

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -

Forgetting Those Things Which Are Behind

Series:
New Creation in Christ

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General Considerations about Using This Material:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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C1. Practical Positions of the New Creature in Christ

This new material is a continuation of the subject on The New Creature in Christ and aims to address some very practical attitudes that God longs to be embraced by those who have come to experience this new condition of life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first subject of the present series about the New Creation in Christ is focused on some considerations about how the condition of the new creation is given to a person, what are some principal and essential characteristics of the new creature, as well as on various aspects of human life that cannot be harmonized with the new “being” that is granted to those who receive Christ Jesus in the heart as their Lord and Savior.

Therefore, **once a person has already received the condition of a new creature in Christ Jesus, one is also expected to adopt indeed practical postures that are consistent with one's new condition granted to him or her by God and according to the heavenly kingdom.**

Anyone, in one's sinful condition, can come to Christ to find salvation through faith in the Lord. However, once salvation and the condition of a new creature have already been granted to an individual, it is expected that he or she also makes practical use of that which in one's new position is available in the grace and love of God.

Salvation and the condition of a new creature are granted to all those who receive Christ as Lord so that they no longer need to be subject to that from which they were freed and so that, with liberty, they may begin to experience the novelty of life granted to them, as exemplified in the following texts:

*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.**

*Ephesians 4: 17 **This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you**
should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility
of their mind,
18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the
life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the
blindness of their heart;
19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness,
to work all uncleanness with greediness.
20 But you have not so learned Christ,
21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the
truth is in Jesus:
22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man
which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,
23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,*

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

Through receiving the Gospel of God, a person, by heavenly grace, receives a condition of a new creation in the Lord, the statement that one has come to be considered as “a son of God” before the Heavenly Father, and the promise that one has his or her name listed in heaven for eternal life. These aspects, however, and although they are already very precious, are not granted to an individual only as titles, but also so that one begins to enjoy his or her new condition, something that depends on a person also living and walking practically in what was given to him or her.

In the last text of the Scriptures mentioned above, we can see that Paul advises Christians to realize the kind of life from which they have been redeemed or rescued, but likewise he warns them to also perceive, according to their new condition, that there are postures or attitudes that they are called to put in practice and by which they begin to demonstrate that they have in fact understood what they have been taught about the new life in Christ Jesus.

When referring to the expression *you have not so learned Christ*, Paul shows us that proper teaching about the Christian life or according to the new creature should always also contemplate the prospect of living and walking in conformity with the new received from the kingdom of God.

By also looking at the words uttered directly by the Lord Jesus Christ, we likewise can observe that just hearing the teachings granted by God without, however, putting them into practice, does not make a person wise. The process through which an individual may indeed reach the benefits that derive from the heavenly wisdom also encompasses the practical attitudes that a person adopts regarding the new information given to him or her from the kingdom of God.

Matthew 7: 24 Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.

If we return once again to the words spoken to Christians in the book of Ephesians, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter, it can be observed that they invariably contemplate two distinct practical points that complement each other, where the first point is explicitly directed to abandonment or leaving those aspects that are not in line with the Christian life, and where the second point is directed expressly to the practical adoption of what is consistent with that which becomes available to a person in one's new condition in Christ.

As long as a person is still dwelling in the present world, one will continue to come across with the two points mentioned in the previous paragraph, where, on the one hand, one is instructed to resist and avoid what is not appropriate to try to associate

with the new creature, and where, on the other side, one is called to receive and practice what is pertinent to one's new condition in Christ Jesus, as also taught in the following verses:

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.

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

Thus, **considering that the practice of leaving what is inappropriate and the practice of adhering to what is beneficial are, both, realities present in the lives of Christians who are still on the Earth, and with which they have to deal continually or day-by-day, it is also very relevant for a Christian to be well instructed regarding the two aspects in reference.**

Being aware that the practical life of the new creature in Christ encompasses both refuting or leaving what the Lord directs to leave and adhering to what the Lord instructs to be practiced can be of crucial value to everyone who has received the newness of life that proceeds from the Lord.

On the other hand, **it is equally important to understand that either what should be left and what should be followed are not aspects that can be defined according to natural human conceptions, but, instead, in conformity with what is taught by the Lord about the new creature, so that a Christian does not incur the claim that *you have not so learned Christ*.**

Who instructs a Christian about what he or she is called to abstain oneself, as well as about what one is called to practice in his or her life because of the received condition of a new creature, is God. Regarding both points, the Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, are ready to teach everyone who trusts in the Lord and who also remains in the fellowship with Christ.

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.**

14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

Highlighting once more, **a Christian needs to receive instruction and power from the Lord Jesus Christ to abstain oneself from what needs to be left, as well as to begin to practice the newness that one has been called to follow in his or her new condition bestowed upon him or her from the heavenly kingdom.**

*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.***

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

*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.***

Therefore, **life in consonance with the new creature, still in the present world, will always be related to a joint action of the resistance and rejection of the propositions contrary to the will of the Lord and the following of the “new practices” for which a Christian is called by the Lord, where both situations express immeasurably precious characteristics of the condition of a new creature in Christ Jesus.**

The practice of the new principles to which the Christian is called as a new creature in Christ aims to lead him or her to new and fruitful harvests according to the will of God. On the other hand, to leave that which is no longer appropriate for the new creature also contributes preciously to the life of a Christian by the fact that this action interrupts new harvests of that which in no way would benefit him or her.

*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.***

And as mentioned above, letting what is to be left and adhering to what is to be followed are actions that may influence each other, and that is why both should be known concomitantly in the light of the new creature.

If a person does not incline toward the new, one does not have the provision even to be free from what holds him back in the old and which is not profitable for his or her life. On the other hand, if a person does not leave the aspects of the old condition, even having God's provision to do so, one does not place oneself in the position of freedom offered to him or her to advance to the new, which provision to experiencing it is also in the Lord.

Through the newness of life in the Lord, a person reaches freedom from the bonds of the old condition, but it is also by properly leaving the former state and its inappropriate aspects that a person puts oneself in a position to proceed with freedom in the new.

In this way, and with a didactic objective to more precisely highlight each of the two practices mentioned in the introduction of the present material, we would like to dismember them in two different subjects, emphasizing in this material the practice of leaving or forgetting those things which should be left, and emphasizing in the content of the following subject the practice of advancing in the novelty that is available in the Lord to all those who have received in Him the condition of new creation.

C2. The Aspects of the New Creation Simply Do Not Fit in What Is Not Consistent with the New Creature

In the world, there is a series of aspects considered new that can be added to what already existed previously, but there are also situations in which the acceptance of something new implies changes and even the abandonment of old aspects.

When people, for instance, resumed the propagation of the concept that the planet Earth has a rounded, almost spherical or geoid shape, and not flat as it was proclaimed in a certain period of history, the new conclusion automatically created a situation in which the idea or the thought that the Earth was flat simply lost its prominent position, although some have probably resisted believing that it actually has the spherical or almost spherical shape.

The new knowledge reached about the shape of the planet Earth surely did not harmonize with the previously announced understanding, showing that the new concept could not be added to the old one by revealing the previous knowledge as obsolete.

On the other hand, the discovery of a new planet, which also rotates around the Sun, is an understanding that can be aggregated or added to the knowledge related to the fact that the planet Earth is also almost spherical and rotates around the Sun, without one conflicting with the other.

Thus, when we return to the theme of the new creation, **we believe that it is very relevant for a Christian to know what kind of category of novelty are the aspects that are granted to him or her as a new creature in Christ.**

Is the new creature, and the new conditions associated with it, then, a granting of life that can be added to an old life model to correct this ancient model?

Or is the new creation a concession of a new condition of life that does not aim at restoring an old model?

To reflect on the questions outlined in the last paragraphs, we propose to recall the text below and which was more extensively covered in the first subject of this series, entitled The New Creature in Christ, as follows:

2 Corinthians 5: 17 **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (or new creature); old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

Knowing or recognizing that the new creature is indeed new, and that the aspects that are granted with it are only applicable to those who receive it, is of vital importance, for as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us, a person who is not born again according to the Spirit of God is a person who cannot see the kingdom of God and cannot enter into it.

Without a person receiving the new birth coming from God, one can only speculate how the new creature is, just as people considered wrongly that the Earth was flat. Without the new birth, an individual cannot experience and obtain the proper knowledge of how the life in Christ Jesus or in consonance with the kingdom of God is indeed.

Without receiving the newness of life from the kingdom of God, there is no way for an individual to indeed live and walk according to this kingdom, an aspect also addressed in the subject on The Gospel of the Kingdom.

Without the new birth, the characteristics or faculties of the new creature are not or cannot be added to a person. And without receiving first the attributes of the newness of life in the Lord, a person is not fit to live or walk according to the new creature.

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

If a person insists on wanting to live according to the principles of the Christian life, without being first made new by the new birth, not only will one not be able to achieve his or her goal, but one may still get burdened or even become bitter precisely regarding the principles that aim at granting him or her true freedom and a life of inestimable value.

While in the proposition of the law of Moses the people tried to attain a new conduct and a new life without first having received a new condition internally or in the heart, in the Christian life the situation is entirely different. The Christian life begins with the constitution of the new creature so that, then, a person may start to live and walk according to this new condition which is granted to him or her by the grace of God from the heavenly kingdom.

Moreover, **during the announcement of the unquestionable need for people to receive the new birth and the kingdom of heaven to begin to experience the newness of life in God, the Lord Jesus Christ never omitted to announce that what He was presenting was indeed new and, therefore, also incompatible with many ancient or old things.**

And to emphasize that the new condition of life offered from heaven to all human beings was indeed distinct from the old condition and that it was not compatible with what people had experienced up to that point, the Lord Jesus Christ exemplified in various ways the incompatibility of the new with the old, of which we still highlight here the ones that follow below:

*Mark 2: 22 **And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.***

*Luke 5: 37 **And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined.***

*38 **But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.***

*Mark 2: 21 **No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse.***

The Lord Jesus Christ, also through two natural figures, teaches that there are new aspects of life that people really should not try to mix with old aspects, for there are situations in which trying to combine some distinct factors will not work or only will increase losses for those who attempt to make such combinations.

Through examples about natural matters, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches that there are situations in a person's life where actions aimed at putting new things into old things can even worsen the old and increase its damage, causing him or her to lose both the benefits of the offered novelty and the old to which it was improperly attempted to add the new.

An individual who wants to live the Christian life, but without being constituted new by the new birth, resembles the person who is seeking to put the new wine into an old wineskin or the unshrunk cloth to mend the old garment. Practices which the Lord compared to the lack of an appropriate sense about the reality of the aspects in reference, and from which derives only losses and more losses.

In other parts of the Scriptures we find the Lord Jesus Christ also declaring:

*Luke 17: 33 **Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.***

*Matthew 16: 25 **For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.***

Just as the thought of the flat Earth does not fit into the conception of an almost spherical planet, and just as the Lord Jesus Christ teaches that it is not appropriate to put new wine into old wineskins, or new cloth to mend the old garment, so it is not pertinent to try to experience the reality of the new creation being still attached to the old creature or under the principles of the old nature.

Christ died on the cross of Calvary to free people from the old nature or the old condition subject to sin, and not for people to try to use some principles of the new creature for the purpose of improving the old nature or the old condition subject to sin.

Christ died on the cross of Calvary to grant a new condition of life accompanied by new characteristics, and not so that people could be equipped with new capacities to try to correct the old nature or the old wineskin, as if the old man had first to reach perfection to after that attain salvation.

The man, the being, the person who receives new garments from the Lord is called to undress the old clothes so that after that one can put on the new clothes with new

characteristics, and one does not receive new garments to try to give credibility to his or her old nature.

Similarly, new wine is not for the old wineskin. On the contrary, as the Lord Jesus Christ declared, ***new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.***

And still, regarding what has been exposed in the last paragraphs, it is also worth noting that **the Scriptures emphatically and repeatedly teach that the person who is in Christ died for the old and was resurrected for the new. Asserting also by this aspect, that the newness of life or the made alive spirit that a person receives in the Lord is the expression of something that is indeed new and entirely dissociated from various old things.**

Romans 6: 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,
9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.
10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.
11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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.

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

Colossians 2: 12 Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Galatians 3: 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Returning once again to the theme about garments, **the one who becomes familiar with the Scriptures, knows that the mentions of the garments can also be a reference to the characteristics of the inner life with which a person dresses oneself. That is why those who come to be in Christ Jesus are also called to cast out the old garments in order to appropriately dress**

the new ones, as exemplified in the text of Ephesians mentioned in the previous chapter and as well in the following verses:

- Colossians 3: 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.***
-

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches that putting new wine into old wineskins under no circumstances will be a successful action, warning people, therefore, not to try to apply the aspects of the new life in the Lord to the things which are behind. In addition to expressing a lack of good sense, the expectation of succeeding in combining the new with the things which are behind may further aggravate the unfavorable condition of those who are inclined to follow this practice.

The Lord Jesus Christ warns that trying to mend the old with a part of the new, or a piece of the new, causes worse damage, causing the hole in the old garment to get bigger or the wineskin to break.

Some Christians often insist on those who have not yet been born again to adopt some principles of Christian life in order to achieve a “morally better” life. However, in doing so, they may fail to teach that **the essence of the Christian life is not a new moral conduct for the old inner man, but, rather, to die in Christ for the old nature along with receiving a made alive spirit and which is guided by the presence of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in the one who is made a new creature.**

In speaking of what is vital to announce in the proclamation of the Gospel, for a person to be enlightened about the new condition of life in the Lord, Paul states the following words:

- 1 **Corinthians 2: 1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.***
- 2 **For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.***
- 3 **I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.***
- 4 **And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,***
- 5 **that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.***

6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

**7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,
8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

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

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

Similarly, also Peter, when referring to the inner posture of a Christian, as well as to the conduct of a Christian towards other people in the world, wrote the following verses:

1 Peter 3: 15 **But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;**

16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

Now, what is the reason for a Christian's hope? Is it not Christ in his or her life? Is it not the heavenly newness of life which the Father of lights has bestowed upon him or her?

Why, then, should anyone expect that a person in the condition of an old wineskin or clothed in the garments of the old nature might live similarly to those who have Christ in the heart?

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.

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

Besides the fact that the Christian is called to do good works because this is the right thing to do and because it is beneficial for his or her life, the Christian is called to perform good works so that the people of the world also may come across the light of the Lord, which is in the Christian and which has been granted to him or her by the new birth.

The unique light that enlightens the life of a Christian is Christ. Therefore, every Christian who is placed in the midst of a world that dwells in darkness is called to be a witness of the light which one has received, and thus to cooperate with the Lord so that those who do not yet know the heavenly light may also become exposed to the testimony of the benefits of receiving it.

Every Christian who still lives in the present world has the privilege of being called to be a living witness of the newness of life that is in Christ and that enables him or her to live and walk distinctly from the world.

*Matthew 5: 16 **Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.***

Only through the new condition in Christ Jesus can a person get a new way of living and walking. And this is the message that the Lord Jesus announced, which the angels of God also proclaimed, which the prophets of antiquity pre-announced, and that the apostles and the witnesses of Christ proclaimed over the several centuries of human history.

How can a branch produce fruit from the vine if it is not connected indeed to the vine?

*John 15: 5 **I am the vine, you are the branches. ... without Me you can do nothing.***

Or how can an individual be able to produce results in consonance with the good vine if his or her source of nutrients proceeds from a tree which bears bad fruit?

*Matthew 7: 16 **You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?***
*17 **Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.***

In the mentality of the old creature, the one in which a person has not yet died in Christ by faith, has not been buried with Him, and has not been risen or made alive in the Lord, the concept or thinking is invariably similar or according to the law of Moses, under which people believe they can, even as old wineskins, come to attain an improvement in their condition as old creatures. An attempt that, however, shows itself to be a vain, useless, or unfavorable effort for their lives. Moreover, this situation may

even be aggravated or have its harmful potential increased when people try to put aspects of the new wine or the new clothing in their old conditions.

And still as part of the theme of this chapter, we would like to point out that **the attempts to put new wine in old wineskins, or unshrunk cloth on old garments, also manifest themselves when people try to live an alleged Christian life in religious structures and that follow the models of the old nature or the models of people who do not live and walk indeed in Christ Jesus.**

In the world, many mistakenly think that God is pleased with their attempts to practice an apparent Christian life through their religious beliefs and institutions, as well as by their temples with the dozens and hundreds of rituals that are practiced around their old wineskins or unfitted garments.

When people try to “frame” the Christian life or the life according to the grace of God in the old concepts of circumcision or uncircumcision, the Jew or the Greek models, religion or liberality, (as explained in the material on The New Creature in Christ), they are trying to put the novelty of life into old structures, old clothes, or old wineskins. This practice, however, may cause them to place themselves at high risk of going away even further from all the newness of life offered to them by the Lord, as exemplified below:

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

2 **Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.**

3 **And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.**

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

5 **For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.**

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

7 **You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?**

8 **This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.**

...

13 **For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.**

Acts 7:4 8 **However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:**

49 **‘Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest?’**

50 **Has My hand not made all these things?’**

51 **You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.**

Trying to “fit” the life of the new creature in Christ into some kind of temple made by human hands or in some denomination or religious institution, even if it is alleged that they were created under some instructions of the Scriptures, is to try to “frame” the wind on four walls or to attempt to set limits to what is created to be free.

*John 3: 8 **The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.***

Trying to “frame” the life of the new creature in Christ in some sort of system of religious doctrines compiled by men or women, even it permeated by parts of the Scriptures, is to try to limit what was created to be free in the Lord and His righteousness, implying, even, in acts that are called by God as a “resisting the Spirit of the Lord” or in practices that oppose the true freedom that is in Christ and in true worship before the Lord.

*2 Corinthians 3: 14 **But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.***

*15 **But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.***

*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.***

*John 4: 24 **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***

Besides that there are people in the world who seek to live the Christian life without having even been constituted as new creatures in Christ, because they have not yet received Him as Lord in their lives, there are also in the world those who have already become sons of God, but who are inattentive to the conditions of the new creature granted to them. They are those who allow themselves to be persuaded to want to put the new wine they have received into concepts and structures of their former conditions, which are either according to the model of the ancient law of Moses or according to the mentality of the people who live without acknowledging and respecting the righteousness of the Heavenly Father revealed in Christ Jesus to the whole world.

If a Christian returns to the propositions that are according to the circumcision or the law of Moses, or if he or she returns to the propositions of the people characterized by the Greek or the Gentiles model, one puts oneself at high risk for trying to frame his or her position in the Lord under a condition that is not due to a Christian. By returning to the things which are behind, a Christian, besides not being able to make them have value before God, may still incur the possibility of seeing grace vanishing from his or her life or jeopardize his or her condition as a new creature in the Lord.

- Hebrews 10: 26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,*
27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.
28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.
29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?
30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people."
31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:
33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;
34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.
35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.
36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:
37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.
38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."
39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

1 Thessalonians 5: 19 Do not quench the Spirit.

The diversity of characteristics of the new creature is not granted by the Lord to be used to strengthen that which opposes the new creature, however appealing, to human eyes, it may seem the attempt to restore the systems that have proved to be imperfect and entirely obsolete in the face of the new condition in Christ offered by the Lord.

And because the new cannot be framed into the old, Paul also declares:

- Philippians 3: 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,*
14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

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

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

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

C3. The New Creature Is Not Granted to Fit in the Standards of the Old Nature, but the Old Nature Propositions Also Do Not Fit in the New Creature

Glimpsing at the title of this new chapter, one might even think that it is a repetition of what was presented in the previous part. However, if viewed more closely, a significant difference can be observed regarding the previous one, although the two distinct points in reference may lead a person to equivalent results at the end.

In the previous chapter, we have seen the Lord's instruction that it is not reasonable or appropriate to put new wine into old wineskins. In this new chapter, however, we want to note that the reverse principle is also applicable, that is, putting old wine into a new wineskin likewise does not match what the Lord offers people in Christ.

Forgetting about the things that are behind, therefore, has at least a dual application, namely:

- ⇒ 1st) **Stopping to insist on trying to put the new wine in old wineskins, as seen in the previous chapter;**
- ⇒ 2nd) **Stopping to insist on trying to bring things that are behind into the new condition in Christ or to associate them with the life according to the new creature.**

A person who understands the principle that the newness of life that one has received from God is not appropriate to restore the things which are behind, but is not fully satisfied with this principle, may still come to think that there is no problem, then, in trying to rescue some parts of what became obsolete, entering so in the way of seeking to aggregate some things of the old standards into the condition of the new creature in Christ. This practice, however, is also not appropriate to be followed by the one who has received the new condition of life granted to him or her from the heavenly kingdom.

And just as in the Scriptures there are figures to exemplify that new wine should not be put into old wineskins, so they also present figures to show that old wine should not be put into new wineskins or added to the new wine.

So, one of the figures recorded in the Scriptures to point out that the aspects or items of the old nature model should not be added to the new condition in Christ Jesus is the figure of the old leaven or, rather, of the working of the yeast that represents the set of propositions of things which are behind.

Trying to make use of things which are behind with the purpose of associating them with the life of the new creature is to try to sprinkle the new with the yeast of the old, is to try to mix the inadequate with the right, the evil with the good, a practice which, therefore, should be firmly rejected, as exposed in one more text below:

*1 Corinthians 5: 6 **Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?***

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

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

Just as Christ warned of the risk of putting an unshrunk cloth on old garments, so the Lord firmly warned His disciples to be wary of the characteristics of the working of the improper leaven that is used by several people, and explicitly urged them to abstain from it:

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

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

In the previous chapter, we commented that if a person wants to live principles concerning the Christian life without experiencing the new birth, one will be trying to put new wine into old wineskins, under the risk of losing the wine and the wineskins, thereby increasing the harmful condition for his or her life.

On the other hand, **if after indeed experiencing the new birth, a person wants to continue putting old wine in one's new condition in Christ, one puts oneself at high risk of getting to the point of turning back to the subjection to the position of an old wineskin, since a little leaven, if given space for it to work, is powerful to leaven the "whole" lump.**

Moreover, one of the aspects to be highlighted about the reality of the attempts to include the leaven of the things which are behind in the position of life that is granted to a person in Christ, is that God does not necessarily interpose Himself so that the yeast of the old does not come to take all the dough that was new and accepted to receive leaven, although God repeatedly calls people to repentance regarding the inappropriate acceptance of the undue yeast.

Just as God does not prevent people from trying to put new wine into old wineskins, although He warns them of the consequences if they do so and instructs them not to follow this way, so God also does not prevent people from putting old leaven in the dough of the new position they have received from the Lord, alerting them, however, not to do so and exhorting them about the consequences to which they may become subject if they despise the instructions of the Lord.

As a new creature in Christ, every person is called by the Lord to follow the way of God's will without returning, in no way, to that from which one has been redeemed, saved, or made free.

If, however, an individual neglects the will of God and chooses to go back to the concepts of the things that are behind, either by turning back to them or wanting to

include them in the new path offered by the Lord, he or she incurs, respectively, the risk of returning to the position of an old wineskin or the acceptance of the undue yeast which, ultimately, can also transform the new dough into an old wineskin by the leavening process that it produces in the lump in which it is put.

If someone who has already received the position of a new creature in Christ continually flirts with sin or inclines to it, the leaven of the conditions that resist the way of the Lord may come to grow and subject this individual again to the afflictions of slavery to sin.

If an individual, already redeemed by the heavenly salvation, starts again to incline oneself, for instance, to the rules of the model so-called Jew in the New Testament Scriptures, and begins to walk in line with them, that is, returns to walk according to the model of the circumcision, the law of Moses, or similar to it, one places oneself on the path where he or she puts oneself under the risk of getting a hardened heart, to the point of returning to the position of an old wineskin or clothed with outdated garments.

Turning back to an involvement with the behavior of the model so-called Jew or the Greek model is a return, in both cases, to the old human conditions because of which it was necessary for Christ to suffer the death on the cross of Calvary to offer all redemption from sin and to offer the divine salvation.

Considering that in the world under the sun there will not be anything indeed new coming from this very world, the acceptance of the commandments of the natural man regarding eternal life is always a return to the old conditions of life from which the new creature was saved and delivered by the Lord. A situation in which it does not matter whether there is a stronger inclination toward the model of circumcision or more to the model of uncircumcision, which, in turn, have been more broadly addressed in the subject on The New Creature in Christ.

The fables or misleading propositions of the present world, over generations or years, may be renamed by other names, but they are always similar in their weak foundations, even if told by other actors or under other narratives.

Meetings or services denominated as Christians, but full of liturgies of the law of Moses (or other laws of men and their traditions), are conceptually so “circumcision” or under the model so-called “Jew” as were the ceremonies under the law of Moses, for if one of the items of the law of Moses is required of people, the individuals who submit to it also become bound to keep the whole law, still becoming subject to the penalty of condemnation associated with the same law if they fail to fulfill just one item of it.

Moses was a God-fearing man and a servant of God. He served God to grant the people a perfect law of religious conduct, a law which the people had asked God after they had come out of the bondage of Egypt. However, never a man fallen in sin could or will be able to fulfill this law, serving the perfect concession of this law as an example and teaching for other generations so that people would no longer want this kind of life or would no longer seek to submit to it. (A subject addressed more broadly in the material on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ and The Gospel of God's Righteousness).

Life under the law of Moses and life in Christ are entirely incompatible with each other, just as the life of the new creature and the life subject to sin are incompatible. However, regarding the law of Moses, the lack of awareness that living under the law is also a carnal life can yet be aggravated by the fascination of the thought that by

fulfilling the law a person may be on the path of truth, even if this is never possible to be done indeed since no human being is capable of fulfilling the “whole” written law.

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.**

John 1: 17 **For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

Looking at the Scriptures, the history of humankind in general, and the history of Christians, it seems that the propensity of a Christian, when inclined toward the flesh, initially or generally is higher for rules similar to the style of circumcision or the law of Moses and its religious rituals and routines, because for many, life under the law does not seem like a life after the flesh. This aspect, however, is a great deception, for both the model of circumcision and the uncircumcision or the Jew and the Gentile model are seen by God as ways subject to carnal commandments.

The inappropriate inclination of some Christians to groups of people who advocate that certain parts of the old law need to be fulfilled or who because of their personal interests attempt to introduce certain items of this law in the way of the life in Christ, is probably more intense because following the outer rules, in principle, may have a greater “moral appearance” or a greater “semblance of a path according to the truth,” but which, in fact, does not express and can never express life consonant with the new creature.

And when there is no repentance accompanied by practical actions of resistance regarding the acceptance, connivance, coexistence, or the complicity of the aspects that are not consistent with the new creature, these aspects that oppose the will of God may grow and end up, on the one hand, in a confusion of rules and laws, and, on the other side, in a Greek-liberal life of sin. If the working of the aspects in reference, including those dressed in the appearance of piety, is not interrupted in the life of a person by actions of repentance, it may go so far as to corrupt the whole dough and lead the individuals who welcome it to experience even the sinking of their faith in Christ Jesus and the Heavenly Father.

The inadequate leaven, once accepted, may reach the point where people begin to follow propositions that appear to be Christian and in which they are led to think, for instance, that keeping Sunday or going to meetings or services makes them holy, as if one day of the week were more holy than another, or as if attending some meetings were more sacred than walk in righteousness in one's home, business, or life in general. In one of its performances, the leaven seeks to create the “double-minded man,” who on Saturday, Sunday, or special meetings claims to want to do good, but who in the practice of his or her day-to-day is unfitted to do right and comes to the point of even not trying to do it in the days he or she begins to call as “secular.”

Thus, **considering that regarding the Christian life it is not appropriate to try to put the new in the old, so as well it is not appropriate to try to put the old leaven into the newness of life in Christ.**

The way prepared and proposed by the Lord to the new creature is, in fact, new. It does not express the attempt to return to the path of the “Jew <_____> Greek” ruler or scale (exemplified in the subject on The New Creature in Christ), but it also does not refer to trying to bring aspects of the path of the “Jew <_____> Greek” ruler models into the Christian life.

The way prepared and proposed by the Lord to the new creature is indeed new, as well as perfect, complete in all its characteristics, and entirely grounded in God and His righteousness, not needing any complement of the things which are behind. The way the Lord presents only needs to be received and followed in line with the living instruction of the Unique and Eternal Living God.

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

*2 Samuel 22: 31 **As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.***

*Psalms 27: 11 **Teach me Your way, O LORD, And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.***

*Psalms 86: 11 **Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.***

C4. Important and Shocking Warning: Who Experienced the “Old” Wine Does Not Readily Want the “New!”

Luke 5: 37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined.

*38 But **new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.***

*39 **And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better.’***

In the words of the Lord Jesus Christ presented in the last text mentioned above, a statement is found that seems somewhat strange, because the first impression one can have is that something is inverted in this text, but it is not.

What the Lord Jesus declared is that indeed those who have drunk from the “old” do not immediately prefer the “new,” not the other way around, still stating that they even come to say that “the old is better” or that the “old is pleasurable or more excellent.”

If a person reads quickly the Lord's words quoted above and is not attentive to them, one might even think that the Lord was declaring that as soon as someone took the new wine that is offered through the gift of the new creature, one too would promptly stop to desire the portion or pattern of what has become obsolete in the face of the heavenly proposition. However, what the Lord has signaled is the opposite, announcing that those individuals who have drunk of the old wine do not readily prefer the new. Instead, they are resistant to the latter, preferring the old and even claiming that it is better than the novelty of life that God offers them.

In speaking of the new wine and the old wine, the Lord Jesus exposes an effect that the old wine produces in those who drink of it, showing that the old wine has a characteristic to affect the evaluation of taste or discernment of those who ingest it.

And this not being enough, the Lord Jesus further stated that “all” those who drink the old wine go on to say that the old wine is better, just as they hold in preference for the old one to the detriment of the preference for the new wine, at least initially.

Besides causing a resistance to the preference for the new, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches that drinking of the old wine still accentuates the preference for the old.

The Lord Jesus Christ has announced that the act of drinking or proving of the old wine is accompanied by an ability to affect the judgment skills of those who ingest it, which is also taught to us in the texts recorded by Paul, as exemplified below:

*2 Corinthians 3: 14 **But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.***

*15 **But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.***

*16 **Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.***

Also comparable to the veil that blinds the mind or the fascination that makes people prefer what does not come from God instead of preferring the newness of life offered to them in Christ Jesus, the old wine, when ingested, read, accepted, received, or assimilated, accentuates the appreciation of the old to the detriment of the new, even the old being corrupted.

Still, in other words, **the old wine has in it a taste or a characteristic that is comparable to an improper veil or yeast that seeks to obscure the perception of the value of the newness that God in Christ Jesus offers to all human beings.**

Nevertheless, the fact that the old wine looks better than the new, or even appears to have a better taste than the new for the one who drinks it, does not mean that it is better indeed or that the choice or preference for it may turn out to be a good, beneficial, or appropriate choice.

Many ancient things are immutable and will remain good or appropriate forever, but just because something is traditional and ancient does not mean that it indeed will be good or beneficial to people.

In the world there are many ancient things which for many centuries are the expression of improper practices, and which, even after centuries, are still futile, vain, or perverse, as we are also informed in the first letter of Peter and several other parts of the Scriptures that narrate the words of the Lord Jesus, as follows:

*1 Peter 1: 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.*

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

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

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

For a soul who drank old wine and has become accustomed to being instructed primarily by its fellow men or by a set of predefined rules, and not personally by God, there is a tendency to think that it is easier to receive an orientation from a close person or some written rules than from the Lord Who manifests Himself also spiritually.

For the soul who drank old wine and is accustomed to seeking instruction in palpable or visible things, there is an attraction to continue seeking guidance in what

one is used to in the natural level, thus presenting a resistance to the pursuit of orientation in the condition of a new creature in the Lord and in Whom there is a challenge to grow in this new way of living and walking.

In many aspects of life, the human being tends to think that it is easier to appeal to what is known or visible from a long time than to choose to walk in what is “unknown, not natural, or new,” even if the new one is better or correct.

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that the human being who drinks the old wine is in the path of becoming a conservative of the old one even though it is inappropriate for his or her life, and therefore, as already mentioned, without a predisposition for the new.

In the kind of life consonant with the old wine, there may be an initial feeling of greater stability and security than in the face of the challenge of receiving the newness of life offered by the Lord, for while life according to the old wine operates according to what is naturally perceivable, the new wine acts according to what is grounded in the heavenly kingdom or what is not conceivable merely according to human natural sight and knowledge. (Aspects viewed more broadly also in the subject on The Gospel of the Kingdom of God).

Luke 17: 20 Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

2 Corinthians 5: 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

People that got used to the taste of the old wine are accustomed to thinking that life can be lived by subjection to a set of rules and practices, not realizing, however, that they follow a model of life or precepts that should have already been abandoned due to the fact that something better and new has been revealed by the Lord to them. They resist the new because of their appreciation for things which are behind and with which they are familiarized, not willing to detach themselves from what they should go away.

Evidently, when God is proposing and offering the possibility for people to receive a new life in Christ, He is not teaching them to change something old for something that appears to be new and that, in reality, is also outdated, remembering that the novelty of life does not come from the natural world or the things that are under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 1: 9 That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.

And not being regrettable enough that the old wine leads the people who drink it not to prefer the new wine, the involvement with the old wine still acts to lead its followers to become defenders and announcers of their attachment to this wine, to the point of declaring that the old is better or more excellent. Thus, proposing that the things which

come from the old human nature are better than the newness of life which comes from God Himself, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

The practice of drinking old wine can become a source of the most bizarre and absurd imaginable dissimulations and deceptions, which gets its playing field when people give preference to what their souls find most pleasurable or safe in detriment of consulting God on what is, in fact, good, safe, and profitable for them.

On the other hand, **the new wine encompasses the gift of sobriety, of heavenly light, and for this reason, it is also the wine that is not welcomed by those who do not receive the love of the truth in the heart or who resist the light of the novelty of life that is offered to them in God.**

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

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.

The expression “new wine” represents a figure of life that comes from Christ, it is the newness of life offered from above, it is the life granted by God through His Spirit, it is the strength and the living instructions of the Lord that serve as support and direction to the children of God, and which in no way conform to the wine that causes torpor.

*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.*

When the Lord Jesus Christ warns about the effects of the old wine on those who drink it, and that so are led to prefer this wine rather than preferring the new wine, He obviously is not signaling that people should stand or insist on the preference for the old wine.

Although the old wine in reference has elements that seek to attract people's preference, this old wine is based on “*the oldness of the letter*” and on propositions that cannot lead people to a real newness of life or eternal life in the Lord.

It is in Christ that God offers the wine of the true novelty of life or eternal life in Him, calling people not to remain attached to the old wine that initially attracts them

more, but which also dulls, deceives, and produces dissolution. An aspect that is also clearly explained in the Scriptures in the following text, as well as in the texts in which Christ refers that the new wine is also a symbol of the new covenant that can be established with Him because of the shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary.

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

*Luke 22: 20 **Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."***

Despite the preference that many people may have for the old wine, the Lord calls each person no longer to be drunk with that old wine in which there is dissipation or dissolution, in that type of wine that is according to the old nature, according to the flesh, and in which there are all sorts of fascinations and deceptions.

To practice the propositions of the model denominated in the New Testament Scriptures as “Jew” or the propositions of the model denominated in the same Scriptures as “Greek” or “Gentile,” is to remain associated with the old wine that in none of its variations, models, or styles has anything of the new wine.

The old wine is indeed more tangible, palpable, and known on the natural level, and may still be much more familiar and seemingly cozy for those who have drunk it, but not even because of this it is beneficial, for it is a producer of opposition or resistance to the offer of salvation and life offered by God to all human beings through His grace.

Although the old wine may have a “*familiar taste*,” a taste of what has been known for a long time, the old wine is outdated and corrupted, and always will be. It will always be an expression of a sort of imitation, dissolution, or dissimulation of the true or real way and will always seek to act in opposition to what actually may cooperate in establishing the life of the new creature in a person.

The word “dissipation” or “dissolution” in the Scriptures is related to a dissolute, perverted, or libertine life. That is, a life where one seeks to dilute the understanding of the truth or where the search for the truth, to reach a more accurate knowledge or experience to live in line with it, is no longer practiced. Life subject to dissolution is inclined to lead people to satisfy themselves with their beliefs, religions, denominations, institutions, structures, historical customs, cultures, and traditions instead of seeking the living and truly beneficial strength and instruction of the Lord, Who is the truth.

In their various propositions, partakers of the old wine may even claim that they are sympathizers of the truth or announce some isolated aspects of truth to try to attract a higher number of followers, but the characteristics of the old wine they offer invariably are dissolute and are associated with aspects of lie with the goal of producing distortion of the understanding of the truth.

To adopt the practice of drinking the old wine, in one way or another, is to follow a path that always seeks to lead a person to propositions of a life subject to corruption in

relation to the offer of life that God makes in Christ Jesus, which is why the Scriptures prominently warns Christians to be cautious and abstain from that what leads to a bitter end.

*Colossians 2: 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.
9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

Accepting to leave, in fact, the old wine behind to receive the new appropriately can be very challenging, which, in turn, may provoke the feeling that continuing life according to the things that are behind even seems to be a more comfortable and better option. However, although it may seem tastier to a soul due to a familiarity with it, the way of the old wine is a corrupted path, and it cannot grant indeed the newness of life in God that exists only in the new wine.

It seems to us, then, that **the warning of the Lord Jesus Christ about the risk of continuing to drink the old wine, and thus having a taste for the new one affected, aims at least two very objective and practical aspects:**

- ⇒ 1st) **To warn those who have become accustomed to the old wine to put it aside, even though the new does not seem better to them, and this, to proceed steadily to the path of the wine that grants a real novelty of life.**
- ⇒ 2nd) **To warn those who are already in the way of the new wine to be careful not to return to drinking from the old, for “*no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new,*” that is, by going back to drink the old wine they also return to the risk of finding the older once again better to the detriment of the new wine they received from the Lord.**

When the Lord announced that the practice of drinking the old wine is a cunning way to keep people associated with this type of wine, He was also teaching that receiving the new life, according to the new birth, is directly related to a disposition of a person to break with that which one has been attached by appreciation or custom and which no longer suit him or her.

In other words, the Lord Jesus was showing that the option to walk in harmony with the new wine also encompasses leaving behind the aspects of the old wine because they are not reconcilable with the new life offered by the Lord, even if these aspects to be forgotten may seem to taste better.

When some people hear that Christ wants to give them an abundant life, they think they can desire whatever they want or whatever pleases their carnal ambitions. However, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that the life He offers is a life according to the truth and righteousness of God, and not according to the carnal lusts of humans.

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that the new wine or the new covenant of life that He offers may, in fact, conflict with the taste or appreciation that people have for their ancient ways of living on Earth and in which they are not guided by the Spirit of God.

Christ teaches us that He knows the affection and appreciation that people have for what is familiar, traditional, cultural, and naturally known. And for being aware of this, that the Lord teaches us objectively that living and walking in the newness of life is also a call to abandon that which is of the old and not compatible with the new creature, even though the things which are behind may be highly attractive to a person.

The call to life in consonance with the new creature, or the offer of life according to the new wine, is not intended to be a proposition that matches the new with the things which are behind, even if people are accustomed to them or however much comfortable or pleasurable they may think they are.

The call to newness of life is not a proposition that exempts people from being challenged or confronted with the need for changes in what is inappropriate in what they are, in what they practice, and even what they appreciate or like.

Christ teaches us that it is indeed challenging to receive Him, but at the same time He also offers us a comforting teaching that what needs to be left behind, however valuable it may seem, will not represent a loss in the face of the greatness of the new that through Him is offered, for what He offers is not only temporal life but also eternal.

To experience the new, part of the process also includes leaving behind the things that oppose the new, which, ultimately, will not represent a missing part for those who leave it in favor of living and walking in the will of the Heavenly Father.

*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.*

Considering that the old wine mentioned in the Scriptures is an expression of a figure of speech of the life according to the natural man, and since the natural man is opposed to that which comes from God or that which is born according to the Spirit of God, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that receiving the new wine or life according to the new creature may come to be not naturally appealing.

Receiving the novelty of life from the Lord, therefore, may represent an action opposed to the natural taste and wisdom of human beings. It is a decision contrary to the lusts of the eyes and the flesh, but crucial and very significant in favor of the recognition of the truth and the eternal life that in the Lord is made available to those who believe and receive Him in the heart.

Galatians 4: 29 **But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.**

Galatians 5: 17 **For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**

John 3: 6 **That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

It is natural for a person to have an attachment to the natural, to the things which are behind, to the life according to the first Adam, but this life does not generate real spiritual life and, therefore, it does not generate life according to the will of God or the eternal life that is spiritual.

In speaking about the new wine and the old wine, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that the new is effectively compatible or able to be combined only with the new itself.

Luke 5: 38 **But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.**

In the book of Matthew, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are recorded as follows:

Matthew 9: 16 **No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse.**

17 **Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.**

Despite the fact that the new wine is offered in a way that contradicts the desire or appreciation of many people, or that is not in line with the natural taste of those who have drunk the old one, the manner by which it is offered, on the part of Christ to human beings, is entirely appropriate, being also because of this called as novelty of life that is widely distinct from mere natural life.

If a person who has an appreciation for the old wine is not willing to give up the aspects of the old nature to receive the new life in Christ, but still wants aspects of the new wine, one runs the risk already mentioned in the previous chapters. That is, he or she runs the risk of wanting to put aspects of the new wine into old wineskins under a possible penalty of coming to impute even larger damage to his or her whole situation.

In the words of the Lord Jesus Christ quoted last, He instructs that the right alternative for an individual to receive life according to the Spirit of

God, according to the heavenly kingdom, is to welcome the new creation and life according to the new creature, where neither remaining entirely in the old nor attempting to combine the old with the new, or vice versa, will be fruitful for the general life of this person and especially for his or her eternal life.

For those who think that Christ should grant them a new life where everything is pleasing to the soul or their taste, the Lord teaches them also the following words:

John 12: 25 **He who loves his life (or soul) will lose it, and he who hates his life (or soul) in this world will keep it for eternal life.**

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.**

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

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

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.**

The path to which a person is called to live and walk in the newness of life in the Lord also passes through the door of the renunciations of the improper desires of the soul or through a tight life for the flesh. Waiting for God's direction for the several tasks of life indeed may come to represent a narrow door and a narrow path for the flesh (soul and body).

Matthew 7: 13 **Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.**

14 **Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

Naturally speaking, it may even be very appreciative to grant significant spaces for the soul to manifest itself as it pleases, to have bodily freedom to come and go, and to make personal plans of all kinds, but in this there is

also the risk of an individual withdrawing from voluntary dependence on God and from the living, personal, and daily fellowship with the Lord.

We find in the Scriptures a parable about a man who, in his natural wealth, said to his soul, “*take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.*” However, the Lord called him mad, because in his devotion to the wine of dissolution, he thought that goods and riches could be the provision and safety of his life for many years. (A theme that is more widely addressed in the subject on The Christian and The Riches).

The wine of dissolution is a figure of the way that large crowds follow, whether the liberals in the flesh or the religious who enjoy their religions and events.

The old wine may even taste good for the natural man and satisfy his earthly desires, but in all its work is included the resistance to the will of God and the life of the new creature in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5: 17 **For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**

2 Corinthians 12: 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, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

10 **Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Naturally speaking, as mentioned earlier, the path that seeks religiousness, life subject to predefined rules, human philosophy, and even the payment to priests and mediators so that they supposedly seek the will of God instead of others, presents several characteristics which are attractive to human beings and even seem to be easier, more tangible, and more agile to be followed than living by personal and ongoing pursuit of fellowship with the Lord. These actions, initially, may appear to offer a more visible or more immediate sense of satisfaction to the soul.

However, life subject to written rules that cannot have life in themselves or mere human philosophies, or even subject to mediators to whom people seek to outsource what only they can do, is a kind of path in which an individual will never be able to develop the newness of life that God offers him or her. Through trust in the natural man, in his attributes, or in his actions, people oppose themselves to the grace of God and the offer of life in the Lord, which has as one of its parameters a direct and personal relationship of God with the new creature and of the new creature with the Eternal Lord already from the heart of the one who receives the new position in Christ.

The attempts to “represent” or “mediate” the fellowship of people with God are explicit expressions of the dissimulated propositions of the old wine, but still, they are highly appreciated by many who have come to drink from this old wine so corrupted by yeast.

Therefore, it is no wonder that so many people are subject to give tithes and offerings to those who, contrary to the instruction of the new covenant, claim to be priests or mediators of God for those they call their brothers, followers, or their disciples.

Also because of the dissolution or misleading fascination that there is in the old wine, that people who drink it agree to submit to leaders who claim to be “specially anointed” or “specially chosen by God” to lead others in their private lives, despite that the Lord Jesus Christ expressly said that no one among the children of God should be called a guide, teacher, father, or leader of their lives.

The fact that a person prays on behalf of other individuals to God may and should be practiced by all Christians, but the call to do so was never intended to replace and supply the fellowship that each person is called to maintain in his or her personal relationship with the Lord. This fellowship, in turn, is one of the crucial or vital marks for living and walking in consonance with the new covenant in Christ Jesus. (A subject more broadly addressed in the material on Knowing About God or Knowing God and The Core Principle of Life for a Christian).

*Hebrews 8: 8 ... **Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant ...***

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

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

When the Lord Jesus announces that people, in their natural or initial condition, are inclined to prefer the old wine, He is also teaching them that they will need to act “contrary to their taste or preference” and resist that which want to keep them in the old, giving rather preference to new wine even though it initially may not look attractive and tasty.

Since people's natural conduct shows an inclination or preference for the things which are behind, but that cannot lead them to live and walk in the will of God, it is necessary that they reject precisely those things that attract them to the path that opposes the will of God and as well that they turn themselves toward the new that initially may not seem attractive or pleasant to them.

No matter how tasty the old wine may feel or seem to an individual, it is not worth the risk to remain subject to that which does not seek his or her eternal good.

Thus, we recall again here, that the old wine is full of dissolution that has the power to quickly put a veil that blinds the eyes of those who drink it, a reason why a person should not be frivolous regarding his or her relationship with that which is associated with the dissolute wine.

No matter the favorable condition that a person has already attained in the earthly life, if one returns to drinking the old wine that tries to over-exalt the glory of the natural man, his works, or his religiousness, to the detriment of the exaltation that is pertinent exclusively to the Almighty Creator and Who is sovereign above everyone and everything, one puts oneself in the position of the risk of despising a life guided and instructed by the Lord or a life according to the new wine. (A central theme of life and human existence discussed more broadly in the material of The Gospel of the Creator).

*Romans 1: 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.*

The Lord Jesus Christ announced that the old wine has in itself the characteristic of dulling the senses of the people. And no individual who begins to ingest this old wine is capable just by oneself of resisting the ability of this wine to corrupt the senses. Only in returning to the Lord and only in accepting the goodness of God does a person find the place of repentance and victory over the dissolution of the old wine.

*2 Corinthians 3: 16 **Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.***

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

*Romans 2: 4 **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?***

The fact that God repeatedly and with longsuffering offers the new wine, although people initially insist on giving preference to the old, and the fact that God offers forgiveness even to those who went back to the old wine after already being freed from it, does not mean that a person should approach with levity the invitation of God to abandon the old wine, mistakenly thinking that one may return to the new wine any time he or she so desires. Instead, everyone is called to pay close attention to the following texts:

*2 Corinthians 6: 1 **We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.***

2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

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?***

If a person insists on the old wine because it is more pleasing to him or her, or for any other reason, one simultaneously places oneself in a position of resistance to the new wine of God's goodness and under the condition in which one's heart may become more and more hardened and more numbed by the dissolution of the old wine that opposes the offer of newness of life in the Lord.

The insistence on the association with the old wine, because it provides some temporal satisfactions to the soul, can lead a person to love the present world inappropriately, which, in turn, characterizes enmity toward God and love for what will soon fade away.

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

- 1 John 2: 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.
17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.***

The solution for a person to get out of the vicious cycle of the appreciation that the old wine tries to promote over the new wine is found exclusively in the conversion of the heart to Jesus Christ, acknowledging and receiving Him in the heart as the Lord and as the Unique One Who gives new wine, which is also accompanied by the help of the Spirit of the Lord so that a person may be instructed and strengthened to no longer need to continue to ingest the old wine.

Although for some people initially the new wine may not seem to have a taste as pleasant as some aspects of the old wine, it is through the active option for the new wine that a person associates oneself with the salvation and the reconciliation with the Lord, as well as with the life of purification

of the mentality of appreciation for the flavors that appear to be pleasant but which ultimately are ways of death.

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

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

Hebrews 9: 11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

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.

The word “conversion,” mentioned earlier, expresses the meaning of leaving the old, turning one's back on it, and simultaneously moving on to the new, moving on to a God-led life, moving on to the life of the new creature in Christ.

And when someone converts to Christ or deposits his or her life and trust in the Lord, Christ Himself assists this person to purify his or her conscience (or convictions), and shows to him or her that the old wine only has the appearance of being better, as well as shows that only the new wine grants the novelty of life in the Lord and can lead an individual to the true and living works done in God.

When a person renders his or her heart to the New Covenant in Christ, and leaves the old covenant, the eyes of his or her understanding are opened to the way of life that only Christ can bestow. (A closer look at the two covenants referred to is found in the subject on The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ.)

Although the people who drink the old wine are initially more attracted by the taste of it than by the taste of the new wine, the old wine is not really good or beneficial for them, for by its dissolutions it acts to keep people from the grace of God and always aims at subjecting them to sin and the law of the commandments of men. That is why, a Christian should not be subject again to that from which he or she was already released by a high price paid by Christ, that is, the blood of the New Covenant shed on the cross of Calvary to offer everyone a new life in the Lord.

And not even the old wine presented by the attempts of imitation or camouflage of the new has some good virtue, for the old wine in its dissolution cannot be restored. The efforts to conciliate or mix the old wine and the new can never succeed, which is why the attempts that aim at combining the two are called propositions of an “Other Gospel” or a “pretended Gospel,” not the true and unique Gospel of God. (Theme specifically described also in the subject on A Different Gospel or Another Gospel).

*Proverbs 23: 29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions?
Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has
redness of eyes?*

*30 Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of
mixed wine.*

*31 Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup,
When it swirls around smoothly;*

32 At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper.

*33 Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter
perverse things.*

*34 Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or
like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying:*

*35 "They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me,
but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another
drink?"*

For those who are in Christ, the entire old wine is equivalent to something that is behind, and it is also by practicing the work of forgetting oneself of the taste of the old wine that an individual advances to the prize that is in Christ Jesus. So, highlighting once more, for this forgetfulness becoming a reality, it is necessary to stop drinking the old wine and advance to the fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the one hand, the old wine needs to be expressly rejected. And on the other hand, the new wine needs to be appropriately received and kept in the heart by those who want to live and walk according to the newness of life offered to them in Christ Jesus.

*1 Corinthians 5: 6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a
little leaven leavens the whole lump?*

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

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

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

Luke 5: 38 **But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.**

C5. Which Are the Things That Are Considered Behind When Someone Receives Christ as His or Her Lord?

In the previous chapters, it has been seen that various behaviors or aspects in which a person lived before receiving the condition of a new creature in Christ are not fit or do not match with the newness of life coming from the kingdom of God.

And Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ, expresses the thought of the preceding paragraph in a very practical and objective way.

By testifying about his personal conduct of life in Christ Jesus, Paul teaches us that those who receive the newness of God's life are also called to adopt various specific and practical actions in their new condition or position which they have received from the Lord, as described in the following narrative:

- Philippians 3: 4 Though **I also might have confidence in the flesh**. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:*
- 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;*
- 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*
- 7 **But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.***
- 8 **Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ***
- 9 **and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;***
- 10 **that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,***
- 11 **if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.***
- 12 **Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.***
- 13 **Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.***
- 14 **I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***
- 15 **Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.***
- 16 **Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.***

In narrating the most crucial change that has occurred in his life, Paul teaches us the principle that “**one thing I do**,” which, in turn, is specifically: “**I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**”

Nevertheless, to do this “**one thing**,” which is “**to press toward the goal in Christ or to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**,” Paul did two other things together, namely:

- ⇒ 1) *Forgetting those things which are behind;*
 +
 ⇒ 2) *Reaching forward to those things which are ahead.*

Although Paul presents a higher or central purpose for life, which is to press toward the goal or prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, he shows us the need for the effective, combined, and continuous working out of two distinct actions or postures so that one person remains in the course of the intended purpose.

Paul teaches that all those who seek to walk in the will of God need to take a posture of separation from what lies behind, as well as an active position of advancing to the new that is ahead of them or to what has become the new purpose of life for those who were born of the Spirit of God, and not only of the flesh.

Thus, considering that Paul divides his action to proceed to his central goal in Christ in two complementary ways, and that the first aspect addressed by Paul on this point is to forget the things which are behind, we would like, then, for didactic purposes, to adopt a more accentuated emphasis in this first item, leaving to address the second aspect in the next subject of this series.

And one of the aspects we can observe in Paul's singular purpose exposed above, divided into two distinct practices, is the statement that he chose to forget several things but does not say that he chose to forget everything of the past. And Paul still, quite objectively, defines which are the aspects that he purposely decided to forget.

Since the condition of a new creature of an individual is generated by the new birth, which is a distinct type than the natural birth of a person, as addressed in the subject on The New Creature in Christ, the life according to the new creature also presents several peculiarities belonging to it.

The new birth in Christ Jesus is not like the natural conception where nothing was known by the parents about the future son or daughter before the conception occurred, for in the type of the new birth a person is previously known by a soul and a body which one already possesses before one becomes constituted as a new creature.

When, for instance, a person thinks of forgetting the things which are behind, it makes no sense for him or her to think of forgetting one's soul and the proper care of one's physical body, for these aspects are not like the things which are behind when one becomes a new creature through the new birth.

Therefore, **after becoming aware that there are aspects that express the so-called old wine, and regarding which a Christian is called to abstain oneself, or that there are aspects of life that are behind, and should, therefore, be forgotten, it is also vital to grow in the Lord in order to be instructed by Him to discern what is in fact the old wine or what comes to be the things of life that are behind.**

So, returning once more to the example of the soul and the physical body quoted above, we can see in the Scriptures that they are not aspects that should be considered as those things which are behind when a person comes to live and walk in Christ.

On the other hand, the way a person is called to care for his or her soul and body, after being constituted a new creature, is very distinct, and several old ways of relating to them should indeed be forgotten or abandoned.

When a person receives Christ Jesus as Lord in his or her life and receives the condition of a new creature, also a whole new way about how one can relate to his or her soul and body is made available to him or her, as exemplified below:

1 Corinthians 6: 17 ***But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.***

18 ***Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.***

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 Thessalonians 5: 23 ***Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Every person who reaches the status of a new creature in Christ or of born of the kingdom of light receives a position in which one can be free from subjection to the power of darkness. That is why, a Christian is also called to leave the practices related to the power of darkness, which, in turn, represents precisely one of the main aspects that are behind.

Moreover, there are several expressions in the Scriptures to show the main aspects that are behind after the new birth of an individual, like “***once,***” “***you were,***” or “***but then,***” as is also exemplified in several texts below:

Romans 11: 30 ***For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,***

31 ***even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.***

Romans 6: 17 ***But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.***

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

1 Corinthians 12: 2 ***You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.***

*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?***

*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.***

*Titus 3: 3 **For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.***

When the Scriptures show that a necessary practical action of the new creature is also to forget the things which are behind, the Lord does not teach us this principle so that we should try to find out by ourselves what lies behind in our life.

In the provision of the newness of life offered in His Gospel, the Lord also teaches us which are the aspects that should be considered in the practical actions of forgetting the things which are behind. For if it were our role to do so, according to our own understanding, we would have been called to return to the actions of the old model of life and according to what we are called to forget because they are old things or attitudes that are not appropriate to the new creature.

He who is called to trust in the Lord is also called to be instructed or guided by the Lord, as also described in the text below:

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

Looking at the verses that are presented above, it may be observed that the Lord does not omit Himself of teaching which things are behind for a person when one receives, through faith, salvation by heavenly grace.

All that which is mentioned in a way associated with the expressions “**once**,” “**you were**,” or “**but then**” in the texts above are aspects which are behind for the one who received the salvation offered to him or her in Christ Jesus, such as:

- ⇒ 1) To walk according to the thoughts of the flesh, the lusts, or the flow of the world that is guided by the prince of this age;
- ⇒ 2) The disobedience to God;
- ⇒ 3) To seek to be guided by idols;
- ⇒ 4) To serve gods who by nature are not, that is, to be guided by persons or spirits contrary to the will of God;
- ⇒ 5) To let oneself be led by the basic principles of the present world;
- ⇒ 6) Return to the condition of life subject to the bondage of sin, the body of sin, and so on.

And still, if we look at a variety of other texts, we could as well list many other things that are clearly exposed in the Scriptures as items that are behind for the one who received Christ Jesus in his or her life, aspects that, however, also are presented in a summarized way in texts like the followings:

Ephesians 5: 8 **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.**

Colossians 1: 21 **And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled**
22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight,
23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Speaking in a summarized way, **what is behind, or what a Christian is called to forget, is the set of thoughts, beliefs, traditions, practices, or attitudes that have been conceived in a way that is dissociated from the instruction or the will of God, Who, in Christ Jesus or by the offer of novelty of life, calls everyone to reconciliation with Him and to live and walk in accordance with His will.**

In a summarized way, **the attempts to live and walk in conformity with the course of the present world, the flesh, the natural mind, or the darkness, and not in the light of the Lord that is available to every Christian, are the**

expression of the things which are behind and that, therefore, should no longer govern the heart of the one who received the condition of a new creature in the Lord.

Since fellowship with Christ Jesus is an offer of God to all people and is already available to all those who believe in the heart in Christ as the Eternal Lord, the things which seek to impute a torpor or state of numbness to humans, as to their fellowship with God, are aspects that should definitely be left behind in the life of the one who receives the gift of the newness of life in the Lord.

Considering that in Christ Jesus is already available the condition of life in which a person no longer needs to be subject to what is opposed to the will of God for him or her, also the subjection to the state of mortification under transgressions, offenses, or sins is something that every Christian is called to no longer accept or practice.

- 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.**
- 18* **And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.**

To walk by the own understanding, by the lusts of the eyes or the flesh, to walk in darkness, to walk according to human vain philosophies, or to walk according to the basic principles of the world, which are based on traditions and cultures, instead of walking in conformity with the light of God and with the truth of the Lord, are aspects that are behind for those who are made new in the Lord and which practices should be abandoned by those who are in Christ.

So, for instance, if a person before becoming a new creature in Christ was accustomed to thinking that his or her life depended on the sagacity and the use of deceptive practices to achieve some success, now, in Christ, one is instructed to forget the improper methods which one used and is called to seek instruction in the Lord about the proper thoughts and actions to be adopted in the most diverse circumstances of his or her life.

Christ clearly stated that if someone wants to live and walk according to the newness of life offered from the heavenly kingdom, one needs to forget seeking to guide his or her life according to human concepts and should follow the Lord according to the way the Lord instructs him or her to live and walk.

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."**

An essential aspect of the calling to live as a new creature in the Lord is the call to be grounded in Christ and to abide in Him.

Still in other words, **an essential condition for a life according to the new creature is the Christian being grounded in Christ and being guided by the Spirit of God in the most diverse aspects, abandoning the old confidence in false foundations and withdrawing from a state of living without the direction of the Lord under which he or she acted before receiving salvation from God.**

And if we look back to Paul's words preceding his statement that he actively "forgot" the things that are behind, we can observe that at the beginning of this narrative he declares a conscious and willful decision not to trust in the flesh, even though he could claim many virtues according to the eyes of the flesh. Paul chose to abandon his confidence in the flesh because he understood that this practice did not fit the condition of a new creature in the Lord.

*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.***

Instead of continuing to put his trust in the flesh, Paul decided to forget those natural virtues that gave him strength according to the flesh, and did so in order to be fortified by the Lord, even declaring:

*2 Corinthians 12: 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, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**
10 **Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.***

*Galatians 2: 20 **I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***

Paul evidenced that he had realized that there is no profit in a branch of the vine wanting to live apart from the vine. Therefore, he firmly chose to leave behind the attempts to trust in the life dissociated from Christ to be focused on the way in which he could live the life which was offered to him in 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.*

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

Yet another way in which Paul made it clear that he was leaving behind confidence in his natural or former condition, is found in his statement where he says that **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 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.**

Therefore, **trying to trust in one's own flesh or trying to rely on the ways and propositions of the very creation is an attempt to establish what is called in the Scriptures as an “own righteousness” or a “righteousness according to men.”**

In trying to establish his own path, the human being has always characterized and will invariably characterize injustice regarding the reality of the constitution of the creation and regarding God who created innumerable things for the good and the beneficial use of people.

And it was the unrighteous way in which human beings or the flesh try to establish themselves in life that Paul chose to forget or to abandon, because from the manifestation of the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus it became plain that the righteousness of men can do nothing to provide for the eternal redemption of a person.

Nevertheless, in the matter of the type of justice that is called self or own righteousness or the righteousness of men, something crucial to note is that it does not refer only to the ungodly or reckless practices of people or to their lack of interest in God. Often, even in a more accentuated way, such inadequate righteousness is also expressed through various practices in which people seek God or at least claim to seek God.

In many situations, it is precisely the search for God or the attempts to please the Lord that fits into the so-called self, own, or human righteousness, since many people try to approach God by way of subjection to external laws, rules, or rituals, thinking that they can reach the justification before the Lord through these works, by their religiousness, or by the efforts of the flesh.

The path of the own righteousness or the righteousness of men, which is a path of unrighteousness before God, is the way in which people seek to justify themselves before God or to reach the benevolence of the Lord by

means of varied efforts of the flesh instead of merely accepting or receiving the gift of salvation and grace offered them from heaven.

Already as an apostle of Christ or as an envoy of Christ to make known the Gospel of the Lord and the peculiarities of it, Paul teaches us that **because of the revelation of the righteousness of God offered in Christ Jesus, the attempts to achieve righteousness before God through works according to human concepts, or according to the efforts of the flesh, have already received the status of things which are behind.**

Because of the righteousness of God revealed in Christ Jesus is that Paul chose to forget to try to live by the ways declared outdated or obsolete by the Lord.

Let us see once again a text already mentioned above, plus a few more verses:

Galatians 2: 19 ***For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.***

20 ***I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***

21 ***I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.***

As one sent by Christ to announce the Heavenly Gospel, Paul teaches that **in the light of the righteousness of God, revealed to the world in Christ Jesus, there is a before and an after for the one who chooses to live according to it and receives it in his or her life.**

Through Paul, God teaches us that **everything that conflicts with the righteousness offered by the Lord in Christ Jesus should be regarded as things which are behind, and should, therefore, be forgotten and considered as no longer worthy to be adopted or followed.**

Also because of what has been described in these last paragraphs, it may be understood more widely why the Lord Jesus Christ exhorted His followers saying to them: ***“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”***

Although the Scriptures teach us that those who came to be constituted as new creatures in Christ Jesus are called to cease to practice a varied series of attitudes or actions which are behind, such as the practice of lying and clumsy speech, the same Scriptures also show us a broader or more comprehensive picture of what are the things that are behind in the light of the revelation that God made of His righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the new condition of life in Christ Jesus, both the model of life called in the New Testament Scriptures as “Jew,” “circumcision,” or “life by the law” and the model denominated as “Greek,” “uncircumcision,” or “life without law” are likewise behind. A reason why both should be considered for the forgetfulness of everyone who longs to advance to the goal or prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

For those who have already received the condition of a new creature in the Lord, the attainment of knowledge about the models that are behind should, in no case, aim at

practicing the aspects of these models, but it only should aim at the strengthening of the understanding that their propositions are not worthy to be followed at all by any individual.

Since the models that are behind have already been publicly declared obsolete by the work of Christ Jesus and His blood shed when He was crucified on the cross of Calvary for the remission of sinners, the practices of that which is obsolete or not valid in the light of the Lord should also be abandoned or left behind.

We recall here that in the materials on The Gospel of God's Righteousness, The Gospel of God's Grace, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, and The New Creature in Christ Jesus is a more specific and comprehensive approach about the righteousness of God, the concept of righteousness that does not come from God, the obsolete condition of the law of Moses, and some chief aspects that characterize the two central models of life according to the flesh and which do not fit the newness of life in the Lord, that is, the models of the "Jew <_____> Greek" scale or ruler, or also called respectively as "circumcision" and "uncircumcision." Materials in which there is an extensive approach about the aspect that Christ came in the flesh into the world to provide the way for the remission of all sinners, but also to fulfill the law of Moses so that it could be declared antiquated, outdated, or revoked because of its inefficiency.

By providing the way for the remission of people from bondage to sin, to the body of sin, to the law of Moses or equated with it, and to the death condemnation according to the precepts of this same law, Christ Jesus was sent by God as a divider of times for the human beings.

Christ was revealed as a divisor between the first and failed priesthood model (which aims to use pretended mediators) and the second priesthood which is according to the heavenly Order of Melchizedek and in which all those who believe in Christ, also proclaimed as the King of Righteousness and King of Peace, are called to a direct and personal fellowship with God, making everything that Christ came to revoke and declare invalid also to be like that "which is behind."

Because Christ has made evident "which are the things that are behind" is that the Scriptures declare words according to the following:

- Ephesians 4: 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.***
-

The salvation of God is offered and granted by grace, and so, it cannot be acquired by any merit regarding what a person tries to give, to pay, or to do. Salvation is a gift from God. However, this does not mean that embracing salvation does not imply in the call to leave things that were previously practiced or that from the revelation of Christ are declared as those that are behind.

Let us look further at another example:

- John 8: 1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*
- 2 ***Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.***
- 3 ***Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,***
- 4 ***they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.***
- 5 ***"Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"***
- 6 ***This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.***
- 7 ***So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."***
- 8 ***And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.***
- 9 ***Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.***
- 10 ***When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"***
- 11 ***She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."***

Although the Lord Jesus is ready, filled with love and endless mercy to receive with open arms all sinners who want to receive the heavenly salvation offered to them, He does not compromise or associate Himself with the encouragement of the continuity of a sinful life, for God is not in favor that people follow the things that are contrary to His righteousness and that could come to make Him an accomplice of some sin.

If a person comes to stumble and then returns repentant to the Lord, He manifests His forgiveness to him or her innumerable times. However, before the Lord, the permanent position of a person deliberately wanting to sin or to live in the practice of sin is not acceptable.

1 John 1: 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

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

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

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

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

Evidently that a person does not pay his or her salvation with the price of what one leaves behind, for salvation can never be paid by any aspect or action of the creation. However, although salvation is granted by God's grace or freely, it was needed a very high or an immeasurable cost to provide it and for which it was essential for the Lord Jesus Christ to assume the guilt of the sin of all people so that the redemption could come to be offered to all sinners.

The Scriptures explicitly teach that a person should not be lighthearted with sin, for Christ will never come again to be crucified by those who despise the one work of the cross that He has already accomplished to provide them with the way of salvation.

Advancing a little further, it may be observed that in the world, there are several people who claim that they understand that the salvation offered by God is granted by the "heavenly grace," but that still insist saying that accepting the heavenly salvation implies a high cost in terms of "leaving valuable things behind" for the sake of receiving Christ as Lord.

This latter expression, however, may contain subtly misleading aspects since salvation also cannot be paid by the cost of what a person leaves behind and, yet, that not everything that a person is called to leave behind is indeed worthy, for the things that are behind in the light of the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary also are regarded as things which have no value before God and the new creature.

Galatians 6: 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Leaving behind something that is worthless before God also does not represent a loss to the one who follows this practice.

To leave the subjection to sin behind or to stop engaging in fruitless works does not mean paying a high price, it does not represent a high cost that is required of people. Instead, it refers to leaving what in advance or no longer had any significant or actual value.

On the other hand, **to leave what is behind, or to leave what has been evidenced by the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary as having no real value, does not always imply saying that to leave these things that are behind does not involve a set of acts of significant impact and that may bring some afflictions and some suffering to those who do it.**

A person also values God's salvation duly when one chooses to forget what does not fit the new life in Christ Jesus, even though there may be possible distress to take a practical position to forget the things which are behind.

After moving on to the condition of being able to live and walk in Christ Jesus, Paul did not insist on continuing to be proud of having practiced, in the past, the things that are behind, rejoicing, instead, in the grace of God and for it allowing him to come to serve the Lord truly according to the heavenly will. Paul saw no parity between what he had been in the past with that which he had received in Christ Jesus, the One Who extended mercy to Paul despite he had imprisoned, mistreated, and given the endorsement for many people to be persecuted and even killed in the name of the law of condemnation that he served before he came to know Christ personally.

A Christian never has an eternal loss in giving up what needs to be left behind in order to follow Christ, but one can have enormous losses in his or her salvation or the development of the salvation if one does not abandon what indeed should be left behind.

Paul understood that the new life that the Lord placed before him was evidencing many ancient aspects of his life notoriously as being worthless, rubbish, or dung. For this reason, as much as he was previously associated with the things that are behind, Paul adhered to the offer of new life that the Lord had made to him by leaving the old and by following Christ in a new condition of life.

“If you confess Jesus as Lord, as the Christ,” is the confession by which an individual invites the King Anointed by God, the King of Righteousness and Peace, to come and reign in the heart and to give direction and strength to a life incomparably superior to whatever kind and former style of life someone was subject to until receiving the saving grace.

By looking closely at the details of Paul's life, it may be noted that when he said that he chose to forget what lies behind, he was a man who had much to lose if we looked at his condition from a merely human perspective. What Paul chose to forget is far more than the vast majority of people, in any of the centuries, could even hope to reach.

When Paul, also called Saul, declares that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision or neither the condition of Jew or Greek is anything in Christ, he was not referring only to something that other people should give up in order to grow in the life in Christ, but he was talking about what he himself chose to leave behind.

When confronted with the living glory of Christ, Paul was faced with a situation that would change his conceptions of culture, religion, and manner of behavior forever. And in his case, this situation also would turn all his ideas about a clerical career for which he had invested a significant part of the years of his life.

In the Scriptures on Paul's life, we find a very enlightening and striking example of what he understood he should forget to move forward on his journey of walking in the light of Christ.

At the time he used the name Saul more frequently, he had a profession of belief as a follower of the law of Moses, but he also had a prominent function in the structure that supported this same law. In this structure, Saul was among the main zealous, teachers, and multipliers of the belief he professed and followed.

So, when Christ introduced Himself to Saul, Saul was faced with a very intense and delicate situation of what in his life was falling behind with that event.

In the case of Saul, after his encounter with Christ, the following aspects, among others, became the things which are behind:

- ⇒ 1) His old belief and form of belief;
- ⇒ 2) His objects and services of worship;
- ⇒ 3) His focus of devotion;
- ⇒ 4) His clerical career as a religious leader;
- ⇒ 5) His professional and spiritual perspective that he had until then.

Moreover, in the case of Paul's life, all the aspects mentioned above became noticeable at the same time as things that are behind. In the light of the revelation of the glory and righteousness of Christ, Paul came to know that the service he intended to render to God and men was, in fact, a work according to the flesh, unfruitful, dead, and very contrary to the will of his Creator, very opposite to the Lord whom he thought he was serving with intense zeal.

In Paul's situation, his decision to follow Christ directly involved several aspects of several areas of his life that so far were highly representative for him.

Circumcised on the eighth day, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, concerning the law, a Pharisee, and blameless concerning the righteousness which is in the law of Moses, Paul suddenly encountered the heavenly light that enlightened his understanding and that in a short time made it clear to him that what he served until then was something that could not bear fruit truly consistent with the kingdom of God.

After Saul saw Christ personally, he would no longer be able to practice the good or God's will if he continued to serve the law of Moses and his old profession of belief, as well as his former clerical career. Whatever Paul would continue to do for the law of Moses, he would be promoting or helping what worked in favor to keep people away from the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

A lot of things that until a particular time for Saul represented profit, purpose, or benefit, soon came to be considered worthy of loss, because he had found in Christ something of incomparably greater worth.

When Paul declares that the way in which a person can advance to the goal of the prize of God's upward calling in Christ also encompasses forgetting what is behind, he knows that taking this position does not necessarily represent something easy or of little implication. From personal experience, Paul knew that these levels of decision-making are not frivolous and of low impact. On the contrary, Paul knew that the decision to leave what lies behind might involve profound aspects and that may shake with the innermost parts of the heart of a person.

Nevertheless, in understanding that the aspects he was choosing to forget were things which already were behind and that several of his practices were entirely worthless before God, Paul no longer associated himself with the things that the Lord showed and taught him as no longer worthy of his affection and dedication.

Paul understood and accepted the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ that it is not fit to try to repair an old garment with an unshrunk cloth. Paul realized and accepted the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ that it is not proper to use new wine in old wineskins, nor to try to mix the old wine in the new wine, for he knew that these practices carry the risk of strengthening the old to returning to act as an instrument that may corrode what has been granted by the heavenly grace to an individual.

Once exposed to the light of Christ, Paul understood and accepted that the old garments should be taken away and the old wineskin should be removed, as well as the old wine or leaven.

In Paul's case, his previous concept of righteousness, his earlier belief system, and his old religious practices were old clothes, old wine, or old wineskins. His dependence on the strength and abilities of the human being was old robes, and his flesh (soul and body), without the direction of the Spirit of the Lord by a made alive spirit, was comparable to an old wineskin. And still in Paul's situation, the whole structure and apparatuses of the law of Moses, its temple, positions, and titles were also added to the old garments, the old wine, and the old wineskins.

If Saul wanted to live according to the meaning of his also name Paul (the smallest, the little one, the surrendered to the Lord) called by God to serve Him in the Gospel after knowing Christ, he needed to leave the things which already were behind.

We have said repeatedly in the previous chapters, that there is no way to combine the wine of the new life in Christ with the old wine that uses the law of Moses, some variations similar to this law, or aspects somehow subject to it.

No one, for instance, can obtain justification for fulfilling the 10 commandments of the law of Moses, for the justification that redeems a person from sin and reconciles him or her with God is not attainable by human works and by the attempts of an individual boasting about oneself before God, alleging that he or she is able to save oneself by doing good.

No one is saved by doing good human works, for the only work that is accepted for salvation is faith in the justification that comes exclusively from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Receiving, through faith in the Lord, the righteousness that is granted by God is the saving justification that a person needs to believe in and accept to receive the new life in Christ and to live and walk in it.

And finally, in this chapter, we would yet like to point out that:

- ⇒ 1) **There are things that due to the redemptive work of Christ Jesus became revealed as things which are behind in a manner applicable to all human beings and to which all Christians should also be attentive of practicing the act of forgetting them or leaving them behind indeed.**
- ⇒ 2) **There are things that should not necessarily be considered as those which are behind indistinctly for all people, and for which a specific discernment about the will of God for a particular person is required.**

As we have seen above, the call to walk under the light or the will of the Lord, and no longer subject to darkness, is obviously a call that is directed equally to all people. However, in this general call to walk in the light of the Lord, there are aspects that correspond to God's will for all people, and there are aspects that are specific to some people and may not be addressed equally to others.

The Lord Jesus Christ preached or announced the Gospel of God by saying that it referred to an offer from the Heavenly Father to all individuals of all nations and peoples, but He did not, for instance, instruct everyone who receives the Gospel to leave his or her natural professions to follow Him, as was the case with some apostles.

On the one hand, the Scriptures teach us the main aspects that in the light of the work of Christ Jesus were revealed as obsolete and that therefore, in general, are not appropriate to any person. On the other hand, the Scriptures also teach us that, according to the wisdom of God, there is an extensive variety of actions for which the Lord calls each of His children in a specific way.

Thus, before a person considers that something is behind in order to no longer be associated with this aspect, it is prudent or wise to seek to know by the Lord what in fact are the things which are behind for all, but also what the Lord wants to be considered behind particularly for him or her.

In the world, there are, for instance, professions and engagements with works, tasks, and services which in themselves are unfruitful and directly contrary to God's will, for they act directly in the promotion of what lies behind for every person who has received the condition of a new creature in Christ. However, there are many professions in the world that a Christian may find oneself working with and that should not be considered as something that is behind in his or her life if the Lord does not instruct him or her to do so.

Some professions and works are generally part of the things that are behind, and which a person is called to leave shortly after he or she came to believe and receive Christ as the Lord of his or her life. However, there is a vast contingent of Christians working in the most diverse areas of society who do not conflict with the new condition in Christ and which the Lord does not even want Christians to regard as something that has become behind in their lives. And this, for Christians to be salt of the Earth and light of the world precisely in the place where they are acting.

We recall here again that **one of the most relevant matters of what should be left behind for everyone who is born again in Christ is the attempt to live apart from the fellowship with the Lord and His instruction.**

After knowing Christ as the Eternal Lord, Paul proceeded to leave the things which the Lord had taught him as being behind for all because of the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary, but He as well proceeded to follow the Lord's instruction to let behind what the Lord instructed him personally.

After receiving Christ as the Lord, Paul chose to no longer walk according to his own understanding or according to the call that others were trying to establish for his life, as was done in his former conduct. After receiving the position of a son of the Light, Paul publicly acknowledged that the way or the calling that he followed was according to the instruction of Christ for his life.

Galatians 1: 1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).

In the world, there are several works which, regarding the new life in Christ, are unfruitful and do not cooperate with the kingdom of God in any way, and which, on the contrary, are directly and undoubtedly opposed to the grace and mercy of God.

And no Christian should remain associated with the unfruitful works of the flesh or the darkness, nor try to use the argument or boasting that he or she remains associated with the practices or places that are already behind to restore them, since Christ did not call anyone to restore old wineskins, nor to repair old garments. The Lord Jesus Himself said that the old wineskin does not support the new wine.

1 Corinthians 5: 6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

...

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

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

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

Luke 5: 38 ... New wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

On the other hand, **forgetting the things that are behind, does not mean leaving or forgetting what has not indeed become a thing which is behind.**

After Paul received Christ in his heart, he, for example, did not cast away his credentials of Roman and Hebrew citizenship, nor did he despise this right which had been conferred upon him since his birth.

Paul also did not cast away his knowledge of the contents of the Scripture, though he threw aside the corrupt understanding which he had previously obtained over the Scriptures, even giving up the benefits or social position which the prior understanding probably would help him to achieve.

After he had come to Christ, Paul made use of his rights as a Roman citizen and a citizen of Israel, but he did so with moderation and honesty. Paul did not consider that this right was left behind by knowing Christ, leaving behind only the previous inappropriate uses of the prerogative of his earthly citizenships.

When he had not yet personally met Christ as his Lord, Paul used his civil rights and social positions to oppress and persecute people. But when he knew the Lord, Paul left behind his oppressive practices, but he did not cast out the right of citizenship which he had received since his birth, and which in some situations contributed to the work to which the Lord had called him.

As a Hebrew citizen, Paul had a free transit in Israel, and as a Roman citizen, he had free passage inside the borders of the Roman empire. And these aspects, when necessary, he used in cooperation with the work for which Christ had called him.

Moreover, it should be noted that throughout this process of living and walking according to the new creation, Paul also needed time for him to learn more and more to be led by the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not forget all the things which are behind in a single day and did not do it by himself.

For each person there are general and as well particular things that need to be left, there are practices that need to be dropped, there are personal and institutional concepts that need to be abandoned, there are places that need to be left, there are relationships that need to be stopped, there are beliefs and pronouncements that need to be discarded, and there may be professions or careers that do not cooperate with the good, and with which, therefore, any involvement should be ended.

Nevertheless, so that the forgetting of what is behind may be accomplished according to the instruction and strength of the Lord, a Christian should always remember that in the new life in Christ, he or she is not called to do it alone or dissociated from the Lord, having available from God's part a perfect help and Comforter according to the righteousness and the heavenly power.

*John 14: 16 **And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.***

*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.***

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

Paul agreed to be guided by the Lord in the whole process of forgetting what is behind so that he could do it according to the truth or direction of the heavenly kingdom. And Christ led Paul so that the outcome of the process of the changes in his life came to be for his benefit and to the benefit of many people to whom Paul was also used to announce the Eternal Gospel of Salvation and the Kingdom of God.

When Paul remained steadfast in following Christ, Whom he had received as Lord of his life, Christ taught and guided him regarding what needed to be forgotten, but also on what should continue to accompany his life while still dwelling in the world.

In his condition of faith in Christ Jesus, Paul received the newness of life offered by the Gospel, by which he was strengthened and instructed by the Lord both to leave what was due to leave and not to forget and follow what was to be kept and followed in consonance with the will of the Heavenly Father.

Paul did not cling to the past and trusted in the promise that the Lord would lead him in truth and according to the freedom that is in Christ, and he accepted to forget all that was necessary to forget, doing both under the direction of the Lord in his life.

What, then, is that which is behind and that needs to be forgotten?

In general, everything that conflicts with the life in consonance with the kingdom of God, the grace of the Lord, and the righteousness of God is what already is behind and should be forgotten.

And specifically, or particularly, what should be left behind to be forgotten is what the Lord individually instructs every Christian to regard as something that does not cooperate with the Heavenly Father's will for his or her life.

Ephesians 4: 20 But you have not so learned Christ,
 21 *if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:*
 22 *that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,*
 23 *and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,*
 24 *and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

Psalms 139: 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;
 24 *And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.*

C6. Forgetting the Things Which Are Behind Is Even More Than Leaving Them

*Philippians 3: 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,
14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

In the previous chapter in which it has been addressed the point of which are the things that are behind, it was mentioned that the Lord, through the testimony of Paul, teaches us that ***to press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*** it is necessary to firmly establish this practice through the following two actions:

- ⇒ 1) ***Forgetting those things which are behind;***
- +
- ⇒ 2) ***Reaching forward to those things which are ahead.***

As discussed earlier, Paul presents us with the need to practice two distinct actions that add up or complement each other for a person to advance to the principal target in reference.

And considering that the aspect addressed in the present subject is more related to the first point mentioned above and that an approach has already been made about which are the things that are behind, we would still like to explore further the expression or the practice of “forgetting.”

So, first, let us look at the descriptions about the expression “to forget” which were associated with the notes of Strong's Greek lexicon of the Online Bible, as follows:

To Forget:

- 1) ***To forget in the sense of an act of forgetting;***
- 2) ***Neglecting, no longer caring for;***
- 3) ***Forgotten, given over to oblivion, that is, uncared for.***

We understand it to be very relevant to note that the word that was used to describe a Christian's relationship to that which is behind does not refer to a word that only expresses the act of leaving what is behind, which, however, is included in the practice of forgetting something purposely.

By itself, the instruction to leave something or the practice of leaving something may not encompass some points of what is contained in the instruction about forgetting something, because a person may leave something behind but still regarding it as precious or relevant in one's mind or heart.

A person, by various circumstances of life, may even be forced to leave something behind, but yet remaining connected to what is left behind in their feelings, thoughts, or affections, thus persisting in attributing value to what they have left already.

An individual may come to leave things behind but do so in a displeased way. He or she may even stop practicing them, but still keeping in mind a series of concepts about the things from which one has departed as if they eventually could be good or favorable.

Therefore, although the word “forgetting” mentioned by Paul includes the action of leaving the things which are behind, the “practice of forgetting” in reference is more than just leaving what the Christian is called to no longer follow.

The “practice of forgetting something” may also include stopping to attribute value in the heart to what one chooses to forget. It comprises no longer be occupied, neither in the feelings or thoughts, with something left behind in the sense of still wanting to value what should no longer be relevant in an individual's life.

Deliberately forgetting may also be a reference to giving something to the place of forgetfulness, to the position of no longer being worthy of appreciation or conjecture in the sense of eventually an individual wanting to return to practice or make use of what is behind.

When the Scriptures show us the relationship a Christian should have with the “old man,” in contrast to the “new inner man” made alive by faith in Christ Jesus, they repeatedly and sharply teach us the crucial condition of renewing the understanding of this relationship, where the old should indeed be considered worthless in the face of the newness of life that the Lord grants us in Him, as exemplified once again below:

Ephesians 4: 20 ***But you have not so learned Christ,***
21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:
22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,
23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,
24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

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

The “practice of forgetting” that God instructs us to adopt regarding that which remains or is behind is intended to be a practice resulting from considerations that are based in the understanding of why it is essential to leave the relationship with what is not appropriate and not compatible with the condition of a new creature in Christ.

The deliberate action of forgetting the things that are behind encompasses a sober consideration, or taking into account in the heart, of what is fundamental in life and what opposes it, as well as the act of putting oneself in a position of consonance with the reality of what has been provided and is provided to a person in Christ Jesus, as also exemplified below:

Romans 6: 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

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

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When God instructs Christians to depart indeed from what is behind, both in the active relationship with these things and in no longer considering as valuable, in the heart, a return to the practice of what they have chosen to leave behind, He is not imputing penalties to Christians and is not even calling them to do so without well-informed and very precious reasons.

When God calls Christians to indeed depart from things that are no longer worthy of their attention, the Lord is instructing them for the good of themselves and not to deprive them of enjoying the newness of life that is widely offered from heaven according to the righteousness of the kingdom of God.

Also due to a sober positioning of considering that it is appropriate to forget the things that are behind, in the sense that they have no contributory value to the life of an individual and that they are not even worthy to be valued in the heart, that Paul adopted the position of forgetting what was appropriate to be forgotten, as can be observed in his words prior to the declaration that ***one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind***, as follows:

Philippians 3: 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

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.

God instructs Christians to leave the things which are behind because what lies behind is a path to destruction and death, and the Lord does not do so for some sort of caprice or because He wants to deprive His children of what could be good for them.

God instructs Christians to turn the heart away from all that which is behind also to protect them so that they do not come to have a divided heart and for them not to put themselves again in a position of vulnerability regarding the attraction or affection for what has so long imprisoned them for the destruction of their lives.

*James 1: 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.
7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;
8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

It is just not consistent for people wanting to walk in the ways of God and at the same time to continually feed the heart with memories or longings of the things that are behind, as if God were depriving them of something that could be pleasurable and profitable to them.

What the Lord instructs to be forgotten, that is, ceased to be practiced and stopped to be valued in the heart, is just, right, and good to be forgotten, for it is precisely from the things that a Christian is called to forget that the grace and the mercy of the Lord in Christ Jesus also have redeemed or delivered him or her.

At this point, we can remember once more the aspect of the old wine or the old garments, in which we have already seen that there is no compatibility of them with the new.

Paul knew that to leave that which is behind, there is also the need for this practice to be accompanied by considering oneself dead to what he former had devoted his life and which would inevitably lead him to condemnation and death if he had not been reached by the mercy and the grace of God, and if he also had not accepted what from Heaven was made manifest and offered him to a new life in the Lord.

If a person longs for freedom from that which enslaved him or her to perdition and death, why then, after being freed, would he or she want to continue to value what had previously imprisoned him or her?

It does not make sense for a person to seek to be free from what enslaved him or her and then wanting to return to that which bound him or her under slavery. It makes no sense for a person to want to combine the freedom that God's grace bestows on him or her with that which enslaves him or her and makes him or her return to the state from which God's grace has already freed him or her.

Galatians 2: 19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

In other words, **Paul says that it is not coherent for someone to destroy what is no longer appropriate for his or her life to, after that, wanting to rebuild precisely the same things what one has destroyed.**

Galatians 2: 18 For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

If Paul did not abandon the law which, before coming to Christ, he served to his own damage, or if Paul tried to combine his new life in Christ with the previous condition he had before knowing the Lord, he would place himself in the way where the benefits that the grace of God had provided for him could come to be lost.

Paul understood that what was left behind in his new condition in Christ was accurately what indeed needed to be left behind. He learned that those things were not worth remembering as something that could add virtues to his life, similarly as something that is dead and can no longer produce life.

When he realized that the aspects that are behind are unfitted to add any benefit to his life, Paul left them and did not occupy himself with what was necessary to give up in order to remain free in the Lord and to be able to advance in the life of the new creature that was offered to him in Christ Jesus.

Paul accepted the instruction of the Holy Spirit about what the new life in Christ was, but he also admitted the guidance of the Holy Spirit about what should be considered by all who are in Christ as something devoid of the newness in the Lord, understanding that it is also necessary to stop to regard as valuable what the Spirit of the Lord teaches as not being in fact valuable.

*John 16: 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.
8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:
9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me;
10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;
11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

Since a series of earlier aspects of his life were no longer in line with his new position in Christ, Paul realized that it was also no longer reasonable to continue occupying himself, or his heart or mind, about the possibility that these aspects eventually still could have some value for him.

The Lord, through the testimony of Paul, teaches us that the things which are behind are no longer worthy of attention, nor are they aspects that a Christian should consider in the sense that one should trouble or worry oneself to keep attributing value to them in one's heart.

Christians are called to forget the things that are behind because they do not fit into the condition of new creatures in Christ or oppose it, but the call to leave them is also evidenced by the fact that there is no harm to a Christian leaving them behind. On the contrary, forgetting them is of great benefit to those who do so.

Recalling further, that in many cases it is the understanding that ends up prevailing over the will, as explained in the subject on The Law of Understanding and exemplified in the text that follows below, if a person does not align one's intention to live and walk according to the wisdom or instructions provided by the Lord also on what are the things which are behind, claiming to follow the new, but not adopting indeed a posture of forgetting what lies behind, this person may be placing oneself in a double-minded position or in a situation of conflict in his or her understanding of the Lord's will.

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

For the person who happens to be in Christ Jesus, there may be many things which are behind that have lost their significance in the face of the novelty offered by the Lord even though they seemed to be precious or very significant in the past. However, the fact that a person has had a great appreciation or affection for something during a time of his or her life does not mean that it is indeed something of value and that it should continue to be cultivated after a person knows the truth and the newness of life in God.

Even in the case where a person has been intensely passionate about something, as was the case of Saul in his devotion or zeal for the law of Moses, his or her intense passion does not make the object of passion valuable before the truth and the heavenly righteousness, neither it makes it worthy of being considered as something that should not be forgotten.

If some aspect was not worthy or precious in the light of God's righteousness when a person became passionate about it, the same aspect remains unworthy even though many or even billions equally become passionate with this aspect, remembering that neither salvation and perdition are collective aspects, but resulting from personal decisions.

*2 Timothy 2: 22 **Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.***

*Romans 7: 5 **For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.***

+

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

+

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

Galatians 5: 24 **And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

Titus 3: 3 **For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.**

That which in the light of God was exposed as something without significance for living and walking as a new creature in God, should no longer be the object of the attention of those who have received the condition of being in the Lord and the condition of living and walking in Christ Jesus, no matter how great was the passion, the dedication, the efforts, and the investment of resources toward which in the light of the Lord was revealed as insignificant.

Paul made reference to terms like “loss” and “gain” regarding the changes of his life when he came to be constituted as a new creature, declaring that which he previously accounted for as profit for his life, he, in Christ, began to account as a necessary and beneficial loss to obtain a real profit, freedom, and eternal life. Paul did not keep himself associated, in any way, to what was behind, even if it may have been extremely precious in his eyes before personally meeting the Lord.

Or yet, in other words, Paul said that what he regarded as such a valuable gain before coming to Christ, now, in Christ, he considered as worthless, as waste, or as the excrement of animals, the latter being a more literal meaning of the term he used.

Philippians 3: 7 **But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.**

**8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ
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.**

As it happened with Saul, people may have been devout, dedicated, or deeply passionate precisely regarding what is equated with rubbish, natural excrement, or dung, but, on the other hand, in Christ Jesus, they are given a perfect and full opportunity to depart of this kind of devotion and affection in the heart. In Christ, people have available even a new heart with new purposes and with the possibility of coming to love, through faith, what is precious in the eyes of God and what has valuable effects for all eternity.

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

Forgetting something will not necessarily imply not knowing that one day it existed and that it was part of someone's life. Forgetting what is behind, however, is to turn the back on these aspects, in the sense of not wanting to go back to what is behind and in the sense of dropping the possibility of using its concepts and practices again.

To forget what is behind is to stop considering as an alternative to life what is inappropriate for the new position in Christ, as well as not to regret or lament for having left the things which are behind.

When the Hebrew people left Egypt and encountered the challenges of moving forward, they sometimes, according to the well-known narrative of their history, remembered the garlic and onions of Egypt as an advantage in comparison to the new condition that they had as free people.

Nevertheless, the people that were delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians refused to see the whole picture. They refused to acknowledge that garlic and onion were “given” to them in exchange for harsh slavery, oppression, suffering, and a life without any expectation for them and their descendants.

So, through the testimony of Paul, God teaches us that it is not appropriate for a Christian, in the mind and in the feelings, to flirt with what is behind, for there is a great danger in doing so since returning to things that are behind represents a going back to what is opposed to the life of the Christian in the Lord, and which path has the potential to lead a person again, if one lets oneself be involved with it, to the broad road that leads to death.

When Paul came across the challenges of life as a new creature in Christ, he could have remembered the command post, the army, and the many facilities at his feet while serving the Pharisees. And by reminding himself of his past, he could even try to draw some parallels to try to highlight some specific benefits he had under the old structure and to try to highlight the efforts or sacrifices he had made to follow the Lord Jesus. However, Paul refused to do this, for he had understood that the right thing to do, in the face of the love extended to him by the Lord, was to forget what is behind and not to wonder whether he could have gained some temporal advantage if he had remained entirely or partially in the condition of his past.

From the moment that Paul left the old things behind, he accepted the Lord's instruction also to leave the whole set of things which are behind, including not performing the practice of conjecturing undue ideas in his mind about what would no longer cause him any good.

Through the instruction of the Lord in his life, Paul understood that he had exchanged the whole set of a model of life for an entirely different condition in its fundamental aspects, as well as that the two positions were not compatible or equivalent neither in general nor in their smaller parts.

Paul did not incline himself to the wrong thought that he could try to “extract the best of both models,” for nothing else would have been profitable for him in the things that are behind, except the firm remembrance of them not being, in any way, a path of eternal life or according to the will of God.

Galatians 6: 15 **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.**

When an individual remains pondering over possible particular or eventual benefits that he or she thinks one could still get in what is behind, instead of forgetting what is appropriate to forget, one may be opening spaces or doors for old thoughts to try again to interpose in relation to the new type of life that one received from God, and this to the detriment of his or her life.

The Scriptures do not instruct Christians to compare life guided by the heavenly instruction with a life guided by a carnal mind to try to get the supposed best aspects of these two paths. The Scriptures teach the Christians not to submit to the carnal mind, but to seek, think, and focus on that which comes from on high to continually be instructed from the kingdom of the Lord.

Considering that a person who genuinely receives the Gospel of God is also constituted as a new creature in Christ, it is evident that one is also called to focus his or her thoughts and attitudes on God and the principles of the Lord concerning the newness of life granted to him or her. Every Christian is called to incline his or her thoughts and actions toward what one has received through the association by faith with Christ Jesus.

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.**

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.**

Thus, we mention here again that **the practice of forgetting oneself about the things that are behind is to consider oneself dead to them, it is to know, to believe, and to accept that they are not addressed to those who have been delivered from them by the Lord.**

*Romans 8: 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.***

In his life, when he came to know the way of life by faith in Christ Jesus, Paul left behind the confidence in the strength of the flesh and in the way that he previously intended to ground his faith. And so, what the Lord instructed Paul as the things which are behind, Paul likewise regarded as unprofitable, not seeing any reason to unduly keeping himself busy with them.

Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and the direction that He gave him through the Holy Spirit, became the way in which Paul chose to walk.

So, to conclude, we ask once more: Why does God call every Christian to trust Him and to continually practice the act of forgetting the things which are behind?

A Christian can have peace in believing in the Lord's instruction to forget what is behind, both in one's actions and thoughts, because in Christ Jesus, God promises to grant him or her all the guidance and provision necessary to live and walk accordingly with the condition of a new creature.

To trust in Christ does not only encompass the confidence that one day in the future the Lord will grant eternal life in the Heavenly Father. It as well comprises the confidence that the guidance the Lord grants, by His grace, is the way to enjoy the good will of God also in the daily and practice life while a Christian still lives on Earth.

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

*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?***

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

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

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

*2 Corinthians 5: 17 **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.***

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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