the kingdom of God.

From meditating on what pertains to the kingdom of God to performing the most various actions in the world in line with the instruction of the heavenly kingdom, whether small and ordinary or whether sporadic or extraordinary, all this variety of actions can be the expression of a good work or walking in good works prepared beforehand by the Lord.

On the other hand, everything that people do that takes them away from God's salvation in Christ, fellowship with Christ, or being led by the Holy Spirit are works that oppose God's eternal purpose. And, therefore, they are wrong or evil works, or unfruitful works of darkness, even if someone wants to call them good or socially good works.

The good works prepared beforehand by the Lord are not just the expression of a list of deeds to be done. On the contrary, they are the expression of a new condition to, in everything, walk and live from the instruction and strength given by the Lord to those who receive salvation by believing in Him. They are the expression of a firm understanding in the heart that these works are the result of salvation and not the cause of it.

1 Corinthians 10: 31 ***Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.***

C6. The First and Principal Good Works to Be Done After Receiving Salvation in Christ

Continuing with some of the main aspects of the Scriptures about what makes up an appropriate reference for the classification or categorization of works, and knowing that the first aspect that qualifies a person to walk in the good works of God is that one has received the salvation that the Lord offers to everyone, we can move on to see in more detail also how a person can practice the good works according to the kingdom of God.

The salvation offered by God is complete for the lives of the people who receive it, for, in addition to granting them redemption from bondage to sin and the Law of works according to Moses, which cannot redeem anyone from perdition, salvation also offers all the instruction and provision for a person to walk in the good works that God has beforehand prepared.

Under the theme of the Gospel of the Grace of God, we also addressed how precious the grace of the Lord is to guide us in all aspects of our lives, showing us, time and time again, that God's call to good works is not about a heavy burden. On the contrary, it expresses a call for the good of an individual when one walks in the Lord's instruction, as we also mentioned at the beginning of this subject.

*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.*

*1 John 5: 3 **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**
4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.
5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Therefore, it is crucial to understand that the fact that the Lord calls people, after they have received salvation, to walk in good works does not represent a call for them to take a burden on their lives concerning the accomplishment of these works, as if this had to be done by their own effort.

At no point where the Scriptures direct a Christian to do good works, and refrain from evil works, it is implied that the Christian should do it alone or only by one's natural strength. On the contrary, the Lord always proposes His broad help in whatever He instructs a Christian to do.

In Christ, the Lord invites Christians to know His will. But, also in Christ, He proposes to strengthen them to be successfully led to accomplishing the works they are instructed to do.

Philippians 2: 13 ...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

*Ephesians 3: 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,
21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Every Christian is called to believe in Christ to be instructed by Him, which is called “living in Christ.” However, a Christian is also called to remain equally in Christ when carrying out what one was instructed to practice, this second abiding being also called “walking in Christ.”

In this way, as we begin to move towards a greater understanding of the aspects that are available to those who have received salvation from God, we can observe that, in addition to the work of faith in Christ, there are still some other works in this salvation that are priorities, that should not be postponed, or that should not be put aside because of attempts to perform good works in general.

After a person has passed to the condition of being saved, there are also works under this condition that precede the others so that the latter can be practiced indeed for the good and the edification of the lives of those who practice them, as well as for them to reflect an expression of good towards their fellow men.

Aiming to order a little more specifically what we are trying to expose in this chapter, we could say, then, that:

- ⇒ 1) There is an exclusive and unique work of faith in Christ Jesus, as the Lord, which precedes the other works that God has prepared beforehand. Without this work of faith, a person does not obtain the primary gift of God that one needs, which is the eternal salvation of one's soul and the new birth through the Spirit of the Lord.
- ⇒ 2) Once a person receives salvation, one comes to have access to the Way of one's reconciliation with God.
- ⇒ 3) Reconciliation having been established, there are works, possible from the salvation granted, which should come to have primacy or take precedence in the life of a Christian so that one, through these primary works, comes to be previously instructed and strengthened in the will of God for the other works.
- ⇒ 4) Having received salvation and abiding in carrying out the primary works of life according to salvation, the Christian can advance, now instructed and strengthened, toward the other good works that God has already prepared beforehand for people to walk in them.

Or yet:

(1) **The work of faith in Christ leads to salvation.** → (2) **Salvation leads to reconciliation with God.** → (3) **Reconciliation allows a living relationship with God for the knowledge of His will and to be strengthened to practice it.** → (4) **Knowing the will of God about what works to do, and being strengthened to do them, the other good works can be performed according to the will and strength that God grants.**

We have already seen in previous chapters that one of the characteristics that lead human beings to deception and perdition is an individual walking dissociated from the instruction and direction of God for one's life. Therefore, **coming to be instructed by the Lord, “before going out into the world” to perform works, is also one of the essential marks resulting from the salvation offered by the Lord to those who receive it through faith in Him.**

A Christian is called to a life of good works in all areas of one's life. However, to be able to do them in such a way that they are indeed qualified as good, as works of light, and according to the kingdom of God, it is necessary for the Christian to do them according to what is good before God, His light, and the kingdom of the Lord.

The good works a saved person is called to do, or to walk in, are the works that are done in God or in Christ, and not apart from the Lord.

Ephesians 2: 10 ***For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.***

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

God does not offer eternal salvation to people only to deliver them from darkness or the abstention of light so that they, then, go back to living and walking dissociated from the only light that can truly illuminate their path.

Works done in a condition dissociated from the Lord's instruction and strength are works done according to what the Scriptures call works after the flesh and not after the Spirit of God. Therefore, they are disqualified works since they cooperate for death and not for eternal life.

Romans 8: 6 ***For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.***

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

Thus, **the primary works made available by the salvation offered by God, or which should have primacy in a person's life after one becomes a Christian or a child of God, have a unique significance or value before the Lord.**

There are some essential works that a saved person is called to do continuously that cannot be substituted, before the Lord, for other works, not even those that are called good works in the Scriptures. And the fact that the Lord calls a saved person to practice good works does not mean that one, by oneself, knows how to choose which good works the Lord specifically wants him or her to practice and which ones one can discard or put aside.

For example, just as it is unreasonable for a person to drive a car at night without turning on the light, so it is also unreasonable for a Christian to stop practicing the work of walking in the light, which is Christ Jesus, to try to walk without this light in the good works of God.

In performing works in the Christian life, it is just not reasonable and profitable to neglect to do the central or essential works that enable a Christian to walk appropriately in other works. If a person moves away from the vital works, one not only moves towards the condition of not being adequately provided with what is necessary to do the good works one intends to do, but also, and mainly, one moves towards a departure from the primary and essential aspects for which the Lord saved him or her.

When we look more closely at the exhortation that the Lord Jesus Christ makes to Christians in the first of His seven letters to the Churches mentioned in the book of Revelation, we can see in it that people were exchanging precisely the practice of some good works to the detriment of the central or more crucial works for their own lives.

Despite being highly committed to doing works for the Lord, the people to whom the first of the seven letters was being directed had their references for categorizing the importance of their works corrupted.

Let us see the following text:

- Revelation 2: 1* ***"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:***
- 2 I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;***
- 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.***
- 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.***
- 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."***
-

When the Lord presents an exhortation in His first letter of the seven described in the book of Revelation, He makes a clear distinction between works and works. Or rather, **the Lord exposes a crucial difference between “good works” and the “first works”** that no Christian should abandon or relegate to a secondary level.

In this same letter, **the Lord Jesus declares that abandoning the “first love,” or the so-called “first works,” is equivalent to stumbling or falling from practices that should never be left aside.**

As if this were not enough, the Lord Jesus presents an exhortation in which He warns that if there is no repentance in the wrong postures adopted, the lampstand will be taken away from those who do not repent. And this can imply that these will go back to walking in darkness, for the lampstand is a figure of the light, or Christ Himself, who, through the Holy Spirit, is the light of those who believe in Him.

Christ's exhortation to those who abandon the “first works,” or those which should always have primacy in a Christian's life, because they become too involved in “other good works,” is extremely relevant and should not be taken lightly by any Christian.

In the first of the seven letters presented in the book of Revelation, we can see that people can come to love “Christian works” more than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, than the Lord who calls them to “good works” and that instructs and strengthens them to do the “good works.” An attitude considered extremely serious by the Lord and highly dangerous for the one who acts in this way.

The attitude of a Christian in relegating to a second level the One who should always be one's **“first love,” which is Christ**, can even make the presence of Christ in this Christian impractical, for the Lord does not take part in the works done in a way dissociated from Him, nor does He acknowledge the works that are not done according to His love.

So, if someone fails to love the source of the provision of true love, how can one, devoid of this love, perform good works?

The many “good works” said to be done for God, without love for God, cannot make up for the absence of love and the abandonment of the “first works.”

Therefore, **identifying the “first good works” and persevering in them, in which every Christian is called to live and walk, is vital for one to be appropriately in line with the reference for classifying works that the Lord uses to acknowledge the other works.**

In this way, for a Christian to remain in the “first love” and continue to have the heavenly light to illuminate one's understanding, decisions, and actions, what are, then, these “first works” that a Christian is called to practice?

After a person receives salvation by the grace of the Lord, through faith in Christ, the priority, first, or primary work that a Christian is called to practice is, and will always be, fellowship with Christ or also called “the work of abiding in Him.”

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

Yet another way of saying what we are trying to expose in this chapter, even being repetitive, is that faith in Christ allows people to start having fellowship with Him in such a way that the Lord starts to instruct them to live and walk according to His light, which, in turn, is powerful to illuminate the hearts of Christians to do good in all areas of their lives, and not the evil that darkness wants them to do.

*Ephesians 5: 11 **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.***

...

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

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

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

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

The works created beforehand by God, that we may walk in them, were created for those who have experienced and continue to experience, through faith, the central result of the fruit of God's saving righteousness towards their lives, which is life in the Lord by fellowship with Him.

By the salvation offered by God, a person can abide *in Christ*. And by remaining *in Christ*, one is instructed, prepared, and strengthened to do other works that God has already prepared beforehand for His children to walk in them. However, without remaining *in Christ*, they also become unfruitful in terms of what the Lord wants them to do.

*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."***

The good works that God prepared beforehand for us to walk in them are for all Christians, but these become effectively manifested to those and in those who abide in God's call to fellowship with Him.

Faith in Christ Jesus, recognizing Him as the Eternal Lord, introduces people to a condition of fellowship with God where they are offered to know the will of God for the different areas of their lives. And this, so that they can come to live and walk from faith to faith as the Lord reveals His will to them through the growing revelation of His Gospel.

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

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

Through the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, the Lord calls us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. However, He does not do this for it to be a mere search exercise. On the contrary, He does it so that from this kingdom and His righteousness, we are instructed in the new way of doing works in our lives.

Thus, the so-called "first works" can also be expressed as:

- ⇒ Seeking things from above, where Christ is seated;
- ⇒ Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, remembering that Christ is the central expression of the kingdom and righteousness of God towards us;
- ⇒ To be filled with the Spirit of the Lord also to live and walk in the Spirit;
- ⇒ To be continuously watchful in prayer;
- ⇒ Looking for the wisdom and discernment of God in all things, remembering that through salvation, we have access to the mind of Christ and that Christ was made the wisdom of God for us.

When a person inclines one's heart to seek the Lord first and because of the love for Him, the Lord Himself helps this individual to incline one's heart, with the appropriate measure, to what one should apply oneself so that the paths one chooses and the works to which one dedicates oneself become prosperous according to the will of God.

There are many good works to be done in the Lord, for which, however, a Christian first needs to be perfected by God to do them. For this reason, it is also so important that a Christian inclines oneself to the work of being instructed and perfected by the Lord Himself.

*2 Timothy 3: 16 **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,***

*17 **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

*Galatians 3: 3 **Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?***

*1 Peter 5: 10 **But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.***

*Hebrews 13: 20 **Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,***
*21 **make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.***

Finally, considering that “the first works” mentioned above have already been broadly described in the various themes of the series on The Gospel of God and the subjects on The Core Principle of Life for a Christian, The Law of Understanding, Work Out Your Own Salvation, and Watchful in Prayer, we do not intend to repeat the points related to them in this present material, but only highlighting, once again, how essential they are and how important it is in the eyes of the Lord that His children redeemed in Christ Jesus continually practice them.

*Philippians 1: 9 **And this I pray,***

that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,
*10 **that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,***
*11 **being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.***

C7. The Polemized Expression “Faith Without Works Is Dead”

In this new chapter, we would first like to clarify that calling the expression “faith without works is dead” polemized or controversial does not mean that this expression is controversial in the Scriptures themselves, but that many people have tried to make it controversial.

Often when someone reemphasizes the teaching of the Scriptures that a person is not saved by works, but essentially by the grace of God, through the unique work of faith in Christ as Lord, there are also people who resist this teaching on the grounds of the expression written by James that “faith without works is dead,” which will be displayed below.

In the Scriptures, it is indeed mentioned that “faith without works is dead” and that faith is not a faith in faith itself, but it is a firm faith in God and a practical trust in what God has spoken and speaks for people to follow. And they even teach that what God instructs people to do is also given to them for practical, profitable, and valuable purposes, as the prophet Isaiah also described in the text below:

Isaiah 48: 17 ***Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go.***

When a person starts to trust in Christ Jesus as the Lord of one's life and receives the new birth by the Spirit of the Lord, it is also part of this trust that a person begins to live and walk as the Lord instructs him or her.

Thus, it makes no sense for someone to think that the Lord offers human beings salvation and deliverance from the paths and practices that lead them to perdition and, soon after, to think that the Lord will approve that people return to the same evil works they had been practicing previously. The salvation offered by God is granted to produce profound practical changes in the way of living and walking of the one who receives it, even if its perception is gradual and growing for the saved person, as it is also exemplified in the following list of texts:

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?

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.**

- 1 John 2: 1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**
- 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**
- 3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.**
-

As an expression of trust in the Lord, faith indeed is not merely rooted in theoretical contemplation or abstract thinking. On the contrary, faith is associated with acts that lead those who practice it to new postures of life in God, as well as it leads them to practices that result from it or are pertinent to the life of faith in the Lord they have come to embrace.

There are several texts in the Scriptures that talk about the need to associate what one says to believe with the acts one practices, among which the text of James is probably one of the most direct and specific about this aspect, as described below:

- James 2: 14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?**
- 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,**
- 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?**
- 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**
- 18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.**
- 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe, and tremble!**
- 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?**
- 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?**
- 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?**
- 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.**
- 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.**
- 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?**
- 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**
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Nevertheless, the matter that faith should also be accompanied by works needs to be viewed with certain appropriate precautions so as not to fall into confusing any work or good work with the work pertaining to or specifically corresponding to an equally specific aspect of faith.

The fact that many people do not distinguish, or do not wish to distinguish, that there are works in general and that there are specific works of an equally specific aspect of faith, has been one of the leading causes why the text of the book of James, quoted above, has resulted in many controversial discussions throughout Christian history. For not adopting an appropriate classification of works, the text of James, for some, apparently clashes with texts that say that salvation does not come by works, but by the grace of God, as already mentioned above and whose examples we complement below with two more texts:

Romans 4: 2 **For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.**

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.**

Although some people want to find some contradiction between the text of James and texts like the last two quoted above, we understand that there is no contradiction between them when the works of faith are appropriately classified according to what faith in God itself is.

What we find in the book of James is an exhortation that the faith a person claims to have must also be consistent with the attitudes one practices regarding the faith one professes. The person who claims to have faith, but does not have attitudes that match what one says to believe, is called, both by James and by the Lord Jesus Christ, as a “non-practicing listener” and who expresses someone who does not really trust what one hears and claims to believe.

James 1: 23 **For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;**
24 **for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.**
25 **But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

Matthew 7: 26 **"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ..."**

Nevertheless, once again, when the Scriptures teach that “faith without works is dead,” they are not teaching that a person should do any works, social works, or works that one oneself wants to do so that one's faith is not considered dead.

Doing works so that faith may be attested or confirmed refers to the performance of those works that are pertinent and consistent with the faith that a person claims or propagates to have, and not any other or compensatory works.

Making faith operative or justifying faith by works is related to the performance of the specific works of faith. It is the accomplishment of those specific works that also makes operative the particular aspects regarding which faith is being exercised.

Thus, as already mentioned above, James teaches us that faith is also accompanied by works, but which derive from it and that confirm it, just as helping a person in need of basic things also needs to be accompanied by an effective provision of what the latter needs.

Therefore, James is not declaring that the work or works of believing and trusting in God are specifically the act of helping the needy, but that, just as helping the needy needs to be effectively materialized in order not to be merely theoretical and empty words, so also the works of a person who claims to believe must match what one claims to believe.

What James is mentioning, in his letter in reference, becomes much enlightened by citing the example of Abraham, whose broader account is described in chapters 12 to 15 of the book of Genesis.

When God instructed Abraham to go out of the place where he lived to follow the Lord toward the land that He would show him, the Scriptures declare that Abraham believed God in such a way that trusting God was accompanied by the corresponding practical and specific action that Abraham believed God had instructed him to do. Because of believing or trusting in God and in what the Lord spoke to him, Abraham was also willing to go out of the land where he lived and which he knew to go towards the place where the Lord wanted to lead him.

Abraham's faith was only recognized by God, on Abraham's behalf, as an operative faith because he believed to the point of doing the pertinent, corresponding, or derivative work of faith in God, which, once again, was to leave his land to follow the Lord's direction until reaching the place that He had reserved for Abraham and Sarah to settle down.

The work corresponding to Abraham's faith, which confirmed or justified his faith in God, exemplified by James, was not the practice of social assistance, but the work of leaving his land and going to the one that the Lord would lead him to.

Although helping other people is a good thing to do and is consistent with the Christian stance in general, this is just not the emphasis that James is presenting. James uses helping others as an example to explain the functioning of faith and the corresponding works, but he does not make the example used the very definition of the practical operation of faith, as some want to claim.

Pointing out again: When James uses the example of the person in need of clothing and a food supply, he is not telling people to go out and do social works as a demonstration or a proof of the faith that they are called to exercise in other aspects and that have specific corresponding works. Instead, James used the example that just as there should be coherence in the material help between what is said and what is done, there must also be an adequate or sober attitude between what one claims to believe and what one does concerning what one says to believe.

James 2: 16 ... and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

When the Lord guides a person to help one's neighbor in some material need, the work of faith, of course, is the material help itself. However, not every work corresponding to specific aspects of faith is a social assistance work, and neither can social assistance works lead a person to reach the salvation that is granted exclusively by grace, through faith, and not by human works.

Through works of material help to the people of the land where he lived, Abraham would never be able to compensate for not responding to God's call to leave that place. If Abraham did not leave the place where he was when the Lord called him to leave, he would not be walking in the work of faith, even if he gave everything he had to the needy people in the region from which he was called to leave.

God did not tell Abraham to help the people where he was, but he told him to get out of there. Thus, the work of leaving was the specific work of faith that justified him and showed that his faith was indeed operative.

Hebrews 11: 8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

In the list of Hebrews 11, on the actions done as a result or work of faith in God, we do not see equal works done by those mentioned in this same list. While all exercised similar faith or trust in the same and Unique Eternal God, each on this list also had a specific aspect to which they were called to believe and walk according to what they believed. In this way, each of them did the work that was pertinent to what they believed and not what Abraham or the others did.

The Scriptures are full of examples that faith in God needs to be associated with works that correspond to the also specific aspect to which faith is directed. And among the most evident examples of the correlation between faith in a particular point and a work equivalent to this faith is the one that we have seen previously, and in which the Lord Jesus speaks of the need for Christians to remain in Him to be able to bear fruit according to the Heavenly Father's will.

John 15: 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

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

Just as no other “good works” can make up for abstaining from the work of “first love” or the work of “loving Christ before and above other works,” so no other works can make up for “not abiding in Christ.”

Therefore, **if anyone says that one believes the Lord's instruction that it is by direct fellowship with Him or by abiding in Him that one becomes fruitful of good works, the specific work derived from one's proclaimed faith, and which the Lord expects to be done, is practicing fellowship with the Lord or abiding in Christ indeed.**

On the other hand, if a person is concerned with bearing fruit for God without first cultivating a personal life of abiding in Christ, one does not really believe in the word of the Lord Jesus that, without Him, it is not possible to walk in the works prepared beforehand by the Heavenly Father. And for this, one is at risk of being cast out, as one does not indeed live a life of faith in the Lord.

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

We also underline here that if a person comes to the point of being “cast out,” it is not because one did not bear fruit that one is “cast out,” but because one did not remain in the faith or in the work of faith which is to abide in Christ, for without faith it is impossible to please God.

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

Thus, not relating to Christ or not remaining in Christ because the person despises the Lord or because one gets so involved with other works to the point of forgetting to abide in Christ, even though one helps many needy people materially speaking, is not believing with an actual working faith in what Christ said about the relationship between the true vine and the branches.

Since the Lord Jesus said that whoever abides in Him will bear much fruit, the work derived from faith or trust in Christ, and in His word in this specific aspect, is the effective abiding in Him, letting to the Lord the generation of the respective fruits or the other works resulting from fellowship with Him.

God's will for Christians is that they are very fruitful, that they continually produce works that are good, and that they are channels for works that will have an eternal value, not just a passing or ephemeral one. However, the works that God longs for people to do also are the works that spring from practical trust in Him, fellowship with Him, and His guidance for their lives.

God blesses those who fear Him and seek Him indeed so that they can walk in the ways of the Lord. But those who only claim to seek God, but do not actually do so, or who declare to want God's instruction without following it when the Lord gives it to them, place themselves in opposition to the Lord.

As we mentioned in previous chapters, God did not promise to bless people in the ways they create according to their own will. On the contrary, it is the ways created beforehand by God that are just and right to be followed, as attested to us throughout the Scriptures.

*Psalms 25: 4 **Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths.***

*Psalms 44: 18 **Our heart has not turned back, Nor have our steps departed from Your way; ...***

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

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

Returning to the example of the text of the vine and the branches, we can observe that in this particular situation, the also specific work of faith is to follow in the practical work of abiding in Christ, which, in turn, leads to the production of new fruits. Without the practice of the work of permanence that particularly confirms this aspect of faith, people are rendered to try to produce fruit through their own vain efforts or even to disregard the search for the production of good works in the Lord.

Remembering once again, the “work” of effective abiding in Christ, as the practical fulfillment of trust in the Lord and faith in God's call to fellowship with Him, is a prerequisite for performing other good works.

The Lord is not impressed by the works people do or the high number of works they might fulfill, for the Lord is the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth and everything in them. The Lord is mighty to do infinitely more than any creature intends to do for Him.

Nevertheless, **the Lord is pleased with those who believe in Him and do His will according to what He instructs them to believe.**

*Matthew 7: 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!'***

According to the text of the book of Matthew mentioned above, what, then, is the good fruit or good work that a good tree produces according to faith in the Lord?

The good fruit or the good work that someone can practice is to act according to the will that God instructs him or her to practice.

And what is the bad fruit or the bad work that a bad tree produces for not keeping faith in the Lord or for not doing the work of faith?

The bad work or the bad fruit is a person not drawing close to the Lord to know His will or doing the things that one was not instructed by the Lord to do, even if one presents them as works called "Christian" or done in "the name of the Lord Jesus."

*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.***

If the Lord Jesus Christ instructs a person to go to a place to do a work there, the work of faith in the Lord's instruction, in this case, is to go to the appointed place and do the work according to the strength granted by the Lord.

On the other hand, if the Lord Jesus Christ instructs a person to wait in Him before taking any action, if this person believes in Him, the work associated with one's faith is to wait. In this situation, the act of waiting is the work derived from faith, even if appearances signal the opposite and external conditions want to pressure the individual to act before one is guided by the Lord to move forward.

Considering that the Lord Jesus said that the works to be done are those that are in line with the will of the Heavenly Father, we also understand that it is correct to conclude that the Lord is willing to reveal His will to anyone who wants to walk in the will of God. And this is also why He calls each person to abide in Him personally.

So, when a person's works are derived from the practical faith of abiding in Christ, they glorify the Lord, for they have been instructed or given to him or her by God.

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

2 Corinthians 10: 17 **But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD."**
18 For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

Therefore, after receiving salvation by believing in Christ as Lord, God's will for a Christian is for one to seek the divine instruction for one's life and to live and walk according to this instruction, which also represents the way by which one can do the works that God prepared beforehand for people to walk in them.

The teaching that faith is also accompanied by works derived from faith shows us that the word and the will of God are not revealed to us only for information, but to be believed to the point of being experienced.

When the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was asked what the food that sustained His life was, He replied that the primary aspect of which He nourished Himself was to do God's will and carry out God's work as He was instructed from heaven to do.

John 4: 34 **Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."**

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.'"**

Finally, in this chapter, we believe it is relevant to conclude by highlighting, once again, that **it is regarding faith that the works that should accompany faith come forth, and not the other way around. Faith is meant to be the reference point for the works that accompany, confirm, or cooperate with it.**

It is due to faith in God that the Lord points to the works that cooperate with faith.

2 Corinthians 4: 13 **And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak,**
14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.

Works that are not of faith do not justify the one who practices them. And God's works for people are associated with faith in Him and the instruction that the Lord gives them. Therefore, a Christian is not called to choose the works one wants to do and then present them to God for the Lord to accept them.

In this way, if we return to the starting point of this chapter that salvation is given by grace, through faith and not by works, and that faith is justified by its works, we can see that **in the specific case of faith for salvation, the work corresponding to this last aspect of faith is simply accepting that salvation is a gift given to us by the grace of God and the act of opening the heart to receive Christ as Lord.**

If a person says that one believes that God grants eternal salvation by grace, simply by believing in Christ as the One who justifies him or her before God, sin, the law, the world, and death, the work corresponding to this aspect of faith is to receive the salvation offered by the Lord without trying to do any other spiritual, material, or social works with the aim of wanting them to serve as a means of salvation.

The aspect mentioned in these last paragraphs is even more notorious also in the following overly precious texts:

*Romans 4: 5 **But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,***
*6 **just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:***
*7 **"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;***
*8 **Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."***

*Romans 10: 9 **... that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.***
*10 **For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***
*11 **For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."***
*12 **For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.***
*13 **For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."***

Wanting to use the text of James, in reference in this chapter, to try to justify oneself by works, but which are not applicable for justification for salvation before God, is an attempt to corrupt the reference of qualification of works established by the Lord and is an attempt to mix or invert what cannot be reversed.

Luke 16: 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

Similar to how it is said that "water and oil do not mix," there are aspects related to faith and works that cannot be mixed to try to apply them to what they are not designated for, respectively.

When people do works because they have been justified by Christ and because they want to live a life according to the salvation they have received, and not to seek justification and salvation by works, they come to understand that there are particular aspects of faith in God also with specific works, corresponding and pertinent to each of the parts of the faith.

When people accept that there are situations for the exercise of faith in God that require different works corresponding to these situations, they also become more prepared to understand the adequate reference to classify or categorize works according to the characteristic of the various aspects of faith in the One Lord and Savior.

So, through James, the Lord teaches us to see faith more wisely so that we can perceive the different moments of the performance of faith and the works pertinent to it in its most diverse moments.

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

Titus 3: 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

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7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.

These things are good and profitable to men.

C8. Equivalences in the Scriptures about Works, Labors, and Services

In addition to understanding the distinction between the work of faith in Christ, the works resulting from this faith, the first works, and those that follow these first ones, there are still other more detailed principles or values that can help us in the classification of works, which, however, we would like to address only after expanding a little further what is involved or associated with the term *works* itself.

Just as a description of the theme of “work out your own salvation” proves to be particularly challenging in terms of its breadth, because the expression *work out* or *develop* can also be expressed by several words that are equivalent to each other, so also a consideration on the theme “works” would not be broad enough if it did not include some basic variations of terms that also apply to this subject in reference.

For example, if someone says one is building something, one is carrying out a work. If, however, another person says that one is serving someone, one is also doing a work. And if yet another person says that one is meditating on a project that one is trying to present to someone else, this one too is doing a work.

If we return once more to the text that narrates the words of the Lord about the essential work that every human being should carry out, we may observe that, in one same narrative, the mention of works is also made in an equated way to labors and signs (or deeds) carried out, as follows again below:

- John 6: 26* **Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.**
- 27* **Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."**
- 28* **Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"**
- 29* **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."**
- 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."**
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Furthermore, in addition to the multiple expressions that are equivalent to doing works in the last text presented above, it should also be noted that several expressions

related to works complement each other to offer a broader exposition of the stage of practice that a work is in or how a work was done or accomplished.

When the text above, for example, uses the expression *signs*, we may see that it refers more to works that have already been completed or will be presented as done, and not so much to works that are in progress or in which the work is still being carried out to be completed.

The text of the following Psalm exemplifies a little this characteristic of works already carried out:

*Psalms 92: 4 **For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work (or deeds); I will triumph in the works of Your hands.***

Therefore, the reference to a work can also be a reference to something that is yet to be elaborated, to something that is in elaboration and execution, or to something that has already been concluded.

When, for example, we refer to God's work of salvation toward us, we might as well be referring to the work already done by Christ on Calvary's cross once and forever to make provision for the redemption of all people from the subjection to sin. But similarly, we may also refer to the work of heavenly salvation when we do so regarding the work that is accomplished when a person actually receives Christ as Lord and by which a person is brought out of the bondage of sin, also receiving the new birth and the newness of life according to the heavenly kingdom. And yet, as a third aspect of the work of salvation provided by God, we may say that this work is also at work when it accompanies, protects, and produces growth in those who remain in it, that is, in those who remain in Christ, the Lord and Savior of their lives.

From another angle, if we look at the life of a Christian, we can similarly say that one has done a work by believing and receiving Christ as Lord, as well as one continues to practice the work of faith by continuing to believe in Christ as one's Lord and Redeemer until the end of one's time in this present world.

When someone receives Christ, one receives Him because of God's work of grace toward him or her, but also because of the work of believing in Christ and receiving Him as one's Lord. And when an individual receives Christ, one is also the target of the work of the new birth provided by God, a life in which the Christian is called to remain until the end, thus maintaining oneself in the work of faith for which one has been called to carry on continuously.

When the Lord Jesus said that people should work for the food that He gives and that does not perish, and He responds to people that the work of God is for them to believe in the One whom the Heavenly Father sent, He is also showing us that believing in Him is a work that leads to effective results, just as believing in Him also refers to an ongoing work that people should carry out constantly and forever in their lives.

The works to which God calls a person to walk in them or to do them can, therefore, be works with momentary actions, but they can also be works whose duration contemplates the entire period until the end of a person's life on Earth.

Near already at the end of his life in the present world, Paul, an apostle of Christ, sums up his work in line with God's will as follows:

2 Timothy 4: 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

From a more summarized point of view, Paul, in his life as a Christian, dedicated himself to three great essential works, and whose duration extended throughout his life after he had received, in his heart, Christ as Lord, namely:

- ⇒ 1) The fight of the good fight;
- ⇒ 2) The completion of the career or race that Christ proposed to him;
- ⇒ 3) The keeping of faith in Christ and in God, which was granted to him by the Lord through heavenly grace and mercy.

Knowing that in the Christian life exist long-term works, whose duration is for the whole lifetime, is very significant for a person not to be focused only on short-term works and for one not to feel unproductive in periods when the Lord is leading him or her to advance in one's career of faith more toward fellowship with Christ and not so much toward outward works.

For instance, **knowing that the act of faithfully working and serving the Lord every day in the most diverse areas of life are also actions that express the accomplishment of the “works” of the Lord, shows us a broader and more adjusted picture of what comes to be to walk in the works that God prepared beforehand for those who believe in Him.**

When Paul, after his conversion to Christ, received and accepted the Lord's call to be separated in the regions of Arabia for three years, to be instructed directly by the Lord about the Gospel of God to be announced to all peoples, he was doing the work the Lord had for him to do at that time, even if he was not bearing fruit in short-term or quantitatively measurable works.

When Paul consented to Christ's instruction to be exposed to the Lord's teaching intensely before going out to spread or preach the Gospel, so as not to do it according to his own understanding, he also cooperated with the work that the Lord was doing in him. Work which resulted in the fruit of a heart with a renewed mind about who Christ was, what had been the purpose of the Law of Moses which Paul served before knowing Christ, and what the offer of salvation by the grace provided by God for humanity was.

Thus, if a Christian does not understand that doing works also includes the labors and services one does being in the Lord, through the Lord, with the Lord, and the Lord through him or her, one is more subject to easily losing focus of what it really is to do good works.

If a person does not understand that the labors and the services at each stage are also the execution of works, a person may be subject to mistakenly thinking that the practice of works would only occur indeed through what can be calculated or accounted for in numerical quantities actually accomplished or achieved.

In sales companies in general, for example, it will be particularly challenging to measure the amount of sales that a person of the administrative area performs.

However, because this person works in the company and serves the salespeople with administrative services, one is also a participant in the sales works, being, in reality, by the administrative works, a cooperating part of all the company's actions.

Therefore, **considering that God calls people to practice different activities, as well as grants them different gifts, wanting to measure works by calculating the resulting numbers is a dangerous path and very likely to generate contentions or disputes between people, which, however, certainly do not come from the King of Peace.**

To do the Lord's work or to walk in the good works that God prepared beforehand for us to walk in them, when also seen from the aspect of laboring or serving, allows us to see that there is a time for every purpose and that to be doing what belongs to each time is, in reality, to be acting and practicing good works.

- Isaiah 28: 23 Give ear and hear my voice, Listen and hear my speech.*
24 Does the plowman keep plowing all day to sow? Does he keep turning his soil and breaking the clods?
25 When he has leveled its surface, Does he not sow the black cummin And scatter the cummin, Plant the wheat in rows, The barley in the appointed place, And the spelt in its place?
26 For He instructs him in right judgment, His God teaches him.
27 For the black cummin is not threshed with a threshing sledge, Nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cummin; But the black cummin is beaten out with a stick, And the cummin with a rod.
28 Bread flour must be ground; Therefore he does not thresh it forever, Break it with his cartwheel, Or crush it with his horsemen.
29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts, Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance.
-

When Paul, in one of his letters, refers to Timothy's faithfulness to the Lord, he does not mention the various numerical deeds that Timothy had already accomplished, but simply refers to the fact that he was "working or laboring in the work of the Lord," as follows:

- 1 Corinthians 16: 10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.*
11 Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren.

Similarly, when Paul writes one of his letters encouraging his fellow believers in Christ to remain continuously active in the Lord, he does not seek to assign to them a load of targets and numerical objectives to be achieved. Instead, he urges them, in a general way, to always remain abundant in the work of the Lord, knowing that it is their continual work or labor, according to the instruction of Christ, that counts before God.

1 Corinthians 15: 58 **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**

Thus, the main works that the Lord longs for Christians to carry out are to believe in Him and to be in Him so that, from faith in Christ and abiding in Him, they may always be abundant in acting in works, labors, or services as the Lord instructs them to act, a point also exposed in the following texts:

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;**

Philippians 2: 13 ... **for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

1 Corinthians 12: 6 **And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.**

The Lord does not call His children to divide their works between those that can be measured in quantities and those that cannot. Instead, the Lord calls His children so that, in everything, their actions may be good works. And this is only possible if they are willing, from the heart, to maintain a continuous life of work and service to the Lord.

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.**

Romans 12: 11 ... **not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;**

Considering that a Christian is called to live and walk in Christ, and being in Him to act according to His instruction, when a Christian is not in Christ and acts in dissonance with the Lord's instruction, one also puts oneself in a position of not being serving Christ and, consequently, departs from the practice of the good works of God.

When a Christian is in Christ and follows His instructions also at the times of actions, everything one does according to the will of God is a good work, for one is at work or at the service of the Lord in what one does.

1 Corinthians 10: 31 **Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

Christ called us to live in Him and for Him. And when we follow it, all the works, actions, labors, and services we do, according to His will, are for good or are called “good works.”

In Christ, we are called not only to do some works for Him, but we are called to live and walk in everything for Him, with Him, and through Him.

2 Corinthians 5: 14 **For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;**
15 **and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**

Romans 8: 37 **Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**

When a person practices a work dissociated from working with the Lord or serving Christ, with Christ, and through Christ, no matter how much one wants to call it a good work and even uses parts of the Scriptures to justify them, this person may not actually be acting cooperatively with Christ.

Matthew 12: 30 **"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."**

Therefore, work, labor, or service, in various aspects related to the practice of works, are equivalent and complement each other. And if any action of a person in one of these three aspects cannot be attributed as being done in the Lord, according to the will of the Lord, and for the Lord, that act does not have the characteristics of a good work being performed for the food that endures for everlasting life.

In addition, before ending this chapter, we also underline that **knowing that doing good works in the Lord is also serving and laboring in the Lord and according to the Lord's instruction also allows us to see that there are good works done in God that are carried out by cooperation of multiple people and even multiple generations. These are works whose joint or complementary action is attributed to all who cooperated with them.**

John 4: 35 Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!
36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.
37 For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'
38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.

When God calls people to walk in the good works that He has already prepared beforehand, He also calls them to act according to what has already been done for centuries and according to the eternal purposes established by the Lord.

So, also from what has been exposed in the last paragraph, **we understand that it is more important to be attentive to the practice of what needs to be done in each generation than to surrender to a concern with quantities or with the practice of the works that people by themselves find more important, but which, in the end, do not cooperate with the greater work that the Lord is doing through several generations.**

David, who came to be established as king of Israel, was considered suitable by God for cooperation in the work of the Lord because he had a heart set on serving the Lord according to the heavenly will and with what was pertinent to be accomplished in the days of his generation, as described in the text of the book of Acts presented below:

Acts 13: 22 And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'

...
36(a) For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, ...

Works, labors, and services are parts that make up the call to “practice of works” or, even, the call to “walk in the works prepared beforehand by the Lord for us to walk in them.”

And finally, without aiming to be extremely precise in the definitions that follow just below, we could perhaps say that, in a certain way and in many situations, the works, labors, and services act together in the following way:

- ⇒ 1) **The term *work* shows us a global aspect of what was, is, or will be done;**
- ⇒ 2) **The term *labor* is the expression used to refer to the practical actions necessary to carry out the various activities that can bring a work to completion;**

- ⇒ 3) ***Serving, in turn, is linked to the disposition, purpose, or motivation with which the work is done and for whom each of the activities in carrying out the work is done.***

Works are carried out or accomplished by the execution of many labors and by the proper positionings with which these labors are done and for whom they are done.

There are people who want to do “good works” for God, but they don't want to do the various labors that are necessary for a work to be done, or they don't want to do the works from a position of humbly serving the Lord. And for this reason too, many times, they do not see the “good works” effectively carried out in their lives.

Many people do not always fail to achieve fulfillment or cooperation in God's good works because they are unwilling to perform them in the broader way, but because they despise faithfulness in small labors and how they position themselves to perform some specific services that are associated with them.

As for the aspect that the practice of works in the Lord also encompasses the labors and life postures of those who practice them, we present below, to close this chapter, some more texts for reading and reflection:

*Micah 6: 6 **With what shall I come before the LORD, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old?***

*7 **Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?***

*8 **He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?***

*Luke 16: 10 **He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.***

Ecclesiastes 12: 13-14

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

*14 **For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.***

C9. Labor for the Food which Endures to Everlasting Life

Once the broader aspects of the distinction between the “first works” and those that result from them become known, and that labors and services are likewise an expression of works, we still can see that some aspects of the very execution of the works should also be considered for their characterization.

From the moment we move to a more conscious position that the term *works* also encompasses labor and service, we can better understand that the classification of works, before God, still depends on the attitude of those who perform them and on the various activities involved in the labors and services to carry them out.

Therefore, **when we begin to verify that the very execution of a work also affects its characterization, we can see that a work is also categorized by the following aspects:**

- ⇒ 1) **For the purpose for which a person labors to carry out a work;**
- ⇒ 2) **Whom a person serves through the labors one does;**
- ⇒ 3) **How or by what means a person performs labors in favor of a work.**

So, to look more closely at each of the three points mentioned in the previous paragraph, we would like to address them in separate chapters, starting to address first, in the present chapter, the aspect of the goal or purpose for which a person labors to cooperate for a work to be accomplished, letting the other two points for the following chapters.

When we see that the classification of a work also depends on the purpose for which a person labors to accomplish it or to cooperate with it, we can also note, once again, that a mere external list of works is insufficient to determine their categorization.

For example, if we think only of the specific aspect of the action of proclaiming the Gospel of God, we could even, at first, consider that every work of evangelization is a good work. However, if we begin to see that there are individuals and groups who want to use the proclamation of the Gospel to create disciples of themselves and not of Christ, and who want to do it to dominate and maliciously exploit their fellow men, we see that the mere external act of the proclamation of the Gospel is not enough to categorize this type of work as good.

There are people who even make use of the Scriptures to attract followers to themselves instead of teaching people to directly follow the Lord Jesus Christ, the only One who gave Himself without guilt as the sacrifice for the salvation of all. Thus, there are many works with the appearance of being Christian, but which, behind the appearance, hide people's greed and desire to seize what belongs exclusively to the Lord. (A subject that is more widely exposed in the themes on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, Another Gospel or a Different Gospel, The Fellowship of Christians in the World, The Christian and the Authority, and The Christian and the Riches).

The good works indeed done in God never act to usurp from people the free, personal, and direct relationship that the Lord offers to all human beings through His Gospel.

Nevertheless, the work of preaching the Gospel is just one of the examples that **the objective for which someone labors for a work is also preponderant for its qualification, in addition to the fact that this same type of criterion is similarly applicable to all daily activities with which a person becomes involved.**

If we return once more to the text in which the Lord Jesus Christ explains that the work of faith in Him is the central work that God expects every human being to practice, it is possible to observe, in the referred text, that Christ is also essentially dealing with the objective because of which people were seeking and following Him, which also categorized the kind of work they were striving to do.

Let us look again at the text referenced in the previous paragraph:

- John 6: 26* **Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.**
- 27* **Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."**
- 28* **Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"**
- 29* **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."**
- 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."**
-

When the Lord Jesus Christ teaches, instructs, or urges people "not to labor for the food which perishes," He is also dealing specifically with the objective for which people labor, warning them that remaining in this type of goal will not make them reach the aspects of greater relevance to life or that are related to eternal life.

At yet another time, the Lord Jesus Christ made reference to the same aspect mentioned above when He spoke about the essential condition of people to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, according to the following text:

- Matthew 6: 19* **Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;**
- 20* **but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.**

- 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
- 22 The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.*
- 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*
- 24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*
- 25 Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*
- 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*
- 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*
- 28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;*
- 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*
- 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*
- 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*
- 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*
- 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*
-

In the world, there are many people who seek God's help, but they seek it, first or only, for the Lord to grant them the food that perishes and not the food that endures for everlasting life. Therefore, this action is a work of seeking the Lord that is not classified by Christ as a work for the food that does not perish, but only focused on a temporal aspect and of very limited benefit.

Christ declares that the good work, the profitable labor, or the good service is the one that puts in the first place the search for the food that He gives to the people and that does not perish. It is the work of searching first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, having as a consequence the material provision, but not having the material provision as the primary and motivational factor to labor or practice works.

Thus, also through the example of the goal for which people labor, Christ once again teaches us that the work of faith in Him and the work of fellowship with Him should be put first so that, from them, people do the works that result from faith in Him and fellowship with Him.

Through the words of the last texts mentioned above, Christ teaches that the mere execution of works, with the primary objective of obtaining material resources, is not enough for a person to have one's works qualified for eternal benefits, remembering

that Christ, in granting this teaching, was speaking to an audience that was literally running after Him or looking for Him wherever He went.

The audience to which Christ was addressing the teaching that the inappropriate aim of seeking Him also disqualifies the work one aspires to do was not an audience oblivious to His presence and which did not seek Him. But still, He disqualified their pursuit of Him because of the purpose for which people were doing it.

Considering that labor, in a certain way, is the practical act of undertaking an effort aimed at carrying out each stage and detail of the production of a work, the Lord urges people in the world not to put the primary or first efforts of their lives in that which is merely transient.

Additionally, this consideration of the Lord Jesus Christ is of enormous scope because **as labor is something continuous and practiced every day or even every moment, the Lord Jesus Christ is also teaching us that, in everything, we should act with a heart aligned with faith in the Lord and with what He instructs us to do.**

When people do the work of first seeking fellowship with Christ and the righteousness of God given to us through Christ, and then are willing to work in what Christ instructs them and how Christ teaches them, they begin to edify good and lasting works, and not just merely earthly and ephemeral works, as Paul also showed us by other words and examples in the text that follows below:

- 1 Corinthians 3: 7* ***So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.***
- 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.***
- 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.***
- 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.***
- 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.***
- 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,***
- 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.***
- 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.***
- 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.***
-

Either directly or through Paul, the Lord Jesus Christ instructs us that building or laboring with objectives aligned with God's instruction is what prevails for eternity, just as He also teaches us that the labors directed at merely human things, natural food, and that which is only for a temporal occupation will not have its value acknowledge when tested by the Lord's fire.

In still another part of the Scriptures, we see the aspects of the last paragraphs also reaffirmed as follows:

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

As we mentioned earlier, through the Gospel, God offers us a new life in Christ, as well as, together with His grace, He offers us the power to live and walk according to this newness of life, expecting that we, too, will start to act or work according to what is available to us in the heavenly kingdom.

On the other hand, when people are inclined to work with the primary objective of obtaining the food that perishes, they continue to be inclined to the mentality that God is not responsible for His creation. In this way, they think or behave as if the creation, once conceived, should provide for everything it needs, thus moving away, through the objectives by which they work, from believing and trusting in God as the work or as the labor to be carried out jointly with all other labors or works.

Therefore, **it is very different for a person to work for food that perishes because one has no confidence that God will provide what materially is necessary than for one to work in what God instructs to work knowing that, in doing the will of God according to His purpose, the Lord will also provide for one's needs or show the way of the provision for those needs.**

The Lord Jesus warned us to observe that a person's life does not consist only of goods and natural supplies that one can reach, just as the kingdom of God offered to us essentially does not consist of material things.

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

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

We believe it is opportune to point out here that **when the Lord Jesus Christ taught people "not to work for food that perishes," He did not teach people to stop working. Instead, Christ was teaching them to work in such a way that what they were going to do would not fade away along with the temporality of earthly life.**

If a person works to supply one's natural needs, God even may allow this individual to achieve this kind of provision in abundance. However, **mere external supply is not spiritual food and cannot sustain a person's spirit.**

Yet in other words, **what a person feeds one's spirit with also influences one's works, for this is the food a person should also work for in the first place to have one's other actions approved before God.**

John 6: 57 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me."

Considering that God is love and Christ is the expression of God's love for us, it is useless for a person to do many works if one is not fed on Christ to do them with love.

Faith in the Lord and fellowship with Christ are the way to feed on love also for the practice of works in love or through the love of God. And also because of this, the Lord calls us to come to Him to obtain the food that only comes from Him and that endures forever.

*1 Corinthians 13: 1 **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.***

*2 **And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.***

*3 **And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.***

*Galatians 5: 6 **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.***

When the Lord Jesus Christ taught people “not to work for the food that perishes,” He did not teach people to abandon any form of work or labor, but to work according to that which can supply them both spiritually and materially, in such a way that the actions, labors, or works in general that they do, while they are still in the world, also receive the heavenly approval.

Faith in God, for example, is a work that sustains a person immeasurably beyond what material conditions can do. And a Christian should work continuously so that one's faith is always steady in God, for the Lord is one's light, protection, rock, and guide for all the steps to be taken in one's life, including for the material provision.

If a person never feeds on the necessary or appropriate food for one's spirit, one will also be weakened in one's “inner man.” And how may a person debilitated in one's spirit be able to work adequately according to the Lord's will?

Let us note here again that in this chapter, we are not referring specifically to the work of salvation, but to the works in which a person is called to walk after one has already received Christ as Lord in one's heart.

As we can also see in Genesis 2, labor or work has been part of God's plan for human life since its creation, and Christ did not come to remove what God established for good

from the beginning. At the beginning of human beings' lives on Earth already, even before sin entered the world, God taught them to work through the practice of tilling the land for a purpose for which He had called them.

Work itself is noble and planned by the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, for without work or labor, the “works or doings” do not become materialized or accomplished either.

The Heavenly Father Himself is a working God, as is the Lord Jesus Christ, as described below:

*John 5: 17 **But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."***

God is continually working on behalf of humanity, and even more especially on behalf of those who trust in Him.

*Isaiah 64: 4 **For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts (or works) for the one who waits for Him.***

On the other hand, it was because of sin that the human being placed oneself in a situation where even part of his work acquired a corrupted condition as to its form and purpose. It was because of sin that a significant amount of the work of the human being started to have a connotation of oppression to be carried out primarily in the pursuit of material sustenance or provision.

Nevertheless, **when Christ came in the flesh to the world to reveal the salvation of people from subjection to sin and bondage to the body of sin, He began to call people back to the condition of looking at God's purpose in the first place also in the aspect of their labors and works, adding yet, as at the beginning, the promise of material provision on the part of God for those who proceed according to His instruction.**

Christ's work on the cross of Calvary was carried out to redeem people from their state of eternal condemnation, but also so that, *in Christ*, many other aspects of the Christian's life may be restored.

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

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

*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.

Seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness first or foremost is not only seeking the kingdom of God and no longer working in the material realm, but it is establishing an order of steps to live and walk in everything according to the very salvation offered by God.

Psalms 50: 23 **"Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."**

When the Lord Jesus says that people should not work for food that perishes, but for that which endures for everlasting life, He is not saying that they could start to "live on wind," that they would not need material sustenance, that they no longer would need to work, and that God would supply everything for them without any action from them, for in another text Paul writes the following warning:

2 Thessalonians 3: 10 **For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**

If we consider once again the text initially used in this chapter, we see that the Lord Jesus Christ is not presenting the option between working or not working. On the contrary, He is referring to what kind of work should always and first be done, or with what aim in the heart should the work be done so that other works or deeds may also be profitable.

The Lord Jesus instructs us to seek God and His kingdom before everything else because God knows everything, everyone, and all times, and because He is perfectly able and righteous to properly instruct what each of His children is called to practice during the most diverse moments of their lives.

The human being's relationship with work is something that begins first in one's heart. And because of this, this relationship is often surrounded by a lot of tension and anxiety. However, it is only in confidence in God that quietness or peace is found to the point where a person can perform one's works in such a way that they cooperate both with eternal works and to obtain the favor of provision for temporal needs.

Luke 12: 29 **"And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.**

30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.

31 But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you."

Often when people count the gains and losses they may experience in working according to God's instruction, they estimate how much it will cost them in material respects. However, in many of their evaluations, they may forget to check what they are losing by not working according to the Lord's instruction.

When people seek first Christ, His kingdom, and His righteousness, they are instructed by the Lord from a proper perspective on both eternal and earthly life. And this allows them to know and experience the will of God, which cannot be reached by hearts turned only to the things of the present age.

*Romans 12: 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.
2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Seeking to expose what we are presenting in this chapter still in other words, it seems to us that what the Lord is aiming to teach us is that:

- ⇒ 1st) We should not seek God just so that He gives us material bread to feed us, but we should seek Him first and always to know His will as to what we should practice, for just as the Lord takes care of the sparrow, He knows that we also need the material provision while we work according to His will.
- ⇒ 2nd) We should not seek to do the work only with the perspective of material supply, but we should seek to do the work that God wants each one to do or with the purpose that God wants it to be done, for when a Christian does the work that God wants or according to God's goal, this person's heart is strengthened with eternal values to act according to the kingdom of God and not only according to earthly and passing things.
- ⇒ 3rd) We should, yes, be willing to work and be intense in what God wants us to work, starting with the work of trusting Him and seeking fellowship with Him, His kingdom, and His righteousness.
- ⇒ 4th) The Lord Himself is committed to providing the means for material supply for those who are willing to do the work according to what the Heavenly Father aims for them to do.

For the merely natural human mind, it can be complicated to understand that it is possible to act in the spiritual and material aspects according to God's will and yet simultaneously find the way of material provision. However, this is not challenging for the Lord, who created the natural world from His word or the spiritual realm. For a person who is in the will of God, the Lord can simultaneously provide “bread to eat” and “seeds of His righteousness” to be sown by those who work in the Lord.

2 Corinthians 9: 8 **And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.**

9 **As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."**

10 **Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,**

11 **while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.**

The Lord Jesus Christ, at no time, said that people would not need material supplies to live in the present world, but He always said that they would need even more to be fed with the will of God, for in this will, there is provision for both the spiritual and the material.

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.'"**

A focus only on the material is also associated with a provision only for the material and ephemeral.

In turn, the focus on work according to the instruction and purpose presented by the Lord Jesus Christ is associated with the material, the spiritual, and the eternal.

Also in the text quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the Lord Jesus Christ still exemplified the importance of seeking God in the first place saying that if the eyes of the body only focus on material needs, and only have natural light, the person will no longer have a focus on what is eternal, letting the rest of the body being equally exposed to the darkness to which the eyes are also exposed.

Seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness is to act so that the eyes are not focused only on earthly things and become attentive to what is from above. It is to seek Christ Jesus, who is the only light that can properly illumine in all things the eyes of the understanding of those in the world.

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.**

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."**

There are goals for which people are willing to work in the world that are born from the hearts of people due to the focus on their temporal needs, and there are goals and works to be done by people in the world that have their origin from the heart of God and that bring benefits that endure for eternity.

Therefore, **a person willing to work only to obtain material sustenance and natural things is very different from a person willing to do it for the purpose of being truly helpful in the work itself in the eyes of God and, as a consequence, to obtain the material sustenance.**

Thus, **a person's relationship with work, and the motivation or purpose for which one does it, can express much of what is in that person's heart.**

As we have already mentioned, if a person is willing to work with eyes basically on one's livelihood, one expresses the thought that one oneself is responsible for one's own provision. On the other hand, if a person is willing to work with joy in the work that the Lord directs him or her to do, one expresses that one believes that God takes care of the provision as He promises to do and that one can act concerning work to, through it, somehow be a blessing, salt of the earth, and light of the world.

When a person works focused on the objective of one's material sustenance, what one may achieve is material sustenance with the wear and tear of work focused on this purpose. When, however, a person works focused on the objective and on the possibility of being helpful through the work to which the Lord guided one to be, one is also blessed by God regarding the material items, but in addition, also receiving the food that does not perish, that can only be granted by God, and that is not materially measurable.

When a person works essentially for the wages that support him or her, one receives the payment according to the debt one generates to those for whom one has worked. However, when a person sees in one's work a way of being helpful according to the opportunity that God grants, the Lord blesses him or her with material provision, but one also becomes a target of the Lord's abundant grace.

Romans 4: 3 ***For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."***

4 ***Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.***

In the supply given by God is included (1) the joy or satisfaction to work; (2) the strengthening of faith and hope even when labor needs to be watered with tears; (3) love for God and fellow men; (4) the peace of the Lord for the day and for the night; (5) support for maintaining a living and ongoing relationship with God. Anyway, for those who seek the food that lasts for eternal life, there are so many more benefits that only the Lord Jesus and the Heavenly Father can provide.

Psalms 128: 1 ***Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways.***

2 ***When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.***

3 *Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table.*
4 *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD.*

Philippians 4: 19 ***And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.***

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

A person willing to do the work granted by God sees in any assignment from the Lord an opportunity to be helpful to those who will use the fruits of one's labor.

However, a person who works primarily for one's livelihood is a person who revolves around oneself and does not see that work is a means of cooperating with God for the sake of the kingdom of God and other people, as well as for oneself.

So, what is the use of a person, by one's effort and work, gaining a lot of resources and losing the essence of living and walking according to the Lord's will for one's life?

What is the eternal benefit of parents accumulating wealth for their children but due to the multitude of works with which they involve themselves, they end up not giving their children due time and attention to teach them to walk in "the Way of the Lord," which is the living relationship with Christ since He is the Way, the Salvation, the Truth, and the Life?

1 John 2: 17 ***And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.***

Since a work is the sum of many works or labors, if each activity or stage is carried out according to God's will, the finished work will also be a work approved by God.

Therefore, by teaching how each person should work in one's daily life, the Lord Jesus Christ also teaches how a person can do a work whose results remain eternally.

In several situations, it may occur that the Christian does not even realize the more comprehensive work that the Lord is doing. However, if one is attentive to listening to God and allows oneself to be guided by Him in the works or labors presented by God in one's daily life, surely, in the end, one will see that all stages were cooperating for a broader good work.

*Romans 8: 28 **And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.***

The Lord knows what is for our good in the whole, and the Lord knows what is best for us in every detail. For this reason, He offers to guide us in our works through the direction in each work, labor, or activity that He presents us to practice in the different stages of our lives.

Christ died also for that we might return to the practice of worthy works, to which we are led by the Lord through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

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

When Christians are willing to have a heart aligned with the proper objective taught to them by the Lord Christ Jesus, they can be called by the Lord to work in the most varied ways and that work for the good, confident that the Lord will not forget the love with the which these Christians do each of the activities of these works.

*Ephesians 4: 28 **Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.***

*Ephesians 5: 8 **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**
9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),
10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.
11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

*Hebrews 6: 10 **For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.***

Whether it be fellowship with the Lord, meditating on His word, or domestic chores, as well as the most varied tasks in external work, doing them with love for the Lord and with the proper purpose are aspects of the foundation for all these works to be able to be recognized as appropriate also before the Lord.

*Romans 14: 7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.
8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.
Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*

C10. Whom Do You Want to Serve?

At the beginning of the previous chapter, we mentioned that a work is also qualified (1) by the purpose for which a person works to accomplish it, (2) whom a person serves through the works one does, and also (3) by what means a person performs the works.

In the previous chapter, we also started to address several considerations about the first of the aspects mentioned in the paragraph above, that is, the purpose why a person does the works in which one ends up participating.

In this chapter, then, we would like to continue with the second point or the aspect of categorizing the works also regarding whom a person wants to serve through the works that one carries out in the cooperation or execution of works.

Thus, one of the central aspects of classifying works is to soberly discern for whom a person is actually doing what one is doing. An aspect that even demonstrates the need for discernment that precedes what a person intends to do and that needs to be present in the very process of executing the works.

By citing the actions he practiced, Paul says that he served God when he also acted according to the understanding or the discernment given by God. On the other hand, Paul teaches us that when he acted according to his human nature, he served the law of sin, which, in turn, leads to death. (Topic seen more widely in the theme The Law of Understanding).

*Romans 7: 22 **For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.***

*23 **But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind (or the understanding), and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.***

*24 **O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?***

*25 **I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind (or the understanding) I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.***

In this way, **whom a person serves indeed, not only thinks one is serving, is as or even more crucial than what one does, because, also according to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, a person cannot simultaneously submit oneself to the service of more than one “lord,”** as described below:

*Matthew 6: 24 **"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."***

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that if a person puts oneself at the service of “one master or lord,” no matter what one does or fails to do, one despises the “other lord.” The Lord teaches that the choice “whom a person wants to serve” is simultaneously a choice to stop serving or to reject the one who was not chosen.

In several aspects, understanding what the Lord Jesus Christ declared in the text quoted above is not difficult to be assimilated and even has a very obvious connotation. If a person, for example, chooses to cooperate with someone who aims to promote unrighteousness, one, of course, cannot, at the same time, want to choose to serve the one who is promoting righteousness in the same situation. In this case, there is an explicit conflict of interests between two parties with entirely different and opposing objectives. (As for the specific issue of serving or not serving riches, we would like to point out that this topic is covered more extensively in the theme on The Christian and the Riches).

Exploring the statement of the Lord Jesus Christ in still other words, it becomes quite evident that a person should not aim to serve the Lord and, at the same time, serve that which does not allow this individual to serve the Lord or which opposes the Lord, and yet, in the end, expecting to have the approval of one's actions before God.

Nevertheless, when we delve a little deeper into the Scriptures on the theme of serving a “master” exclusively, we can see that this theme also presents some other highly significant and challenging aspects, for the Scriptures themselves teach us that a Christian is called to serve on different fronts, circumstances, and even different characters, as shown, for example, in the following texts:

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

2 Timothy 2: 4 ***No one engaged (or at service) in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.***

Colossians 3: 22 ***Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.***

Like in the texts above, those who are called to serve the Lord and who are parents are also called to serve their children. Parents of children who are still dependent on them, for example, are continually required to serve their children, obviously first out of love for them, but also for the sake of providing for the dependent children's basic needs.

How is it possible, then, to say that a person should serve the Lord exclusively, in such a way that one does not serve other masters, if the Scriptures themselves instruct Christians to serve other people and even other masters who are over them according to the flesh or the natural life?

Finding an answer to the question in the previous paragraph can be crucial, for if, on the one hand, we have in the Scriptures the statement that a person cannot serve two masters simultaneously, on the other hand, we also find declarations that instruct those who are of the Lord to serve other people and not only or exclusively the Lord.

The very angels of God, who serve the Lord exclusively in everything, are called to serve people who receive Christ as the Lord of their lives.

Hebrews 1: 14 **Are they not all (the angels) ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?**

Therefore, **to understand the exclusivity of serving a single “master” and, at the same time, serving other people, including masters according to the flesh, it is crucial to realize that:**

- ⇒ 1) **The act of serving can be divided into several instances that complement each other, with major and minor instances in the designation of serving;**
- ⇒ 2) **There is a difference between the one to whom a service is done and the one because of whom a service is done or performed.**

When the act of serving is looked at more closely, we can observe that it can also come to be divided between the one who asks or instructs someone to perform a service and the one or those to whom the service that will be done is intended.

If we, by way of example, consider a delivery individual of goods ordered by a customer, we may observe that, at a certain level, this individual is serving the customer who is the recipient of the service. However, on another or a broader level, the courier is serving the company by which one was hired to perform the deliveries. And it is also to the company by which an individual was hired that one must, at a higher level, account for one's service. The company that hired the courier to deliver the orders of its customers has a higher authority, in terms of service, regarding the courier than the customer, even if the courier's job is to deliver goods to the contractor's customers.

Similarly, if the delivery person, in our example, delivered the goods according to the criteria agreed with the company by which one was contracted, and the customer has some complaint concerning what was received, it is not the delivery person who is responsible for what happened, but the company from which the customer acquired the delivered product.

So, although the courier provides service simultaneously to the company by which one was hired and to the customer of this company, it is because of the contracting company that the courier performs the service, and it is to it that the courier is accountable more than to the final customer. For the delivery person, the contracting company is a higher instance regarding one's act of serving.

Still following the line of reasoning about the delivery individual who serves simultaneously on two fronts, having, however, one of them as a higher or generating instance of one's act of serving, we can observe that this is also the case concerning serving God simultaneously to serving people in the world.

Therefore, **the question about the theme of “whom do you want to serve” is related, firstly, to the aspect about who called a person, in the highest instance regarding one's life, to serve others or based on the call of whom, ultimately, that a person presents oneself willing to serve others.**

Christians indeed have a call from God to serve others in specific situations. This call, however, is for the service to others to be done concomitantly with serving God and the firm conscience or certainty of faith that to the Lord belongs, with exclusivity, the instance of assigning to a Christian to whom and in what one should serve.

Although God instructs Christians to serve their fellow believers, their masters according to the flesh, and people in general when there is an opportunity to do good, God does not tell Christians to have more than one source that calls and inspires them to serve.

Although God instructs Christians to serve other people, the matter of having only God as the exclusive Lord also concerning serving, not being able to choose to serve two masters, is perfectly applicable regarding the aspect of the Lord being the only source authorized to inspire or cause the motivation by which a person serves others.

In this way, when a Christian serves the lords according to the flesh, it is not because of the inspiration these lords propose that one should serve them, but, instead, because the Lord has placed this Christian in a place to serve the Lord and the people there.

Christians are not called to serve others because of the desires that others have, because they inspire or fail to inspire, or because they are threatened or not threatened. Every Christian is called to serve with the understanding and discernment that God has called him or her to be in a certain place to serve what cooperates with good. A Christian is not called to serve not even motivated primarily by salary, as we saw in the previous chapter, but by the awareness of serving the Lord in everything, although one may also take into account salary as a result of one's work.

In other words, **God is the only source who can work the proper will to serve for good, just as it is He who can bestow all that is necessary to also carry out the desire He has given.**

Philippians 2: 13 ...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

2 Corinthians 9: 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

From whom a Christian should heed the call to serve others or whom a Christian should regard as the highest authorized and inspiring instance to call him or her to serve is a condition or position that belongs exclusively to God.

And since the will to serve for good and the doing of this good come from God, it is also with the heart turned to doing everything as for the Lord that a Christian should perform all the acts and services in one's life, and not as for men or people.

So, when God teaches that a Christian should serve masters according to the flesh, He is directing His teaching to those who are in the position of servants and is not telling masters, according to the flesh, that they have a right to impose themselves over those who serve them and nor that they should be the source of inspiration for servants to work and serve them well.

As in the example of the delivery individual, in which one serves an end customer, but does so because one serves even more or primarily the company by which one was hired, **when a Christian serves others in line with God's will, one, despite serving others, is doing so because essentially it is God that one chose to serve.**

If we go back to see in the Scriptures some of the texts mentioned above about serving other people, we can also clearly observe, in the verses that follow some of them, the condition of serving masters according to the flesh simultaneously with serving God, having, however, the Lord exclusively in the highest instance and as the primary reason for the practice of serving others, as follows:

Colossians 3: 22 ***Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.***
 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.***
 25 ***But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.***

Ephesians 6: 5 ***Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;***
 6 ***not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,***
 7 ***with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,***
 8 ***knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.***
 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.***

1 Corinthians 12: 5 ***There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.***

Looking at the act of serving under the aspect of multiple instances, where the lower should work in consonance with the more elevated ones, we can also learn that the action of serving, to be appropriate before God, needs to have its origin and instruction coming from God, as well as also be done as for the Lord.

In the sense of this last paragraph, we can see that **it is indeed impossible for a person to serve two masters, having to despise one when one pleases the**

other, for all actions of serving, ultimately, also come from a broader source of lordship and are designated according to the purposes of this.

If a person performs the act of serving because one is following an inappropriate source that led one to do it, also the serving one performs, and the works that result from it, will not be for one's benefit as to the food that endures for eternal life. An aspect that is amply exposed in the Scriptures, and concerning which, we present below once again a text as an example:

*Romans 6: 16 **Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?***

*17 **But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.***

*18 **And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.***

*19 **I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.***

In the theme of The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, we addressed the aspect that Christ came to serve the people in the world when He came to it in the flesh. However, He always did it having the service to God and the will of the Heavenly Father as the aspect that guided His actions and moved Him to serve. In the same theme, we mentioned that Christ is the "King who serves" people and that He is a faithful servant of God, but also that Christ is not the "servant King" to fulfill corrupt wills and lusts according to the will of human beings.

Christ came to serve people to the point of giving Himself on the cross of Calvary for the remission of human beings from the bondage of sin and the condemnation caused by the practice of sin. However, Christ never came to fulfill the will of human beings. Christ humbly served people in the world, to the point of giving His life in sacrifice on the cross, but He always did so in line and under the primacy of serving human beings according to what the Heavenly Father asked Him to do.

Similarly to the examples in the texts above, when parents are called to serve the children that God has entrusted them to care for, these parents are not called to become servants of their children to fulfill their wishes, but to serve them as God instructs them to do. Parents should know that they are servants of Christ and are called to serve their children according to Christ's instruction, not according to the fleshly desires of the children.

He who tells parents what is proper to teach their children and how they should serve them is the very Lord whom parents should serve from their hearts. The parents themselves or the children themselves, whom parents are called to serve, are not the source of the call for parents to serve their children. Who calls parents and all people to serve in what is good, according to the Lord's will, is always God, the Heavenly Father, the only sovereign Father of all His children.

*Proverbs 22: 6 **Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.***

*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."***

The Lord Himself has called human beings to work, bear fruit, and multiply seeds and works on Earth, but He has also called them to do so in the fear and reverence of His sovereignty and according to what He instructs them to do.

In this way, **the mere service of producing works or merely sustaining them does not classify them as good before God. The aspect related to whom a person serves in the highest instance of one's life to carry out one's activities also determines the recognition of one's works as good or as inappropriate.**

Although God, through the Scriptures, teaches about the aspect of people seeking to be productive or fruitful, it is not the production itself that qualifies them before the Lord. An adequate position also occurs by what people are moved to do, what they do, and because of whom and for whom, in the highest instance, they seek to do what they do.

Thus, similarly to the question of the objective for which a person works to carry out works, seen in the previous chapter, the choice of whom the person has as the causing source of serving emphasizes that a mere external list of works is insufficient to determine their categorization.

The Scriptures present various classifications of works, such as works of light or unfruitful works of darkness, works that express the practice of good and works that represent the practice of evil, works that produce life and works that produce death, living works or those that are called dead works, works of righteousness or works of unrighteousness or iniquity, and so on. However, the Scriptures do not present an exact list of works that a Christian should perform, as was the case under the Law of Moses, **for the essence of performing good works is also validated by what a person aims to achieve and to whom one is devoted first in the heart regarding what one does.**

Not even people who go around the world seeking to prophesy, perform miracles, and cast out demons, including using the name of the Lord Jesus when performing these practices, have a guarantee of being accepted before the Lord just because of the services or the number of services they have done, as shown in the text presented once again below:

*Matthew 7: 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!'*"

In the last text above of the book of Matthew, we can observe that although the people mentioned in it present a list of works carried out as done in the name of the Lord, Christ considers them as workers and cooperators of iniquity.

Firstly, regarding the text of Matthew 7, it is essential to understand that works do not serve to justify a person to be saved, as we have already seen in the chapter on The Work of Faith in God and in Christ. A person can only attain salvation if one receives it as a gift from God towards one's life through heavenly grace, so that no one can boast before God.

Except for the work of faith in Christ that believes in the saving grace of God, any attempt to turn a work into a soul-saving work is an attempt to establish iniquity or unrighteousness in opposition to the unique work of justification offered to us through the blood of Christ or the work of the Lord on the cross of Calvary.

Secondly, when people, in presenting their deeds to God, act in ways similar to those mentioned by Christ in Matthew 7, they present them as bargaining works, labors, or services. By claiming God's attention to them because of their very works, those people were demonstrating that they did not truly do the works as a service caused by God, for God, or in conjunction with Him. On the contrary, they did it by themselves and for themselves to have something to require or demand from God, which characterizes another iniquity.

Who, then, is the human being to claim rights before God because one has performed a few works, as if these could compensate for all the deeds contrary to God that one practices every new day?

Could anyone reach the point of making God a debtor to a person if it is the Lord who gives everyone the breath of life, the power to wake up each new day, the strength and vigor to be able to work and produce, as well as all the other things by which an individual can do works?

1 Corinthians 4: 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?

Already in ancient times, the Lord warned human beings not to say that their strength and their arm made them achieve any benefit in their lives, as also exemplified below:

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

*Job 36: 22 Behold, God is exalted by His power; Who teaches like Him?
 23 Who has assigned Him His way, Or who has said, 'You have done
 wrong'?*
*24 Remember to magnify His work, Of which men have sung.
 25 Everyone has seen it; Man looks on it from afar.
 26 Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; Nor can the
 number of His years be discovered.*

The fact that God is kind, generous, merciful, and abundant in grace, to the point that He Himself serves and helps human beings far beyond what we can even think or imagine, does not make God a servant of people and does not make human beings lords of God.

Human beings will never be able to demand from God, with propriety, that He has to reward them because of some works they have done. Even if they do many works, it is not up to people to determine how God should or should not act towards them, or still, who God should accept or not accept into His kingdom.

God's sovereignty exceeds any human pretense or wisdom, as can be remembered in the examples of the texts below:

*Isaiah 40: 10 Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him.
 11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.
 12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance?
 13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him?
 14 With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding?
 15 Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing.*

*Romans 11: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!
 34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?"
 35 "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?"*

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

Works called good, but which try to raise human beings to the height of God and demean God to be subjugated to the lordship of human beings, are works that try to present the truth as the lie and the lie as the truth, thus turning all works, labors, or services done, according to this purpose, in evil works and making those who want to justify themselves by them inexcusable before the Lord if they do not repent of their arrogance and pride.

Romans 1: 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,
21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,
23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.
24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,
25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.
Amen.

If the aspect referring to “whom a person is seeking to serve” is opposed to the condition that one remains faithful in serving God and in what God directs him or her to serve, one’s works, labors, or services cannot receive the classification of being good, for these, in the highest instance, do not serve whom or the purpose that is due or appropriate to serve.

Doing good works, understanding God’s sovereign position, and seeking to serve the Lord in everything always go hand in hand. And the contempt or the rejection of God is also a path of actions contrary to Him and to what is according to the righteousness of the Lord.

Proverbs 28: 5 Evil men do not understand justice, But those who seek the LORD understand all.

Isaiah 29: 15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?"

16 Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made

it, "He did not make me"? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

Amos 5: 14 Seek good and not evil, That you may live; So the LORD God of hosts will be with you, As you have spoken.

Therefore, if, for example, a person offers assistance or help to a needy individual in exchange for the requirement that the assisted individual has to practice sins or idolatry, this proposition of aid is a perverse work, manipulation, machinations of darkness, and a service contrary to people's relationship with God, characterizing it as a work that indeed is not appropriate before the Lord to be practiced.

And in the Scriptures, there are many examples of mentions of fraudulent works or services, and of which we quote a few more below:

Isaiah 32: 7 Also the schemes of the schemer are evil; He devises wicked plans To destroy the poor with lying words, Even when the needy speaks justice.

Proverbs 14: 22 Do they not go astray who devise evil? But mercy and truth belong to those who devise good.

Isaiah 5: 20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

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

In this way, would there be any chance for a person to have one's heart turned to serve the corrupt designs of the flesh, the world, or darkness and, even so, through these actions, be serving for the accomplishment of good works and in line with the Lord or in the Lord?

In the following texts, we see that there are certain aspects that are simply not mutually cooperative and cannot be associated with doing good.

James 4: 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

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

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Romans 16: 17 **Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.**

18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

In Christ, a Christian can do works or carry out all one's works as if serving the Lord or together with Him because, *in Christ*, one is accepted by grace, receives the condition of a child of God, and, as such, lives to adopt conducts and works that the Heavenly Father shows or points out as a model to be done.

1 John 3: 1 **Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.**

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.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

A Christian should be willing to do the good works, those that the Heavenly Father shows to be done, because of the new nature of a child of God that one has received through Christ Jesus and because one understands that the will of God is what it is right or just to be practiced.

A Christian should be willing to serve the Lord, through the works that the Heavenly Father instructs to be done, because it suits one's saved and holy condition *in Christ*

Jesus or because it is consistent with what one has become *in Christ*, and not because one needs to serve the Lord to become a Christian or to become a child of God.

As we have already commented above, when a person works to perform works according to the dissociated understanding of what the Lord establishes about serving according to heavenly righteousness, the person serves according to the creation or according to the natural man, and not according to the instruction of the Spirit of the Lord.

Thus, **what a person leans towards in one's heart to serve is also what ends up qualifying or disqualifying one's works.**

Romans 8: 5 ***For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.***

6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

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

8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

...

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

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

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

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

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

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

Repeating the question, why, then, did the Lord Jesus Christ not accept, does not accept, or will not accept the works of people like those narrated in Matthew 7, and who approached Him offering works, labors, and services to be accepted before Him?

The Lord does not accept the works of many people who claim to do them in His name because they do the works dissociated from Him or based on their own natural and fleshly understandings. The Lord does not accept that which is contrary to true eternal righteousness or the instruction given from the heavenly kingdom.

Many people do works as if serving themselves, opposing the instruction recorded long ago in the book of Proverbs, namely:

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

When the human being departs from voluntarily serving God and starts to serve oneself or the creation, one begins to serve under the condition of what is called "natural man," also starting to discern the will of God no longer, even if claiming to be acting "in the name of the Lord."

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

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

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

On the other hand, *in Christ*, a Christian has available the possibility of walking in the good works prepared beforehand by God, for *in Christ*, one also has the condition of choosing correctly, first in one's heart, whom and what one wants to serve, as well as also has in the Lord the instruction on how to do it, as also exemplified in another series of texts below:

Romans 6: 19 **I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves (or servants) of righteousness for holiness.**

Galatians 4: 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?**

Malachi 3: 18 **Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.**

John 12: 26 **"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."**

So, aiming to conclude this chapter, we could say, then, in a way, that **serving is staggered in multiple levels of serving, where the highest level that a person chooses to serve is fundamental to determine the actions and the categorizations of the other levels of serving.**

Yet another way of expressing what we are trying to expose in this chapter is associated with whom a Christian has as “The Head” of one's life. An aspect that only pertains to Christ Jesus concerning each one of those who individually believe in Him and constitute His Body or His Church. (Topic widely discussed in the material on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

A Christian is called to live a life that serves the Lord Jesus Christ because Christ has previously served him or her by granting salvation and reconciliation with God, allowing the Christian to have a worthy purpose in one's heart and return to serve, according to the instruction of the heavenly kingdom, whom it is due and proper to serve in all things.

In this way, the Lord's call for a Christian to hear from Christ the instructions on how to behave in all aspects and moments of one's life certainly also includes the instructions on how to deal with the whole theme of serving.

***In Christ*, a Christian is called to have an appropriate posture before God by understanding that serving the Lord and His will in the most diverse aspects of one's life is the right path to follow. *In Christ*, therefore, God grants the possibility for a person to be, together with Him and other Christians, a cooperator of good for one's own life and the lives of one's fellow men.**

Hebrews 13: 16 ***But do not forget to do good and to share (or to mutually cooperate), for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.***

C11. Whom Do You Want to Worship?

In addition to what was exposed in the previous chapter, we would like to emphasize that **when the matter of categorizing works is put on the agenda, it is very important or necessary to understand the meaning of what “to serve” means, but also what comes to be “worship.”**

Also because of the multiple instances associated with the acts of serving, an aspect commented on in the previous chapter, it is so crucial to understand that the word *worship* and the act of *servicing* even present some characteristics of synonyms between them.

The verb *to serve* in English, for instance, may derive from several different words originally used in the Scriptures.

In the text of Matthew 6, which refers to the matter that no one can serve two masters, the word used to *serve* denotes service to others, both for someone who is a slave to someone or as one who voluntarily chooses to serve others.

Let us look at yet another example:

John 12: 26 "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

In this last text, written by John, we already find a difference in the words related to *servitude* or *servicing*.

The expressions *serves me*, *servant*, and *to serve*, from this last text, are more associated with the term that is translated into English as *deacon*, *minister*, or *ministry*.

In turn, the idea related to the term *deacon* refers to a person who renders service to others. He is an attendant, a domestic, a person who waits at the table, serves someone to meet a need, serves with care for the poor and sick, serves by giving food, or serves by contributing support, comfort, and so on.

Thus, when a person claims the desire to be a “minister” of Christ, one is stating that one wants to be a servant of Christ and wants to serve Him according to what Christ requires. To aspire to be a “minister of Christ” is not to aspire to a title or an office to command other Christians or other people, but rather to be a willing and faithful servant to do whatever the Lord asks an individual to do.

***1 Corinthians 4: 1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards (ministers, servants, or deacons) of the mysteries of God.
2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.***

If we continue a little further in investigating the terms used in the Scriptures for the expressions *to serve* or *service*, we can see that there is also a more specific use for it that varies in some translations and, perhaps because of this, makes people stop seeing that the verb *to serve* is also expressed by the verb *to worship* or *to adore*.

Let us see below, as an example, a text that is expressed differently in two different versions regarding *servicing* and *worshipping*:

Luke 2: 36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;
*37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, **but worshipped God with fastings and prayers night and day.** (Translated from Portuguese RA version)*

or

Luke 2: 36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;
*37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, **but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.** (NKJV)*

Moreover, we can see the use of the verbs *to worship* and *to serve* used as synonyms in one same text:

*Luke 4: 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.**"*

Mentioning the matter that the texts shown above are different in two different versions or use different words as synonyms is not intended to raise a controversy regarding which translation is correct and which is not, as both are correct or adequate.

Seeing the above translations of the same text that speaks of the prophetess Anna, we can see that one of the translations uses the word *worshipped* and another *servicing* to describe the works, labors, or services that she was doing for God. And this is because the two terms or aspects are equivalent.

Saying that a person “worships God” or saying that a person “serves God” express similar acts.

To worship the Lord is to serve God. And to serve God is to worship the Lord.

In turn, the issue of not understanding that *worshipping* and *servicing* refer to terms that are similar in many aspects is something that has led many people to find it so challenging to comprehend serving God in the first place and then serving others in the world.

In the Scriptures, the word *worship* does not have the connotation of a work of mere contemplative prostration before the Lord, as many try to present it today. Instead, the word *worship* has a connotation of prostration before God, but it is also accompanied by the practical willingness to do services in line with the Lord in all areas of the life of the

one who wants to worship Him or who is in the condition of serving the Lord in everything one does.

According to the Scriptures, all acts a person does in life are related to serving or worshipping God or are related to acts of opposing or resisting God.

Matthew 12: 30 **"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."**

1 Corinthians 10: 31 **Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

Every Christian is called to an ongoing ministry of worshipping the Lord. And this, through everything one does in one's daily life, doing it for the Lord, in the Lord, and according to the will of the Lord for one's life.

On the other hand, the fact that we have mentioned that the expressions *to serve* and *to worship* have characteristics of synonyms in several aspects, but not in all, is because this equivalence does not always apply, which leads us to see again the importance of knowing that there are multiple instances to whom a person performs the act of serving.

As seen in the previous chapter, **in the same act of serving, a person may render service to someone, but because of whom one serves in the highest instance of one's life, one also renders service to whom, in one's heart, one dedicates one's service, where the latter aspect refers to serving as worship or also called an act of worship.**

Therefore, **when a person helps someone else, does a job for the people by which one was hired, takes care of the house or the children, and so on, one is not called to serve the people one serves as an act of worship of them, but only as a service. In this sense, the service is not meant to be equivalent to worshipping or should not be done with this connotation.**

Although worship is also expressed by doing works, labors, or services, it is a word to express service as done to the highest instance that a person considers over one's life. A reason why it should also be practiced only regarding God, who is the only one who is above all and is the only one worthy of worship or service with this connotation.

In this way, when a person performs an action and does it simultaneously as for the Lord and in line with His will, one can be serving others, not in worship, and also serving God as an act of worship.

Nevertheless, if a person reverses in one's heart the aspect of "for whom one does the work or service" and stops doing it as for the Lord, one stops serving the Lord and starts not only to serve what took the place of the Lord, but also to adore or worship it, since to serve in this particular is also to worship.

If a person serves one's family because of devotion to one's own family, and not because God has placed him or her to cooperate with it according to divine instruction and because of the love that God has bestowed on a person to love one's family, the

service to the family is already beginning to lean to dangerous aspects of worship and not just a service done to the family under exclusive worship of God.

If an individual serves others on the job because of fear of losing it or just because one wants to have material resources, and not because there one can be helpful according to what God instructs to be done, what was only to be a service to others, and at the same time a service of worship to God, starts to become a service of worship to people and material things instead of an act of worshiping the Lord. With this kind of attitude, an individual may even reach the point of having one's "belly" considered as one's god, as the Scriptures mention in a text that we have already seen in other chapters.

When a person does some service to others, one's home, or one's own life as for the Lord, with an attitude of worshiping God in everything, one is rich towards the Lord. However, when one does it without considering doing it as for the Lord, one's work is not good, first of all, for oneself, because in what concerns the eternal aspect and before God, this work will not be profitable to this individual. And by this, one may even become equated by the Lord with those whom He exemplifies as being fools, as follows:

- Luke 12: 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.*
- 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'*
- 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.*
- 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."*
- 20 "**But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'***
- 21 **So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."***
- 22 Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.*
- 23 Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.*
- 24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?*
- 25 And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*
- 26 If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?*
- 27 "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*
- 28 If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?*
- 29 And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.*
- 30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.*
- 31 **But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you."***
-

Serving others or oneself, dissociated from serving or worshiping under the condition that God is in the first place, is choosing to serve contrary to that for which a person was created by the Lord, because, as we have seen in Ephesians 2, *we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

It is also in choosing to serve the Lord first and to worship God exclusively that a person aligns oneself with the Lord's purpose for one's life, placing oneself in the path of expressing what is just and good for the one who walks in it.

Every Christian is called to an ongoing or continual ministry of worship or service to the Lord. And this, through everything one does daily, doing it for the Lord, in the Lord, and according to the Lord's will for one's life, because the Lord wants one well and wants one also to be a channel of good for the people the Lord calls one to serve.

It was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who announced, directly, the news that people, from His coming in the flesh into the world for the remission of them from the bondage of sin and perdition, could start to live with an attitude of reverence and with a heart continually prostrated to God. And this still, in all places and moments of their lives.

According to John 4, when the Lord told the Samaritan woman that the hour would come, and that it had already arrived, when people would worship God in Spirit and Truth, the Lord Jesus was also saying that people could start serving God through a new way of living and behaving in the most diverse aspects of their lives, and not only in the old concepts of what was considered as a practice of worship until that period.

At the time of the prophetess Anna, quoted above, a group of people went to the temple in Jerusalem to worship the Lord there. However, with the coming of Christ to the world to restore people's direct reconciliation with God, this period when people were called to go to temples to serve the Lord was coming to an end, for the Lord Jesus Christ was introducing a new way of worshiping God, regardless of the people they originated from, the place or territory they were in, or the language that people spoke.

John 4: 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

From the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh into the world, His work on the cross of Calvary, and His resurrection from the dead, the restrictions of places, peoples, and languages for human beings to draw close to God did not stand before God. From Christ, it was announced that the decision to serve or worship God became a position in the heart of each individual in the most diverse places where someone finds oneself in one's daily life.

In Christ, God invites people to serve Him with understanding and according to the righteousness of the Lord at all times and through everything they do, allowing people to make, in everything, the option of whom they really want to serve in the most elevated instance over their lives or, in other words, to whom they want to render their worship.

When a person has the understanding that the practice of works, in the aspect of the highest instance, is a way of worshiping in everything that an individual does, one too may soon realize that a Christian is called to serve the Lord at all times of one's life, for a heart willing to serve is also a precious instrument in the hand of the Lord for the manifestation of good to the person who worships Him, as well as to the world in which one lives.

Many people, still with the First or Old Covenant thinking rooted in their hearts, have confused worship with praise and singing to be performed in temples made by human hands. However, although a person can sing praises to the Lord, the word *worship* is associated with serving, and, therefore, it applies to everything a person does in every place of one's life. Adoration or worship is not restricted to singing songs and much less applies to acts that people do in temples considered holy by them.

Barriers, borders, and the very concepts associated with the First Covenant, and passed on by traditions and cultures about what worship is, were revealed as devoid of significant purposes before God with the announcement that each person, *in Christ*, is the sanctuary of the Lord to serve Him in everything and every place.

Acts 17: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

1 Corinthians 6: 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 10: 31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Therefore, **making the right decision of whom one wants to serve with understanding is a continually vital or crucial positioning, for as it is also a decision of worship, sowing, and reaping, it can involve not only present but also eternal implications.**

2 Corinthians 5: 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Thus, considering that worship and service are equated or complement each other before the Lord when talking about actions to be done, that is, when talking about doing works, labors, and services as to the Lord, an essential definition to be clearly established by a Christian in one's heart concerning everything one does or intends to do should be the definition of whom one truly wants to serve or worship in the highest and most central instance of one's life.

Finally, when a Christian inclines one's heart to serve the Lord exclusively in terms of worshipping the Lord in everything or doing everything as for the Lord, one can also learn, from the Lord Himself, the instruction about which paths one should walk to serve Him and worship Him appropriately.

Psalms 25: 12

***Who is the man that fears the LORD?
Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.***

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

C12. The Means for Doing Works, Labors, and Serving God

At the beginning of the last few chapters, we commented that a work is also categorized (1) by the purpose for which a person acts to do it, (2) whom a person first serves or worships in one's heart through the works one performs, and, still, (3) by what means a person performs the works.

In previous chapters, we also started to address several considerations about the first and second aspects mentioned in the paragraph above, choosing to address the third in this chapter.

Therefore, **along with the understanding that a work is also categorized by the purpose for which it is done and because of whom it is performed, we also find the aspect of the very ways in which a work is carried out.**

With God's permission, there can be enormous potential in the life of a single human being. So much is said about the resources that exist in nature in general and the resources of equipment that people create, but, undoubtedly, the most comprehensive and vast potential of God's creation on Earth is deposited in the human being oneself, who is even allowed to make many rational uses of the potential that exists in the creation in general.

Furthermore, even though many activities that were done manually in the past have been automated, the devices, ultimately, continue to be controlled or operated by humans. No matter how sophisticated a technology is, behind it, there is always the cooperation of people for its development, operation, and maintenance. People are endowed with many physical, mental, and emotional abilities, among which many are still indescribable or unsearchable to human beings.

In this way, due to the potential existing in each individual, people's lives may be a broad productive and cooperative means for carrying out many works. And one of the aspects that has often been in significant consideration in human history, for the most diverse generations, is precisely this ability granted to people to do or perform works, labors, or services.

On the other hand, this same productive potential that God grants to people often has also been placed as the target of many inappropriate ambitions, meaning that what is respectful, in terms of ways of accomplishing the desired deeds, is not always followed and applied.

Considering that in a person's life lies a very expressive productive potential, this potential may also come to be seen by people as a target of a considerable dispute to achieve the purposes desired by them, as well as to act by inappropriate means to achieve their goals.

Nevertheless, **and despite some people trying to claim that inappropriate means can be justified by supposedly appropriate ends or that appropriate purposes can justify improper means, before God, the central aspects of the beginning, the means, and the ends must align with His heavenly will, and with His righteousness, so that a work can be recognized as good or appropriate in favor of the one who practiced or practices it.**

Considering that God has never been, is, or will be complicit in any work of unrighteousness, He also does not act with complicity to endorse

inappropriate means in carrying out works, labors, or services. (A subject discussed extensively in the theme on The Gospel of the Righteousness of God).

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

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

God does not recognize all the works and services supposedly offered to Him as adequate. God only recognizes as appropriate those works that are consistent with His righteousness.

A work that is not done in truth, in righteousness, and according to God's principles does not receive the validation as such from the Lord.

If God endorsed and received works that were not done according to His righteousness as works of eternal worth, God would become a receiver and partner of evil works. That is, the fact that someone wants to do something for God does not sanctify a work that was not born of God and is not according to His righteousness.

And since God acts through His righteousness in everything He does and has no complicity with the works of darkness, this is also the model that Christians are called to adopt in their lives in everything they do.

Since God always acts in righteousness and is not an accomplice of the works of darkness, the Christian is also called to act by the same means in order not to be an accomplice of the works of darkness. Every Christian is called to imitate God in everything one does because one is a child of God and a child of Light, according to the text we saw in the previous chapter and which we repeat once again below:

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.*
 11 *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

Additionally, **when we come to see that a Christian is called to walk according to the light and the model one has in Christ, and not in collaboration with the unfruitful works of darkness, we understand that it is of great value to remember again that walking in righteousness is not limited to or defined by what people, for themselves, come to understand as right or righteousness, but, rather, by what the Lord teaches about it.**

As we mentioned at the beginning of this material, who defines what is or is not a good work before the Lord is the Lord Himself, and not human beings dissociated from fellowship with Christ. Before the Lord, a work classified as good is not what people want to offer to God and that has been done without the Lord's instruction, nor is it what they did for their own carnal and selfish interests, even if under the allegation that they have done it as for the Lord.

For example, an individual may lead an exemplary life in terms of civil laws and before a given society, but still not be producing good works according to God's criteria. A person may never have been formally charged by civil magistrates and yet have spent one's life producing unfruitful works according to darkness.

Under human nature contaminated by the choice of subjection to sin and according to the thought of the Law of Moses, or similar to it, the focus of those who wanted to serve God was actually trying to do works of the law to supposedly obtain God's approval. However, with the coming of Christ in the flesh into the world and the offering of the New Covenant by the Lord to all people, this old way of acting regarding works, labors, and services was exposed as inadequate, imperfect, and useless.

If a person does not do "one's homework," together with the Lord, to understand the difference between trying to do works for justification before God and the works that are a consequence of this justification, one will repeatedly tend to incur works to be accepted by God and not on works that result from faith because one was previously accepted before God by the righteousness of Christ and through faith in the Lord.

Even a Christian who yearns to serve the Lord and has a purpose to do so with an eternal perspective may become intensely involved with fruitless works for not acting according to the righteousness of the Lord. (A subject widely discussed in the theme of The Gospel of the Righteousness of God).

Nevertheless, if we go a little further in the Scriptures regarding the categorization of works in terms of the means by which they are done, we can observe that this matter, in addition to the aspect of the Lord's righteousness, also takes into account the factor of "through whom or by what force" the works were or are performed.

If doing the works of God were something that human beings had to do in righteousness according to their own strength, this way of trying to do the works of God would again fall back on trying to live according to the Law of Moses, in which people tried by their own capacity to be faithful to all that the law required of them.

Therefore, since one of the reasons why Christ came into the world in the flesh to fulfill the Law of Moses and then to remove it was also to redeem those who were under this law or subject to the idea that by their own efforts they could achieve justification before God, a Christian is not called to perform good works according to the Law of Moses or by the strength of one's flesh or merely natural efforts.

When the Lord Jesus met the Samaritan woman who was thirsting for water that would quench her longing to worship, serve, or adequately relate to God, He told her that what mattered from the revelation that He was the Christ, and what the Heavenly Father was also looking for, was not people who sought to be faithful in the old models of worship that this woman knew. On the contrary, Christ announced that the Heavenly Father was looking for those who would worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. **Christ announced that God was looking for people who would serve Him in righteousness according to the truth, but also who would do so in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord and no longer in the strength of human effort.**

Remembering that to worship is also to serve, let us see a part mentioned in the last paragraph also once again in the text below:

John 4: 23 **But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**
24 **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**

Under the Law of Moses mentality, people tend to think that the essence of the practice of works is to fulfill, by human effort, everything that is placed in the Scriptures as a command to be followed to achieve righteousness or justification through works. However, this righteousness supposedly acquired by the practice of work could never actually be achieved by the followers of this course of action. Therefore, after the death and resurrection of Christ, the Lord established that the way of trying to live for God by human effort and the Law of Moses itself were both considered obsolete.

Thus, under the mentality of the Law of Christ, the Law of Freedom by the presence of the Lord in the hearts of the children of God, the essence of the way of practicing good works, according to eternal righteousness, is to do them by the living direction of the Lord through His Spirit and by the Lord's strength or power given by Him also through the Holy Spirit.

Below, we recall then some more texts that affirm that the life that God offers to people, through eternal salvation, is to be lived *in Christ* and according to the Spirit of the Lord, and not by the flesh or according to merely external commandments:

John 16: 13 **However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**

2 Corinthians 3: 13 ... unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.

15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3: 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God.

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Galatians 3: 1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

4 Have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain?

5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

In Christ Jesus, God does not only call people to live and walk in the world to do works for Him, but, rather, to do works "with Him," "through Him," or even "He doing them through those who believe in Him."

A person being able to act in conjunction with God, or through the Lord Jesus Christ, and allowing the Lord to work through him or her, is a central aspect of the tremendous change that Christ came to introduce also in how a person worships or serves God in all areas of one's life.

Being able to act in conjunction with God or having the possibility of acting in conjunction with Christ is, regarding the means for the practice of works, a fundamental aspect that the Lord made available from the removal of the first

priesthood or the First Covenant and by the establishment of the priesthood according to the Order of Melchizedek or the New Covenant. From the blood of Christ shed on the cross of Calvary and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, God offers all people a course of action entirely different from what was proposed under the Law of Moses or others that follow similar lines. (A theme widely discussed on the subject about The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

To stress the point mentioned above, we recall below another series of texts that affirm that “*in Christ*,” we are called to act together “*with Him*” or “*through Him*,” as follows:

1 John 4: 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

*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 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.
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.**

Acts 13: 36 **For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;**
 37 **but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.**
 38 **Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;**
 39 **and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

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.**

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.**

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

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

2 Corinthians 3: 4 **And we have such trust through Christ toward God.**
 5 **Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, ...**

2 Corinthians 1: 20 **For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.**

1 Corinthians 15: 57 **But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

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

Trying to do works by human effort and not through Christ, even if one wants to do them for God, is also trying to do works that oppose God's righteousness, for one of the essences encompassed in God's righteousness is the restoration of the possibility of our joint action with the Lord, or by the power of His Spirit, as well as the possibility of offering ourselves voluntarily for God to act through us according to this same righteousness.

Seeking to do works by human effort and not through Christ, even if one desires to do works for God, is a path prone to the practice of works of unrighteousness. It is the way that despises the fact that human beings cannot do what is righteous if God does not enable them to do it, and also because it is the way of death and not of life because it seeks to perform works dissociated from the Spirit of the Lord who gives life.

Let us see below some more texts that talk about life and its works directly associated with Christ or the Spirit of the Lord, as well as life and its works dissociated from the direction and fellowship with Christ and the Spirit of the Lord:

*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."***

*Romans 8: 6 **For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.***

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

*8 **So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.***

*9 **But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.***

*10 **And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***

*11 **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.***

*12 **Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.***

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

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

Considering that Christ is the Truth and that, through Christ, a person receives the Spirit of the Lord, it is only in Christ, with Christ, or through Christ that a person becomes able to serve or worship God "in Spirit and in Truth."

Life in Christ is indeed new because in it, we have the newness of life and the power by the Spirit of the Lord, and no longer the obligation and burden of having to seek to live a righteous life by mere human effort or the flesh, which never can reach the righteousness of the kingdom of God, as also exposed in some more texts that follow below:

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 7: 18 ***For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.***

Philippians 2: 13 ***For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***

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.

24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

A work can even be called a “good deed” in the world, but if, for example, it is moved by envy or with the intention of pride and exaltation of some above others to elevate themselves regarding their fellow men, as if life were a competition between human beings and God rewarded those who excel in this competition, this work would not be good in the eyes of the Lord, for God sees the heart.

It is not the outward and the apparent aspects before men that determine whether a work is proper or inappropriate before the Lord. Not even a charitable deed that a person performs intending to project oneself before others has, before God, any

beneficial value for a person. And this is because this work was not moved by the Lord to be done, but, rather, by an ambition of the flesh.

Thus, by whom a person allows oneself to be moved to do a work also points, before the Lord, to the type of work that this person does. And those works that were moved by improper means also do not receive validation from the Lord. On the contrary, these works are exposed to God's reproach and rebuke.

*Matthew 6: 1 **Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.***

*2 **Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.***

*3 **But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,***

*4 **that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.***

*Amos 5: 21 **"I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savor your sacred assemblies.***

*22 **Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings.***

*23 **Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments."***

What, then, is the means of doing works, labors, and services according to the will of God and in such a way that they are done indeed for God because they were done with Him, through Him, or by Him through us?

The works, labors, and services done in line with the will of God are the works that result from an individual "living and walking in Christ," also called "living and walking in the Spirit of the Lord."

As in everything else in the Christian life, being firmly rooted in Christ to live and walk in Him in everything also applies to the aspects of the means for walking in good works prepared beforehand by the Lord for us to walk in them.

*Colossians 2: 6 **As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,***

*7 **rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.***

After a person receives Christ as Lord and comes to know the will of God according to the truth, one is also called to keep oneself in the strength that the Lord gives through His Spirit to practice the will of God. One of the reasons why David prayed that

the Lord would continually also strengthen his spirit with the goodness of the Holy Spirit, as follows:

*Psalms 51: 10 **Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.***

*11 **Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.***

*12 **Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.***

*13 **Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.***

*14 **Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.***

*15 **O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.***

*16 **For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.***

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

God not only calls people to walk in the good works that He has prepared in advance, but it is also He who gives them the understanding, strength, and resources to walk in them by means that are equally good and appropriate.

Finally, we would like to underline that **coming to understand that the good works of God are to be done in the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, is only the beginning of what Christians are called to also put into practice in all days of the life that the Lord still will grant them in this present world.**

*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.***

We also recall here that the topic of “living and walking in Christ” is addressed even more specifically in the themes of The Gospel of the Grace of God, The Gospel of the Power of God, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, The Core Principle of Life for a Christian (which has a greater emphasis on “living” in Christ) and The Law of Understanding, as well as the entire Walking in Newness of Life series (which presents an emphasis more directed to “walking” in Christ).

C13. Choosing to Practice Good Works is primarily a Personal and Not a Collective Decision

After addressing some of the main aspects that determine the classification of works before the Lord, we believe it is also very significant to highlight that the option for the practice of good works, or walking in them, refers to a personal decision, and not collective as some try to claim it to be.

Just as the choice to receive the salvation offered by God is a personal or individual decision, so the choice to walk in the works that accompany salvation or that God has prepared beforehand is also a personal decision.

*1 Corinthians 3: 10 **According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.***

*Hebrews 6: 9 **But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.***

On the other hand, when we mentioned above that the decision to walk in good works prepared beforehand by God is personal or that each Christian should be mindful of how one builds on Christ, we are not claiming that the Lord does not cooperatively use the set of works, labors, and services performed by many Christians. In the Scriptures, we can observe that Christians are also considered as part of the holy nation, the chosen people, and His own special people to announce, through their words and their actions, the greatness of Him who called them out of darkness to His marvelous light.

The Lord does not intend that only one Christian or a very restricted handful of Christians fulfill the mission of showing the glory of God in Christ Jesus to the world. On the contrary, God's purpose is precisely the opposite. God's purpose is to manifest His glory to the world through many who believe in Him, as exemplified in the following texts:

*2 Corinthians 4: 15 **For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.***

*1 Peter 2: 9 **But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**
10 **who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.**
11 **Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,***

12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

The Lord's will includes the fact that His glory comes to be manifested to all people of all nations, peoples, tribes, and languages, but that this action also comes to be done through His own special people, that is, all those individuals who have been bought by the blood of Christ, have received the Lord in the heart, and are in all these nations, peoples, and tribes of the world.

And being the will of God that His glory comes to be known by many, this also will be fulfilled in this way, for none of God's purposes can be withheld.

Nevertheless, an inadequate understanding of the individual role and the role of the collective in the practice of works, as well as the failure to distinguish between them, may cause significant damage to individuals and, consequently, also to the collective.

A collective only exists because of the individuals that compose it. Therefore, it is from what is done through individuals that the actions of the collective are also expressed.

A flock of sheep, for instance, only exists if there are individual sheep that make it up. Otherwise, it is just a virtual and empty concept, just as a body cannot exist if there is not a minimum set of individual members properly united to make it up.

Many people, however, tend to reverse the process of composing the collective from individuals and start to want to treat the sets as if they could have life only based on the very concept of groups even without the presence of the individuals who make them a collective.

In this way, as the world is associated with a bondage of corruption, many people, for example, seek to attribute to it and its subsets all the blame for the corrupted pattern of life that they individually adopt.

Under the concept that the collective has life in itself, people, also as an example, begin to claim that government A or B is responsible for what happens in their regions, that party A or B has caused this or that, that company X or Y has been corrupting the market, that it is religious institution A or B that rules the behavior of certain people, and so on.

Now, collectivities dissociated of people have no life in themselves, for they are operated and commanded by individuals who associate with them for common purposes. It is living individuals who give life to collectivities. Therefore, if collectivities are corrupted, it is people who have corrupted them. If their collectivities cease to function or even cease to exist, it is the people who have abandoned the life of the specific collectivities they formed.

Among other terms, the Scriptures also call various collectivities as principalities and powers, highlighting, however, that they also do not work by themselves, and may even come to be operated by the rulers of the darkness of this age and who, in turn, are instigated and strengthened by spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Thus, if several people want to convey the idea that an individual can hide behind a collective, it should be noted here that this is not applicable before God and the

salvation in Christ. And for this reason, too, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that the gate of decision for the path of the newness of life that comes from the kingdom of God is narrow, for a person can only pass through it individually.

*Matthew 7: 13 **Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.***

*14 **Because narrow is the gate and difficult (or also narrow) is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.***

*John 10: 9 **"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."***

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

Given this, we see that **one of the main aspects that Christ came to reveal to the world, when He presented Himself to it as the Savior coming from the heavenly kingdom, is that God created human beings for each of them to live and walk according to personal faith in Him and that, through this faith, an individual does not need to be subject to the collective flows of the world, even if one lives in places where people try to impose this type of flow of life on others.**

- 1 Peter 4: 1 **Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,***
- 2 **that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.***
- 3 **For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.***
- 4 **In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.***
- 5 **They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.***

When we also see examples in the Bible such as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Ruth, Moses, Joshua, Esther, Daniel, and others, we can clearly see that these made a firm choice to walk in faith and the ways of the Lord even though they found themselves amid collectivities predominantly opposed to God. And for this reason, they personally experienced the Lord's favor and even became channels of great beneficial impact also for their societies.

Therefore, although an individual's personal decisions and actions may contribute to the collective good or may oppose it, the positioning of the choice of how to live and walk regarding Christ and the works of God is individual.

The Christian life is not just a proposition for people to stop being of the world. It is also the offer of a new journey in the novelty of life. And just as salvation is not collective, so also the daily decision to walk in God is not collective but characterized by continually making personal choices.

*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.***

*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."***

How significant, then, this expression "**he who follows Me**" is, for the Lord does not say that he who follows in the collective stream of a high number of people, or the majority, will be the one who will not walk in darkness. So, the place for knowing the truth is not in the flow of collective movements, but in personal faith in Christ.

*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."***

*John 8: 31 **Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.***
*32 **And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."***

Moreover, complementing the teaching that the gate or the door to eternal life is narrow, the Lord Jesus also declared that the way leading to it is similarly narrow. Therefore, if the choice for the door to receive salvation from God is a personal decision, so is also walking in Christ.

Although God uses the expression "His own people" several times, the Lord also teaches us that this collective is composed of individuals who have a name of their own and have individual characteristics of children and members of the Body of Christ.

*1 Corinthians 12: 27 **Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.***

The children of God are not called by the Lord to be independent of God and the other members of the Body of Christ. On the contrary, they are called to act

cooperatively, but this does not mean that the collective can impose its yearnings or desires on Christ's members.

In Christ, each member is linked to the body and remains connected to it individually and not collectively, the whole Body of Christ having only one sovereign Head over each of the members. (As addressed extensively on the theme of The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

The children of God make up the family of God and are called to cooperate and act together with it. However, or even so, each of God's children has unique attributes and a personal relationship to be cultivated with the Lord, on whom each child effectively should be dependent in everything.

Therefore, one of the central points associated with salvation in Christ is for a Christian to understand that one no longer needs to be guided by the collective impulse to choose and carry out works in the world, for a personal relationship with the Lord is available to this Christian to be able to walk in the works prepared beforehand by God for us to walk in them.

A Christian is not called to submit to the world guided by the sum of the wills of those who walk in the flesh and not according to Christ. On the contrary, every Christian is called to submit to Christ and be active in the world as God leads and strengthens him or her.

Romans 8: 10 ***And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

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

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

Many people use the argument that the system of the world imposes their behaviors. However, for those who know the Lord's counsel, this type of argument does not match or express what God offers people through faith in Christ Jesus.

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?

If a Christian is not overcoming the world and continues to run in its same flood of dissipation, it is because one is not living and walking in the faith of Christ as one is called to do, and consequently one is not walking in the Lord.

*1 John 4: 1 **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.***

...
4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

“Christ in you,” “greater is He who is in you than the one that is in the world,” “the Lord's divine seed remains in whoever has been born of God,” and so on, are expressions that point to the condition of the hearts of individuals, showing us that it is from the presence of Christ in an individual that one can choose to practice good works or to walk in them, and not by the external or collective aspect.

*Colossians 1:26 ... **the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.***
*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.***

Choosing to receive Christ in the heart as Lord, starting to follow Him, and walking according to the good works of God are actions directly associated with exclusively personal decisions before the Lord. And not even another Christian can stand between Christ and the one who wants to follow the Lord to know what one should do or what one should reject.

Those who insist on trying to place themselves as leaders of other people in their Christian life, also for the definition and ordering of which specific works, labors, and services they should do or not do, resist the will and direct teaching of Christ not to be leaders and guides of other lives. (A point widely presented with several texts of the Scriptures in the themes about The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, The Gospel of God's Righteousness, Another Gospel or a Different Gospel, and The Fellowship of Christians in the World.)

If a particular Christian, or even a group of Christians, turns away from following Christ and walking in the good works that God prepared beforehand, this does not need to imply that other Christians do the same, for following Christ is, firstly, personal, and so it should be learned and practiced.

A Christian is personally sent by Christ to be in the world, and one needs to be careful not to become a slave to collective institutions, including those that claim to represent Christ on Earth. And this is because one of the leading damages these institutions aim to produce is to deprive the Christian of one's personal decisions before Christ and thus put this individual at risk of destruction precisely in the collective or what many call their assemblies or congregations.

*Proverbs 5: 14 **"I was on the verge of total ruin, In the midst of the assembly and congregation."***

When people turn away from listening to Christ's instruction, given through the Holy Spirit, about what they personally should do or not do, and, instead, begin to listen to those who wrongly call themselves leaders of their spiritual lives, it is men and women, and their goals, that they serve, and not Christ.

In this last path, people may voluntarily become slaves of others and their groups, even being subject to the risk of making these leaders their idols. Since worshiping is also expressed as serving, when a person serves another individual contrary to God's instruction and according to what that other person instructs one to do, one also places oneself at risk of coming to worship or hallow those towards whom they should not do so.

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

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.***

Considering that a Christian will give personal or individual account to God for one's life in the world, and no other person and no institution can represent an individual at this most crucial hour before eternity, there is no reason for a person to follow one's fellow men and their institutions thinking that one will be able to justify oneself before God for having followed others instead of following Christ who offers to guide each one who believes in Him.

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.***

2 Corinthians 5: 10 ***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***

1 Corinthians 3: 13 ***... each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.***

Given that each individual will be accountable personally or directly to God, would it not be better for each to bow one's knees before Him and confess Him as Lord instead of wanting to be guided by the collective or other people?

Since it is before the Lord that every Christian will render an account, is it not better for a person to seek the Lord Himself now for the steps and specific acts of one's life, also receiving from now on the instructions of Christ that will be well recognized in the future rendering of accounts?

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself already offers His Holy Spirit to dwell in the heart of every Christian so that each one from now on and every new day can be guided into all truth also to have one's works approved at the future accountability time. And the Lord Jesus Christ truly grants the Holy Spirit to everyone who believes in Him and receives Him as the Lord in one's lives, as we see below:

*John 7: 38 **"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."***

*39(a) **But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive;***

*John 16: 13 **However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.***

*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!"***

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

It is because the Spirit of the Lord can always and in everything be with those who have Christ as Lord that a Christian can also choose to do all works, labors, and services according to the instruction, direction, and strength of the Lord.

In Psalm 1, we can also observe that the "blessing" described in it is personalized. And even the fact that the counsel of the ungodly, the path of sinners, and the seat of the scornful are mentioned in the plural, or make reference to their collectives, it does not make these alternatives profitable for the one who follows them. However, the point highlighted in this Psalm is the individual positioning of each person in favor of

the will of God and in rejection of the attitudes and counsels of those who oppose the Lord.

*Psalms 1: 1 **Blessed is the man (or individual) Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;***

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

4 The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Finally, we underline that a collective does not change due to changes initiated by the collective. A group incurs significant changes if the individuals in that group change significantly.

And some collectives can never be changed, only left or extinguished, as they are characterized by the set of people who practice things in common and whose change in their practices automatically extinguish their collective sets.

For example, a band of thieves and robbers cannot change to be a collective of honest and honorable people, for if this happens, they are no longer thieves and robbers. If everyone in a band stop being a thief and a robber, the so-called “band of thieves and robbers” becomes extinct or ceases to exist.

Thus, the collective called “world” cannot be saved, as it is composed of the sum of the acts that make it up. For this reason, a person's only solution regarding the world is individually to stop being part of it and to stop walking in the path of the unfruitful works of darkness. So, here again, to choose to stop being of the world and doing its works, to be a child of God and walk in the Lord's light, is a personal decision.

Through concepts about collectivities, groups, or sets in which there is no balanced emphasis on what each individual's attributes are, several people want to convey the idea that everyone is responsible at the same time, but also the mistaken presumption that responsibility is also nobody's. Many people, even on purpose, seek to hide behind the collective so as not to change the works that each one, with the personal help of God, should change in one's own life.

The “concept of collective responsibility,” but which does not clarify that in reality it does not exist dissociated from the individual responsibility of the people who make up a collectivity, is one of the great fascinations that the devil does not want to be clearly known to keep people imprisoned in their illusions.

Repeatedly, when people put more emphasis on the collective than their relationship with God, they come to love the collective and its works more than God, as well as being inclined to trade the truth to protect the collective. And, in turn, when people value the

collective more than walking personally in the will of God, they also begin to be inclined to practice the most absurd actions or works supposedly suggested to them by what they call their groups or collectivities.

Now, *in Christ*, all humankind received an alternative so that people individually can approach God, even if the majority does not. Christ brought the possibility that each one, regardless of the whole or the majority, can live and walk according to God's will.

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

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

Once Christians personally know who they have believed in, and this aspect is also well established in their lives, they may encourage each other never to leave this personal place in Christ. However, when they weaken in the understanding that each one serves the Lord in the first place, they tend to want to follow the works of a collective with its leaders, contrary to what Christ tells them to follow.

Therefore, *in Christ*, the Christian has the provision to be able to choose good and reject evil personally. And this, of course, also applies to the works, labors, and services to be performed even if the world around them points out other ways. However, to understand and experience this truth in one's life, the Christian needs to be willing personally to practice the work of eating solid food and not relying on milk alone or just keeping oneself in the discussion of the most elementary principles of Christ's teaching, as follows:

Hebrews 5: 13 ***For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.***

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

The world is not a “simple kindergarten of evil,” but is experienced in it. For this reason, the Christian is also called personally to mature in the Lord to discern, through fellowship with God, the good, the path in which one should walk, and the works one should do on this path, as well as to be able to discern what is associated with evil so that one may reject it through the wisdom and the power of the Lord.

Thus, to discern both good and evil, it is essential to know that in Christ is all life, all knowledge, and all discernment, but also that each one can, personally, always draw close to the Lord.

On the other hand, **it is crucial for an individual to be aware that without Christ, one is not fit to walk in the ways or works of God, nor even to discern and choose what is good and reject evil.**

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

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

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

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.**

Romans 8: 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

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

C14. The Simplicity Associated with Doing Good Works or Walking in the Good Works that God Beforehand Prepared

Up to this chapter, we have considered that some of the main aspects for classifying or categorizing works are:

- ⇒ 1) The distinction and the previous and continuous practice of the work of faith in Christ for justification and salvation before the other works resulting from the justification and salvation received;
- ⇒ 2) The distinction and the previous and continuous practice of the so-called “first works” before or together with the works that follow the first ones;
- ⇒ 3) The choice of the present and future purpose because of which a person does works;
- ⇒ 4) The choice of “because of whom” a person performs the works one does or whom one chooses to worship or serve in what one does;
- ⇒ 5) The choice of the means by which a person seeks to carry out the works, labors, or services that one intends to practice or with which one intends to cooperate.

And looking at the aspects above and that the practice or accomplishment of works also extends to the labors and the services that a person performs in every moment of one's life, it may even seem that the understanding of doing works according to the will of God is very complex or difficult to be achieved.

Nevertheless, **and although there are several aspects above that add up in the categorization of works, all of them, in reality, always converge to the same points, which essentially are: Maintaining faith in Christ as Lord and maintaining continuous fellowship with the Lord to be taught, guided, strengthened, and protected by Him in the practice of works, labors, and services in the most diverse areas of life.**

When the Scriptures expand the theme of good works prepared beforehand by God for us to walk in them and teach us how to do them, they show us the most diverse angles from which we can and should seek to do it. However, at the same time, they always revolve around the need to keep ourselves in fellowship with the Lord and the direction He gives us from this fellowship and through the Holy Spirit.

The life that God offers people to be lived *in Christ Jesus* is to be lived *in Christ* and *through Christ* in everything, and this aspect also demonstrates its simplicity. If a Christian just allows the Lord, each new day, to teach how to listen to His voice and receives the instruction of Christ in the most diverse areas of one's life, the Lord Himself teaches how the Christian can discern what is appropriate to choose to practice and what should be rejected.

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."

There are many detailed aspects in the Scriptures about doing works because there are also many possibilities for people to do them. However, while the Scriptures teach us about the multiplicity of works and ways to do them, they repeatedly converge to highlight that God's will is for all people to choose to live and walk in all things in Christ Jesus.

*1 Timothy 2: 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,
6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

If a person, merely in one's natural mind, looks at the many works that can be presented before him or her in the world and the various aspects for discerning them, their high quantity, in several respects, can be frightening indeed. However, if an individual believes in the Lord Jesus and that He will teach, guide, and uphold him or her, one will be able to advance daily in peace in the Lord to what He gradually leads and instructs this Christian.

Psalms 33: 20 Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.

When a person remains in Christ, one is even protected by the Lord from the opposition of the enemy exemplified in the following two texts:

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.

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

Therefore, the central question of simplicity in the whole life of a Christian in the world, also in the matter of works, labors, and services, is for one to remain in Christ Jesus and allow the Lord to go ahead of him or her, manifesting the way to be followed and preparing the one who believes in Him for the accomplishment of good works in this same path.

1 Corinthians 15: 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

C15. Purification or Cleansing of Conscience from Vain and Dead Works

After a person understands that there are principles of the Lord to classify or categorize works previously, one can perceive what the good works that God has prepared for us to walk in them are, but one can also, by a clarity granted by God, note what comes to be vain labors, works so-called dead, or unfruitful deeds for one's life.

Through fellowship with the Lord and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, an individual can be awakened to take appropriate actions before God. However, one can also become able to perceive with which works, labors, or services one should not be involved because they are devoid of good purposes before the Lord.

Understanding the main aspects that are in line with the will of God, regarding the classification of works, is an action that serves as an instrument to cooperate with sober evaluations about the works in which a person should advance, but also about those which one should reject and avoid in one's journey in the world.

Let us see below two texts that reinforce the importance of fellowship with Christ and a sober discernment of works:

1 Peter 1: 13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5: 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

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.

Recapitulating what we have commented before, we would like to stress, once more, that it is not the mere act of work, in itself, that is appropriate before the Lord, but the kind of work that is done and the conditions by which it is performed.

Not every work is sound, good, and noble when also seen by the eternal results it produces. Therefore, God intends that Christians act wisely, prudently, and soberly in all things with which they become involved.

Previously, we have also seen that there are actions that cooperate with good works and others that do not contribute to them and even are opposed to them.

And although several points of reference for classifying works have already been mentioned earlier, we will seek to add some more considerations about how unfruitful works are called in the Scriptures and how they can be reproved or avoided previously or already in their origin.

A work can be inappropriate not only when it works towards an explicit evil. A work can also be inadequate when it covertly prevents a person from attaining salvation or prevents an individual from being fruitful in good works according to God's will for one's life.

There are several actions or works in the world that, in themselves, are neither good nor bad. However, if they lead a person to be unproductive in walking in the good works that God beforehand prepared for a person to walk in, these works and services begin to act against a person's life. And because of this, they become bad or inappropriate actions or works for people or several specific circumstances.

For example, the fact that a person becomes involved in a specific profession or job tends to be, in principle, a good and profitable work. However, depending on what one has to give up to carry out this profession or how far this can even distance an individual from God, this undertaking may become contrary or in vain for the most central aspects of one's life before the Lord.

Regarding actions or works that are not necessarily evil in themselves, but regarding the set of aspects in which they are applied, we find, in the Scriptures, the expression that many of them are vain and, therefore, also called unfruitful, not profitable, devoid of a meaningful life, or even as dead works.

In the Psalms, in the books of the Old Testament prophets, and in the New Testament, we find several references to unprofitable or vain works and actions, as exemplified below:

Psalms 127: 1 ***Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.***

***2* It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.**

Jeremiah 51: 58 ***Thus says the LORD of hosts: "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, And her high gates shall be burned with fire; The people will labor in vain, And the nations, because of the fire; And they shall be weary."***

Habakkuk 2: 13 ***Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts That the peoples labor to feed the fire, And nations weary themselves in vain?***

Hebrews 6: 1 ***Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,***

...

It is highly significant that a Christian be awakened to the understanding that there are vain and unfruitful works in the world, or even called dead. And this is for an individual to distinguish between them so that one may not choose them and may choose those that come from God, are fruitful, profitable, or cooperate with life according to the kingdom of God.

The purpose of the enemy of human souls is not necessarily to prevent people from working and being fruitful according to the standards of the world at large. His intention can also encompass the objective that people just stop working with what is in line with the will of God and profitable for them according to what is beneficial in the eyes of the Lord.

If the enemy of the souls of human beings manages to lead people to become excessively involved with some works to the point of letting aside the work of faith in Christ and “the first works” that the Lord longs to be practiced by all, he already succeeds in occupying their time or distract them so that they are no longer occupied with the knowledge of God's will. And by not knowing the will of God, people also no longer practice the will of God, as we saw in the text in which Paul said that he served the Lord when he had an understanding of the will of the Lord and did not serve the Lord, but sin, when he was bereft of the understanding afforded him by the heavenly kingdom.

When people work and build without doing so in cooperation with the Lord, they may even become very productive according to natural human standards, if the Lord allows it. However, its results are liable to be considered in vain before God. And it is in this way that many nations worked and continue to work in vain for the day of the fire.

*Proverbs 12: 11(b) ... **he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding.***

But how, then, does the power of darkness try to lead people and even nations to surrender to vain labors or fruitless works, although they may even be prospering materially and in knowledge about various matters about natural life?

One of the central means by which the cooperating agents of the kingdom of darkness seek to influence and lead human beings into fruitless or vain works is to offer them thoughts to occupy people's minds that are also vain and fruitless. Through fascinations, illusions, lies, and false projections of results, also called enchantments, the power of darkness seeks to seduce people to vain works to the detriment of acting in works recognized as good by the Lord.

For this reason, **vain or unprofitable works are originated or triggered when a person gives shelter to vain thoughts in one's heart, as the latter are like seeds that, when cultivated, also lead to the harvests pertinent to their propositions.**

Unfruitful works have their origin in vain seeds arising from equally vain thoughts, which, in turn, come from the natural human being and the

prince of the power of the air who proposes a course of life contrary to the will of God, as exemplified in some texts below:

*Psalms 2: 1 **Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing?***

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

*Psalms 94: 11 **The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are futile.***

*Matthew 15: 8 **"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.**
9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*

In this way, a Christian should always be on guard to discern and select the thoughts one harbors about works, labors, and services in all areas of one's life. And this, so as not to harbor in one's heart motivations that lead to the unfruitful works of darkness.

The Christian already needs discernment in the heart when meditating on what actions one should get involved with, how one should get involved with them, and what activities one should not approve in the sense of not even harboring them in the heart for also not becoming part or accomplice of them in external actions.

There are many thoughts in the world that seem harmless at first. However, if they are welcomed into the heart, they can become thorns that suffocate the will of God in the life of the one who harbored them.

If the devil cannot steal the seed of God sown in a heart, he also tries to prevent it from bearing fruit with indirect opposition. If the devil cannot prevent the seeds of works given by God from sprouting in a person's heart, he proposes seeds of thorns that, if they are sheltered, may develop into thoughts, labors, and works with the capacity to choke even the word of God deposited in this same heart.

If a heart remains in God, absolutely nothing can prevent the Lord's design from being fulfilled in a person's life. However, if a heart turns away from God or is divided into accepting and cultivating thorns, this person's choices may have the strength to prevail over the word of the Lord sown in one's life.

Therefore, the most prominent conflict between the fruitfulness of the seed of the word of God sown in an individual and the thorns that try to choke it occurs in the territory of one's heart. The primary scenario where Christ's parable of the sower takes place is the heart of an individual. And this, in turn, occurs mainly as a consequence of the activities a person considers engaging.

The difficulties of life, by themselves, are not powerful to stifle the power of the word of God, in the sense of preventing it from producing the fruits for which it was designed. However, when a person harbors inappropriate thoughts, their thorny fruits may stifle the fruiting of good seeds because the individual oneself has given undue space to also undue seeds.

So, realizing that the word of God does not impose itself on the thorns, but that the thorns sharply try to choke the word of God, when allowed to do so, is something that no person should despise. The word of God is prosperous and victorious over all evil, but it restricts its action in the heart that does not want it to prosper or in the heart that wants to divide its attention between two masters or fascinations.

*Luke 8: 14 **Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.***
*15 **But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.***

Through His blood shed on the cross of Calvary, the Lord Jesus has already paid the redemption price of all human hearts once and forever. However, the word of heavenly salvation is granted to prosper in those hearts where it finds reciprocal acceptance and the rejection of the thorns that oppose it.

The Lord is incomparably greater than he who is also called the prince of this world. And God manifests Himself as such to those who want to reject false prophets and the allurements of their words. However, if someone, even so, wants to welcome the false, the corrupted, one will also expose oneself to the growth and harvest of the thorns that result from its seeds.

In this way, when we start to consider this stage of preventing the seeds of inappropriate works from prospering in a person's heart and that it is necessary for an individual to discern, already from the thoughts, between those seeds that come from the Lord and those that come merely from the creation, we also understand that it is crucial to highlight here the fact that there may be, in people's hearts, seeds of works that are not appropriate, but that they cannot easily perceive or discern, by themselves, as seeds of inappropriate thoughts before the Lord.

And the fact that a person harbors and cultivates an inappropriate thought that leads to inappropriate works, even if one does not know that this seed is not profitable, does not guarantee that this person will not reap vain or dead works related to the seed one cultivated. Ignorance does not prevent the growth of an inappropriate seed, for a seed produces what is essentially in it if given soil and space to grow, even if a person does not know that one is granting that space.

There are seeds related to works, labors, and services that have the appearance of being good, but the results of a seed do not lead to what people want to make them appear to be, but to what essentially the seed is.

The fascination with wealth, for instance, may appear beneficial and even be promoted by many who claim to be preachers of the Gospel of God and want to use it for their greedy purposes. However, the fruits of this fascination, in the end, always lead to what the Scriptures say about it and not to what people say about this type of seed, as exemplified in the two texts below:

*Proverbs 23: 4 **Do not overwork to be rich; Because of your own understanding, cease!***

*5 **Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.***

*6 **Do not eat the bread of a miser, Nor desire his delicacies; ...***

*1 Timothy 6: 9 **But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.***

*10 **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.***

*11 **But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.***

*12 **Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.***

The lust for riches is a work of the flesh, not of God, and results in covetousness or greediness, which, in turn, is equated with idolatry. Idolatry, on the other hand, is a vain work, as it separates those who practice it from the Only Sovereign God who can extend mercy and salvation to them.

*Colossians 3: 5 **Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.***

*Jonah 2: 8 **Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy.***

There are many works that people have tried for centuries to establish as good or living works, such as the fascination with riches, but which repeatedly turn out to be works that lead them to that which do not reflect truly beneficial or eternal results for them.

There are also many works that people, for centuries, have insisted on trying to call good because they are associated with their traditions and

cultures. However, the fact that something that is not adequate comes to be practiced for centuries and passed on by traditions and cultures does not make it a good work if it essentially is not.

Furthermore, it may be precisely on the matter of traditions, cultures, and practices that have been carried out for a long time that many people end up getting involved in fruitless works, or so-called dead ones, without realizing that they are so involved with something that is not indeed beneficial to them.

In the Scriptures, there are several texts that describe the existence of works, activities, or deeds that are passed on by tradition and cultures, but that are not considered appropriate thoughts or actions for a person to get involved with them, as described in some more texts presented below:

Jeremiah 16: 19 ***O LORD, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things."***

Isaiah 1: 13 ***Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.***

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.***

Mark 7: 9 ***He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."***

Thus, differentiating some works between good or bad, or whether they are profitable or unfruitful, may seem easier or more evident for some more explicit cases. However, recognizing fruitless works in what a person grew up with or got used to living with may not always be so clear.

There are works that just may appear to be profitable or harmless because of familiarity and coexistence with them for many years or even as passed down from generation to generation, but which are still fruitless or considered dead before the Lord.

Works passed down by traditions and cultures, or that have been practiced for a long time, can be particularly challenging to be recognized as inappropriate or unfavorable to a person. And this may happen because these works may have taken a space of acceptance or obligation of execution in the conscience or the deepest convictions of an individual, hindering a more sober and less emotional evaluation of them.

And regarding this last aspect, we reiterate, once more, the need that each individual in the present world has to relate intensely and continuously with the Lord Christ Jesus.

In the text of Ephesians 5, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we see that **Christ is the one who enlightens a person to discern the works according to the will of God**, but also, in the same text, we are taught that **Christ is the light that makes known the works of the darkness that try to hide themselves so as not to be recognized as inappropriate, including those that come from traditions passed down through generations.** A point that is also reaffirmed in the book of 1 Peter, as follows:

*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;*

In this way, **in Christ**, and through fellowship with Him and the provision He made on the cross of Calvary, a person can even break one's association with those fruitless works that one has assimilated and stored deeply in one's conscience through traditions, cultures, or familiarity, for the Son of God was given to us by the Heavenly Father also to redeem people from all inner convictions or beliefs of inappropriate works, even those deeply rooted in their consciences.

In another text, in the book of Hebrews, we find the teaching that, through the results of Christ's work on the cross of Calvary, a person can have one's conscience or one's innermost convictions or beliefs purified by the Lord, referring even to the works similar or corresponding to the works practiced in the First Covenant or the Covenant according to the Law of Moses.

Let us see below the text in reference:

*Hebrews 9: 14 ... how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

Now, if not even the works of the First Covenant, presented in the Scriptures themselves, continue to be valid before the Lord, instead they are considered as acts of transgression because the people were unfaithful to God in fulfilling the First Covenant, how much more will not be the other traditions who also oppose the will of the Lord in similar ways or even more full of idolatries or contempt of the Lord of Hosts?

In Christ, there is abundant light to manifest even what for centuries was practiced as dead works by the peoples and falsely called good works. No matter how hidden or rooted these same works are in people's hearts, Christ knows everything that has been done in all centuries and, above all, everyone's interior without any restriction.

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

Thus, if by the aspects that constitute the reference for qualifying works before God, seen in the previous chapters, it is still not possible for a person to distinguish whether a work is or is not appropriate because of the convictions or beliefs one inherited by tradition or culture, again it is to Christ that a person needs to turn to be enlightened also in these more specific aspects and which are more intensely rooted in one's conscience.

After exposing one's life to the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul, a man who grew up under solid convictions or beliefs associated with the traditions of his people, expressed the following words:

***Philippians 3: 4 ... though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:
5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;
6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.
7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.
8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ
9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;***

From Paul's narrative, we can see that breaking with dead or unprofitable works can have an impact on letting go of aspects that were very valuable to a person for many years and to which one dedicated oneself even with intense zeal. However, also from Paul's narrative, we can see that what Christ offers is incomparably more profitable or valuable both for the present life and for the eternal life of those who trust in the Lord and follow the way pointed out by Him.

There are many works done by people in the world that have their foundation only in traditions and cultures passed down from generation to generation, but that are contrary to the will of God. And a Christian is not called to be a preserver of traditions and cultures that do not add benefits according to the kingdom of God to one's life and one's fellow men, as further mentioned in the following text:

Galatians 4: 8 ***But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.***

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

10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.

By distancing themselves from God, people have created environments, rules, cultures, traditions, and circumstances that oppress human beings on Earth and that do not allow them to live in the freedom that the Lord has for them in Christ Jesus. For this reason, every Christian is called to wake up in one's own generation and follow not the traditions and cultures of the world, but the will of the Heavenly Father.

Furthermore, **also looking at the question of how Christ works in conjunction with a person to cleanse one's conscience from dead works, we can see, from various texts and points of the Scriptures, that the Lord does this perfectly for the edification of the one who keeps the fellowship with Him.**

Hebrews 7: 22 ... ***by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.***

23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing.

24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Philippians 1: 3 ***I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,***

5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

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

Only by the help of the Lord is it possible to achieve the mortification of inadequate or dead works. And only by the help of the Lord is it possible to do works through the newness of life that is in Christ Jesus.

*2 Thessalonians 2: 16 **Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,***
*17 **comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.***

Finally, we inform that we only will not go deeper here on how Christ acts to purify the conscience of dead works of those who come to Him because a broader description of this theme is already described in the subject on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ. More specifically, in the chapters on The Glorious Work of Jesus as the Only High Priest of Those Who Believe in Him and on The Glory of the High Priest who is a Friendly Advocate before the Heavenly Father.

C16. The Path of Freedom concerning the Oppressions of Works, Labors, and Services

Why is it so important that a person has one's conscience clarified and purified about the main aspects that categorize the works, labors, and services, as explained in the previous chapters?

Having a conscience cleansed by the Lord of vain, unfruitful, or dead works is vital for every individual since many works, labors, and services have their beginnings in the thoughts and beliefs that people have about works, but also because several thoughts or beliefs, and that do not have God's endorsement, may impose subjugation, oppression, or significant distress on those who shelter them in their hearts.

Choosing works that are opposed to what comes from the Lord is not only harmful to a person because of the time one wastes on vain or fruitless works, and because of the implications for eternal life, but also because what a person ends up getting involved may subject the individual to heavy yokes that require an ever-increasing dedication to them. An aspect that is exposed to us in many texts and narratives of the Scriptures, and of which we mention a few more below:

Ecclesiastes 5: 10 **He who loves silver (or money) will not be satisfied with silver (or money); Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.**

2 Peter 2: 19 **While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.**

Romans 6: 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?**

Although the possibility of performing works, labors, and services or walking in them has been granted by God to human beings to cooperate with the good, this same possibility, when misused, may also lead a person into bondage to what one chooses to practice or associate with.

The potential to work or to do works is one of the most precious assets that human beings have been endowed with by God. However, the works, labors, or services inappropriately admitted into a person's life may cause great oppression to one's life.

Just as faith and the works of this faith go hand in hand, so bondage and some performances of works, labors, and services corresponding to it also go hand in hand, making their joint approach so necessary and crucial when it comes to the practice of works or cooperation with them.

When the Scriptures use the term *bondage* or *slavery*, they are not necessarily referring to explicit bondage where one person is subjugated by force or by agreement to another person or a group. On the contrary, the Scriptures may refer to the condition of a person not being free to walk under God's instruction simply because one became involved with what was not appropriate to become involved.

For instance, if a person gets used to hectic and exaggerated life in practicing or performing works, there is a risk that one will come to think that quietness, moderation, meekness, and other heavenly virtues are unproductive, and may even come to believe that if one settles down, one will not be well seen by God.

Excessive involvement with work may even lead a person to indulge in inappropriate dreams, visions, or projects that one would not have if one adopted an appropriate posture in the number of works or labors with which one becomes involved.

Ecclesiastes 5: 3 ***For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words.***

The thought that opposes the quietness and meekness that come from the Lord is extremely dangerous, as it leads people to think that they please God essentially by the outward works they do, thus returning to submission to conditions similar to the works of the Law of Moses and not of heavenly grace.

As seen in the previous chapters, God, of course, is pleased with the good works that people produce, as this testifies that they are walking in the light and in the good works that God Himself prepared beforehand for them to walk in. But, again, we point out that good works are those which are derived from the work of faith in the Lord, from fellowship with Christ, and done according to the Lord's instruction and strength, and not according to reliance on the aspects of the creation or on fleshly force to perform works.

Thus, there is an order in carrying out works that leads people to the path of freedom concerning the bondage of works. Unfortunately, however, there also is an order that leads people to the path of the most diverse subjections to bondage by works.

We have also mentioned several times that the Christian is not called to be guided and enslaved by the obligation of carrying out works to find justification before God, and not even to achieve one's sustenance. Instead, **the Christian is called so that the works are subject to the Christian and so that one may come to practice them guided and strengthened by God also as to the intensity or in the appropriate measure that God instructs one to do.**

When the Scriptures teach about the Christian being zealous of good works, they are not declaring for the Christian to work like a madman and without time for fellowship with God, one's family, the fellow believers in Christ, and without the due time of rest and refreshment to be strengthened to advance in one's journey.

A Christian should never depart from the confidence, in one's conscience, that one's sufficiency and ability come from the Lord and not from the works themselves. The Lord can use works to perfect a Christian for more works, but a Christian's ability to act according to God's will

always has its origin in the Lord Himself and in the quietness of listening to His instructions.

The call to walk in good works prepared by God is not directed to the Christian to be moved by works again, but to be moved by the instruction and the power of the Holy Spirit in everything one does because of the understanding of the "reason or motive" for doing good works.

The Christian who leans towards the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ finds in Him freedom from oppression or bondage, concerning the subject of the heavy burden of works, because one also finds in the Lord Himself a call and a model to walk in humility, meekness, and quietness.

*1 Thessalonians 4: 11 ... that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,
12 that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.*

*Matthew 11: 28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

The Christian who surrenders to the Lord Jesus Christ and accepts to be taught by the Lord, also on how to relate to works, labors, and services correctly, finds in the Lord the power not to be dominated by the pressures, the competitiveness, and the flood of dissipation according to the course of this world, as well as to be abundantly fruitful in God while living in quietness and meekness.

Romans 7: 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

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

...

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

Matthew 5: 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

Isaiah 40: 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,
31 But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

In Christ, a person's relationship with works differs extensively from the world's relationship with works. ***In Christ***, a person first rests from the dominion of works and labors. ***In the Lord***, one can break with the cycle of the mastery of the obligation of works to try to be blessed through them. ***In Christ***, an individual can access the Lord, through faith, to first receive divine grace and then, through it and the strength that the Lord grants, to act in works and labors.

Many people worldwide work to try to win the favor of God and their fellow men. However, ***in Christ***, a person receives first the gradual instruction and the blessing of the Lord's kingdom to, from His favor, perform each of the works one is called to do.

Romans 14: 17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.
19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

Those who die ***in Christ*** to life after the world's standards may also rest from how the world deals with works. ***In Christ***, a Christian can find rest regarding the world's rampant dissolutions to act moved and strengthened by the Lord, whose burden is not heavy.

When Christians find ***in Christ*** the mortification of dead works in their lives, Christ guides them so that works follow or accompany Christians instead of subjugating them. ***In Christ***, the children of God are called to reign over their works and not so that works dominate them.

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

Revelation 14: 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

In Christ, we find the offer of a new way of acting in which God allows us to rest from the works that so much seemed necessary to be practiced in the world, but that, in reality, are not. And this, so that we can, together with resting and waiting in the Lord, advance to do good works in the intensity, instruction, and strength of the Lord, whose yoke brings rest to the soul of the one who follows the Lord.

Isaiah 14: 3 **It shall come to pass in the day the LORD gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve,**

4 that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: "How the oppressor has ceased, The golden city ceased!"

5 The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of the rulers;

6 He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, He who ruled the nations in anger, Is persecuted and no one hinders.

7 The whole earth is at rest and quiet; They break forth into singing.

Hebrews 4: 9 **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.**

10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

The good works that God beforehand prepared for us to walk in them do not enslave and are not given to discourage and imprison us. And this, because they can be done in God together with the Holy Spirit and His grace, whereby the Christian also receives the proper measure of moderation to know how intensely one should act in all things.

2 Timothy 1: 7 **For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (or moderation).**

Philippians 4: 5 **Let your gentleness (or moderation) be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.**

Additionally, something very significant to understand about God's grace being made available to a Christian is that it is not figurative. On the contrary, it is real and effectively interacts in the life of the one who receives it through the Spirit of Grace granted by God.

Therefore, to practice works by the grace of God is to count on the provision of wisdom and strength to do them, including favorable external conditions for the advancement of the work, since the Lord Jesus Christ is also the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace who reigns over the entire universe. (As explained more extensively in the themes on The Gospel of God's Righteousness and The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

The Lord is powerful to make all grace abound in every good work to everyone who submits to Him in trust to do good works. One of the reasons why the practice of these good works does not represent a heavy burden for those who walk in them.

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

2 Corinthians 9: 8 **And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you,**

→ always having

→ all sufficiency

→ in all things,

→ may have an abundance for every good work.

9 **As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."**

10 **Now may He**

→ who supplies seed to the sower,

→ and bread for food,

→ supply and multiply the seed you have sown

→ and increase the fruits of your righteousness,

11 **while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.**

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

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

After an individual is set free *in Christ*, and is freed from the bondage of dead works, it also becomes very significant that one clearly understands that when the Lord instructs him or her to be zealous for works, He is not asking this Christian to return to the kind of strain and heavy burden under which one was before one was delivered. God does not deliver a person from an evil yoke to subject the individual to another heavy yoke.

In the newness of life *in Christ*, also the strength to do works is new because it is available to a Christian personally in God. Therefore, the Christian is also called to be attentive to allow God's provision to act in him or her for the practice of the works to which one is called by the Lord.

Ephesians 1: 17 ... **that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,**

18 **the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is**

→ the hope of His calling,

→ what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

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

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.**

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.**

Romans 8: 11 **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

For a Christian to receive the strength or vigor to do the works of God, and so that these are not a heavy burden, it is necessary that one also believes that the Lord will strengthen and quicken one's life to act according to the power given by God to every work or labor to be done.

God did not create people to be enslaved in their hearts, which in many ways is expressed by subjugation to works, labors, and services that are vain and fruitless for their lives. God's purpose has always been that everyone should be free and serve one another in freedom or voluntarily. However, this freedom can only be achieved indeed through the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3: 17 **Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**

We also highlight here that the freedom that God offers in Christ is not freedom for the person to start doing everything one intends to do. Instead, it is the freedom granted to an individual to do what is appropriate and also to reap the good harvests that the Lord wants to give.

When a Christian seeks to do works that are not consistent with the good works or labors that the Lord has called one to practice, this Christian acts in one's fleshly strength and not by the Spirit of the Lord. And because of this, one also becomes so

exhausted when one oscillates between wanting to walk in the Lord and, at another time, in the strength of one's own flesh.

We understand that it is always relevant to remember that subjection to oppression resulting from bondage results from the yoke of sin to which human beings became subject, which, in turn, tries to place people in a cycle of more subjugation and slavery if people are not freed from this yoke in their hearts. (A topic addressed in more detail in the theme of the Gospel of the Righteousness of God when it addresses the bondage to which a person may become subject when practicing works according to one's flesh, sin, the body of sin, or conducts similar to the Law of Moses).

*John 8: 34 **Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.***

*36 **Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.***

Thus, for example, a person who is not sure of the forgiveness of one's sins before God becomes the target of being involved in the most diverse speculations of works that one can imagine. In other words, the belief that they must "make up" for their sins with sacrifices and works of religious devotion is one of the central factors why so many religions acquire so many followers and require so much subjection from them to their fruitless or dead works in the eyes of God.

Still others, to try to anesthetize the suffering of the weight of the yokes to which they are subject, seek to compensate for the anguish of their hearts with an unreasonable volume of work or the surrender of their lives to the most diverse types of addictions.

Fear, lack of peace, anguishes, and so on, are instruments to enslave people to the strangest types of services, works, and labors imaginable, for behind them is the evil operation of the prince of darkness and bondage. One more reason why only *in Christ* can a person find true remission for a new and dignified condition of life.

Christ gave oneself in living sacrifice to offer all people the possibility of the dignity of living and serving the only God worthy to be worshiped and served eternally, and so that they also no longer need to act moved by fear or the torments that fear causes.

*Hebrews 2: 14 **Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,***
*15 **and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.***

The Heavenly Father manifested Christ to the world to offer everyone a dignified condition to live and serve the One God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, also because only God calls us to walk and practice truly good works that are according to His eternal glory.

In Christ Jesus, the Spirit of the Lord is deposited in the heart of a Christian so that the spirit of bondage that produces fear is put away from one's life.

1 John 4: 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

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

Through His blood shed on the cross of Calvary, Christ bought the freedom of a Christian's heart so that one can choose to submit to the Lord to be instructed and strengthened by Him in everything.

When a Christian rests in the Lord and understands that one is not justified by one's own work, but by Christ's work on one's behalf, one can work in peace for one's good and for the praise of the Lord's name.

Therefore, still concerning the oppressions and bondage that works, labors, and services may try to impose first on people's hearts, we again run into the need for each individual to relate to Christ to be freed from what seeks to oppress him or her also in the various activities with which one comes across in life.

It is through fellowship with Christ that God offers people the way to knowledge of the truth also about works, labors, and services in such a manner that they experience, from their hearts, the way of freedom in everything they are called to do while still in the world.

Christ walked in freedom in the world because He always did God's will, even when He was imprisoned to be crucified. And it is by following Christ, as He followed the Heavenly Father, that each person also finds the way and the strength to act in freedom in all that one is called by God to do.

John 8: 28 Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free?'"

34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

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.

C17. Works that Cooperate with the Perfecting of Christians for Other Works

In the previous chapter, we saw that when a person is willing to be continually taught by the Lord Jesus Christ and to practice what the Lord teaches concerning works, labors, and services, one not only puts oneself on the path of reaping various direct fruits of one's actions, but also to receive one of the primary general benefits for one's life, which is true freedom in the Lord.

Understanding the role of the freedom of the heart in the Lord is essential for a person also to realize that it is from the Lord that one receives the peace that confirms the paths one should walk and the actions one should practice, as well as those aspects one should reject or not get engaged with.

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.***

John 14: 27 ***"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."***

Knowing that it is the Lord Jesus Christ whom a Christian is called to serve exclusively, in the sense of the highest instance of service and worship, and that it is from Him that true peace also comes as to the matter of works, can be crucial for a person not to feel pressured by what other people or the world wants to impose on this Christian.

Although people dissociated from fellowship with the Lord give enormous weight to external productivity, in the Christian life, as we also commented on the theme Work Out Your Own Salvation, there are several stages in which the Lord also leads a Christian to actions that are much more focused on strengthening of the heart or "inner man" of this Christian than in external and materially measurable works, as exemplified in the text below:

Ephesians 3: 14 ***For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,***
15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,
17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height,
19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,
21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

The preparation and equipping to walk in the good works that God prepared beforehand comes, firstly, from preparing and equipping the “inner man” of a Christian. And this, that one might know and be able to recognize that it is God who works all things according to His will by His power that works in those who trust in the Lord.

Nevertheless, when people do not recognize the relevance of inner strengthening and that God prepares His children, even during extended periods, to walk in some specific works, they postpone or even prevent the Lord from preparing them to fulfill His heavenly will regarding these actions or to cooperate with these works.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in His condition as the Son of Man, had to wait until He was 30 years old to begin to act in a more notorious way in the ministry (or service) for which He was sent in the flesh into the world. The Son of God Himself, in His condition as the Son of Man, needed to be exposed to the everyday activities of people in the world and needed to undergo suffering to be perfected for the great and unique ministry of the Eternal Savior, an aspect witnessed, among others, by the following texts:

*Luke 2: 40 **And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.***

*Hebrews 5: 7 **Jesus, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,***
*8 **though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.***
*9 **And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,***
*10 **called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"***

If we also look at the example of Joseph in his life in Egypt, narrated in the book of Genesis, we can see that Joseph, still young, was exposed to doing works that he, by his own choice, probably would never have chosen to be exposed to. However, as Joseph had in his heart the disposition, in everything and everywhere, to be faithful to his One God and Creator, he accepted as coming from the Lord what came into his hands to do. Joseph inclined his heart to act in reverence and faithfulness to God even in the land where he was a stranger and a servant.

Later, when Joseph was elevated to the position of governor in Egypt, he recognized that the Lord Himself, in all stages of his life and in the works in which He had placed him to act, was also preparing and perfecting him for the function he would come to perform years later. Due to his faithfulness in the various stages that the Lord led him through, Joseph also became able to manage the resources that fed multitudes of people from a wide variety of peoples, even serving to provide for his own native people, according to the narrative below:

*Genesis 45: 4 **And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.***

5 But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

Thus, when Christians give in to external performance or productivity demands that other people try to impose on them to the detriment of inner improvement, because they basically follow the models of apparent and external measuring of productivity, Christians may even be intense in what they do and reach some expressive numbers materially speaking, but they may also be putting aside the Lord's preparation for the works that He had as a purpose for their lives.

A Christian is not called to be concerned with producing numbers and quantifying one's works to be held in high esteem before God. Every Christian is called to faithfully carry out the works that the Lord instructs to be done at each stage, even if, in some of them, it seems that there is nothing to show outwardly. In several stages of perfection provided by God, the Lord does not want the focus of the Christian to be just on doing works, but to be more focused on what these works produce in the Christian when one is doing them.

There are works that God has prepared for His children to walk in them that pass through various stages of faith and works corresponding to this faith before they come to be manifested in an expressive or outwardly tangible way. They are works that carry out what the Lord wants to do in each of His child's life in each different stage.

Something interesting to note in the call to do works for the Lord, in the Lord, or with the Lord is that the Christian is not only called to do works, but is also called to allow God to carry out transforming works in one's life. And the Lord often does this by leading the Christian into various works because of which one is placed in practical circumstances where one needs to depend on the Lord and where one is perfected to walk under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When he did the work of shepherding his father's sheep, David, still a boy, was exposed to face a bear and a lion that wanted to attack the flock he took care of, but which David overcame by trusting God and the strength of the Lord. This experience, however, did not end with David's victory over the bear and the lion, but strengthened his heart to believe, in a future time, that the same God would be with him when he voluntarily presented himself to face the threats of Goliath, the greatest of the Philistine's warriors.

In the Scriptures, there are countless examples of people who were prepared through works that they were led by the Lord to do, works whose central focus was not merely directed to external productivity, but to the faithfulness to the Lord that each of these people expressed in that to which one was led by God to do.

When referring to people who yearn to serve the Lord, Paul, an apostle of Christ, reiterates the importance of faithfulness in this willingness to serve God, as follows:

*1 Corinthians 4: 2 **Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.***

Also in other passages of the Scriptures, declared by the Lord Jesus Christ, we can observe how faithfulness is highly esteemed in the eyes of God and how much it is part of the advancement or the increase of the attribution of works to those who walk in it.

*Luke 16: 10 **He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.***
*11 **Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?***
*12 **And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?***

*Matthew 25: 23 **His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'***

In this way, **when the Lord instructs or allows a person to be placed in a specific work, one needs to be open to the most diverse aspects that can be done before the Lord in that work or what God wants to do in the individual through that work to which one is exposed.**

For instance, in a simple job to work with other people's resources, a Christian can be faithful in what one does because one does everything as for the Lord, even though the employer oneself may not be so attentive to the faithfulness of the one that was hired.

There are many people who yearn to be more productive for the Lord. However, by not understanding that it is regarding the least, what is another person's, and even amid the unjust conditions around them that the Lord wants to perfect them, many end up postponing this action or putting obstacles to the possibility of cooperating more with the Lord.

There are works to be done in the Lord for which a Christian first needs to be prepared more broadly in the perseverance and firmness of faith, needing to be exposed before to situations and works that operate the strengthening of this perseverance and faith, as also exposed in the following list of texts:

James 1: 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

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

1 Peter 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

9 receiving the end of your faith: the salvation of your souls.

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.

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Psalms 119: 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge, For I believe Your commandments.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.

68 You are good, and do good; Teach me Your statutes.

69 The proud have forged a lie against me, But I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.

70 Their heart is as fat as grease, But I delight in Your law.

71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

There are many Christians, for example, who do not practice “the first works” to which the Lord calls them and wonder why the Lord does not make them walk in other good works prepared beforehand, forgetting that Christ Himself said that whoever does not abide in Him also cannot do the works of God or the works according to the Spirit of the Lord.

First, it is by fellowship with Christ that a Christian is prepared for all other actions in one's life. And this, the Lord does not accept that it comes to be replaced by any other aspect, as we have already mentioned in previous chapters.

Therefore, when a person is working on works or actions in which one has less pleasure to act or feels more fragile to carry them out, and this makes that one turns more to the Lord to be helped or supported by Him, this work may be serving as an excellent work of perfection for learning dependence on the Lord in all circumstances.

When facing specific opposition from the enemy against one's life, Paul turned to the Lord for the opposition to cease, but, in his particular case, the Lord signaled to Paul that the most important thing was that he depended on the heavenly grace despite the opposition of the enemy. The Lord taught Paul that the strength to fulfill the will of God came primarily from divine grace, no matter how much knowledge, including spiritual knowledge, Paul could have about the truths of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 12: 7 **And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.**

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities (or weaknesses), that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities (or weaknesses), in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

No Christian, of course, should deliberately seek to attract the enemy's opposition against one's life, but when one perceives it, one should always do what Paul did. That is, one should also resort directly to the Lord and obtain from the Lord the specific answer and grace for each situation in one's life, for it also is by the work of taking shelter in humility in the Lord that a Christian can find the strength and the security against the enemy of one's soul.

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

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Psalms 91: 14 **"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.**

15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."

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

Returning to the matter of classification of works, we remember that the way of the kingdom of God to measure the degree of importance of what a person does or its manner of quantifying works is very different from the competitive systems that the world adopts, starting already with the objectives by which people in the kingdom of God are called to do the works.

A parent who, for example, teaches a child that Christ is the way in which one should walk all one's life, does a far greater and higher work in the eyes of God than those who seek to change their children into great conquerors of the things of the world, but with a heart that is proud, arrogant, and dissociated from fellowship with the Lord.

Likewise, a person who has a small business serving one's customers honestly, who does not try to deceive one's fellow men, but operates with righteousness and a gain obtained not by deceit, has a share of being salt in the society in which one lives and before God. And so, one has a much more valuable performance before the Lord than those who conquer large shares and expressions in the market but in disagreement with the heavenly kingdom.

What is considered great deeds in the eyes of human beings is different from what God considers great deeds. What is seen as highly esteemed by people is not seen in the same way by God, just as the little of one person justified in Christ far exceeds the sum of the abundance of many unrighteous people.

Below are some texts that exemplify what we mentioned in these last paragraphs:

1 Corinthians 1: 25 **Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

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."**

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

Proverbs 16: 11 **Honest weights and scales are the LORD'S; All the weights in the bag are His work.**

Proverbs 10: 20 **The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little.**

Psalms 37: 16 **A little that a righteous man has Is better than the riches of many wicked.**

Thus, when a person serves the Lord, it is the Lord's approval that one needs for what one is doing, but also at the time when the Lord sees fit to reveal this approval, as Paul also teaches us in the following texts:

1 Corinthians 4: 4 **For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.**

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

Colossians 3: 3(b) **... 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.

Many men and women dissociated from fellowship with Christ seek to exalt themselves by what they do on the outside. And this, because they do not expose themselves to the inward works of God in their hearts. So, they seek to present themselves with dissolution and dissimulation regarding the corrupted or dead works they actually serve and are associated with.

Individuals dissociated from fellowship with Christ, and who, for example, allow themselves to be moved by envy, act according to what others do and not according to what the Lord has as an instruction for their lives. For this reason, the Lord warns Christians not to covet the works of the wicked nor to let themselves be seized with indignation according to the righteousness of men because of the works and temporary prosperity of evil and perverse individuals.

Ecclesiastes 4: 4 **Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.**

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.
- 10 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more.
- 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
- 12 The wicked plots against the just, And gnashes at him with his teeth.
- 13 The Lord laughs at him, For He sees that his day is coming.
- 14 The wicked have drawn the sword And have bent their bow, To cast down the poor and needy, To slay those who are of upright conduct.
- 15 Their sword shall enter their own heart, And their bows shall be broken.
- 16 A little that a righteous man has Is better than the riches of many wicked.
- 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, But the LORD upholds the righteous.
- 18 The LORD knows the days of the upright, And their inheritance shall be forever.
- 19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
- ...
 23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.
- 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.

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

And finally, we would also like to reemphasize in this chapter that **it is to Christ that a Christian is called to submit regarding works, just as David said when he declared that the Lord Himself was his Shepherd, for Christ warned us that many would come claiming they are acting in the name of the Lord when, in reality, they are trying to take primacy, precedence, or direction in the lives of others, and if possible, even of Christians.**

When in the title of this chapter we mention that there are works that perfect Christians for other works, we understand that it should also be emphasized that there

are works in the world that a Christian might get involved that operate in the opposite direction to one's perfection. They are works that act in the sense of leading a person to move away from Christ, and may even lead an individual to shipwreck in faith if one submits oneself to them.

Therefore, **when the Scriptures mention that all things work together for the good of those who love God and walk according to His purpose, they are declaring that this applies specifically to those who indeed love God and walk according to His purpose, which, essentially, is that all people and everything they do in their lives converge to the Lordship of Christ.**

*Romans 8: 28 **And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.***

*Ephesians 1: 7 **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace**
 8 **which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,**
 9 **having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,**
 10 **that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him.***

*Colossians 3: 24 ... **knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.***

On the other hand, or again as to people handing over the direction of their lives to those who destroy their paths, it is on the path that leads to the harvest of the destruction of their paths that they place themselves when they choose this type of option.

*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."***

*Galatians 6: 7 **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**
 8 **For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**
 9 **And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.***

Contrary to the conduct of life that the Lord Jesus Christ wants each Christian to adopt, there are many people who present themselves saying that they are called to be leaders of other Christians. However, it is according to the deceit and lies against the word of Christ that they do it, rendering themselves to corrupt the ways of those who follow them and leading people to reap the bitter fruits of their ways dissociated from the Lord, although many present themselves with the appearance of being serving God.

The subject of this last paragraph is more fully described in the theme of The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, regarding which we mention below only some texts to remind it here:

*Matthew 23: 8 "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi (master, guide, or leader)'; 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 (masters, guides, or leaders); for One is your Teacher, the Christ."*

*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.*

*Matthew 23: 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.
28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."*

*Jude 1: 12 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots;
13 raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.
14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints,
15 "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

- 16 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.**
- 17 But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:**
- 18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.**
- 19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.**
- 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,**
- 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.**

Matthew 24: 25 (Jesus said): "See, I have told you beforehand."

Therefore, with each step a person takes or the work one practices at each stage of one's life, one may also be defining crucial aspects of one's life through what one chooses to do and what one actually does.

Faced with this reality, it is vital that the Lord Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit, is the One who is guiding the life of a Christian in everything one chooses to do and does, for the Lord always leads the one who believes in Him to works that are good and, above all, profitable for eternity. *In Christ*, the Christian is called to grow in everything for good because only God is thoroughly righteous to lead everyone righteously in everything.

Thus, only Christ can perfect a person from the heart to the outside, from the innermost depths to the variety of actions in good works. Only the Lord is almighty to sustain a Christian in carrying out the works that God, according to His will, has already prepared beforehand for us to walk in them.

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

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

Hebrews 13: 20 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

C18. The Work of Glorifying, Praising, and Exalting the Lord

In this final chapter, trying to present succinctly or more objectively the subject of works, perhaps **we could still say, in a more simplified way, that every work or action that can be done for the true glorification, praise, and exaltation of our Eternal Lord can also be done categorized as a good work.**

Just as we did in the chapter where we discussed the simplicity of doing good works or walking in the good works that God beforehand prepared for us to walk in them, so too it is concerning the work of glorifying, praising, and exalting the Lord.

On the other hand, **if in some work or action that a person becomes involved in, one cannot glorify the Lord through one's actions, this work also does not fit the criteria of being classified as a good or appropriate work to be practiced in the sense of the food that endures for everlasting life.**

Recalling the text of Ephesians 2, **we can see that the works in which the Lord calls a Christian to walk are the works that the Lord Himself prepared in advance for His children to walk in them. Works that, precisely because of this, have the heavenly seal and glorify the Lord.**

If a person soberly thinks about everything that God has provided and provides, starting with one's own life and the air one breathes, there is nothing that justifies an option for not walking according to God's will, which is always good, acceptable, and perfect for those who choose to live through faith, hope, and love of the Lord.

As much as there are moments of struggles, afflictions, and difficulties in the present world, even for those who walk in the will of the Lord or even for the fact of walking in the will of the Lord, the works of the Lord continue to be fair and cooperate with leading to eternal life with God. One more reason why the Lord is always worthy to receive glory, praise, and exaltation.

Therefore, **the glorification of the Lord and the performance of works for the praise and exaltation of the name of the Lord have always been and will continue to be essential aspects for checking, categorizing, or discerning the works with which a person may come across in one's life.**

And considering that a broad material on the glory of the Lord is presented on the theme of The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, we will only remain in this chapter in the brief mentions above on this topic. Furthermore, we inform that the themes Vocation, Calling, and Election and Walking Zealous of Good Works also complement the present material.

To finalize, then, this present theme, we also list below, for final reading and for reflection, some texts already mentioned in the previous chapters, plus some other specific examples concerning the glorification, praise, and exaltation of our Lord and Eternal God.

May the Lord, also in this generation, extend His mercy upon His children in the world so that they may have a clear understanding in their hearts of the relevance that the glorification, praise, and exaltation of God represent for their own good in all aspects of what they do in their lives. Amen!

Matthew 5: 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

*1 Peter 2: 11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,
12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

*1 Peter 4: 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.
15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.
16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.*

Hebrews 13: 15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

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.

1 Corinthians 10: 31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Psalms 33: 1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful.

Psalms 28: 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him.

Psalms 103: 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

*2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,
4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

- 6 **The LORD executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed.**
- 7 **He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.**
- 8 **The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.**
- 9 **He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.**
- 10 **He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.**
- 11 **For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;**
- 12 **As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**
- 13 **As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him.**
- 14 **For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.**
- 15 **As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.**
- 16 **For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more.**
- 17 **But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children,**
- 18 **To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.**
- 19 **The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.**
- 20 **Bless the LORD, you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word.**
- 21 **Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.**
- 22 **Bless the LORD, all His works, In all places of His dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!**

Lamentations 3: 25 **The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him.**

- Revelation 5: 11* **Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,**
- 12 **saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"**
- 13 **And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"**

Psalms 90: 16 Let Your work appear to Your servants, And Your glory to their children.
17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.

Bibliography

Note on Biblical Texts referenced:

- 1) The biblical texts without explicit indications of reference were drawn from NKJV Bible, as indicated below.
- 2) Highlights in the biblical texts, such as underline, bold, or similar were added by the author of this study.

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