

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -

Conscious of the Context of Life and Destination of the New Creature

(With particular considerations on
"The Whole Armor of God")

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.*

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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. Conscious of the Need to Be Conscious

This new theme is part of the series on the New Creation in Christ and aims to follow up on the other subjects that preceded it, namely:

- ⇒ 1) The New Creature in Christ Jesus;
- ⇒ 2) Forgetting Those Things Which Are Behind;
- ⇒ 3) Reaching Forward to Those Things Which Are Ahead;
- ⇒ 4) Vocation, Calling, and Election.

When a person comes to believe in Christ Jesus and receives Him as the Lord of one's life, one experiences a new birth through which one becomes a new creature in the Lord and, along with this newness of life, one also receives a vocation or calling from God to start living and walking according to one's new condition of existence.

This new condition of existence, however, needs to be known and actually practiced according to what the Lord expounds about it in order to be lived according to the newness of life offered to the new creature in Christ Jesus.

In his letters to his fellow believers of faith in Christ, Paul makes several “appeals” so that everyone who is a Christian may indeed live and walk according to the new condition of being a Christian that the Lord grants to everyone who believes in Him, such as:

*Ephesians 4: 1 **I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ...***

The fact that Paul beseeches that people also start to adopt a sober and practical position regarding what they are called in God is a point repeatedly emphasized in the Scriptures. And this also occurs partly because of the distance people often keep between the information they receive and the effective practice of what is related to the received information.

A person may read countless books or texts and still not practice what one reads.

Thus, on the one hand, the attitude of not always practicing a suggestion or instruction received may also be very positive, as it allows a person to receive information and validate its credibility and applicability before starting to practice what was informed, suggested, or even learned. This stance is essential and can serve as ample protection, as discussed more fully in the themes Watchful in Prayer and The Law of Understanding.

On the other hand, however, people may also run into the habit of staying excessively at the level of information and not indeed breaking through to the degree of the practical application of new information they receive or of a new condition of life offered to them.

For example, it is quite possible for a person to read and agree with the material in this series about the New Creation in Christ, read about the need of forgetting those

things which are behind and the need to move forward to those things which are ahead, but, even so, continuing to live one's life as one used to live it. That is, without actually leaving behind something that would be good to dissociate from and also without advancing towards new aspects already offered by God in Christ Jesus.

In other words, it is possible that people have access to information about something new and accept it in principle but do not reach the awareness and action of effectively applying the new things in their lives.

People may receive new information that seems to them to be favorable to their lives but, even so, continue to think and act according to their old convictions or beliefs.

In the letter to the fellow believers of faith in Christ who were in Ephesus, Paul seeks, then, to awaken them to the information about the new reality of life that they began to receive in Christ, but he still goes ahead and “beseeches” that they too apply themselves to live and walk according to this new condition of existence that was extended to them by God in Christ Jesus.

The verb *to beseech*, expressed by Paul in his letter, has its roots in the idea of making a summons and an intense appeal for a person to become aware that one's life has changed and that this should be lived effectively, not remaining only at the level of intellectual or theoretical acceptance of information.

In this way, **to be conscious of something, or to be aware of something, encompasses having a clear and firm conviction about a specific subject to know if it should be adopted and practiced in one's own life or if it should be rejected in a practical and objective way.**

A child, for instance, may be informed by parents that one should not put one's fingers in the electrical outlet, but still may not be aware of how painful and dangerous an electric shock is if one actually puts one's fingers in a power outlet.

An adult person, also as an example, may have the information that the act of lying should not be used, but, at the same time, one may not be aware of the actual effects that are associated with the use of lies to such an extent that one takes the position of abandoning this practice.

Similarly, another person may also practice lying because one is not conscious of the truth. One may reject the truth because one is not aware of the benefits that its use brings in the course of life.

A person may have information about the harm of lying but still continue to use it at different times because, in one's heart, one still believes that lying is not so bad and that its use could eventually even have its benefits.

Thus, a person's effective creed or what one effectively believes may be much more evidenced by what one actually practices than by what one says or thinks in a more superficial or merely intellectual layer.

Matthew 7: 20 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

Yet another person may have the information on how important it is to follow God's guidance in one's life, but one may not be conscious of the real benefits of practicing life

under God's leading and the harm of not practicing it. And this may even become a strong reason why one does not approach God with intensity and does not follow His instructions even though one declares having the fear of or reverence for the Lord.

Therefore, **complete ignorance of a particular aspect represents a condition of ignorance about it, but mere informative knowledge about some aspect, without being provided with an effective consciousness or conviction of what implies adopting or rejecting it, may also characterize a marked condition of ignorance.**

And, in turn, ignorance about a subject or a fundamental aspect of life is no guarantee of protection against the damage that real life may cause to people. On the contrary, ignorance, lack of sobriety, lack of prudence, or lack of consciousness about a specific aspect, in several situations, may expose a person to actions as destructive as an active action of the practice of evil.

The Scriptures are emphatic about the essential condition of seeking understanding and real conviction about the fundamental aspects of life according to the will of the Lord, as well as about the relevance of awareness and effective practice of the principles of life according to the kingdom of God, as exemplified below:

- Proverbs 1: 1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:*
- 2 To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding,*
 - 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity;*
 - 4 To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion,*
 - 5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,*
 - 6 To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles.*
 - 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*
-

The need to “*perceive the words of understanding*” implies saying that only having the words of understanding is not enough for a life according to heavenly wisdom, for it is also necessary to understand them, which, in turn, enables or favors their proper application in the life of those who come to understand them.

A proper understanding and becoming conscious also on how to apply the words of the Lord's wisdom are essential aspects in cooperation for a person to advance practically and fruitfully toward life according to the Lord's will and under the continuous protection of God.

The Scriptures teach us that the foolish are those who despise what goes beyond information. Those considered foolish before the Lord, although they may be seen as wise according to human wisdom, are those who do not advance into the wisdom or teaching of God that leads to actual understanding and a deep practical conviction about the fundamental aspects of life according to the heavenly kingdom.

The Lord Jesus declares that in the world, there may be many individuals who even listen to the words of the Scriptures but who are still considered by the Lord as foolish or unwise because they are content to only hear the words of the Lord without, however, advancing to the consciousness that they need to be indeed practiced and not just heard.

Consequently, **just hearing God's words, by itself, without advancing to the understanding under a firm conviction or practical awareness of them, does not represent wisdom. On the contrary, it may even come to represent great folly.**

- Matthew 7: 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*
- 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'*
- 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*
- 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."*
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Looking more closely at this last text, we can notice that even the simple “understanding” of the Lord's words may still not be enough, showing us the essential condition of adding to it the “understanding that impels to practice.”

Thus, **the “understanding accompanied by a consciousness that what was heard also needs to be practiced or rejected” is what represents wisdom before the Lord on the part of those to whom His word and instruction are announced.**

A firm conviction about the various aspects of the new life in Christ, to effectively practice them in due time and manner, according to God's will, is the kind of understanding or consciousness that God wants His children to attain through His grace extended to them.

- Ephesians 1: 15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,*
- 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:*
- 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,*
- 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ...*

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

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,
16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

We recall here again, as we also did in the preceding themes, that the mention made of following God's instructions or His words is not a mention for people to follow the Old Covenant instructions given through Moses. The call for Christians to practice God's will or His words refers to living and walking according to the New Covenant in Christ Jesus.

And why, then, does God want a Christian to move from the mere informational condition to the condition of being conscious of the newness of life that the Lord desires for each person?

God wants us to be aware of the newness of life that we have in Christ so that we may indeed live this novelty that He gives us and so that we no longer live a life of subjection to sin and deceit. In Christ Jesus, the Heavenly Father has already extended to us the provision of remission and forgiveness of life subject to sin and the body of sin also so that we may live in everything with understanding given by the Lord or so that our time is not merely consumed by the evil days in the present world.

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.**

Ephesians 5: 16 ... **redeeming the time, because the days are evil.**

Repeating once again, the Scriptures teach us that it is possible for a person to hear the words of heavenly wisdom, it is possible for a person to listen to the words of God, and yet not have an understanding and conviction that the Lord's words are indeed practical instructions whereby He bestows newness of life, daily direction, and protection upon those who trust and follow Him.

Every Christian is called to see God's words or instructions about the newness of life in Christ as the psalmists in the book of Psalms saw them. That is, the Lord's words should be seen with conviction as being lamps to the feet and a light to the path of those who love God.

The psalmists of the book of Psalms sought to know God's instructions for their own lives because they understood and had a conviction that they could serve them as life, light, wisdom, and strength.

The psalmists declared that God's instructions could be light to their lives because they also had received the light or had the eyes of their understanding enlightened to the point of seeing that the word of God is light to all practical aspects of life.

Therefore, **for a person to understand the various instructions that God grants to one's life, one is also called to be aware that the words of God directed to him or her are an effective or practical light for one's life.**

*Psalms 119: 105 **Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.***

*Psalms 36: 9 **For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.***

On the other hand, remembering the point mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, **not everyone is willing to see the light that gives light to the understanding of God's words as a light to the newness of life in the Lord, remaining, therefore, not convinced of the light that is in the instructions of God in Christ Jesus.**

Thus, **the mere fact that a person has natural access to the words of God recorded in the Scriptures does not guarantee their understanding and much less the conviction that one's whole life should be based on the instructions of the Lord, for He who gives light for someone to understand the Scriptures as a light for daily living and walking is the Lord of the Scriptures.**

*John 5: 36 **"But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.***

*37 **And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.***

*38 **But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.***

*39 **You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.***

*40 **But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**"*

*Jeremiah 7: 22 **"For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.***

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

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

25 Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them.

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

27 Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you.

28 So you shall say to them, "This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth."

In the text narrated above by Jeremiah, the behavior of the people described in it does not indicate that people literally did not listen to the prophets and their words, but it indicates that, despite listening to them, they did not heed the words to practice them nor to be a conscious part of their lives or their most profound convictions to know how they could live and walk according to the Heavenly Father's will.

Given this, then, we can see that **listening and actually paying attention to the Lord's words in the heart are attitudes that represent going far beyond the mere step of hearing the spoken words or even registering them in the intellect.**

Additionally, we can see that **the Lord Jesus Christ declared that not even the exhaustive study of the Scriptures guarantees the practical understanding of life according to the kingdom of God.**

That is, **if a person does not have a minimum conviction or the conscience that leads him or her to seek Christ objectively, personally, and directly, one, despite many studies, may still be entirely dissociated from the newness of life that the Heavenly Father offers him or her.**

Finally, in this introduction to the present topic, we would yet like to mention that our main objective in it is not to enter primarily into the aspects of how the process of formation of understanding that leads to the practice of the Lord's instruction takes place, for this subject has already been widely discussed on the themes The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, The Core Principle of Life for a Christian, The Law of Understanding, and on the chapter Take Heed How You Hear or Watch How You Hear of the subject Work Out Your Own Salvation.

In this new theme, we do not intend to repeat the topics addressed in other materials that precede it, but we want to go a little further, emphasizing the need for the Christian to be effectively conscious that one needs the Lord to help him or her to reach, in one's heart, a deep conviction about the practical aspects of one's new condition as a new creature, as well as on the fundamental points of a proper relationship with the context that continues to surround one's life while one is still in the present world.

As we have already mentioned, **in this theme, the use of the expressions *conscience, being conscious, or being aware* is more associated with the idea of a clear or unequivocal awareness, conviction, or perception about something to the point of an individual taking a practical position regarding what one has become conscious about.** And it is around the need for

a Christian to have convictions or sureties firmly and clearly established in the heart that we also aim to delve deeper in the next chapters.

Many practical propositions have already been addressed in the various themes of Systemic Teaching about the Christian Life, and there are still many others that may be explored. However, this specific theme, even if it briefly mentions some points already mentioned, has the objective of cooperating as if to awaken once more to the fact that the calling to live and walk as Christians in the present world is a real calling to be applied in a real and daily way in one's personal life from a certain and firm faith in the Lord.

Thus, **knowing with conviction about something or someone, to the point of believing and trusting with conviction in what is known, goes far beyond knowing a lot of information about something or someone.**

Life in Christ has a foundation eternally and firmly established by the Lord, a conviction that a Christian may also reach in the Lord to be equally convinced, in one's heart, about the God in whom one trusts one's life in the present world, but also, and mainly, for all eternity.

And yet, **considering that faith is the expression of firm convictions about what is expected according to the will of God and about what a Christian is called to live and walk through faith in one's Eternal Lord, being firmly conscious or aware about what and in whom one believes is an entirely integral and inherent aspect of the Christian life itself**, as we can also observe in the texts listed below:

Hebrews 11: 1 ***Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.***

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

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

2 Timothy 1: 12(b) ***... nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.***

Since faith is the firm substance or surety about facts that are expected or that are not seen according to natural eyes, the absence of firm convictions about God and about how to live and walk in the Christian life may also represent an absence of faith, recalling the fact that without faith no one can please God.

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

*Hebrews 2: 1 **Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.***

Therefore, it is part of the Christian life, or necessary to it, for a Christian to reach the condition of firm practical convictions in Christ Jesus.

And it is also concerning this necessity of a conscience established in firm understandings or convictions that every Christian should be conscious of.

May God's mercy be renewed, then, once more upon us so that we do not incur the same practices of the people whom Jeremiah admonished by the fact that they did not remain firm in a practical way in following God's will for them. A people to whom the words of the Lord were delivered by many prophets, but who, despite having the word of the Lord at their disposal, chose to walk in their own counsel, becoming individuals who walked backward and not forward because they did not allow themselves to be convinced or becoming aware that it was the Creator and His instruction that they indeed needed in their lives.

C2. Conscious of the Need to Be Established in the Conviction of Truth and Not of Illusions

Considering that multitudes of people predominantly act in their lives according to what they are inwardly convinced or conscious of, and not according to mere informational knowledge which they may have received or acquired during their lives, the continual revision, adjustment, or reaffirmation of conscience or inner convictions plays a crucial role in every individual's life.

A person may receive or acquire knowledge but still not change one's convictions or conscience as a result of the acquired knowledge, which shows us that the layers of informational knowledge and conscience, or inner conviction, are distinct items that can complement or oppose each other.

As an example, we can observe in the world in general that a person may have heard or read that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Only Mediator between God and human beings, and may even declare that one believes in this information. However, one still may not have assimilated this knowledge in one's conscience or inner conviction, making this individual, in the actual practice, still resort to other living or dead supposed mediators when one thinks one needs to interact with God. Although a person has the information that one can seek God personally and directly, one may still have an inner conviction, or conscience, that makes him or her lean, in practice, towards the indirect pursuit of God and the ways one is more convinced.

Thus, a central point to be noted in the matter of inner conviction or conscience is that however much a person is convinced of what one does, one may have a largely mistaken conviction or conscience.

Therefore, the fact that a person is sure of something or has a firm conviction about an aspect of life, to the point of practicing it, does not make what one is certain about appropriate or true if it, in fact, is not appropriate or true.

If, for example, a person firmly believes that the life of one's soul ends with the end of one's life in the natural body, and one lives according to this conviction, this does not change or will not change at all the truth of the soul continuing to exist after one dies in the present world if this is the condition of the truth.

Given this, we can see that the world and life are not necessarily what people think or are convinced and aware of what they are, nor are they necessarily what people want them to be.

If the world and life were what people are convinced or aware of them, the Earth, in the centuries of the Middle Ages, should have become flat and not remained spherical (or geoid-shaped), for at that time, most people predominantly believed the Earth was flat or rectangular.

If the world and life were what people have a conviction or conscience about them, or what they want regarding them, the world would have to undergo radical changes every day, hour, and minute, for at every new moment, people think different aspects about them and yet, among the diverse people in the world, there are simultaneously many different beliefs.

Although people can significantly influence several aspects of the world and life, the world and life have a multitude of fundamental aspects that are what they are or are what the Lord declares them to be and function regardless of people's beliefs about them.

Thus, having full conviction, awareness, conscience, or certainty about something does not necessarily make this something a reality if it is not in fact or if it cannot indeed be turned into a reality, nor does it make something cease to be a reality if it is not subject to stop being a reality.

And since there are aspects that are immutable in life, but there are also inner convictions that are contrary to what is immutable, it is possible to know that people can be aware or convinced of what is real or true, just as they can be resolutely conscious or convinced of what is not real or true, showing that people in the world can be established in true convictions or conscience or in illusory convictions or conscience.

The fact that a person is fully convinced that a particular lie is the expression of the truth does not mean that one's attitude of relying on one's conviction or conscience will turn the lie into truth.

In this way, **when God calls people to live and walk by faith and declares that without faith it is impossible to please Him, the Lord does not call people to believe or start to establish their convictions in what is illusory, false, or not true.**

The faith granted by God to people who receive Christ Jesus as Lord in their hearts is given to them to trust with conviction in God and what is possible for them to achieve according to the truth and the eternal will of the Lord.

Nevertheless, **the so-called faith that believes that faith is the power of God given to a person to achieve what one oneself thinks one can achieve or for someone to attain everything one wants to achieve is an illusory faith and, therefore, not even faith but a creed or belief under a deceitful and illusory conscience and convictions.**

As we discussed in the theme The Gospel of the Promise, the Scriptures teach us that faith encompasses certainty or what gives support for a person to believe that God is faithful to those who trust in Him and faithful to fulfill what He has promised to those who wait in Him, which also implies saying that there is no true faith dissociated from faith in the Lord and His will.

Thus, **having the wisdom to appropriately perceive and distinguish between what is illusory or shaky and what is reliable to be believed is also part of the understanding and the sobriety for a proper life before God and also before the world.**

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

When God calls people for them to obtain in Him the conviction of life according to His supreme purpose and according to His sovereign vocation in Christ Jesus, the Lord is not encouraging them to create the most fetched and illusory fantasies of what the Christian life is and what they supposedly could get out of it. On the contrary, God calls people to converge their convictions to what is already firmly established by Him as the eternal truth.

And, in turn, **God calls people to sobriety in Him and His will because although there are immutable and firmly established aspects regarding the world and life, people's relationship with these aspects may undergo several variations depending on the diversity of attempts that people imagine being able to experience them.**

People individually, as peoples, and even as nations may create, as a result of their imaginations, a conscience, concepts, and convictions of life that are widely empty and which, although they do not change the truth and what is true, may lead people, who surrender to what they imagine and create, to subject themselves to their illusions of life propositions, as exemplified below:

*Psalms 2: 1 **Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing?***

*Proverbs 18: 11 **The rich man's wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall in his own esteem.***

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

*Acts 17: 29 **"Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising."***

And still not being enough that many people subject themselves to the concepts of imaginary worlds that they create, many of them are not satisfied with just imagining illusory lives, also starting to imagine the "god" or the "gods" that they want for these worlds and these lives. And advancing even further, they may reach the point of actually trying to materialize these "gods" or even daring also to create the conceptions of their own "gospels" and their own "preachings" about what they imagined or assimilated in their fleshly minds. (As for the concepts of "own and personal gospels," we inform that this subject is more broadly discussed in the theme Another Gospel or A Different Gospel).

When faced with the heavenly truth granted to them by God, many people are not pleased with this truth and may even reach the point of surrounding themselves with teachers, guides, or what they call leaders whom they exalt, honor, and even pay salaries, offerings, and tithes so that they may speak and teach what pleases their ears and what sounds good to their corrupted consciences and convictions. However, before

the Lord, the words of these teachers are considered as fables that please many people and to which many surrender themselves to the detriment of their own lives.

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

In this way, something that seems to be very relevant to highlight regarding the posture of choosing to listen only to what adds to the distorted convictions that a person appreciates, to the detriment of listening to the sound doctrine of the Lord, is that under this posture, a person does not only subject to the varied lines of imagination that are created by human minds, but one also embraces the false idea or conviction that in fact a human being could imagine and make concrete the world and the life one wants to create. And this leads the person to a widely distorted understanding of the role of the creature and the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

When human beings begin to advance in the idea that they can accomplish everything they set in their minds to do, they start to think that they have the power to create “eternal worlds” according to their own “goals and visions,” even wanting to assign their names to their passing possessions as if they had eternal value. However, many people forget, or want to forget, that no matter what they think or how wise they think their thoughts are, all individuals in the present world are inevitably assigned to physical death, whether it comes more suddenly to some or later for others, as exemplified in the text below:

Psalms 49: 7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him
8 (For the redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever)
9 That he should continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit.
10 For he sees wise men die; Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, And leave their wealth to others.
11 Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, Their dwelling places to all generations; They call their lands after their own names.
12 Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain; He is like the beasts that perish.
13 This is the way of those who are foolish, And of their posterity who approve their sayings.
14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them; The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.

God allows and even instructs people to make plans or sow seeds with expectations and hopes of reaping in the respective time of each kind of seed. However, this is very different from a person thinking that one has the “power to transform visions into

reality,” for it is the Lord who allows or grants the growth of the seeds and sustains all life.

1 Corinthians 3: 7 ***So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.***

When a person begins to think that one oneself has “the power to transform any vision into reality,” one subtly begins to believe and have a conscience or inner conviction that one is a “god” or that one has “the power of the gods” at one’s disposition, which before the Lord, however, is an evil boast or arrogant conjecture.

James 4: 13 ***Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";***

14 ***whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.***

15 ***Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."***

16 ***But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.***

Starting with life itself in the present world, when people begin to think of personal life on Earth as if it were something for a very long term and that will not soon pass away, they disregard the truth that God declares about the duration of life, indulging in the illusions and convictions that they allow to lodge in their consciences. And this occurs because no matter how convinced and conscious a person is that one’s natural life will be very long, it will undoubtedly dissipate in a short fraction of time.

Returning yet to the question of people seeing themselves beyond what is convenient and starting to believe that they have total capacity and autonomy to execute and sustain their imaginations, if a person could actually have the powers of the gods at one’s disposition to do everything one oneself desired, one would be superior to the gods themselves, as they would be subject to him or her to carry out one’s desires. And is not this the “kind of god” that many imagine and would like to have in their lives?

Similarly, also as an example, when a person prays for something that is not according to the will of God and confidently hopes that the Lord will do what one asks, one is wanting, from vain imagination, to subject the Creator to the service of one’s own desires, not having the Lord’s approval to do so.

James 4: 3 ***You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.***

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

In their vain beliefs, some people imagine that the salvation and newness of heavenly life that God offers them, by divine grace, refer to a sort of life for themselves to be able to imagine, create, and execute whatever they think and want to accomplish, as if the heavenly salvation gave them the powers of God to carry out the most diverse intents of their hearts. However, they do not pay attention to the truth that Christ said about salvation in Him, namely: ***unless you abide in Me*** and ***without Me you can do nothing***.

An individual who thinks one has the freedom to visualize and accomplish everything that one oneself thinks, imagines, or envisions is a person who is not keeping oneself united to the One Head that God has appointed to be the Lord of all who believe in Him, namely: The Lord Jesus Christ.

Several people who think they hold or dominate the power of the “gods” or even the One Eternal God are also those who start to present themselves as defenders of phrases that speak of the “power of imagination,” the “power of visions,” the “power of faith in itself,” and so on, as if the belief of the human being in the human being or in one's own belief could accomplish good for one's own life and the lives of one's fellow people. These are individuals who insist on trying to elevate the creature to the position of God and demote God to the status of creature, according to the text of Romans 1, verses 18 to 25, approached more extensively in the theme The Gospel of the Creator.

And, in turn, to individuals who trust in the creation itself, to the point of making trust in it their strength or their strong and supporting arm, the Lord declares:

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

6 For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited.

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

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

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

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

11 As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, So is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool."

The referenced aspect about the human being starting to have a conscience favorable to believing in one's own capacity or the capacity of the creation as one's arm of support and strength is something that even Christians are tempted to adhere to when they are called to idolize and serve what many people call following "their visions" or "the visions of the Lord's anointed men and women." Propositions that aim to distance

people from serving the One Eternal God and His direction and daily instruction for their lives.

In the world, there are many people who, with great conviction, propose their imaginations and visions to themselves and other people as being the ideal goals for their lives, even under the pretext of humility or even devotion to what they say they have heard from angels (or messengers). However, and despite being convinced, many of their convictions are based on the pride of their fleshly minds and their vain imaginations by which they want to judge and dominate the lives of others and to subject them to themselves and their projects that contradict the life guided by the Only Guide of Christians, the Lord Jesus Christ, as also exemplified in the texts below:

*Colossians 2: 18 **Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head (Christ), from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.***

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

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

Therefore, **one of the most essential or fundamental consciousness and convictions for every human being, and, of course, much more for every Christian as a new creature, is to know the main characteristics of the worthy way of walking of the new creature, as well as what "are not" the new creation vocations or what a Christian is not called to in Christ Jesus.**

When Paul "beseeches" the saints or Christians who were in Ephesus to walk worthy of their calling, he does so after a sequence of texts that explain the sovereignty of God and the power of God in ruling the entire universe so that people may know that they, too, are called to be instructed and guided by the Lord, and not merely by the creature's own ideas about life.

In the three chapters of the Ephesus letter that precede Paul's "appeal" for Christians to walk worthy of what they are called by the Lord, he declares to them the purpose of God and the greatness of this God towards their lives and all humanity to show the reason for the "appeals" he makes to Christians.

And even after the text where Paul "beseeches" the Christians to walk worthy of their calling, he continues to insist on exposing several matters about the sovereignty of God that are eternally established and that can never be changed, as follows:

*Ephesians 4: 4 **There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;**
 5 **one Lord, one faith, one baptism;**
 6 **one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.***

It may even seem obvious, but when Paul describes some eternal truths associated with walking worthy of the Christian's vocation, he is teaching parameters and limits of this calling so that people do not stray from what is appropriate for their lives and what is firmly established in the Lord, and, yet, so that they do not come to give themselves to the vain consciences and beliefs that may come to be proposed to them in a way contrary to the sovereignty of the Lord.

When Paul declares that there is only one Spirit, one Lord, and one Father of all, he is stating that, apart from God, there is no one in the entire universe who has a calling to be a guiding spirit of other people, just as there is no one among Christians with the vocation of being “lord” over other Christians and, still, that there is no creature worthy of being considered a “spiritual father” over the most diverse people.

The human being, as a creature, is greatly benefited from the awareness that one is a creature and that the Creator God of this creature is the "Only" living and real God for one's life, for this consciousness serves as an instrument to discern thoughts inappropriately elevated that the creation has of itself.

Therefore, any idea or proposition that aims to attribute to the creature a vocation that has aspects that exclusively belong to God is the fruit of the imagination of human beings or evil spirits. It is the fruit of creatures thinking of themselves more than is convenient for them.

As a creature, the human being does not have, from God, the vocation to be “god,” nor to be a “Christ” (Messiah, Savior, or The Anointed). The human being was created according to the likeness of God, but the human being is not called to aspire to place oneself in any position whose glory belongs exclusively to the Lord.

Thus, people and peoples think vain things, things that are not pertinent to their vocations or the callings that God has for them. And it is also because people receive and keep in their consciences or convictions what is inappropriate or vain to them that they resist so much the truth of God's sovereign position regarding them.

People may become so absorbed and concentrated in their thoughts and imaginations that they simply no longer see reality soberly and no longer see life according to the truths declared to them by the Creator of all life.

Yes, Paul “beseeches” Christians to walk according to what is worthy of the “Christian” vocation, also showing us that a “Christian” is not called to want to be “god,” “the lord of oneself or others,” and not even a “little Christ,” as seen in the previous themes of this series.

Given this, we can note that when the Lord Jesus Christ declared that whoever wanted to be His disciple should deny oneself, this also implies

that a person should deny the imaginations one created about life and about oneself or that others have inappropriately instilled in one's conscience or convictions.

Many people, including some Christians, long for the present natural world to be entirely restored for human beings to inhabit it forever, but they do so without asking whether this is God's purpose for the current world and whether this is the vocation on which Christians should place their focus and deposit their hope.

Many people aspire to find fountains of youth and remedies that will give them longevity and make them "lifelong" in life on Earth, but would this be possible, and would this be the vocation desired by God for humanity?

And if God has also already established a generic limit for the life of human beings on Earth, what good would it be for a person to try to establish the present world in ideal conditions if one oneself will not be able to remain in it after one's natural death? And yet, if God's goal was the present world completely restored, what would be of those who have already died? Would God just forget about them for eternity?

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

If we remember the words of the Lord spoken to Noah and Peter, we see that God has already declared limits for human life in general on Earth, as well as for Earth itself, and yet, that there is no prediction, on the part of God, of perpetuate people in the present world.

Genesis 6: 3 ***And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."***

2 Peter 3: 7 ***But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.***

When God withdraws the working of His Spirit from the natural bodies of human beings or animals, their bodies immediately succumb. However, even so, it is admirable, in the negative sense, to observe such a large number of people who are dedicated to discovering visions, paths, and alternatives for success in life in today's world without committing themselves, at the same time, to personally receive the instruction from the One who gives them life and to walk in the ways of the Lord also to be prepared for eternal life.

Equally impressive is to observe how many people ask God to be favorable to them in the ways and in the options they make for themselves regarding passing, fleeting, and vain matters because of remaining associated with the transient convictions they

have about life instead of aligning themselves with the path in which God's mercy and grace already abound both for the present and the eternal future.

Galatians 6: 15 **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.**
 16 **And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.**

God is the Creator of human beings, and God is the one who gives life to the new creature. God did not create them randomly. Therefore, He knows the vocation and purpose for each life. However, how many indeed seek to know the calling of God for their lives? How many give up their imaginations, deny themselves concerning the ideals they have settled in their hearts, and actually start to seek the Lord's advice even if their ideals have to be left behind?

Romans 10: 16 **But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"**

Ephesians 5: 17 **Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

Looking yet at the texts above, **we can see that the posture of seeking to establish life according to human imagination, as well as the abstention from the search for understanding the will of God, are positions that do not produce wisdom or do not walk in line with the wisdom of the Lord. On the contrary, they are unwise ways, for this kind of life does not have a solid and lasting foundation.**

In other words, **the human being who despises the search for the Lord and the counsel of God for one's life, moves away from wisdom and sobriety for life, allowing one's conscience or convictions to become established in what is not reliable.**

There are many people and even multitudes who are very convinced and confident in human thoughts or beliefs, but this does not make these thoughts indeed grounded in truth.

The human being, only through the knowledge that exists under the Sun, is already not able to be aware of many details of what natural life on Earth is like, let alone concerning what precedes life on Earth and what follows it after one's natural death.

People in the world may come to think, imagine, believe, and be convinced that the extremes of the "Jew <_____> Greek" line of thought, or their combinations, are the best definitions of life that can exist. However, since these definitions are based on human fleshly thoughts or the spirits that oppose the Lord, their guarantee of support also does not go beyond what human beings or the creation can guarantee.

People may even imagine that after Christ's coming to Earth as the Son of Man and with the granting of Christian life among human beings, Earth will be able to become a paradise again. However, all these thoughts do not actually come from God and the Lord's Scriptures, therefore not being parameters of a true conscience of what life on Earth is and what comes to be the novelty of life of the new creature.

Paul declares that if the Christian's hope in Christ were preeminently turned to the passing or natural life, Christians would be the most unhappy of all human beings, for they would be under an imagination that Christ came into the world to grant them an eternal life that in the end would not exist and whose imagination would also be leading them to deprive themselves in the present of surrendering to fleshly passions as does a huge portion of other people in the world.

1 Corinthians 15: 19 ***If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.***

Faced with the foolishness of the imagination that human life is limited to the “here and now,” Paul instructs Christians to return to the sobriety of the vocation to the newness of eternal life that they received from God and to remain firm in it, calling them to look attentively at what was presented to them by the Lord and to which they were called in Christ Jesus.

On the other hand, how can someone walk in the vocation to which one is called if one does not know it or is not aware of one's true vocation? Or still, if one does not remain conscious of it?

1 Corinthians 15: 34 ***Awake (or return to sobriety about) righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.***

Thus, when God calls people to have hope in Him, in the promise of eternal life, and life as a new creature, God does not call people to speculate and imagine what this life will be like but to draw close to Him to know the God of their lives and to know His will for them.

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

Psalms 25: 12 ***Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.***

Psalms 32: 8 ***I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.***

Furthermore, **God also has not called Christians to have visions of what they think or imagine they should do for God and His work, as if God does not know what needs to be done and how something should be done. God has not called people out of darkness into light for Christians to imagine actions to be done as do those far from the light and whose understanding is darkened.**

What God asks of Christians for them to live and walk according to His will, first of all, is that they present themselves to Christ Jesus in prayer or fellowship so that, through Him, they may have their understanding enlightened and so that, through Him, they become instructed in what they should exercise faith and in what and how they should act, as well as what they are called to reject.

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

*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.***

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

So, the way in which a Christian is called to redeem time in the context of evil days, which are every day in the present world, is not for one to imagine, release one's creativity, or conjecture about all that one could do "for God." This is not the way to which God calls His children, calling them, instead, to draw close to Him in order to have their understanding enlightened by Him so that they no longer need to spend their lives speculating on vain imaginations.

The time of a person's life is too precious to be consumed all in vain imaginations or the practice of fruitless or dead works.

Including the creature's very attempts to define and set the standard for what its "churches" and their "doctrines" should be like, what "people's spirituality" should be like, or how should be the "perfect world to be left to their children" are nothing more than empty imaginations because the creation did not receive the authority from the Lord to define the truth about these aspects.

The Lord knows everything and everyone, not needing people to teach Him. For this reason, the psalmist also asks the Lord to see if there is any evil path in his life, as well as to guide him along the eternal way.

*Psalms 139: 1 O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my
 thought afar off.
 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted
 with all my ways.
 4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You
 know it altogether.
 5 You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon
 me.
 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain
 it.
 ...
 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.*

If a person chooses Christ Jesus as the Lord of one's life, one's choice should also include the understanding that one is choosing Christ so that He can effectively be the Lord who guides him or her in everything, which, in turn, also implies asking the Lord to be indeed searched and guided by Him according to His way or His will.

In the Lord's Scriptures, **a Christian is figuratively referred to as a sheep called to be led by its Shepherd and not to be the sheep that wants to guide the Shepherd Jesus Christ.**

If a Christian looks closely at Psalm 23, one can see that it is in the Shepherd's leading in all of one's life, even in the valley of the shadow of death, that life and safety are found for this Christian.

The world of darkness is evil, cunning, and perverse. And a Christian, in one's own thoughts, devoid of an intimate and continual fellowship with Christ, lacks the ability in oneself and the world's resources to discern evil, much less to create strategies and visions by which one can overcome evil on all fronts that it manifests itself against one's life.

Thus, when the Lord Jesus Christ declared that *without Me you can do nothing*, He was also including in this declaration the inability of Christians to think appropriately by themselves or in conformity with the kingdom of God, a point that was also declared by Paul in the texts below:

2 Corinthians 3: 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, ...

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

Additionally, among the people who live in the world, there are also many who think that God has to answer all their prayers just because they say they are praying in “the name of God” or “in the name of Jesus,” but who do not pay attention to the fact that for something to be “in the name of God or the Lord Jesus Christ,” what they ask also has to be according to the will of God and what the Lord instructs this person to pray, and not merely what one thinks is right to ask God. When a person asks the Lord for what one wants and that is contrary to God's will, it is no longer “in God's name” that one asks, but in the name of oneself and one's mistaken ideas or concepts.

God does not “have to” attend to Christians in their various fictions about life or how they imagine, in their minds and hearts, that life should be.

In this way, we can perceive that **the world is not an amusement park, and neither the new birth and heavenly grace are a ticket to authorize a Christian to use this world according to the yearnings and desires created or assimilated in one's fleshly understanding.**

Thus, **as much as people want to fantasize about a present world and a natural life devoid of opposition and evil, the actual context of the so-called present world is evil and subject to dense darkness,** as the following text also warns us:

*1 John 5: 19 **We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.***

*20 **And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.***

*21 **Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.***

Let us note here again the importance of the statements of this last text. That is, if there is a true one, there is also a false one. If there is a genuine one, there is also a corrupted or distorted one. And a Christian is called to realize this if one longs to achieve sobriety in one's life.

*Hebrews 5: 14 **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.***

Said still in another way, **when Christians are called to live and walk in the world according to the heavenly vocation or calling, they are invited to live and walk in what is their calling in God, and not in the illusions and falsehood that the fleshly mind or even evil spirits create and reproduce.**

In Christ, the Christian has understanding available from God to “know Him who is true,” but **in Christ,** a Christian is also called to be conscious that the false, based on the imaginations of human beings and evil spirits, exists and is very close to him or her. And this, so that the Christian resists,

rejects, and does not harbor evil in one's heart, a point affirmed again and again in the Scriptures and exemplified in a few more texts below:

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.

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.

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, ...**

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.**

If we look again at the text of 1 John 5, verses 19 and 20, quoted above, we can observe that several times it is stated that the children of God “know,” that is, they are convinced of what is given to them in God, but they also “know” what is against them in the world.

Thus, one of the problems that lead many people to be ensnared (placed in networks that imprison them) occurs due to the simple fact that they do not believe and are not convinced that in the “simple” and “apparently harmless” human thoughts, or in their cultures and traditions, there may be many illusions that keep them away from the truth of God in Christ Jesus.

In the world, there are many ramblings and even many speculations in human minds of what the world could come to be through Christ, but which are not according to the “truth,” are not in line with “Christ” Himself or are not in harmony with that which is “**according to Christ**” as mentioned by Paul.

Given this, we can see that the condition of being a Christian is not a general liberation to start imagining a kind and wonderful world for everyone, but it is to receive from Christ the consciousness of what the world is indeed and what is the actual

will that God has for a Christian despite the corrupt world that so closely surrounds those who believe in the Lord.

Therefore, **a Christian should not be frightened or terrified by the fact that one receives a conscience or a conviction from the Lord about the evil that is in the present world, for the light of God illuminates the hearts of Christians also on how they can live and walk in the Lord despite the current age.**

Every Christian is “called” to carry “the love of the truth” in one's heart and never abstain from it, recognizing that this “love of the truth” is powerful to reveal both good and evil. Remembering here that the presence of Christ in the heart of a Christian is the presence of the “love of the truth” in this Christian, for Christ is the supreme expression of the Heavenly Father's love and the supreme expression of God's light and truth.

John 3: 16 **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

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

Still regarding being subject to a life contrary to the love of the truth, we understand that it is also worth noting at this point that many people who hide behind imaginary worlds do so because they still do not know God and His light. Others, however, do so because they prefer their “own worlds,” because they think that they will be able to continue doing what they love to practice in them forever, disregarding, in their conscience or convictions, that the paths they are choosing are paths that lead them to sad harvests according to their choices for darkness.

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."**

For this reason, the reality described in the Scriptures is that the individual who chooses a world according to darkness, according to lies, according to fables and illusions, however attractive they may seem, also chooses a path of much pain, deceit, and unrighteousness that presents itself in the lives of those who hate the light, for it is only through “the love of the truth” that a person is sustained against the illusions that are in the world.

*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.***

So, on the one hand, however much the “love of the truth” may in some situations bring afflictions and momentary sorrow to a person because of what is made known by the truth, the action of abstaining from this love, passively or actively, certainly does not contribute against the illusions in the world.

On the other hand, as much as separating oneself and keeping oneself separated from illusions, lies, falsehoods, and evil may generate opposition and afflictions in some specific situations for those who choose to remain in the “love of the truth,” there is true and eternal deliverance only in truth itself, which, in turn, is secured by Christ for all those who believe in Him.

*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."***

*John 8: 31 **Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."***

*2 Corinthians 13: 8 **For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.***

Concluding, then, the present chapter, we highlight the fact that **a person who experiences the new birth in Christ and becomes a new creature is “called” by God to be continually conscious that one needs “not to conform to the world in which one lives,”** always preferring to seek true counsel in Christ so that one's conscience or convictions also are continually according to God and not according to the world.

C3. Conscious that Conscience or Convictions according to the Truth are Achieved only in God

In one way or another, expressive content concerning the title of this new chapter has already been mentioned in the previous chapters. However, even so, we want to dedicate a few more paragraphs specifically and directly addressed to it because of its essential condition.

Thus, **reaching or receiving the understanding of the fundamental principles for a life according to the heavenly kingdom or the truth, to the point that this understanding is constituted in the heart as a firm conviction, does not depend primarily on human intellectual capacity, for it is given by God to whom the Lord grants to receive or attain it.**

Achieving or receiving understanding and firm conviction about the principles of life according to the heavenly kingdom, in such a way that a person is effectively conscious of them to the point of being able to practice them wisely, depends on God's favorable action to make His truth known to whom He wants it to be known, as exemplified below:

Luke 10: 21 ***In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.***

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.

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.***

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

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

And why does God reveal the truths according to the heavenly kingdom or the new creature only to those who receive His salvation and the condition of being born not only according to flesh and blood, but also according to the new birth given by the Spirit of the Lord?

As we saw above, **the Lord, firstly, reveals aspects of the newness of life in Him to those who humbly receive heavenly salvation because it is His good pleasure to be pleased with them.**

Secondly, God only allows people to become conscious through Him of the aspects of the new creature life in Christ Jesus so that people may not glory in natural knowledge and abilities, as if understanding life in Christ Jesus depended merely on the natural capabilities of human beings.

God's sovereign calling or vocation in Christ Jesus is a calling distinct from how human beings seek to establish natural callings or vocations. And this is also because the heavenly calling has different criteria for choosing and granting capacities to people, in addition to having distinct objectives.

*1 Corinthians 1: 26 **For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.***

*27 **But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;***

*28 **and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,***

*29 **that no flesh should glory in His presence.***

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

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

Therefore, **when God calls Christians to notice their calling in the Lord, He does not ask Christians to pay attention to their limitations, but to the God who called them and to the power that the Lord wants to grant them.**

And, in turn, **God's power toward those the Lord calls is not limited to a power to perform works. God's power towards Christians is also perfect and entirely able to help or cooperate with Christians so that they can have their conscience or convictions adjusted to the new condition of life offered to them as a new creation in Christ.**

The Scriptures teach us that God works in those who believe in Him and receive Christ as the Lord of their lives both "to will" and "to do." That is, the Lord does not want His children to be mere servants who carry out what He instructs them to do, but He wants them to do it voluntarily out of understanding or conviction of understanding that is granted to them from the heavenly kingdom in their hearts.

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

So that the "to do" is performed according to the "to will," it is necessary that the will is first or also established. It is necessary that understanding

or the conviction of understanding (or conscience) is also aligned with what is intended to be accomplished.

And in His teaching towards us in the last text mentioned above, the Lord Jesus Christ shows us that He is the One who makes known to each Christian everything that is necessary to know from the Heavenly Father so that each one knows the heavenly will of God for one's life.

In this way, **when God calls Christians to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, that is, by the renewing of their understanding to such an extent that conscience or inner convictions generate the will for practical actions of change in personal lives, God does not call Christians for them to do it alone or among themselves, but for them to present themselves to Christ ready for Him to teach them and renew their consciences and convictions as only Christ knows how to do.**

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

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

*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.***

All the understanding and knowledge that brought, brings, or will bring benefit to human beings comes from God, as we also saw more widely in the theme Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift.

Thus, **apart from God Himself, there is no other source from which true heavenly wisdom can flow. A reason why the renewal of conscience or personal convictions, to be according to the will of God, also needs to be obtained in the Eternal Lord Himself.**

*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.***

*James 3: 17 **But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.***

The point about God being the source that bestows all understanding, to the extent that this is a profitable and helpful conviction, needs to be announced again and again,

for there is much natural knowledge that a person may store in one's mind, and even have it clearly in one's memory, but still not seeing what God wants him or her to see about them.

Although the Christian life is a calling or a vocation to live and walk by faith in the hope that is promised by God, the hope that the Lord offers people so that they believe in it, to the point of becoming a firm conviction in their hearts, is a hope that can only come to be known widely in the Lord, which is also testified in the text that follows below:

Ephesians 1: 16 ... do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:
17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,
18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ...

In this last text, we can observe again that the understanding with conviction, or the “knowing” of what God calls people to in Christ Jesus, is an aspect in which a person depends on the Lord to have a minimally appropriate understanding about it. Only God can open and enlighten the eyes of a person's understanding. And for this reason, Paul did not try to do it alone but prayed to God that He would do it in the lives of those for whom he prayed and for whom he announced the Gospel of Salvation and newness of life in Christ.

For a person to be able to act as a new creature in Christ Jesus, according to the Spirit of the Lord, and not according to the flesh, one depends on the power of the Lord in everything one is going to accomplish. However, one is also dependent on the power of the Lord so that one can have the inner conviction or conscience aligned with what is pertinent to the new creature or the Christian life.

The calling or vocation for a person to live and walk as a new creature, then, is not a call to receive power from God to perform acts in life only according to the mere natural understanding. The calling of a Christian is for him or her, firstly, to have one's inner convictions aligned with the Lord's heavenly will to accomplish in the spiritual and the natural what one has been taught by the Lord.

A Christian is called to be aware that the Christian life also needs the food that is proper to it, that is, the solid spiritual food that is given exclusively by the Lord of the new creature, bearing in mind that the human being cannot produce the spiritual food whose basic consistency is in the "word of the righteousness of God," and not according to the righteousness of human beings.

Hebrews 5:11 ... of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.
12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

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

When the psalmist declares that the Lord's instruction for his life is a lamp to his feet and a light to his path, he also declares that he is dependent on the Lord's instruction to know which way to walk and what the steps to be taken in this way are.

In yet another Psalm, the psalmist tells us what God told him about how the Lord intended to guide him, as follows:

Psalms 32: 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

Therefore, **the Scriptures explicitly state that God desires to impart heavenly understanding about all things that are needed by Christians living on Earth. However, it is also necessary for Christians to desire and allow God to exercise their faculties to discern “not only good,” “but also evil.” Faculties that may also be expressed as a person's conscience or inner convictions.**

We highlight once again here that the exercise of the faculties of discernment is not primarily linked to the human intellectual capacity, for God is mighty to exercise whom He wants and to give capacity to whom He wants. However, at the same time, we see that growth in the senses of discernment is for those who are willing to be practically led by God and to see what God wants them to see.

Solid food is for those who are willing to go beyond the elementary food and are willing to see further what the Lord wants to show or grant them.

If there is a lack of discernment of good and evil among Christians because they lack a more accurate and more profound conscience of the truth, this does not occur because the Lord does not want to give them this renewed conscience, but it is because many Christians are also “dull of hearing” or negligent to let the Lord make them aware of the things that are necessary for them to be firmly convinced according to the heavenly kingdom.

Receiving understanding about life according to the light of the Lord is not always something immediately pleasant to be assimilated by the soul, for the understanding that comes from above exposes the erroneous understandings that exist on Earth concerning life according to the heavenly kingdom. And because of this, too, many people hide behind the idea or behavior of preferring to remain immature to avoid seeing what they do not want to see.

Nevertheless, adopting a deliberate attitude of remaining in the condition of immaturity or inability to the detriment of being able to discern good, as well as to discern evil, makes an individual also unable in one's conscience and inner convictions to perceive the evil that comes against one's life, as well as to resist this same evil.

In other words, what we are trying to point out in this chapter is that **for a Christian to become able to continually discern between good and evil, to do good and to abstain from evil, one also needs to be conscious or convinced inwardly that one needs to receive the food that gives the appropriate ability for the desired discernment, which, in turn, is the word of God's righteousness that is granted by direct fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.**

For a person to be able to perform a task appropriately or more fully, one needs first to be strengthened and enabled to carry out this task. And this is what the word of righteousness produces in those who feed on it through fellowship with Christ Jesus. For this reason, the Lord also instructs His disciples to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first.

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

Similar to the aspects mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the Scriptures also explicitly teach that **before a person can perform works in the light, one needs to have the light with him or her. And Christ is the light that every Christian needs to have a renewed conscience according to the will of the Heavenly Father.**

In the fellowship with Christ, a Christian can find the renewal of understanding to comprehend and go on knowing the sovereign call of God in Christ Jesus, just as one can also find knowledge about the illusions that are proper to abandon when a person lives and walks according to the will of God.

What we are trying to emphasize in this chapter once again, then, is that **for a Christian to live and walk according to God's will, one not only needs to have a conscience or inner convictions aligned with God's will, but one needs first and foremost enter into the fellowship with Christ so that one may attain a conscience according to the will of God.**

It is vital for a Christian to know that one needs a renewed mind in God. However, before that, it is imperative that this same Christian understands that this renewed mind in God can only be provided in Christ Jesus through continuous and intense fellowship with Him.

To discern according to a conscience renewed by the Lord, a Christian is called to consciously draw near to Christ Jesus first to have one's conscience renewed through Him so that, with the renewed conscience, one may live or serve God in newness of life and according to the discernment granted by the Lord.

*Hebrews 9: 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.

In addition, people with a mindset predominantly focused on doing works are also many of those who despise quieting themselves before the Lord. And for this reason, so often, they end up getting so involved in dead works, as was the prevailing condition under the Old Covenant, the Covenant according to the Law of Moses or the Order of Aaron.

Therefore, God does not call Christians simply to do works, but to do the works the Lord wants them to do, as well as at the time and in the way He wants them done. And to be able to do so, Christians first need to be aware of what the Lord wants them to do and how He wants them to do it, needing, for this, the fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

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, ...

Given this, **discerning between good and evil, to carry out the practice of choosing good and practically rejecting evil, is a crucial step towards living in conformity with the new creature. However, this is still the step “2,” because the step “1,” to reach the step “2,” is a person first presenting oneself to Christ to be transformed by Him by renewing one's understanding or by renewing one's conscience or inner convictions.**

Thus:

- ⇒ **Step 1: Awake and make yourself available to Christ to be enlightened by Him.**
- ⇒ **Step 2: According to the light of Christ and the conscience renewed by what is taught by Him as the truth, also live and walk in Him.**

For this reason, as important as knowing that it is necessary to have the mind renewed in God to live and walk in the will of the Lord, it is also essential to understand that this renewal only takes place in God, through fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, in this chapter, we highlighted that **if there is an appropriate inner conviction about the truth that it is in Christ Jesus that a Christian finds the renewal of one's conscience, this conviction should also result in an action of practical exposure of the heart to the Lord to, through Him, having renewed convictions.**

First, then, it is crucial for a person to have one's eyes enlightened to the fact that Christ is the light to attain salvation in God. However, this “knowledge,” by itself, still

does not lead one on the path of salvation if the person does not indeed expose oneself to the light offered by the Lord and if one does not keep following this light.

If a person does not really want the light offered by the Lord, the mere knowledge, in itself, that the light is in Christ Jesus may still not represent salvation for a person if one does not accept the light and does not actually expose oneself to this light.

The calling of God for a person to live and walk as a new creature in the Lord is effectively manifested by the light of God in Christ Jesus. And if a person rejects or abstains from this light, one also refrains from renewing the understanding of life according to the new creature.

So, step “1” to answer God's calling to live and walk in the light is to come to the light. Step “2” to answer the same calling, in turn, is to receive the transformation of life through the renewal of convictions to move forward in line with the will of the Heavenly Father.

John 8: 12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

In addition to what we mentioned above, we would like to remind here that several very objective aspects concerning how a Christian can position oneself “in Christ” to have one's conscience and convictions purified by the Lord are described in the theme The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, especially in the chapters that deal with the aspect of Christ being the light of the Christian, the Eternal High Priest, and the Advocate who assists them with the Heavenly Father. Subjects that we do not intend to repeat in the present material because it is more directed to highlight the need for a Christian to be effectively conscious or convinced of the need for the truths of God about the Christian life in Christ Jesus and the context in which Christians are called to live them.

C4. The Firm Conviction of Understanding of the Simplicity in Christ to Grow in Other Convictions

2 Corinthians 11: 2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

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

When the subject of a Christian having a firm conscience about one's life in the Lord is brought up, in the sense that a Christian has strong convictions in one's heart about one's life in God, some people soon put themselves in opposition to this possibility, under the allegations and thoughts that the Christian life is too complex for a person to be able to aim at having firmly established convictions.

Nevertheless, **declaring that it is complex for a Christian to live the Christian life is to enter a path that contradicts what the Scriptures teach when declaring that there is a simplicity for the life in Christ Jesus to be lived by a Christian.**

On the other hand, the same Scriptures declare that God did great and wonderful acts so that a person could come into existence and God did even greater works so that a person can achieve the new birth and new creature status in Christ.

The prophets and psalmists clearly declared that the works and acts of God are inscrutable and that His thoughts are higher than the thoughts of human beings, as well as His intentions are higher than the intents of people.

Isaiah 55: 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

Consequently, **on the one hand, we have statements in the Scriptures that life and what sustains it are vastly complex, to the point where they cannot even be thoroughly scrutinized and understood by human beings, and, on the other hand, we have the statement that the life of a Christian is according to the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus.**

Therefore, **if we understand that the complexity of life in general and also of the Christian life can be a distinct aspect of what a Christian is instructed to live one's life in Christ, we can observe, also in the Scriptures, that something very complex may coexist with the simplicity that is assigned to another aspect.**

When the Scriptures teach us that there is a simplicity for the Christian to live and walk in Christ Jesus, they are not necessarily saying that the work of God to sustain the Christian's life in its most varied aspects is something simple to accomplish.

Life in general, as well as the Christian life, to be made available and sustained, encompass countless and endless complexities. However, a person does not necessarily need to know all these complexities and manage all of them in their broadest sense to experience life in the Lord.

Thus, although the Christian life depends on highly complex, complete, and perfect foundations in God, a Christian is not called to sustain these foundations or understand all aspects of them to actually begin one's new condition as a new creation in Christ Jesus.

If a person starts looking at the complexity of what supports the proposition of the Gospel of God and life in the Lord, and thinks that one would depend on understanding all these aspects to living the Christian life, one could never even imagine experiencing the novelty of life in the Lord.

Nevertheless, **the essence of the Christian's practice of the Christian life is the opposite of complexity. Although the Christian life is structured on a foundation that is even inscrutable and indescribable in human terms, the Christian's living and walking in the Christian life is offered to him or her based on a principle of great simplicity.**

In His sovereign wisdom, God ordered or structured all the complexity of the universe so that the Christian life could be based on very simple principles, so simple that the simplest people can live it and so simple that it is often even easier to be lived by the simple.

In this way, the experience of the Christian life or living and walking in Christ, on the part of the Christian, revolves around the practice of a very simple central principle, exposed below directly by the Lord Jesus Christ:

*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."***

*Matthew 11: 27 **"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."***

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

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

The calling for a person to live and walk in the Christian life is offered to Christians according to a very simple principle, for it is offered to be lived in God or in the One for whom nothing is too complex.

Life in general of people in the world shows itself to be very varied and complex, but not before the Lord who created the Heavens and the Earth and everything in them. The Lord knows everything and reigns according to the counsel of His will over everyone and everything.

Similar to the previous paragraph, the Christian life and the diversity of aspects that there are in it can also appear to be complex to human beings, but, again, they are not complex to the Lord.

If, however, someone wants or tries to live and walk in the Christian life dissociated from the simplicity that is in it for it to be lived in God and wants to introduce complex aspects that God has not established for it, this individual will face an impossible condition to be fulfilled no matter how much effort, time, or resources one tries to devote to doing so.

Given this, we can see that the simplicity that there is to live the life offered to the new creature in God is in the Christian being invited to live it in Christ Jesus and that, starting from this condition, the Lord promises to make provision for all the other needs so that this newness of life according to His will can be achieved, no matter the degree of complexity of the circumstances so that the will of the Lord becomes firmly established in the life of the one who trusts in the Lord and abides in Him.

The principle of simplicity of a Christian remaining in Christ and from Christ receiving the newness of life according to the will of God, just as the branch receives life from the vine on which it remains, is so simple and so possible to be done by everyone and everywhere that it even becomes the target of mistrust by many.

Although sustaining life in general and the life of a Christian requires countless aspects of extreme breadth, grandeur, and complexity, what falls specifically to the Christian to do to be instructed and strengthened by the Lord for life as a new creature is primarily or foremost to remain in Christ and Christ in Him.

The mystery kept for centuries, the mystery that none of the wise men of the Earth could unravel, the mystery that God revealed in Christ Jesus to humanity, is the mystery about how it is simple and possible for every Christian to be able to live and walk in God through Jesus Christ.

*Colossians 1: 26 ... **the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.***

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

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

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

Thus, **the simplicity of the Christian life is Christ in the heart of everyone who believes in Him and voluntarily receives Him as the Lord also to be instructed or guided by the Lord in the most diverse areas of one's life.**

For a person to receive Christ in the heart, it is not necessary, or it is not required, money, material resources, temples, special places, religious leaders, human sacrifices, circumcision, becoming a member of lists of human religious institutions, doing works, or having expressive vigor to carry out works. For a person to receive Christ in the heart, only the willingness to open the heart to receive Christ as Lord for fellowship and

to be instructed by the Lord in the growth of the newness of life as a new creature in God is needed.

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

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

Therefore, if Christians would open their hearts to be more widely aware of how simple the Lord has made access to Him for people to experience the Christian life in Christ Jesus, and would no longer stray from this simplicity, the so frustrating and exhausting continuous or recurrent search in so many vain teachings, books, and preachings could finally be ended.

If Christians became aware of how simple the Lord has made access to Him so that each one of them could experience the Christian life in Christ Jesus, and would not leave this simplicity anymore, it would only be necessary to live this revelation given to them by the Heavenly Father and so, from Christ, they would receive everything they need for the life of the new creature and true godliness before the Lord.

Peter, an apostle of Christ, also affirms this same condition of simplicity in his second epistle, as shown below:

2 Peter 1: 1 **Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:
2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,
3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ...**

In another letter, also Paul reaffirms that the purpose of God is to converge everything to Christ, that is, that all may be in Christ so that Christ may be in all, as follows:

Ephesians 1: 7 **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,
9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,**

10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him.

We recall here once again that the fact that the practice of the Christian life is offered by God so that every Christian can live and walk in it according to the simplicity of the principle of abiding in Christ Jesus does not mean that the mystery and the way to provide this condition were simple to set up. On the contrary, in another text, Paul declares that “***great is this mystery,***” as follows below:

1 Timothy 3: 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

Without controversy, great is the mystery that allows the new creature to live, through a path of simplicity, the new life in Christ Jesus.

And why, then, is the simplicity of living and walking “in Christ Jesus” enough for a Christian to experience life according to the new creature?

The simplicity of living and walking in Christ Jesus is enough for the Christian because in Christ Jesus dwells all the divinity of God, who is the Creator of Heaven and Earth and all that is in them.

If a person is in Christ, one has, in the condition of being in Christ and Christ in him or her, everything one needs to live and walk in life according to the will of the Heavenly Father, as also exemplified in the following three texts:

Colossians 2: 2 ... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,
3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Hebrews 1: 1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

*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?***

And since living and walking in Christ and Christ in us is the simplicity of the broad and inscrutable life in God, what is lacking, then, for Christians to start practicing this simplicity that is already available to all of them in the Lord Jesus?

Let us look at the text mentioned above again below, which may help us answer this last question:

*Colossians 2: 1 **For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,***

2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,

3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

In Christ or the life of continual fellowship with the Lord, all that is necessary for the Christian regarding one's past, present, and future are already provided.

But asking once more, what is missing, then, for Christians to more abundantly experience the novelty of life of the new creature offered to them in the Lord?

One of the main aspects of the answer to the previous question is: ***The riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.***

Numerous Christians who lack a more intense living and walking in the newness of life available to them in the Lord do so not because they have not yet heard that every Christian should abide in Christ as the branch abides in the vine, but because many still have not let themselves be convinced by the Spirit of the Lord about ***the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.***

Many Christians know intellectually that they should abide in Christ but lack conviction about this fact. And for this reason, they do not practice the simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus, surrendering to the most absurd practices to try to live the Christian life, trying to complicate what is simple and which does not accept being made complicated.

Yet other ways of expressing the above would be to say that:

- ⇒ 1) It is essential for Christians to have a “firm assurance of understanding” that from trust in God and from a relationship with Him will come everything the new creature needs to live and walk in the novelty of life.
- ⇒ 2) It is vital for Christians to have a “firm conviction of understanding” that leads them to actually practice abiding in Christ, to the point of waiting for instructions to be given from their relationship with the Lord that, in due time,

will produce the fruits of life according to the condition of the new creature that they became in Christ Jesus.

- ⇒ 3) Crucial for Christians is the “firm assurance of understanding” that leads them to leave the practice of doing works without first having done the initial work of all other works, which is to trust in Christ, abide in Him continually, and follow what He instructs them to do.

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

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

Unfortunately, various teachings of contemporary centuries on faith have replaced the “trust of believing in God and depending on the One in whom one trusts” with the type of belief that is satisfied with “the information of knowing that something exists or believing that something exists.”

Nevertheless, believing from the perspective of faith is associated with active trust in God and not a mere agreement that something exists, as also shown by the comments associated in the Online Bible with Strong's lexicon on the word *faith*, as follows:

Faith, among others, means:

- 1) To think it is true, to be persuaded of, to believe, to place confidence in;*
- 2) Trusting Jesus or God as able to help, either to obtain or to do something: saving faith;*
- 3) Entrust something to someone, that is, their faithfulness;*
- 4) Conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the New Testament of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it;*
- 5) The conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ;*
- 6) Belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same;*
- 7) The character of one who can be relied on;*

Thus, when the Scriptures declare that “the just shall live by one's faith,” they are pointing to the fact that the just shall live by the trust one places in God, and not by the mere fact of agreeing with the idea that God exists.

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

The act, action, or posture of believing that demons practice is a belief in the existence of God, but not a faith of trust and surrender to God. Demons believe that God exists, but they still resist the Lord.

*James 2: 19 **You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe, and tremble!***

Therefore, a Christian obviously needs to believe that God exists, but one is also called to take the next step related to faith, which is to believe in God in the sense of putting one's life's trust in Him so that the Lord may guide him or her in all of His ways.

The belief that puts trust in Christ is a faith that effectively leads the person who believes in the Lord to establish a close relationship with God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of God.

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

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

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

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

The true faith, the Christian faith according to the simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus, is the faith that leads a person to believe and receive Christ Jesus as Lord of one's life. That is, it is the faith that trusts in Christ Jesus to the point of desiring and receiving Him as the new Guide, Master, and King of one's own personal life. It is the faith that believes in the words spoken by Christ and does not look for other leaders to be able to live and walk in life according to God's will.

*Matthew 23: 8 **"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi' (or guides, masters, leaders); for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.***

*9 **Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.***

*10 **And do not be called teachers (or guides, masters, leaders); for One is your Teacher, the Christ."***

What, then, is the simplicity that God asks a person to be saved with heavenly salvation and remain saved in this salvation?

For an individual to be saved and remain saved, God instructs people to personally entrust their lives to His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who is the Author and Finisher of the very faith in God and also of all other areas of the life of faith in God of a saved person.

Faith in Christ, including the trust of depositing one's personal life in Christ, is the means by which a person can receive justification before God granted by the Lord's grace and which opens to him or her the condition of being a "righteous person who lives through faith in God."

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

The life provision for all people to live life in God according to the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus is already available to all human beings, it was made once and for all, and is eternal, but the Lord also waits for people to accept this life according to the simplicity in which it is offered to be received and lived.

*Hebrews 10: 10 **By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.***

What, then, do Christians lack to live more intensely the life that is already available to them in Christ Jesus?

If we look again at the text of Galatians 2 above and pay attention to the expression “**knowing that**,” we see that in this text, too, Paul reiterates once again the point of firm conviction.

Thus, if there is something that Christians lack to live and walk in the newness of life in Christ Jesus, this does not occur because God does not want to grant them what they need, but rather because they often do not open their hearts before the Lord that He might strengthen them in all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.

Again, at this point, we return once more to the theme of the previous chapter and to the core that is found in each of the themes of this same series on The New Creature in Christ Jesus, as well as in all the other series, which is that only the Lord Jesus Christ can enlighten the eyes of Christians' understanding about the riches of God's glory and that only in Christ can Christians have access to this provision according to the measure that God has prepared beforehand for them.

The mystery of God, “which has been hidden from ages and from generations,” lies in the simplicity that the Christian is called to live the Christian life in and through the One who opened the way for this newness of life, namely: the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is from life “in Christ” that all other necessary convictions and provisions of a Christian are provided.

*John 11: 27 **She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."***

*2 Timothy 1: 12 **For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.***

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

*1 John 5: 10 **He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.***

*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.***

Finally, since the objective of this theme is to present a particular emphasis on the need to move from information to conviction, we will not repeat more aspects here about what has already been exposed about life in Christ in other materials. Remembering here only that being, living, and walking in Christ is a subject that has also been widely addressed in other themes of the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life such as: The Letter or Life; Knowing About God or Knowing God; The Core Principle of Life for a Christian, and, mainly, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ and the series Walking in Newness of Life.

C5. Conscious of the Opposition to the Firm Conviction or Assurance of Understanding that there is in the Simplicity of Life in Christ

Considering that the great secret or mystery of the centuries revealed about the life of the new creature is Christ in the hearts of those who receive Him as Lord and life in Christ, we can understand that this will also be a central point that the powers of darkness will try to fight and weaken in the lives of human beings.

Thus, a highly intense combat that occurs daily against every individual throughout the present world is the combat that is opposed to the matter of each person individually and directly trusting in Christ and remaining united to Him through a living relationship and effective confidence in the instructions He gives.

Although, in general, the news worldwide do not mention such a central fight that the darkness carries out against people's lives, this fight takes place daily in every continent, nation, people, family, person, or heart.

What, in general, is most notoriously reported around the world are the consequences of what comes from the fact that many people let themselves be defeated by the so central fight against their lives, but rarely will the main news of a region or the world report anything about the combat of the powers of darkness that aims to lead people not to relate individually with Christ.

The powers of darkness, even because of their characteristic of being darkness, seek, by many means, not to address what they essentially aim to fight. And this, so that they may continue to do so in a cunning, sneaky, obscure, or hidden way.

Therefore, when we see in the Scriptures the text in which Paul calls the attention of Christians to abide in the simplicity that there is in Christ, we can notice that he also calls the attention of Christians to beware of what most opposes their abiding in simplicity in Christ, as presented once again in the text below and shown even in more than one version:

2 Corinthians 11: 2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

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

or

*2 Corinthians 11: 3 **But I fear**, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your understanding or senses may be corrupted and depart from the simplicity that is in Christ. (Translated from Portuguese and Spanish versions)*

In this way, one of the biggest or main focuses of action of the powers of darkness against the lives of all human beings is essentially to seek, by

many means, to create concepts and actions that aim to compromise the clarity of understanding, of senses, or people's minds about the simplicity by which each individual can live the life according to the new creature in Christ.

And added to the objective of the powers of darkness against the lives of all human beings so that they do not pay attention to the simplicity that is in Christ, they still seek to do it with cunning or in a veiled way so that people do not even realize that their understanding or their senses were dulled or fascinated.

For this reason, the Christian who lives in the world, despite that as a Christian one is no longer of the world, needs to be aware that the opposition described above exists, is real, and acts continuously and fiercely against all people who inhabit the Earth, including against the lives of those who have already received in their hearts the offer of being able to live and walk in the simplicity that there is for them in Christ Jesus.

The Lord Jesus Christ works or acts in everything in the light and shows clearly what life in the light is, as well as what life in darkness is. However, the devil, who operates or acts in darkness in everything, does not work in the truth and, therefore, omits the truth about living and walking in the light, as well as the truth about living and walking in the darkness.

The devil, who lives and walks in darkness, wants to attract people also to live and walk in darkness. What, however, the Scriptures warn us about this is that **a more emphatic way in which the devil wants to reach his intent in the life of every human being is the distortion of the understanding or senses regarding the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus for a person to be able to live and walk in the condition of a new creature.**

Although the devil, equated in the Scriptures with the thief, only wants to steal, kill, and destroy, he tries to do it in cunning ways, mainly aiming to reach people's convictions so that they essentially do not realize the simplicity with which they can have access to the Christian life in Christ Jesus or so that they even become opponents of this simplicity that is in the Lord.

The main riches that a person has as a human being, besides the Creator of one's life, is one's heart. The main personal wealth to which a person should give a safe haven in one's life in the world is one's heart. A reason why this is also the wealth most desired by the thief called the devil, the prince of darkness, or the prince of this world.

*Proverbs 4: 20 **My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.***

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

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

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

As much as the devil also wants to destroy material aspects of people in the world, what he most wants to distort or destroy is people's proper understanding of God and the simplicity available to them for their relationship with the Lord.

The devil aims mainly that people do not understand that the sovereign calling of God, in Christ Jesus, is offered to human beings to be experienced according to the simplicity of access to the life that is in Christ, and from which everything can be provided for those who abide in the Lord according to this same simplicity.

Thus, if obtaining material riches is an aspect that distances an individual in particular from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus for access to life according to the new creature, the devil may not be opposed to a person reaching earthly riches, for in many ways, he aims to obscure his greater intent to corrupt a heart's understanding as to the relationship with Christ.

In previous chapters, we have already mentioned that deep understanding, equated with a person's conscience, does not refer to mere informative knowledge, but refers to convictions about a certain subject to such an extent that it determines the practical position of this person on what one understood.

And it is the understanding or convictions about how the Christian life can be lived in simplicity in Christ Jesus that the devil aims to corrupt in the minds of people who inhabit the present world.

In yet another part of his letter to the Christians in Corinth, Paul mentions in another way the same aspect aimed at by the devil, doing so by describing that **the devil seeks to blind the eyes of people's understanding. And this, with the purpose that they do not understand that it is in the face of Christ that the light is available to them to understand the Gospel of the Lord and the glory of the Heavenly Father and Christ towards them, as follows below:**

2 Corinthians 4: 1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

*2 **But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.***

*3 **But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,***

*4 **whose minds (or understanding) the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.***

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

*6 **For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

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

The enlightenment of the mind or understanding about the glory of God that sustains the life of the new creature is made known by the Heavenly Father in the face of Christ, in a person's direct and personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit. And therefore, the understanding of this reality is one of the main aspects against which the devil militates so intensely for people not to receive or reach it.

Christ and the relationship with Him are the light of the Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, for Christ *is the brightness of the glory of God and the express image of His person.* (As also described in Hebrews 1).

And since the relationship in simplicity with Christ results in the light that shines for the understanding of the Gospel of God for an individual to receive salvation and the newness of life in Him, this is also the aspect that the devil, as the prince of darkness, seeks to attack intensely with a view to blinding or keeping blinded in people's minds or convictions.

The devil's fight against the simplicity that exists for any person to be able to relate by heavenly grace with the Lord, through faith in Christ and the work done by the Lord on the cross of Calvary, basically aims to affect the practical relationship of a person with Christ, for if one does not relate to Christ, even if it is because one does not understand the simplicity that there is in the Lord, one no longer exposes oneself to the heavenly light to walk in a world that is in darkness.

Christ and the light of God to live and walk according to the heavenly will express inseparable aspects, for Christ is the very light that God gives to people in the world, as exemplified once again below:

John 12: 35 ***Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.***

Psalms 89: 15 ***Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.***

John 8: 12 ***Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."***

When, through the Scriptures, the Lord calls those who are new creatures to remain in Him, He also does so because, dissociated from the presence of Christ, human beings also place themselves in a position dissociated from the true light offered by God for their lives. And for the devil, more important than him stealing some material items from a person, is that he manages to divert the person from understanding the need to remain in the light, for if a person lacks light, the devil, sooner or later, will have an easier time to steal the other aspects of life from the one who has turned away from the light.

The Lord Jesus Christ also declares that those individuals who do not relate to the light of God, which is Christ Himself, do not know where they are going. They are likened to blind people being guided by other blind people or blind people guiding other blind people.

Christ, then, is the light in the world to the one who follows Him, the one who has Christ before one's eyes, and the one who remains steadfast in one's relationship with Christ. And it is from the convinced understanding of this simplicity that is in Christ that the devil wants to move people away.

Simply or primarily, the devil wants to remove people from the condition of being aware that without Christ, they also walk without light in the world, for if the devil succeeds in this intent, those who move away from the light also enter the path of those who have lost themselves because, without light, they are liable to stumble and fall from their proper positions of faith and life according to the will of God.

As we will also see later, **the Scriptures declare and teach us that if a person abides in Christ, nothing on Earth, in the natural world, or in the spiritual world can take that person away from life in Christ Jesus. However, if the person oneself leaves the light, one places oneself on the path of stumbling and destruction. This is why the heart and convictions in Christ should be kept in the Lord with so much appreciation.**

Just as a symbolic example, the relationship of trust with Christ is like a light switch provided with energy that turns on or off, or connects or disconnects, a person to the light for one's life.

In the example of the switch supplied by light or power, the question no longer refers to whether or not light or power is available to a person, but whether or not a person makes use of the switch that allows the passage of light or power into the environment in which a person is located.

When a person wants and practices a living relationship with Christ, one is opting for exposure to the light to see the wonders of life according to the new creature offered by God, as well as to see, through the light, what the darkness in the darkness is like.

On the other hand, if a person does not practice the relationship with Christ Jesus that is offered by salvation in the Lord, it is as if one also does not turn on the light switch that is at hand to be used.

Light shows more of the light, and light also shows what is in darkness and what has been hidden so that what is opposed to light may also be revealed, as exemplified below:

Ephesians 5: 13 ***But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.***

2 Corinthians 4: 6 ***For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

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."

In other words, the devil's intense work against people's lives is aimed at producing a deception in their understanding so that they think that it is not good or not indeed necessary for them to approach the light. And yet, that it is better for them not to turn on the light switch so that there is the light of Christ in them, trying to do it, however, in a subtle way and often in indirect ways that are opposed to the simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus.

Light can powerfully and instantly manifest the separation of light and darkness, but it is this clear and unmistakable perception of light and darkness that the devil does not want people to know and achieve.

From the beginning of the manifestation of light in the present world, God established a separation between light and darkness. And it is also from the beginning of the manifestation of light that the devil opposes it in everything.

Genesis 1: 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

So, no matter what method the devil or any other being tries to use to turn a person away from the light, if anyone tries to use something obscure and subtle to turn a person away from the light of God in Christ Jesus, one is acting as an instrument that is serving the powers of darkness.

It does not matter if it is by entertainment or if it is by terror and fear, if it is by works or abstention from works, if it is by apparent peace or if it is by war, if it is by apathy in the pursuit of God, or if it is by intense religiosity, if someone or a spiritual being has the object of keeping people or just one person away from the light of Christ, one is acting according to the prince of this world or the powers of darkness.

Since the eternal purpose of God is to converge or gather together everything and everyone to Christ through the simplicity that the Lord offers to all in Christ by grace, through faith in Him, and by fellowship with Him, the purpose of the devil is to "not converge" (or turn away) everything and everyone from Christ, no matter to the devil what are the necessary means to try to accomplish his objective.

For this reason, **there is a vast variety of disputes and fights that are fought daily in the world, but all of them are actually variations of one main combat.**

The central or primary battle continually fought in the world is the abiding or non-abiding of an individual in Christ and the confidence to live and walk according to the instructions of the Lord. All other conflicts are variations of this main combat.

Nevertheless, **if a person perseveres to the end in keeping the light of Christ burning in one's life through the simplicity of relationship and personal trust in the Lord, even though one may experience losses and defeats in material and physical life, one has won the main fight to which one was exposed in the world along with everyone else.**

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

26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

Matthew 10: 22 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved."

Therefore, **the context of the world or the natural environment of a person who is already a new creature in Christ is not what seals one's destination, but it is the faith in Christ and the relationship with His light that determines the present and the future of those who remain united to the Lord.**

If a person holds to the simplicity of the firm conviction of understanding that "*in Christ,*" and in the relationship with Him, is the light because He is the only true light for eternal life or life according to the will of God, this person is also amply qualified to remain continually under the Lord's instruction.

Returning, then, to emphasize here once more, the understanding about the relationship with the light and with the darkness is directly related to the understanding of the simplicity that there is for the new creature to live and walk in Christ Jesus.

If a Christian remains in the relationship with Christ, one stays in the relationship with the light that can illuminate everything. However, if one turns away from Christ, one also becomes devoid of understanding according to God's light about life, the world, and the heavenly kingdom, simple as that.

Furthermore, if a Christian does not remain in the relationship with Christ, one not only despises the light offered by God, but one also despises the salvation granted by the Lord, forgetting the life one had before knowing Christ and also exposing oneself to

the risk of walking again in the directions of life that the prince of darkness wants for people, as also presented in the text below of Peter's epistle:

2 Peter 1: 8 ***For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

9 ***For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.***

When a Christian practices the relationship with Christ and remains in it, the Lord grants this Christian to see life spiritually from Christ's perspective. If, however, a person moves away from the relationship with Christ, one, spiritually, also ceases to see life from the standpoint of Christ and only sees the life that is close to him or her. That is, one only sees life from the perspective of the creature and not of the Creator.

In this way, the central or main fight of a Christian is not that one should want to win the whole world for Christ. This mission pertains to the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and through many fellow workers. The Christian's central or primary fight is to remain attentive to the simplicity that is in Christ and to the practice of the invitation to approach the light and remain in it, for without the light of Christ in the heart, a heart does not even have light to announce it appropriately to other people.

The Christian is called to be a cooperator of the Lord Jesus Christ, but always guided by the Lord Jesus Christ, for only the Lord knows all the conditions regarding the steps His followers should take.

Thus, there is a fight to be fought daily, continuously, and primarily until the day when “the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus” is wholly achieved. It is the fight to maintain, with the help of the Lord, the simplicity of trust in Christ Jesus, established by continuous fellowship with the Lord.

1 Timothy 6: 12 ***Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.***

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

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

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

Philippians 1: 27 ***Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your***

affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ...

Finally, in this chapter, we would like to point out that because life in Christ Jesus is so fundamental for every human being and, therefore, also so opposed by the prince of darkness, God has established a simplicity for life in Christ so that it can be lived through faith in the Lord at any time and in any place. However, the Heavenly Father also established that Christ Himself, through the Spirit of the Lord, dwells in the hearts of all those who heed the simplicity that is in Him.

Since the central battle of the world and the powers of darkness is aimed at moving people away from the simplicity that there is in Christ and that, for this purpose, they make great efforts of all kinds, it pleased God to allow the One who is greater than the one who is in the world to dwell in the hearts of those who receive heavenly salvation so that *in Christ* and *Christ in them*, Christians may be more than conquerors in the Lord.

The fact that the Lord offers life according to the new creature to be received in simplicity by grace, through faith, and by fellowship with the Lord, does not mean, then, that the life that can be accessed in simplicity is devoid of the power of the Lord to resist and overcome the evil intents that oppose the life in Christ Jesus.

For this reason, too, the fact that the Lord instructs a Christian about the importance of being aware of the opposition that exists in the world to try to prevent him or her from living life in Christ is to alert the Christian so that one remains sober in the Lord and not to make one afraid, for in the very living and walking in Christ, there is also full provision for living and walking in victory in the Lord.

1 John 4: 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

1 Corinthians 1: 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

In this chapter, we are seeking, then, to highlight the aspect of the relevance of the Christian to be aware of the opposition that is made in the world against one's condition of simplicity in Christ. On the other hand, however, we can also see that there are many graceful and fruitful aspects by which the Christian is called by God to be in the present world, of which several were addressed even more extensively in the themes The Christian in the World in General, Works, Labors, and Services, as well as in the entire series Walking in Newness of Life.

We also remember that a broader explanation of various aspects related to the text that mentions Christ as the light of the Lord to illuminate the understanding about the Glory of God is covered in the theme The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ.

C6. Aware of the Enemy, Weapons, and Structures that Oppose the Life of the New Creature in Christ Jesus – Part

1

In the previous chapter, we addressed the aspect that the Lord, through the Scriptures, warns Christians that in the present world, there is a marked opposition to them and that it seeks to act very intensely against the firm conviction of understanding of the simplicity of access to the life that is offered to them by the Heavenly Father in Christ Jesus.

Although the Scriptures teach that Christians, as redeemed by the blood of Christ, are no longer considered part of the present world, the Scriptures also teach that Christians continue to be the target of the oppositions that resist God's will and sovereignty. And this happens because Christians still live and walk in the world while in the natural body. (An aspect discussed more widely in the theme The Christian in the World in General).

Nevertheless, **in the same Scriptures, the Lord does not restrict Himself to just mentioning that there is a sharp opposition against the lives of Christians in the world, but He also clearly exposes what the sources and ways in which these oppositions seek to manifest themselves in the world are.**

In addition to objectively mentioning and instructing in the Scriptures that Christians have enemies in the world, the Lord, also through the Scriptures, mentions and teaches Christians about the nature of their enemies, as well as about the weapons and structures they use to try to accomplish their oppositions.

Starting with sin, as discussed in detail in the theme The Gospel of the Righteousness of God, and the lusts and passions of the flesh and the eyes, as also discussed in the subject of The Gospel of Peace, it is crucial for every Christian to be conscious of the fact that there are multiple aspects that seek to militate against an individual's condition as a new creature in Christ Jesus. And this, so that one also finds oneself aware of the provisions granted in the Lord not to be defeated by these oppositions.

Since the oppositions to a Christian do exist or are real indeed, it is not beneficial for the Christian to adopt postures towards them as if they just do not exist, for the simple fact of ignoring something existing as if it does not exist does not make what is real into something unreal.

Because the oppositions that aim and battle to move Christians away from abiding in Christ Jesus are very sharp, aggressive, and invested with a not inconsiderable degree of power, the actions of a Christian, with the purpose of becoming aware of these oppositions, should not be carried out merely in some random way or without the care that the Lord instructs each person to adopt regarding them.

The understanding or discernment of the oppositions that rise against the life of a Christian, as well as the way to resist them, also needs to be obtained from the Lord Jesus Christ, just as it is pertinent to any other action in the life of a Christian. The Lord knows how to instruct and guide a Christian to do good, but He also knows how to

instruct and guide a Christian to understand evil and resist it according to the light and the heavenly kingdom.

Thus, **in everything a Christian is called to see life according to the light that is in His Lord Jesus Christ, which also applies, in a particular way, to the matter of soberly perceiving what opposes the life of this Christian, as exemplified below:**

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

In addition to being called to be conscious and sober in the light of Christ to carry out God's will, a Christian is also called to walk in the sobriety of the light of the Lord by the fact that all Christians have an enemy who seeks to destroy them entirely if it is allowed for Him to do so.

In this way, it is crucial to observe the last text exposed above with great attention, for it is not stated that the devil, by himself, has the power to bring people into darkness and destruction, but that the devil has a measure of power to do so when people set aside the sobriety they can obtain from the Lord through the exercise of firm trust and faith in Christ.

Therefore, one of the central reasons why the Lord calls Christians to draw close to Him with confidence is to grant them the firm conviction of understanding about what life in Christ is like, but also how life dissociated from abiding in Christ is, for it is in the lack of sobriety and vigilance according to the light of God that a person gives space for the devil to ensnare him or her in his wiles and subtleties.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the devil does not work in the light and the truth. The devil does not expose his purposes clearly and explicitly. Instead, he tries to do it by subterfuges and indirect ways. For this reason, the Christian needs to be equipped with sobriety so that one is not ensnared by the multiple forms of deceit.

God invites people to salvation and the newness of life in Christ in an objective, direct, clear, and specific way, allowing each person to make the option or not for the Heavenly Gospel. The devil, however, does not act like that. The devil, as the father of lies, as the one who works according to the effectiveness of lies and deceit, and not the truth, seeks to ensnare people by indirect and sneaky means, which, in turn, end up having their effectiveness in those who are in a condition dissociated from the light of God or in those who are inattentive to the devil's ways.

To have an expectation that the devil will act openly, in the light, in a sincere and transparent way as God does is to be supported by false and erroneous expectations, for since the devil is characterized as the prince of darkness, he in everything can only operate as darkness. And therefore, the very light he claims to present is darkness, not the true light, but a false imitation of what the light of the Lord is.

The use of deceit, lying, falsely trying to present light, and so on corresponds to the devil. And this is how his actions should be seen in everything he does.

John 8: 44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

*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.*

In these last texts, we can once again notice that the devil indeed holds specific measures of effectiveness and power, as we have already seen in the text of 1 Peter. However, we can equally observe above that this effectiveness is limited to ensnaring and deceiving those who do not receive “the love of the truth that they might be saved.” That is, those who are not willing to receive Christ as an expression of salvation and truth, or even those who do not abide in Christ Jesus.

Thus, the fact that the Scriptures show that the devil acts according to his working aims to show Christians that the devil has his own way of acting, but also that the devil uses specific tools, weapons, or means to exercise power and operations that are still allowed to him to perform.

In other words, what we are seeking to highlight in this last aspect is that even if the devil is not acting directly and personally in some action, if there is an action in motion that is based on darkness, lies, lying wonders, or deceitfulness, also in this ongoing action, the operation of the devil is at work.

That is, when the Lord calls Christians to sobriety and vigilance according to the light that is in Christ, so that they may not be ensnared by the devil, the Lord is calling Christians to sobriety for them to be also kept from the evil that the devil intends for them by whatever means he wants to entangle them.

Expressed yet in another way, since the devil seeks to exercise his working and power by indirect means and by subterfuges of lies and deceit, for a Christian to resist the evil that the devil intends against one's life, this Christian is also called by God to resist all means, weapons, or structures by which the devil wants to entangle him or her.

Therefore, being aware of the need for sobriety and vigilance to resist the devil also encompasses being aware of the need for sobriety, attention, and resistance concerning the indirect action of the devil through his weapons and the structures that lend themselves to being used by the powers of darkness.

In the theme The Gospel of the Creator and The Gospel of the Righteousness of God, we addressed the aspect that the devil wants to entangle people through sin to generate a rupture in their relationship with the Lord. However, when the need for Christians to

be aware of the means by which the devil works to entangle people in sin is also highlighted, we can see that the Lord calls Christians to perceive and equally be attentive, in a specific way, also to the broader forms by which the devil seeks to entrap people.

Thus, part of the consciousness of the context from which a person was saved by the Lord is made known by exposing the characteristics of sin and the yoke that are associated with this context. However, a more accurate awareness of how the devil seeks to separate people from fellowship with the Lord is also granted by God by exposing the nuances or variations by which the devil seeks to accomplish his intentions.

In the theme The Gospel of the Righteousness of God, we approached the aspect that the devil uses propositions of temptations to try to ensnare people, but in this same theme, we also saw the part that God calls Christians to act in a preventive way so as not to enter the most accentuated sphere of temptation.

Considering, then, that the purposes of the devil or Satan, whose terms also mean *deceiver* and *adversary* respectively, are (1) to lead people away from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus, (2) to blind the eyes of the understanding of human beings so that they do not see the light of the Gospel of the Glory of God and Christ that the Heavenly Father makes shine in the face of Christ, and (3) to produce in people the rejection of the “love of the truth” to imprison them in lies and darkness, we can see that the wiles of the devil are evidently not to be viewed lightly and without due attention and sobriety.

In the previous chapter, we already mentioned that since the eternal purpose of God is to converge or gather together all things and everyone in Christ, and the goal of the devil is “not to converge” everything and everyone to Christ but to turn them away from the Lord, it also becomes necessary a broader perception about the means, agents, or tools that the devil seeks to use in trying to accomplish his intentions.

For this reason, Christians need to be aware that the conflict we are referring to is manifested throughout the world and to all Christians. All over the world, the devil seeks to afflict people with his same goals. And concerning these, Christians should be aware to resist them in faith so that the devil does not take advantage of them, as Paul also mentions in the following text:

*2 Corinthians 2: 11 ... **lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.***

Whether by trying to use riches, entertainment, oppression, threats, Greek or Jewish philosophy, and so on, to lead people away from justification by grace in Christ Jesus, through faith, and from fellowship with the Lord, the opposition of darkness is real. And a Christian who reads the Scriptures carefully can realize that no one can deny the real and active existence of evil and the devil without, through this attitude, also trying to deny the Scriptures themselves.

Similarly, it is no use for a Christian to refrain from learning about texts that mention evil and the devil, thinking that, with this action, one will be protected from evil or thinking that ignorance about evil prevents evil from acting against one's life.

Evil is evil, and therefore, it is not compassionate and generous to the ignorant. Evil or the devil is cruel and perverse to all who allow it or him to work in their lives.

Given this, the Lord Jesus Christ warned everyone about the vile and cruel objectives of evil, as follows:

John 10: 10(a) ***"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy."***

Thus, when a person, even being a Christian, walks dissociated from the light offered by the Lord, one starts to walk in the world in a vulnerable way in which one may become involved by the effects of darkness through multiple forms to the point of no longer knowing where one is going.

John 12: 35(b) ***Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going."***

If we look further at the book of Proverbs, we can see that in one of its approaches, it is narrated about a young man lacking prudence or a young man who was unaware that evil was in the streets and at the crossroads of his city. And this young man became a victim of abuse and destruction because of his naivety, lack of understanding of evil, and lack of prudence towards evil, showing us that ignorance in no way served him as a protection.

Therefore, by creating their own images or concepts of what the Christian life is and how God "should" protect them, many Christians incur recklessness similar to the young man in the book of Proverbs or end up being found as fragile targets in the face of evil because they do not discern that darkness acts in many ways.

There are many people, and even Christians, who resist seeking a broader sober awareness of how life is and that there are real evil and dark actions in it, even often clothed with the appearance of good. That is why this posture is also one of the motives that increase suffering in the world.

It is necessary and beneficial, then, for Christians to know that while the Lord, through His Gospel, truly and transparently offers life according to the heavenly kingdom to anyone who wants to receive it through faith in Christ Jesus, the powers of darkness act by what is called in the Scriptures *wiles of the devil*, as is also exemplified below:

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

Many are the devices of Satan, but they are all based on lies, deceit, and corruption of truth and righteousness, just as they all aim to harm and destroy those to whom they are directed. And for this, every Christian should discern them in Christ Jesus to also avoid, resist, and reject them.

Recalling here once again the text of Hebrews 5, and some others, we would like to reiterate once more that **a Christian, through being strengthened in the word of God's righteousness, is called by the Lord to discern what is good, to lay hold of what is good, and to practice it. However, a Christian is also called to discern evil in order to move away from it and not to be a doer or accomplice of what is contrary to the will of the Lord for one's life, as shown in several texts below:**

Hebrews 5: 13 **For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.**

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

Romans 12: 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

1 Peter 3: 10 **For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.**

11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.

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

1 Peter 4: 1 **Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,**
2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.
3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

1 Thessalonians 5: 21 **Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

22 Abstain from every form of evil.

When the Lord instructs Christians to discern both good and evil and to abstain from all forms of evil, in the most diverse appearances or formats in which it may appear, the Lord gives this instruction for the good of the Christians and because the love and fear of the Lord are not consistent with a life of fellowship with evil.

*Proverbs 8: 13 **The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.***

*2 Corinthians 6: 14 **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (or unfaithful). For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?***

*1 Corinthians 13: 6 **(Love) does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.***

C7. Aware of the Enemy, Weapons, and Structures that Oppose the Life of the New Creature in Christ Jesus – Part 2

In addition to the previous chapter and considering that the emphasis of this theme is mainly aimed at highlighting the need for Christians to be conscious of the context in which they live in the world, and aiming not to be too repetitive on what has already been exposed in other themes referenced in the previous chapters, we would like to focus on highlighting just a few aspects of some of the weapons or structures through which the devil tries to act as an adversary or opponent so that the will of God is not established in a person's heart.

Although in this and other themes of the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life we already widely discussed various means by which the powers of darkness act in opposition to the good of human beings to subject them to evil, it seems to us of great relevance to make some highlights about the following aspects mentioned in the Scriptures:

- 1) Hypocrisy;
- 2) Sophisms, haughty advice, or distorted arguments;
- 3) Strongholds;
- 4) Structures of principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and hosts or forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Since one of the main targets of the devil is to subject people by distorting their “understanding” about the truth and the simplicity through which they can approach God, it is also in this sense that the devil invests several of his central efforts and manifests some of its main weapons, pitfalls, tricks, or structures of action.

Considering that the Scriptures teach us that the devil also has the characteristic of being a prince or ruler, it is according to the concepts of what he rules that he seeks to seduce people to keep them away from fellowship with the Lord.

Thus, when the Lord calls Christians to abide in Him and be strengthened in Him, the Lord also does so because the devil's opposition towards a Christian is not an opposition made only by the devil himself, but it is an opposition of a whole set of factors and a whole mentality of the powers of darkness against a Christian's life.

When the Scriptures teach us that the devil also has the characteristic of being a prince or ruler, they show us that the devil's aim is not only focused on harming some people individually but is also focused on establishing over the world, and people in it, a condition and corporate mind according to the powers over which he stands as the prince.

Therefore, it is crucial for a Christian to be aware that when one received Christ Jesus into one's life, one also had one's condition of belonging to the powers of darkness revoked, becoming part of another kingdom, with another Lord, and also with other understandings and principles about

life, showing us, the Scriptures, that the salvation of a soul encompasses even a fight between kingdoms and not just battles of individuals.

Colossians 1: 13 ***He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.***

Acts 26: 16 ***‘But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.***

17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,

18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

And, in turn, **conflicts, struggles, combats, and wars between kingdoms or sets of powers, before being tangible in material and physical aspects, first occur in the spheres of distinct conceptualizations, mentalities, or understandings.**

The devil knows that through concepts, convictions, beliefs, and understandings, he can guide or determine courses of conduct and life in people who do not resist him, as the following text shows us:

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.

The text above from the book of Ephesians shows us, then, that walking according to the inclinations of the flesh, and not according to the Spirit of God, is equivalent to being guided by the course of the present world. Which, in turn, is conforming to the prince of the power of the air or prince of the powers of darkness, for the one who inspires people to consider life only from the mere perspective of the creation or the flesh, and not from the standpoint of God, is the devil, as mentioned by the Lord Jesus also in the following text:

Matthew 16: 23 ***But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."***

Although the devil or evil spirits may try to act directly against a specific person, as was the case where the devil directly tempted Christ when the Lord was in the flesh in the world, **the powers of darkness also seek to work more broadly in opposition to people by trying to involve them through propagation, teaching, and support of their misleading concepts and propositions, and which they try to spread even accompanied by signs and lying wonders, as we have seen before.**

If we carefully observe the following text from 1 John, which warns Christians not to believe any messenger, prophet, or spirit without first testing them, we can see that when referring to unworthy spirits, this same text also makes reference to false prophets as the promoters of the false spirits mentioned, showing us that the words, ideas, or announcements of these false prophets are one of the chief practical ways in which false propositions are exposed to people.

*1 John 4: 1 **Beloved, do not believe (or do not give credit to) every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.***

The working of the powers of darkness, carried out through deceiving spirits, has the reproduction of their corrupted teachings through people who lend themselves to being false agents of its main objectives, for when people assimilate the deceiving teachings, these teachings may also be transported, passed on, or multiplied by the people themselves, as is also taught in Paul's letter to Timothy, as mentioned below:

*1 Timothy 4: 1 **Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,***
*2 **speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ...***

And also this last text mentioned above is especially enlightening about the way the powers of darkness work, for in addition to elucidating that it is also through corrupted teachings that darkness seeks to act strongly, it also exposes that the teachings themselves are made not only under the characteristics of an explicit lie, but also under the characteristics of hypocrisy that tries to hide the fact that they are taught according to the lie.

Through the letter to Timothy, in a highly condensed text, Paul warns Christians that in the world, there are deceiving spirits who seek to teach corrupted teachings and who still seek to do so under some specific characteristics by which they try to hide the lies that are in their teachings.

That is, **in addition to using lies, the actions that aim to add hypocrisy, sophistry, haughty advice, distorted arguments, or strongholds to the lies already used are actions that try to make use of a second level of lies,**

which, in turn, are specially designed with the aim of trying to hide the first levels of lies used.

Thus, because of what is mentioned in these last paragraphs, we understand it to be highly significant to highlight even more some aspects about hypocrisies, sophisms, haughty advice, distorted arguments, strongholds, and structures through which the powers of darkness seek to impose or multiply their corrupts concepts of life on people in the world.

Starting, then, with hypocrisy, more widely commented on the topic “Highlighting Dissimulation or Hypocrisy as a Weapon That Fights Against Faith in God,” of the theme The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, we reiterate that it refers to a means by which attempts are made to simulate or dissimulate deceitful performances in such a way that lies appear to be the truth or seem to cooperate with the truth, but are nothing more than vile intentions to try to mask the opposition of thoughts and actions to the will of God.

As if this were not enough, hypocrisy is also compared by the Lord to leaven that, if left free to act, can corrupt an entire lump. And this lump may be a person or even a group of people who allow themselves to be influenced by hypocrisy.

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."

Galatians 5: 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

A person trying to simulate or dissimulate that one is living a life of piety towards God, but one is not doing it from the heart, from the leading of the Spirit of the Lord, and according to the will of God, but to sustain the appearances of humility and godliness, is an example of a highly dangerous practice of hypocrisy that may cause very severe consequences to the lives of those who practice it.

God does not look at the appearance with which people practice religious acts in their lives, but whether they live in godliness or fear of the Lord from a broken and contrite heart, and according to the Lord's eternal will.

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

In this way, the practice of hypocrisy cannot deceive God. As for human beings, however, if they allow themselves to be involved in the hypocrisy of their religious acts, they may also become involved in the lack of perception or by the obscurity of how opposed they are to the will of the Lord.

Matthew 7: 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

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

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

Matthew 15: 8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me."

While the light greatly clarifies when it is accepted, the instruments of darkness come between the light and the individual who receives these instruments, blinding the person also to multiple aspects of one's life.

Continuing with the observation that the powers of darkness adopt the attempt of distorting the truth as one of their main weapons or wiles against the good for people's lives, we also find in the Scriptures the reference to the terms *sophism*, *arguments*, *advice*, *counsels*, or *haughtiness* elaborated as truths, but which in reality are devoid of truth and contrary to it.

Let us see below the text that refers to the terms mentioned in the previous paragraph.

2 Corinthians 10: 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

5 casting down arguments (sophisms or counsels) and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

The sophisms, arguments, or counsels distorted by haughtiness and disobedience that oppose the knowledge of God and, therefore, also the knowledge of the truth, are described by Paul concerning a scenario of struggle or combat, in the sense of being even part of a war scenario.

And although the powers of darkness, in some cases, may go so far as to try to impose their counsels by physical force, it is not this type of fight that Paul is referring to, but rather the aspect of thoughts and concepts that can cause effects similar to those of hypocrisy if anyone receives and welcomes them in the heart or one's convictions, conscience, or beliefs.

Through their precepts based on deceit, the powers of darkness seek to indoctrinate or teach people to follow the path of darkness or that which correspond to it.

For example, the thought that suggests that people should believe and have the conviction that they can chart or define the future of their lives if they only plan well and are faithful to follow it is haughty advice or false argument and, therefore, expresses a tool that acts according to the powers of darkness to subject people to deception, as the text that we recall once again below teaches us:

James 4: 13 **Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";**

14 *whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.*

15 *Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."*

16 *But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

Thoughts that are haughty or that oppose the fact that people need to be dependent on God are thoughts that oppose the Gospel of God, salvation, and eternal life offered by the Lord, for the salvation offered by the Lord has as one of its main specific objectives enabling a person to return to the knowledge of God also to be able to return to live and walk dependent on God and His instruction, remembering, once again, that Christ declared: ***For without Me you can do nothing.***

If, through the advice offered by false prophets, the devil manages to lead a person to believe that one actually can achieve good autonomously or dissociated from God's instruction for one's life, the devil no longer needs to act individually or directly to subject this person into darkness, for when one accepts or agrees with the suggested thought that one can live dissociated from God, the person already omits oneself from seeking the heavenly light for one's life.

Haughty counsels, arguments against the knowledge of God, or sophisms aim to "establish as truth concepts that have an appearance of truth, but which always and repeatedly aim to mislead people." They are instruments that seek to present "arguments or reasoning conceived with the objective of producing the illusion of truth, which, although it simulates an agreement with the rules of logic, presents, in reality, an inconsistent, incorrect, and deliberately misleading internal structure" or refer to "a lie or action committed in bad faith to deceive (others); deceit, craftiness." (Definitions obtained from the dictionaries cited in the Bibliography of this present material).

In this way, since the devil is the father of lies and what he rules operates according to the working of the power that rests on the lie, no person should expect anything appropriate or beneficial from the propositions arising, directly or indirectly, from these corrupt powers.

Therefore, by declaring that the weapons by which he fought as a Christian were mighty "in God" to destroy counsels and arguments made up according to deceit and disobedience, Paul was also teaching that the thoughts that oppose the Lord and His will are not thoughts that can be overcome merely by natural wisdom and reasoning, just as they do not refer to simple thoughts with which a person can flirt unpretentiously. On the contrary, the way taught by Paul to destroy thoughts contrary

to the life in Christ refers to the posture of bringing every thought into captivity before Christ for the Christian to be instructed by the Lord about what is according to the truth and what is in conformity with deceit or lies.

For this reason, **being conscious that corrupted advice and arguments are weapons that aim to cooperate with the powers of darkness is highly relevant, for the Lord, through Paul, also teaches us that these counsels, arguments, or sophisms aim to reach even a condition or feature of “strongholds” for people to be imprisoned in them.**

A person adopting the Lord as the stronghold of one's life is something indescribably wonderful. However, in the world, there is also a diversity of strongholds that are not intended to protect people, but, instead, aim to imprison them in their dense walls so that they can no longer leave the limits they seek to impose on them. And it is this second type of strongholds that Paul is referring to when he refers to the need for people to be delivered from the strongholds of haughty counsels and deceitful arguments by which they have been entangled.

A stronghold that aims to imprison people with corrupted concepts and arguments is a highly vile instrument, for there are strongholds that have the characteristic of trying to isolate a person from the reality that is outside these strongholds, trying not to let the person out, but also looking not to let anything in to be known by the one who is imprisoned in the strongholds.

Thus, also from this angle, **hypocrisies, haughty advice, or arguments contrary to God and His will are aspects that need to be seen with sober discernment and caution, for once a person lets them settle in one's heart, they go beyond the condition of mere thoughts and may come to establish the characteristics of strongholds that aim to hold a person to prevent an individual from seeking the light, as well as trying to prevent the light from reaching a person.**

Faced with a world permeated with hypocrisies, sophisms, haughty advice, and arguments against God and which aim to establish themselves as strongholds that imprison people in them, the Scriptures, among many others, highlight the following points:

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

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.

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.

Isaiah 55: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

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

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

Proverbs 12: 5 The thoughts of the righteous are right, But the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

Colossians 2: 8 Beware lest anyone cheat (or ensnare, lead away from the truth) 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; ...

And as the fourth point on the list of aspects that we chose to highlight in this chapter, we would also like to make some considerations about some corporate or collective structures that the devil seeks to use to oppose Christians in the present world.

Not being enough the attempts to induce people to hypocrisy, haughty advice, and arguments or sophisms that aim to generate strongholds and resistant opposition to the establishment of God's will in the lives of human beings, the adversary, or the enemy of people's souls, still seeks to potentiate its opposition to the good of people through the attempts of the establishment and operations of structures that aim to combine various forces and agents that allow themselves to be used in cooperation with the powers of darkness.

Thus, among the texts that most prominently mention actions of darkness against the lives of Christians, there is one in particular that expresses very objectively and in an impressively condensed way through which structure the devil seeks to act in opposition to the children of God, namely:

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

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

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

Aiming to prevent people from reaching the simplicity that there is in Christ or to try to demote them from this condition of life, the devil also seeks to make accentuated use of complex and large structures of collectively grouped powers.

Aiming to combat the simplicity by which a person can live and walk as a new creature in Christ Jesus, the devil seeks to use principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual forces or hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. One more reason why a Christian should always stand firm in the Lord against these wiles of the devil.

Therefore, in addition to aiming to imprison people in strongholds of deceitful and corrupted understandings, the devil's wiles still strive to entangle people in structures of command through which the powers of darkness seek to impose various other forms of influence and domination over human beings.

The “wiles of the devil” are not something regarding which a person should be inattentive or frivolous, for it is through the wiles that the powers of darkness seek to ensnare people with their strongholds of hypocritical thoughts, haughty advice, deceitful arguments, as well as with their collectively organized structures designed to keep people subject to the influence of these perverse powers.

In the theme The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, in the chapter on The Glory of Christ as King and Head of All Principalities and All Power in the Universe, and in the theme The Christian in the World in General, we saw that the principalities are kingdoms or sub-kingdoms, they are empires or sub-empires, they are structures where a prince or princes seek to settle down to rule or govern.

A “principlality” is the set of aspects that are subject to one or more princes and powers or sub-rulers of princes and their ordinances.

Given this, we can see that while Christ came to re-establish the path of personal, direct, and individual fellowship of each person with God, since “each righteous individual” is called to live by one's faith in Christ, the devil acts in the opposite direction, where he seeks to establish principalities to try to prevent also by collective means that people live a personal and direct relationship with Christ.

Although great in power according to the working of deceit and lies, the devil is not God nor like God, and therefore he is not omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent as is the Eternal Lord. So, the devil needs hierarchically established structures to collectively attempt to impose his influence and dominion over as many people as he aims to reach.

And knowing how the enemy works or seeing his strategies soberly is very important, for Paul warns Christians not to allow the devil to take advantage of them, as we have already seen in the texts mentioned above.

In yet another text, Paul registers a warning for Christians not to give any place to the devil, as follows:

*Ephesians 4: 27 ... **nor give place to the devil.***

Therefore, when Paul, as a legitimate apostle of the Lord Jesus, states that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness, he is also warning Christians that the devil, more broadly, will not act in confrontation with people only through individuals, but he will also try to use kingdoms, sub-kingdoms, and their structures, (principalities), to try to fight them.

That is, when a Christian gives undue space to the principalities through which the devil seeks to impose his intentions, this Christian, indirectly, is also giving space to the devil.

Thus, allowing oneself to be trapped by a principality that acts in favor of the devil or by parts of the structure of this principality may be equivalent to allowing oneself to be involved in a wile set by the devil.

If we observe once again the text that narrates that the Christian's fight is not against “flesh and blood,” but against principalities and all their functional structure, we can notice in this statement that the devil also seeks to generate institutional and impersonal structures to fight people so that they do not achieve good, for the challenge for people to resist the intents of structures is often broader or more difficult to accomplish.

And what, then, are the types of principalities that the devil seeks to institute or use to oppose the newness of life that God offers in Christ Jesus to all people?

The principalities that the devil seeks to use to raise resistance so that people do not reach the will of God can be the most varied and distinct.

For example, a company, an organization, or a government in any sphere that lends itself to evil can become a principality through which the devil seeks to raise opposition to people's faith in Christ Jesus, God, and the righteousness of the Lord.

If we look at the aspect of trying to generate institutional and impersonal structures, we can observe that nowadays, there are many companies that are managed by a group of shareholders and by directors elected by these shareholders. These directors, in turn, are often replaced when they no longer meet the corporation's wishes.

And if a regular citizen has some individual matter to deal with this corporation, with what “flesh and blood” can he fight for one's problem to be solved?

One will hardly be able to do so, as one's fight is against an entire principality or even empire that may have principles of honesty and compensate the harmed person, but that may also not give attention to the demands of a simple individual, who, in this case, on the merely human level, would need other principalities to face the principality that caused one's harm.

Although organizations or human institutions are managed by people, they may reach a stage where they are encircled as if by their own institutional or corporate identity, to the point that currently they can even be compared to people of society, that is, to be seen as legal persons. And when organizations and institutions come to be seen as protagonists and impersonal subjects, superior to human beings, or more important than them, it is when they put themselves in positions of serving the purposes of darkness and not for the good of simple individuals. It is at this point that the fight is no longer against “flesh and blood,” but against principalities and the aspects of their structures.

Therefore, the devil seeks to act so that the principalities, their structures, and the mighty of these gain strength so that impersonality grows. And when impersonality increases, disrespect for people also begins to increase, thus increasing exploitation, oppression, and unrighteousness toward various individuals in society.

As much as a simple individual yearns to find some “flesh and blood” subject that solves one's demand in relation to a principality that is more focused on its own structure than on people, the demands of this individual are treated in an impersonal way, for this type of principality is corporate and deals with issues as if always prioritizing its condition as a principality.

Given this, when the Lord, through Paul, instructs Christians to strengthen themselves in Christ, so that they may be firm against the wiles of the devil, the Lord is teaching them also to be attentive so as not to become imprisoned or involved by principalities that act as agents to corporately entangle and harm people of “blood and flesh,” for these principalities do so under the goal of depriving people of the freedom that is offered by God to all in Christ Jesus.

In the world, there are a series of principalities that claim to offer many benefits to people who join them but that also, at the same time, omit the matters related to the higher costs that they will demand from the lives of those who accept their propositions.

Thus, when God, through Paul, alerts Christians to lift their eyes also to be attentive and aware of what opposes them, He does it so that they perceive and become aware of the types and degrees of actions contrary to their lives with which they may come across.

Yes, in several cases, the corporate or collective aspect that in the world is offered to people in so many ways as always being beneficial can be very contrary to the individualized manner in which God sees each individual and to the personal direction the Lord longs to grant to each of His children through the Holy Spirit.

One of the characteristics of God's will for each of His children according to faith in Christ Jesus is that they may be guided by the Spirit of God who dwells in their hearts, an aspect that the devil tries to oppose intensely also through the corporate and collective concept of principalities and their structures that serve the intent of the powers of darkness.

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

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

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

Only the Lord can fully attend, strengthen, and interact at the same time with each human being, not needing principalities and their structures to speak to each soul, for God is mighty to deposit His Spirit in the heart of each person.

The Christian faith or faith in Christ Jesus as Lord for personal life is not a collective action but an individual or personal one. And it is this concept that the devil does not want people to know or does not want them to be established in it, seeking to use the distorted concept of principalities and their structures to try to impose a collective course and not an individual one on people in the world.

The principalities and their structures may have appearances of grandeur, strength, and of something powerful and unshakable, but if not even the principalities that became great nations dominating peoples subsisted or will stand forever, how much less, then, will it be the duration of minor principalities?

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

*Psalms 9: 19 **Arise, O LORD, Do not let man prevail; Let the nations be judged in Your sight.***
*20 **Put them in fear, O LORD, That the nations may know themselves to be but men.***

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

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

If we remember here also the temptations that the devil presented to Christ in the desert, we can see that the aspect of showing the opulence of the kingdoms (or principalities) of the world was one of the central aspects by which the devil sought to involve Christ. An aspect immediately rejected by the Lord Jesus when He declared that only the Lord God is worthy of worship.

The devil knows that many people allow themselves to be impressed by the apparent or even intimidating glories of business principalities, governmental principalities of all kinds and sorts, religious principalities and their structures, and the most diverse associations. And because of this, he also seeks to use these principalities to ensnare and subject people to them.

One wile of the devil, then, is trying to lead people in the world to believe that principalities are like a consortium of collective life so that people may collectively achieve their yearnings, hiding, however, that a collective cannot replace the people's need to individually obtain a heart appropriately established in the righteousness of God.

The Scriptures explicitly declare that each human being is called to give an account of oneself to God and not collectively as the devil wants to expose in such a “golden” or “glorious” way, but which actually is so deceitful, perverse, and false.

*Romans 14: 12 **So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.***

No principality in the world, however powerful and extensive its structure is, has the authority or can represent a single individual before God regarding heavenly salvation, faith in the Lord, and eternal life. One of the reasons why the whole system and principalities associated with the Law of Moses, or the priesthood according to the Order of Aaron, were declared obsolete and forever abrogated by God through Christ's work on the cross of Calvary. (An aspect widely discussed in the theme The Gospel of the Righteousness of God, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, and on The Gospel of the Grace of God).

And yet, not being enough trying to entangle people in all sorts of principalities and their structures, **the devil still seeks to articulate or associate the various principalities that serve him. And this, in order for them to make alliances with each other to make the opposition even more pronounced against the proposition of simplicity of access to the heavenly life that God offers to all in Christ Jesus,** as exemplified in the following two texts:

*Psalms 2: 2 **The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,***
*3 **"Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."***

*Acts 4: 23 **And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.***
*24 **So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,***
*25 **who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?***
*26 **The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.'***
*27 **For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together***
*28 **to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done."***

When the chief priests, elders, Pharisees, Herod, and Pontius Pilate rose up against the Lord, they were acting on behalf of the principalities that each one represented or presided over. However, when each realized that their respective principality was weakening before the greater authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, they united as one against the Lord, thus fulfilling what David had already prophesied about the way in which many principalities act in opposition to the Lord's Anointed, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ and all that pertains to the kingdom of God.

Remembering here also the theme Forgetting Those Things Which Are Behind and remembering that "*in Christ*" there is no longer validity for the old condition called

“Jew” nor the old condition called “Greek,” but only being a new creature in the Lord, we can see in the text of Acts, exposed above, that the king of the “Jews” (Herod), their priests, and the representative of the “Greeks” or “Gentiles” (Pilate, Roman governor and his guard) gathered together against Christ, for the life and liberty which the Lord offers cannot be provided by any human kingdom, no matter how much these kingdoms try to come together or act in partnership.

Faith in Christ is individual. However, in his cunning, the devil seeks to introduce the false concept of collective faith sheltered and protected by institutions or principalities that offer themselves as protectors and spiritual coverings of those who adhere to them. Their propositions, however, are weak and useless for a person's remission of one's sins and eternal damnation, just as the priesthood under the Order of Aaron was weak and as are all those principalities that follow precepts similar to this order.

Hebrews 7: 11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

...
*18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,
 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

Thus, when a person deposits one's belief and trust in a collective and corporate institution or group, and not in the Eternal Lord Himself, one may be placing one's trust under a type of principality that lends itself to serving darkness, which, in turn, is one of the principal means by which the devil battles against the life that is offered to be accessed personally and directly in God by the simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus.

*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.*

“The righteous,” “the individual,” shall live by faith in Christ Jesus. “The” man, “the” woman, “the” human being, “the” individual who builds on the rock, this one will not be shaken when the rain, the wind, and the flood come against one's life, says the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, **personal and direct faith in Christ Jesus is an inconvenience to the intentions of the powers of darkness, as it exposes the fragility and uselessness of all sorts of principalities that serve the intentions contrary to life through faith in Christ Jesus.**

Structures and institutions constituted as kingdoms or principalities with their chains of command do not resist when some types of storms befall them, for it is not primarily with them that God is committed, and they are not the ones who live by faith

in Christ. Throughout history, God has first given and continues to grant support to individuals, and then to what people accomplish and organize under the Lord's instruction. It is primarily to individuals that God has promised salvation and eternal life, for this present world, its principalities, and their structures will all pass away.

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

Also in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, which cites a list of individuals who overcame by faith in God, we can see that this list is only made up of people. And it does not contain any human institution or collective principality that has institutionally and materially achieved the condition of living and walking by faith.

In the world, of course, there are principalities, kingdoms, and sub-kingdoms that serve as instruments for good and that receive authority from the Lord to act for good, as is more widely discussed in the topics already mentioned in this chapter and the theme The Christian and the Authority. However, for a Christian, it is also highly relevant to be aware that principalities and structures that oppose them have existed for many generations and continue to exist in each generation.

In all centuries, through the principalities that serve him and his powers of persuasion, the devil seeks to put difficulties before those who want to walk in righteousness by following the paths that the Lord Jesus Christ leads them to follow.

Through various principalities, the devil, for example, seeks to put obstacles, distorted propositions, bribes, or pressure in people's ways so that they do not have adequate access to work or jobs, so that they have difficulties carrying out honest buying and selling, so that they run into neglecting the words of truth, and so on.

As mentioned earlier, one of the core strengths of some instituted principalities is that they practically begin to function as if by themselves, even if their leaders are changed frequently. These principalities then enter into a flow of continuity, tradition, culture, norms, and pre-established procedures, where their precepts still have the power to influence or impose dominance on the understanding of the people who submit to them even if there are no longer highly expressive leaders active in these principalities.

And finally, **there is still a type of principality to be highlighted that is particularly subtle in its establishment and functioning proposals. This type refers to principalities that “appear to be structures that serve Christ or are associated with the Lord, but which are not indeed.”**

This type of principalities encompasses those that call themselves “structures of the kingdom of God” but which actually express yet another veiled form of principalities that lend themselves to serving the powers of darkness. They are principalities that propose the worship of God but whose worship is in vain because they follow the precepts of the creation and not the truths according to the heavenly kingdom.

*Matthew 15: 9 **“And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”***

In the world, there is a type of principality that is expressed through structures (houses, institutions, associations, organizations, denominations) that declare themselves to be willing to welcome and care for people who want to serve Christ and present themselves as houses or sheepfolds that advocate being able to be protectors and instructors of the children of God, but which want to do it according to the corrupted traditions they follow.

In the world, there are many principalities that claim to contain God within their structures and associations, but which, in fact, are principalities that aim to move people away from the simplicity offered by the Lord to the direct and personal life that is in Christ Jesus. They are structures, or principalities, that rise to be at the head of God's people and advocate having God's vision for God's children in their generation. However, what they seek to do is to steal people's hearts so that these are subject to the intentions of their structures instead of allowing people to remain in the simplicity of direct access to the heavenly life that is in Christ Jesus.

And as for the type of principalities mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself pre-announced that this type of principalities and houses would be present throughout generations and that there would even be many false prophets who would point to this type of structures. However, the Lord Jesus Christ also warned that the kingdom of God does not come with a visible or palpable appearance, saying this so that people are careful not to get involved in what is apparent and false, as follows:

*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."*

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

The Lord Jesus Christ never authorized or gave authority for a principality, institution, or any other aspect of the world to establish itself as the "head" of the children of God.

Therefore, individuals who are inattentive to the truth, immature, or inclined to evil are the ones who insistently seek to assume haughty positions to establish themselves as leaders, guides, masters, or rulers of the members or individuals of the Body of

Christ or the Church of the Lord, for Christ explicitly declared that among Christians this should not happen under any circumstances.

The perfecting of Christians is chiefly accomplished by the personal abiding of each branch in the true vine, which is Christ. However, to try to distance people from direct life in Christ, one of the principal weapons that the devil offers Christians to harm them is the proposal for them to create institutions that supposedly will take care of their spiritual lives and carry out the organization of their services to God, leading them to an institutional and routine system of services that never perfects those who participate in these services.

The prophet Isaiah also already announced warnings about the principalities that, if they were allowed to do so by people, would try to elevate themselves over those who are called to be of God. They are principalities, structures, and people who claim to be godly but who adopt principles, postures, teachings, and actions that cause harm to individuals who follow them or are subject to these types of principalities and their structures.

Isaiah 3: 12 "As for My people, children are their oppressors, And women (which may also symbolize principalities or their structures) rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, And destroy the way of your paths.

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Isaiah 1: 23 Your princes are rebellious, And companions of thieves; Everyone loves bribes, And follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, Nor does the cause of the widow come before them.

For this reason, nowadays, there are institutions that even call themselves the “true vine,” or similar things, contradicting, however, the declarations of Christ that affirm that only He is the “True Vine” and the Head of which His whole Body called the Church is supplied or nourished.

That is, in their foolishness, there are many principalities and institutions in the world that call themselves Christians that are not indeed and only have the “appearance” of being Christians, for what they actually want is to take primacy or prominence over what belongs exclusively to Christ.

As we have already mentioned in other topics, only Christ died on the cross for the sins of humankind. And no Christian or the sum of all Christians, all members of the Body of Christ, has the authority to stand as someone else's mediator before God, for all Christians have been equally redeemed from a vile position of sin and opposition to God.

Thus, Christ did not call Christians to build “churches,” “principalities,” or “institutions” so that they might live and walk by faith in men and women who have been justified by Christ or by faith in their works. Christ called every Christian to, personally and directly, follow Him and His instruction, declaring that the primary

responsibility for building up His Church, which are the individuals who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, is His as He builds up every individual who believes in Him.

On the other hand, in his vile subtlety, when he is unable to ensnare people through the most diverse principalities that he tries to establish in the world, the devil is not shy about trying to create principalities and structures that intend to present themselves as instruments for the propagation of light and righteousness, even creating alternative propositions to the Gospel of God called by Paul as Another Gospel or A Different Gospel, as well as establishing promoters and even supposed apostles of this false gospel. However, by trying to act under the concept of principalities and in the attempt to establish structures and hierarchies according to the creation and not according to the will of God, these principalities are not worthy of any acceptance or any subjection to them and to those who are part of them.

*2 Corinthians 11: 12 **But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.***

*13 **For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.***

*14 **And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.***

*15 **Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.***

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*Galatians 2: 5 ... **to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.***

The Lord Jesus Christ does not depend on principalities, structures, institutions, and the approval of their clergy to speak with whom He wants to speak. And neither does the person to whom Christ presents Himself to grant salvation, instruction, and life need to be in a religious principality in order to believe in the Lord, relate to Him, or worship the Lord in Spirit and Truth.

Furthermore, one of the central problems with principalities and governments that are not from God or that fail to serve the Lord is that their leaders begin to demand reverence for themselves and their offices instead of genuinely serving people for good.

In the theme The Christian and the Riches, we addressed the fact that in the world, there are many false teachers who creep into households (structures) to peddle the word of God there, to trade souls, and, if allowed, to make even Christians into objects of their greedy earnings. And for this reason, too, these are the masters who appreciate so much the principalities and their structures to try to increase even more their domain areas and the profits of their shady intentions.

Nevertheless, also regarding this last point, explicitly or directly, the Lord Jesus Christ said: ***“But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.”***

Very active and intense, then, is this fascination that makes many people who even read the Bible come to the point of not believing what the Lord Jesus Christ explicitly

said, preferring, rather, to believe what vile leaders or people associated with vile principalities say to them.

And once again, why, then, are there so many leaders (princes, powers, or rulers of the darkness of this age) who say it is “in the name of God” that they accept to lead principalities and structures that are not endorsed by God?

In the theme The Christian and the Riches, we saw that people confer powers and riches on teachers so that they say what is pleasing to them. And it is with these resources that the false masters also create their structures and institutions (principalities and powers) to subject people more and more under their roofs, coverings, cloud, structures, institutions, or whatever other names they give to their principalities.

Without intending to go into the details of the matters inherent to these last paragraphs, we understand that one of the answers to the reason for the existence of so many religious principalities also occurs because people still have a high appreciation for idolatry instead of the surrender of the heart to the One Eternal God and Creator of Heavens and Earth.

One of the aspects of the present world for which people pay the highest prices is idolatry. Whether idols are images, living people, dead people, objects, professions, or physical places, what people regard as idols are also the aspects that receive inadequate special attention from them. And it is in these aspects that the devil most seeks to offer them attractions through ostentatious principalities.

Therefore, the simplicity that there is in Christ for a person to live and walk in the condition of a new creature is based on a relationship that does not need principalities, institutions, and idols for a person to relate to God. It is a simplicity in which a person receives Christ and the Lord's instruction personally through the Holy Spirit wherever one goes. It is the simplicity that does not require financial bargaining for a person to hear God, for the “gift of God” cannot be obtained by money but by the grace offered from the heavenly kingdom. However, this is also the simplicity so often despised by many for the fact of being so simple and so direct.

1 John 5: 20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Hebrews 7: 25 Therefore He (Christ) is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

God also speaks to people through people. God instructs Christians through other Christians and can speak to them when they come together as fellow believers in Christ. However, the Lord did not instruct Christians to build principalities, hierarchies, and dependence on institutions and other people so that He would speak to His children through them.

God can speak through those who believe in Him, but God can also speak directly and at any time to people He wants to talk to and who want to hear His instruction. Although the Lord speaks to people through various means, the Scriptures teach that God predominantly wants to work directly in every heart. That is why the Lord also pours out His Spirit in the hearts of all who become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Many principalities, in turn, seek to interfere with the freedom of simplicity that there is in Christ, seeking to create the most diverse rules that claim that God has to speak through these principalities, which, however, are no more than strongholds of the wiles of the powers of darkness to separate people from a personal and direct relationship with their One God and Creator.

In this way, as part of the Christian life, the Christian is called to advance in the Lord to receive from Him the firm conviction of what one has in Christ, but also to understand how much the devil wants to take this away, to the point of trying to use weapons, riches, structures, and people to try to dissuade people from the simple and direct access that is provided to them in the living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, given the broad picture of struggles that are presented in the world, also through the principalities and their structures, a Christian should never take lightly the warnings that the Lord Jesus made directly about each of the aspects of these fights, as we can also see in the last text below presented in this chapter:

- 1 Peter 5: 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*
- 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*
- 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*
- 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*
- 10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*
- 11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

C8. Conscious of Christ's Provision for the New Creature to Remain Firm in Him and His Love

After seeing the previous chapter, in which we highlighted some means or weapons by which some of the main oppositions to life according to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus are carried out, we understand that it is also very significant to highlight that the human being was not constituted (created and called) to face evil based on one's own strength or based solely on one's works.

There are forces of evil that are stronger than the human being itself. Human beings are not the strongest creation that exists. And when human beings choose not to walk guided by God and in the strength of the Lord, they are heading down a path on which they will not be able to succeed over sin and evil. When a human being relies on the strength of the human being or anything else of the creation, one becomes vulnerable to many forms of action of the powers of darkness.

And since it is through trust in Christ that a person obtains the grace of God for salvation and life according to the heavenly kingdom, so it is also against the trust of people in Christ that evils are opposed.

As we saw in the theme *Reaching Forward to Those Things Which Are Ahead*, Paul's great goal, as a Christian, was always "the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus," which is salvation to eternal life that, in turn, is expressed by knowing God and Christ by abiding in Him through faith.

Thus, a person like Stephen, for example, who was stoned to death for his faith in Christ, is not an individual who was defeated by evil, but is an individual who overcame evil by persevering in faith in Christ until the end. (According to Acts 7).

When we also see the example of the individual who lived as a criminal and ended up being condemned to death by men, but who, in the final moment of his life, was faced with the crucified Christ also in his favor and repented before the Lord of the evil he had done, we see that this individual also managed to overcome evil by placing his faith in Christ for eternal life.

Only the Lord Jesus is the provider of life according to the Heavenly Father's will, and only He can align a person's heart to see the light and have one's conscience purified or adjusted to realize what God wants to be practiced and to have the ability to live and walk according to the direction of God.

Nevertheless, it is also only the Lord who can guide the Christian so that one is aware of the evil that so closely surrounds one's life and so that, at the same time, this Christian also has strength in the Lord to live a life in the light of the Lord in such a way that one knows how to resist evil with sobriety and heavenly wisdom.

On the one hand, the Lord Jesus Christ declared that His mission towards human beings was to bring life and abundant life to those who believe in Him, even if they are in the midst of anguish and tribulations. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus Christ also said that His mission is to grant light so that those who believe in Him can live and walk without falling or succumbing to the evil that surrounds them in the midst of a world permeated with darkness.

*John 10: 10 **"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."***

*John 8: 12 **"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."***

Initially, the existence of light and darkness may be scary for humans, but not for the Lord, for He is light over everything, and even the densest darkness cannot prevail against the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this way, when the Lord teaches that it is His will that Christians seek to be conscious that there are evils and darkness in the world, He is not aiming to frighten or terrify Christians, but to alert them and make them aware that the powers of darkness in the world are real and mighty in their actions if freedom to act is given to them.

In other words, the Lord wants Christians to be conscious of the existence and activity of the powers of darkness or evil that oppose their lives in Christ Jesus so that they also may always be properly prepared and sober to resist evil according to the wisdom and strength available to them in the Lord.

If Christians did not have the provision in the Lord to overcome evil, they could even be terrified about the existence of darkness that opposes their lives. However, **since Christians have in the Lord the provision to overcome evil, the fact that they are warned about the action of darkness serves as a warning to them of the necessity of never neglecting the heavenly provision for protection and resistance against evil.**

The new birth in Christ brings forth a new creature and an opportunity to live in the newness of life that could never be attained by any human standards, for the new birth also introduces a person to new capabilities given by God, which, however, are granted to be lived under the fellowship with the Lord.

The Lord Jesus Christ also does not call the attention of Christians to be aware of the action of evil just for the sake of information, but so that they are conscious that although the weapons of evil have their effectiveness according to the powers of darkness, in the Lord Christians are given every provision to discern evil and its weapons, just as in the Lord Christians are also given every provision of wisdom and strength to resist the evil that so intensely seeks to oppose them.

For a person who has reached the condition of a new creature in Christ, a new consciousness is offered on how one can relate in a new way with the light, but this newness of life also applies to how to behave concerning the darkness and its weapons so as not to be entangled by their wiles anymore.

Thus, **when the Scriptures below report that, for the new creature, old things have passed away and become new, this includes both the new way of relating to the light and the new way of behaving regarding evil, darkness, its weapons, and its structures.**

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.**

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

The Lord knows those who are His, but the darkness is also aware of those who received the condition of a new creature in Christ. And for this reason, it is also essential for a Christian to seek in the Lord the awareness of one's new position in life so that one may have light in the world and perceive in one's life the steps one is called to follow in the Lord from the moment one becomes a son of light, as well as the ways and steps one is called to reject because of one's new status in the Lord.

2 Timothy 2: 19 **Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."**

Psalms 18: 28 **For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.**

And as we have already mentioned in all the themes of the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life and whose aspect we repeat once more here, **the path to understanding and personal awareness of who the new creature in Christ is and how one can live and walk in the Lord, despite that there is still darkness around, is only granted by the personal relationship with Christ Jesus.**

Therefore, **putting into practice the dependence on the relationship with Christ, and not just having mere information about it, is one of the first and fundamental aspects that every Christian should be aware of to be able to resist the evil that opposes one's life.**

Trying to live the new creature life in a world permeated with darkness without going through the practical aspect of a personal or individual relationship with Christ ends up repeatedly expressing itself as a vicious circle of attempts and failures.

For a person to walk according to one's vocation in God, one is called to know more and more aspects of this calling, just as one is called to reach a broader awareness of the context in which one is called to live and walk in this new condition in the Lord. However, we would like to emphasize here again that the central aspect for a person to discern both good and evil in each new day resides in the fact that one also remains "in the Lord" to be able to know or discern these aspects appropriately and continually.

As we saw in the theme of Vocation, Calling, and Election, the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus for a Christian is not primarily a calling to a specific ministry, but it is the call to live and walk in the world under the condition of remaining in Christ and His

work of justification provided in the cross of Calvary, just as a branch that intends to bear some good fruit needs to abide in the vine.

That is, as a person reaches the consciousness of who one has become as a new creature, one is called to apply oneself to what sustains him or her as a new creature so that one can also be firm against the wiles of the devil and the powers of darkness by which he seeks to work.

In the various texts already shared in other themes, we have tirelessly tried to repeat the topic of the essential need for a Christian to remain in Christ. An aspect that we are stressing here once again also regarding what concerns a Christian to be able to stand firm against the wiles of evil, for without the perspective of the direction of life given by God and without being strengthened in the Lord, aspects that the Lord grants through fellowship with Him, the Christian becomes highly weakened in the world for not making use of what is available to him or her in the Lord.

It is highly significant to be conscious that God takes care of the creation in its fragility as creation and protects human beings so that no harm exceeds what they can bear. However, it is also crucial for a Christian to be aware that human beings can reject the escape, strength, and provision that the heavenly kingdom offers them to overcome evil.

1 Corinthians 10: 12 **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**

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

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Furthermore, one of the reasons why Christians are kept in the world is to signal to a corrupt and perverse generation that there is a solution of salvation in Christ Jesus for all people. For this reason, as we have also seen previously, the position of the Christian in the world is one of continuous conflict between light and darkness, but which never refers to a condition in which the Lord wants a Christian to be devoid of what is necessary to live and walk in the world under the heavenly light.

If a Christian keeps the flame of the word of life burning in one's heart, which is the presence of Christ in the Christian and the Christian in Christ, a Christian has in the Lord the supply of everything one needs in the world, for Christ has already overcome the world and the evil that still seeks to act in the so-called present age.

Philippians 2: 15 ... **that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,**

16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

*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."*

On the one hand, Christians are called to be aware of the reality that the world is a place of many actions of darkness and that the world is not their homeland. On the other hand, however, Christians are also called to be conscious that the world is a place for them to cooperate in the announcement and testimony to others about the condition of victory that exists in living and walking in Christ or through Christ.

The Christian in the world is called to fellowship with Christ and to bear fruit that cooperates with awakening the people of the world to the salvation offered by the Lord and to the life in Christ. And for this, the Christian does not lack, on the part of the Lord, the provision more than enough to respond to the calling of God, for faithful is He who calls the Christian also to protect, lead, and enable him or her according to what one has been called.

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

*1 Thessalonians 5: 24 **He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.***

Despite the perversity that exists in the crooked and perverse generations of the world, a Christian can have peace in Christ in one's living in one's generation because the entire source of provision for the new creature comes from Christ, the true vine. If, however, fellowship with Christ is neglected or abandoned, the possibility for a Christian to bear fruit in God and for Christ to live through the Christian is also impaired.

Thus, we also emphasize here again that separating a person from fellowship with Christ Jesus is the great intent of the powers of darkness. It is one of the most terrible destructive actions to which a person can expose oneself, for if space is allowed for the powers of darkness to take this action, they also have room for moving ahead in the sense of seeking to separate people from the only source that can indeed provide them with all that is necessary to overcome evil.

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

Therefore, again, we repeat that **the central point for the Christian to be in a position to bear fruitful fruits and to be in a position to resist the evil in the**

world or the power of darkness that works in it is for the Christian to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ and Christ in one's heart.

The world may seem scary, and it is indeed dark as we have already seen described by the Scriptures. However, the foundation for the Christian to be of good cheer is that Christ is more powerful than the whole world, its principalities, powers, rulers, and the spiritual forces or hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places and that every Christian can live and walk abiding in Christ who is mightier than the world and the powers of darkness.

Due to the context of the present world, it is essential for a Christian to be increasingly aware that the way for the creation or human beings to come out of the bondage of corruption lies exclusively in the redemption or salvation that is available in Christ Jesus. But it is also vital for a Christian to be aware that one oneself, after receiving salvation, also needs to remain in Christ and Christ in him or her so that one does not again become subject to the evil that operates in the present world.

John 3: 16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Romans 8: 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;

21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

If, on the one hand, the Lord wants the children of God to serve Him as His witnesses in the world, on the other hand, the Lord does not want any of those who are already His to be lost again in the world, insisting so much, therefore, that they may abide in Him.

The context of the world is a territory of multiple and broad conflicts. And for a Christian to soberly inhabit it, it is also essential that one is conscious of this area of conflict so that one can understand one's need for continual dependence on God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the provision for the redemption of people subject to evil in the world, but the Lord Jesus Christ also remains the provision for those who are already His so that they can remain safe and protected from evil.

Moreover, despite the context of the world being permeated by darkness, the one who is in Christ has the light to not walk in darkness and, if one remains in Christ, one may still cooperate in the liberation of people subject to the world that so strongly resists God.

Thus, no matter how big the world is, what kinds of conflicts there are in it, or how wicked a wile of the devil is, the provision for the true

deliverance of a person subject to evil is always the new birth provided by the heavenly kingdom and, after this, the abiding in trust and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

*1 John 5: 4 **For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.***
*5 **Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?***

*1 John 4: 4 **You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.***

In the theme Reaching Forward to Those Things Which Are Ahead, we saw that every Christian is called to reach forward to actually use what God puts before each Christian. And what lies before every Christian, to overcome the world and the wickedness in one's generation, is equally the life to be lived "in Christ Jesus" and "through Him."

*1 John 4: 9 **In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.***

*Ephesians 5: 8(a) **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.***

...

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

Whether it is to know and practice the fruit of the light, which consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, or whether it is to resist evil and its wiles soberly, the provision for the new creature, in everything, always has one and the same source and the same address, namely, once more: The Lord Jesus Christ and being in Him.

Said yet in another way, when promising an abundant life already in the present world to those who believe in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ never promised a life devoid of oppositions and conflicts. On the contrary, the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as His apostles, declared that a person's option for an abundant life in the Lord would also imply opposition, but they always said it as well under the guarantee that a Christian who abides in Christ is also in everything under the care and power of God towards him or her, exemplified in a few more texts below:

*John 15: 18 **"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.***

19 *If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

20 *Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*

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

John 17: 6 *"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

...
14 *I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

15 *I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.*

16 *They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

17 *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*

18 *As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*

...
20 *I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;*

21 *that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

...
25 *O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.*

26 *And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*

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

13 *But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Matthew 28: 20(b) *"... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Psalms 121: 7 *The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.*

Despite the Lord warning Christians about the darkness of this age, the emphasis of Christ Jesus regarding the benefits of life in unity with Him and the Heavenly Father, as an unshakable refuge for those who believe in God, is even more accentuated throughout all the Scriptures. For this reason, the Lord Jesus also asked the Heavenly Father for Christians to dwell in the most diverse generations of the world that so much need to know the heavenly light that is available to them in the face of Christ.

Thus, also in the face of this, **it is essential for a Christian to be conscious of one's own fragility in the face of evil, of its wiles, and of the powers of darkness that act in the world, but not without also knowing the greatness of the power of God that the Lord grants by the presence of Christ in one's heart or by the presence of the One who keeps those who believe in Him from evil.**

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

*Galatians 1: 3 **Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,**
4 **who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ...***

*Galatians 6: 14 **But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.***

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*1 Corinthians 1: 23 and 24(part of) **we preach ... Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.***

*1 Corinthians 3: 19 **For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness";***

*1 John 4: 9 **In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.***

As cunning as a wile might be in the present world to try to shake and destroy a person's life, God, in Christ Jesus, has already exposed the wisdom of the world in its own craftiness, showing that Christ is fully or perfectly mighty to deliver and guard from evil all those who in Him seek refuge, sober wisdom, and the power of the kingdom of God.

Returning to ask, then, **what is the provision of God that the Christian needs to be aware of to live and walk in the world both to do good and to overcome the wiles of evil?**

God's fundamental provision for the Christian, both for the practice of good or the truth and for the resistance of evil and the workings of the devil according to the lie, always is and always will be: The Lord Jesus Christ and life in Him and through Him.

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

Since it is the will of the Lord Jesus Christ that Christians live in the world or He appoints them to live and walk in Him to be the witnesses in this present age, the Lord also provides the conditions for His followers to have, from the heavenly kingdom, all the protection and power to be in the world and to be able to walk in it according to the will of the Heavenly Father for their lives.

Once more: **What, then, is freely available to the Christian along with the new birth to have the Lord's strength and protection in one's life in the world?**

And the answer throughout all centuries is always: The very Son of God so that the Christian may live and walk in Him and through Him.

Christ is the living manifestation of God's mighty love. Christ is the proof of God's love, and perfect in power, for human beings so that they also can overcome evil or abstain from it in the world.

Christ and abiding in Christ are God's provision so that the Christian has everything one needs to overcome the world that opposes one's life, even when this world uses principalities, powers, rulers, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Christ has already overcome the world, and the Christian who remains in Him also has Christ in him or her to have the assurance of victory over the most varied oppositions.

*Colossians 2: 13 **And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,***

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

*Psalms 91: 9 **Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place,***

10 No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

- 11 *For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.*
- 12 *In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*
- 13 *You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.*
- 14 *"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.*
- 15 *He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.*
- 16 *With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."*

Psalms 23: 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

...
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

Whether for life to come or for the present world, the new creature's support provision is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, given by God to indwell the Christian. And since He has already triumphed and received authority from God over all principalities and powers, everyone who is in Christ and abides in Christ can never be shaken by any force that opposes Christ, for no power can do any harm to Christ.

In Christ is the provision of protection, but also in Christ is the provision for every Christian not to lose God's love and turn away from Him. In Christ is the provision for granting, sustaining, and protecting life. A reason why no Christian should consider attempts to live and walk dissociated from Christ and should not even try to face the evil dissociated from abiding in the Lord.

The Lord Jesus Christ is God's guarantee of redemption, support of the redeemed life, and the eternal maintenance of God's love in the hearts of those who have received God's salvation, but it is also in Christ that a Christian has the provision to discern and overcome that which opposes one's living and walking in the Lord.

In Christ dwells all the fullness of God's divinity. And in Him also resides all the power to sustain and keep a Christian in God despite the evil that may still be at work in a world that so broadly resists the Lord.

Therefore, victory in the Christian life does not depend on the human or natural ability to overcome evil, but it depends on the power of the One who has already overcome all evil and publicly demonstrated it on the cross of Calvary. And every Christian, no matter how weak or strong one thinks one is, is always invited, with simplicity, to trust not in one's own strength, but in the strength of the power of God's love towards one's life.

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 (or weakness), that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Despite the many struggles that exist in the world also because many people still resist the offer of the Gospel of God to them, as far as it concerns God, the Lord says that He will never leave or forsake anyone who believes in Him and chooses to remain in Him. Only the person oneself may come to abandon the Lord if one loses or rejects the perspective that the provision of victory against the wickedness of the world is in Christ Jesus.

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

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

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

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

1 John 5: 10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

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.

And added to the above, we can see that to further demonstrate His faithfulness to those who believe in Him, the Lord awakened several people over several centuries moved by the Holy Spirit to write their stories so that they would serve as guidance and encouragement for us to also trust in Christ to the end.

In addition to speaking directly to people's hearts, the Lord allowed His Gospel to be formally recorded in history, as well as called several to have a cloud of witnesses described for centuries in His Scriptures to also demonstrate in this way that everyone who believes in Him has never been forsaken by the Lord.

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

- 6 ***So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"***
- 7 ***Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.***
- 8 ***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.***
- 9 ***Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.***

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.***

And finally, in this chapter, we add below the text in which the Lord intensely and repeatedly assures us that in Him we have all the necessary assistance for life in the present world, just as in Him we also have protection against any evil intent, no matter the magnitude and proportion of this evil, for in Christ we have the fullness of the Heavenly Father's perfect love and power. Text for which we suggest a reading with particular attention, gratitude, and affection for what the Lord gives us in Him.

- Romans 8: 26* ***Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.***
- 27 ***Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.***
- 28 ***And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.***
- 29 ***For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.***
- 30 ***Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.***
- 31 ***What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?***
- 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?***
- 33 ***Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.***
- 34 ***Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.***

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

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

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

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

We also remember here that an explanation more directly focused on the condition in which the Christian is seen as “more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus” is also found in the theme The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, more specifically in the chapter The Glory of the Lord is the Facet of the Gospel that Highlights the One Who Can Guide and Support Someone to be “More than a Conqueror or Winner.”

C9. Conscious of the Need to Actually Use the Provision of Christ or “The Whole Armor of God” to Stand Firm in the Lord and His Love

In the themes The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, The Core Principle of Life for a Christian, Watchful in Prayer, and Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift, we have approached several aspects of how the Christian can live one's life practically in Christ Jesus.

In this chapter, however, we want to go a little further on how Christians can walk in the world while remaining in Christ even in the face of the darkness that operates in the world, as the Lord instructs us in the following text:

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

A Christian is a light in the world when one is in the Lord, but how can a Christian be or abide in the Lord while walking in the world?

Through the Scriptures, **God teaches us that walking in the Lord is through faith in Christ, which also happens when a Christian walks in the instructions of God and, by faith and with practical actions, one dresses oneself with the Lord or puts on Christ.**

For a Christian, living and walking in the way one is instructed by the Lord is also a way of abiding in Christ, as exemplified in several other texts below:

*John 8: 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, **"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.***
32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

*John 6: 56 **"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."***

*John 15: 10 **"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.***

*1 John 2: 6 **He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.***

1 John 2: 14 I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong,

and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

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

1 John 2: 24 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

1 John 3: 24 Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

1 John 4: 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

2 John 1: 9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Ephesians 4: 1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ...

After seeing the list of texts above, we understand that we can repeat here, then, the consideration mentioned in the previous paragraphs, saying that **practicing the Christian life according to the instructions of Christ is also to abide “in Christ,”** that is, it is also **“to live and to walk in the Lord”** even though **physically a Christian is still in the world.**

And why does the word of God guide Christians to walk worthily or consistently with the vocation offered to them in the Lord?

The word of God guides Christians to walk according to the vocation of Christians to enjoy the newness in Christ, but also because it is in this position that Christians are protected regarding the world in which they still live and the lusts that exist in it.

The protection of a Christian who is still inhabiting the present world, or one's place of refuge from what opposes one's life, is primarily God. However, the protection that God gives to Christians is also associated with the postures of these Christians in the world. For this reason, the Lord instructs those who believe in Him to be attentive to how they walk in the calling they received from the heavenly kingdom.

As powerful as the Lord is, He, for example, does not promise protection to a person when one seeks to hide behind a lie or to make a lie one's refuge of safety and protection.

When a person hides in works of darkness, one is not taking refuge in God but in lies, darkness, and deceit. Aspects with which the Lord, despite His rich mercies towards sinners, is not complicit or conniving.

Thus, taking refuge in God is also expressed through attitudes aligned with God's instructions and will.

God firmly declares His commitment to guaranteeing the protection of the person who puts on Him, abides in Him, or is “*in Christ*,” no matter how hostile the world and the powers of darkness that operates in it are. However, if a Christian does not walk in God's instructions for one's life, one may incur ceasing to be “*in Christ*” or to be clothed with Christ, thus excluding oneself from the condition of the text below that declares that there is no condemnation for the one who “*is in Christ*,” but which does not state the same condition for those who stop “*being in Christ*.”

Romans 8: 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

When a Christian walks in the world according to one's flesh or one's own understanding and not according to God's instruction for one's life, one is also vulnerable and liable to condemnation according to one's actions, similar to anyone who sows according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit of the Lord.

Given this, achieving the condition of being Christian is not a position with the Lord's guarantee of protection in the world regardless of the works that a Christian practices. To be in Christ and to walk according to the Spirit is what represents the actual practice of living and walking in the Lord for which there is a guarantee of protection, and not merely bearing a Christian title and walking practically according to the flesh.

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.

In other words, receiving the newness of life of the new creature is not the receipt of some sort of “safe conduct” so that the Christian can live life in the world as one intends in one's flesh, nor is it the guarantee of God's protection in all the situations with which the Christian, by oneself, comes to get involved.

All things work together for good to those who “walk according to the eternal purpose of God,” and not according to any other purpose, whether it be of the flesh, of the world, or according to the wiles of the devil. And God's eternal purpose, as seen in the previous themes of this series, is to gather together all things in Christ

Jesus and not the return of a convergence to sin from which the Christian was redeemed by the blood of the Lord.

On the other hand, if the Christian lives and walks in Christ, this Christian's protection solution is independent of the world and of how strong its power is to oppose the Christian, for Christ, on the cross of Calvary and in His resurrection, has already overcome the world, the prince of this world, its principalities, all its powers, and the whole power of death and sin.

Therefore, the victory of the new creature regarding the world starts from receiving the salvation that redeems a person from darkness, but its support is also related to the personal posture of the one who was redeemed by the Lord.

When a Christian follows the Lord's instructions that lead him to converge one's life, salvation, heart, intimacy, feet (paths), hands (works), mouth (words), and faith to Christ, one also comes to be in Christ in a practical way. And *in Christ*, the world and all that is associated with it can never overcome a Christian, or the world can never separate a Christian from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

It is in *being in Christ*, which implies also living and walking according to the Lord's instruction, that a Christian is a winner and even more than a winner also concerning the oppositions of the world and darkness. It is *in Christ* that a Christian is amply and eternally victorious.

The newness of life of the new creature is not granted to a person so that one can be a "worldly or carnal Christian protected by God," but it is for a Christian to be a "child of light," to be a child of the heavenly kingdom so that one can also walk according to the light and who is also protected by the Lord even in the midst of a world permeated with darkness.

Being "more than conquerors or winners in Christ" does not mean an absence of struggles or tribulations, but it means that, in everything, the victory of Christ in the life of the Christian is certain and will always prevail for the one who is *in Christ*.

And when God allows even a Christian who is *in Christ* to be in a context of struggles, the Lord allows it for a greater purpose to be fulfilled, namely: The exaltation of the greatness of God through those who live and walk in Him and for Him in the world, as also the following texts teach us:

- 2 Corinthians 4: 6* ***For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***
- 7* ***But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.***
- 8* ***We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;***
- 9* ***persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;***
- 10* ***always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.***
- 11* ***For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.***

*Philippians 1: 27 **Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,***
 28 ***and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.***
 29 ***For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,***
 30 ***having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.***

Part of the manifestation of God's greatness to the world is precisely in the fact that His children, the children of light, dwell in fragile bodies or humble material conditions, which is also done by the Lord to demonstrate that the greatness of the heavenly power and life according to the will of God do not have their source in the creation itself or in the vessel that receives this power and life. On the other hand, the fact that God's power is deposited in very fragile vessels also demonstrates that God's strength, even acting through fragile means, is more powerful than the power of the mighty of the world.

*1 Corinthians 1: 25 **Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.***

The Scriptures are full of examples in which the darkness of this age and its forces tried to oppose weak men and women in their generations, but which could not carry out their intentions against those who fear the Lord because God had protected the frail vessels that served Him.

The greatest rulers of the greatest kingdom of Daniel's day, for example, rose against the life faithful to God that Daniel lived in his generation, but they could do nothing against this man who served the Lord in faithfulness. Neither the king of men nor the king of animals (den of lions) could touch a single hair of Daniel's life until the Lord allowed them to do so, making the glory of this provision of protection for Daniel also to be attributed to God, as narrated below:

*Daniel 6: 25 **Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.***
 26 ***I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion shall endure to the end.***

On the one hand, Daniel was protected because this was the Lord's will for Daniel at that time, but also because Daniel maintained his trust "in God" despite the oppositions of principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, and hosts of wickedness

in the heavenly places that were raised against him with broad threats and acts aimed at his destruction.

Similarly to what happened to Daniel when he remained “in God” in the face of the uprisings of the kingdoms against his life that was already lived daily “in God,” we also find what is described by Paul, in other words, in the text below:

- Colossians 3: 1* **If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.**
2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
4 When Christ who is our life appears (or will manifest Himself), then you also will appear (or be manifested) with Him in glory.
-

When the oppressions were raised against Daniel, he did not consider them as being the actions that would determine the entire trajectory of his life, for even being surrounded by opposition, Daniel believed and knew that the condition of remaining in the Lord was available to him. In times of peace, Daniel had the Lord as his dwelling place and refuge, but also in times of opposition, he continued to seek God and the things that are above as his secure place in the Lord.

And when God, who was the source of life and protection for Daniel in times of peace and in times of opposition, manifested Himself protecting Daniel, Daniel also was manifested with the Lord in glory. From the posture of faithfulness and trust of a single individual in God, the Lord was exalted in all nations subordinated to the empire in which Daniel lived, as well as Daniel was exalted together with God as a small and fragile man who had trusted in his Mighty, Eternal, and Sovereign God.

Thus, the focus of the Christian in the world is not to aim for great or small glory, as this is up to the Lord Jesus to determine when He will manifest Himself in the life of a Christian. However, always being in the Lord and being available to the Lord for cooperation in every good work the Lord intends to do through a Christian is something that every Christian should have as the central focus of one's life in the world.

A Christian's first calling is to eternal life, which is to know Christ and be in Him. And from the point of being *in Christ*, a Christian receives the calling to be guided by God in the most diverse activities of one's life, also accompanied by the provision and protection to carry out what one is instructed by the Lord.

A Christian can carry out in peace the activities that one is instructed to carry out in the Lord, even if there is no peace around one's life, knowing that it is the Lord who keeps this Christian despite what the principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this age are plotting against the Lord's will.

- Isaiah 26: 3* **You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.**
4 Trust in the LORD forever, For in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength.

Psalms 62: 7 In God is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, And my refuge, is in God.

And yet another way in which God wants to teach His children to be practically in Christ, also to be appropriately protected in the world, is that which refers to the use of the heavenly provision of protection associated with the expressions “to put on” or “to clothe oneself” with this provision.

In the previous chapter, we mentioned the aspect that, *in Christ Jesus*, a Christian has all the provisions to stand firm in life as a new creature. However, when the Scriptures teach that the Christian is also called to put on or dress oneself with the provision available in Christ Jesus, they are also showing us that there is a difference between a Christian having something available and this Christian indeed making use of what is offered to him or her by the Lord.

Having a garment available to use is something very different from actually making use of the garment that is available for use.

Therefore, knowing that there is a perfect provision in Christ Jesus for living and walking in the world under God's protection is very different from putting on the provision that God offers in Christ for a Christian to walk under heavenly protection.

By living in Christ and through the Scriptures, a Christian may have access to the knowledge that the Lord has full provision for one's protection. However, if one, in practical life, lives and walks without making use of this provision, one still stands apart from what God offers. An aspect that, obviously, should not be like that, but that happens all too often.

Also in the other topics of this present series on the New Creature in Christ, we have already seen that a Christian should not attend the feast of fellowship with the Heavenly Father and with one's fellow believers in faith without wearing the heavenly garments, how much more, then, should not a Christian be dressed appropriately to walk in the world permeated with opposition and hostility towards one's life?

By being called to live and walk according to the heavenly kingdom, even though one is in a world permeated with darkness and opposition to the light and the will of God, a Christian is not called to do so under the same conditions one lived before knowing Christ. On the contrary, a Christian is called to do so with new heavenly garments suited to the hostile environment into which one is sent by the Lord.

Although a significant part of the conditions that surround a person who has received Christ in one's heart eminently may be similar to the conditions that this person had before becoming a new creature, the heart of the individual who received the new birth by the Spirit of the Lord is new, as are the heavenly garments that become available to this individual in God.

In the themes mentioned previously, we have also seen that the figure of the garments in the Scriptures may represent mentalities or types of attitudes. For this reason, dressing up in them may mean using these mentalities or attitudes in carrying out the most diverse actions, just as this dressing up in garments may also serve as the use of items for protection or shelter for those who use them.

It is commonly known that proper garments and properly equipped allow people to go to places they could never go without adequate clothing or could not go without suffering significant injuries or harmful consequences.

For example, if one is appropriately dressed, a person may enter a laboratory highly infected with viruses and bacteria and still be wholly protected against them. On the other hand, if the person does not have the appropriate clothing, one becomes a highly fragile target in the face of what may cause severe damage.

As yet another example, just as no one today expects a firefighter to fight a fire without proper clothing, so **the Lord does not send His children to be His witnesses in a hostile world without first providing them with the appropriate clothing to live and walk in this world.**

Together with the salvation that redeems a Christian from bondage to sin, from subjection to Moses' Law of condemnation, or similar to it, and from subjection to darkness, and together with the salvation that grants the saved the condition of new creatures, God also makes new garments available to all who have been redeemed by Him so that they may have garments that will enable them to resist the wiles of darkness from which they have already been saved in the Lord. These garments, however, are made available to Christians also on the condition that Christians present themselves willing to wear them voluntarily and are not imposed on them.

The Scriptures objectively teach us that the present world is permeated with evil and darkness. And if someone does not put on appropriate garments to resist the evil that operates in this world, one is highly exposed to the damage that evil may cause, for the garments according to evil itself do not serve to protect people from evil itself, as exemplified in the text presented more extensively below:

Isaiah 59: 1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.

2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity.

4 No one calls for justice, Nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.

5 They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; He who eats of their eggs dies, And from that which is crushed a viper breaks out.

6 Their webs will not become garments, Nor will they cover themselves with their works; Their works are works of iniquity, And the act of violence is in their hands.

7 Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths.

8 The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

9 Therefore justice is far from us, Nor does righteousness overtake us; We look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness!

10 We grope for the wall like the blind, And we grope as if we had no eyes; We stumble at noonday as at twilight; We are as dead men in desolate places.

11 We all growl like bears, And moan sadly like doves; We look for justice, but there is none; For salvation, but it is far from us.

*12 For our transgressions are multiplied before You, And our sins testify against us; For our transgressions are with us, And as for our iniquities, we know them:
13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, And departing from our God, Speaking oppression and revolt, Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.*

14 Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter.

Thus, when people put on mentalities and attitudes of sins and iniquities, it makes no sense for them to expect to be protected against what they clothed themselves with and attracted so close to themselves.

The fact that people hide behind lies and deceit does not diminish God's power to save them, nor does it make God unwilling to save them. However, by insisting on choosing this type of clothing to cover themselves, people declare to God that they prefer to welcome lies and deceit and prefer to clothe themselves with them. And God, who offers salvation in Christ, but does not impose it on people, also does not prevent people from choosing to take on attitudes or postures that oppose the heavenly will and that have the potential to generate consequences for them corresponding to what is in them or the evil they may contain.

Therefore, **it is crucial for a Christian to be aware that what one puts on may also determine what may come close to him or her and affect one's life.**

As we have also already mentioned, **the present world is permeated with evil and darkness, but if anyone is clothed in Christ or of Christ, one is protected, for Christ has conquered all darkness, and no evil, by itself, has the power to harm Christ and the one who is *in Christ*.**

*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.

We emphasize here again, then, that when a person is not "*in Christ*" or does not consider oneself in Christ through faith, failing to put on the garments made available by the Lord, one does not have from God the guarantee of Christ's protection from the "infections" or "defilements" of the powers of darkness by which one is surrounded in the so-called present age.

The Lord can even send, and indeed sends, multiple warnings and alerts to a person about the dangers one may be subject to if one is without the adequate heavenly garments to resist evil and its snares. However, as long as a person is unwilling to take off inappropriate or useless garments and is unwilling to wear the protective garments

given by the Lord to resist evil, one is actually very fragile in a world that broadly follows the course of darkness.

Still in addition to the above considerations, we also remember that in the theme The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, we extensively addressed how a person can undress before Christ the old garments and the old conscience one had about life. For this reason, we will not repeat it on this point, also considering that the focus in this chapter is more directed to the end of indeed using the provision that God already makes available for the Christian to walk in the world.

And, in turn, **it is also because of what the Lord instructs to be worn as proper clothing that a Christian can find oneself prepared to resist the enemy of one's soul or life, as well as the wiles and structures he seeks to use for his objectives**, as mentioned in previous chapters and whose basic text we present once again below:

*Ephesians 6: 10 **Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.***
*11 **Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.***
*12 **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.***

Additionally, another relevant point to be observed in this last text is that **the Christian who is in the world cannot abstain from all fights that the enemy and his structures raise against one's life.**

That is, **all Christians in the world are targets of opposition from darkness and are called to be attentive, sober, firm in the Lord, and coated with “the whole armor of God,” for their struggle is not merely with flesh and blood, but also with the evil that presents itself in various forms and structures or organizations of opposition to the Lord's will for people.**

The Scriptures do not teach that a Christian has a choice whether or not to be exposed to the world around him or her, but that one is already exposed to the world throughout one's natural life, also being, therefore, called not to be negligent regarding the wearing of the armor offered by the Lord.

Although a Christian can act preventively to avoid a series of temptations against one's life, as we saw in the theme The Gospel of the Righteousness of God, there is not, in the present world, a specific natural place that a Christian can go to be totally exempt from any exposure to the temptations of the devil's wiles against one's life. Another reason why the call to put on “the whole armor of God” is a call to every Christian in the world.

On the other hand, **it is also because of “the whole armor of God” that the Lord instructs Christians not to live and walk in fear in the world, for through “the whole armor of God,” a Christian can stand firm against the wiles of the devil and his agents and can stand firm “in the evil day” that**

opposes one's life, as is also described in the sequence of the text mentioned above, as well as in other passages of the Scriptures, as follows:

Ephesians 6: 13 **Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

Romans 8: 15 **For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."**

If, on the one hand, God warns Christians to be aware of the power of darkness and the breadth of the means by which they act, on the other hand, the Lord only does so because He also has to offer them everything they need to resist evil and to stand in everything unshaken through “the whole heavenly armor.”

Although the strength of the enemy and the means by which he tries to act may go far beyond what a simple Christian may even enumerate in the most diverse details, the garment offered by God or “the whole armor of God” is powerful to protect a Christian wherever in the world the Lord guides this Christian and is mighty to strengthen the Christian so that one can overcome the most varied wiles that are launched on the people who inhabit the world.

In turn, “armor” is the term used for soldiers' clothing in an army. And because the enemy of Christians in the world and its structures are at constant war with the children of God, the Lord also offers each Christian an “armor” as a garment so that each of them can also live and walk in the world adequately or according to the will of God.

So, although in the next chapter we intend to look a little closer at several points about what makes up the “armor of God” itself, the point we want to emphasize here again is that the armor only produces a due effect if a person puts on the aspects that make up this armor.

If we return to the example of the contaminated laboratory, it is known that the isolation suit would be of no use for the protection of a person if one enters this laboratory merely carrying this garment on one's back and does not cover oneself with it adequately.

Given this, when the Lord warns Christians that resistance to the enemy is done through “the whole armor of God,” it is also implied that they should put it on, which, however, does not seem so obvious to many Christians. That is why the Lord insists that they indeed take or put on this “armor.”

In addition to God granting the appropriate “armor” for Christians to live and walk in the present world, He still reiterates that people actually put it on properly, for it may even happen that people study many details about the “armor of God,” and its various items, without, however, learning to use it in fact and without making practical use of this “armor” in life and its most diverse areas and moments.

It is highly relevant to know the aspects that make up the “whole armor of God” to also recognize it in each of its facets. However, if a Christian does not advance to the action of taking the armor to put it on, one continues unguarded or weakened in the face of opposition or wiles that may rise against one's life in the world.

God's revelation about the armor He has prepared for the Christian is wonderful, but so equally is the repeated emphasis that the Christian should “put on” this same armor.

What, then, is the expression “*putting on or to clothe oneself with*” used so emphatically regarding the actual use of “the whole armor of God”?

Is adopting a form of prayer, repeated daily, the method for a person to put on “the whole armor of God”?

Could something mechanically learned, without actually having a minimal understanding of the aspects that make up “the whole armor of God,” be an appropriate method to put on what remains unknown?

If we look at the expression “*put on,*” or variations of it, according to the comments associated in the Online Bible with Strong's lexicon, we can see that it means:

- 1) *To sink into (clothing), put on, clothe one's self;*
- 2) *To go into (the clothes), enter, go under, be plunged into, sink in.*

Therefore, **“putting on the whole armor of God” does not only refer to an act in which a person just quickly throws something on oneself, but refers to the act by which a person enters fully into something to actually use or wear it.**

Thus, God calls Christians to take on “the whole armor of God” and to deepen or immerse themselves in it, to enter into it as if they were sinking into it, as if they were being completely enveloped by this armor.

As for the wearing of “the whole armor of God,” Christians, then, are called to immerse themselves in it to the point of being conscious that without this armor, they are unclothed of the proper garment for living and walking in the world, to the point of knowing that without the armor they are not suitably dressed to be in the world and to resist the wiles that there are in it against their lives.

Furthermore, here it is also vital for a Christian to understand that the “whole armor of God” is not like other natural garments that one puts on, which a person takes out of the closet and puts on and later takes off and puts beside.

When the Scriptures use a symbolic example, people should not put on the figurative, but the true one. And “the whole armor of God” is not a natural apparel, but a spiritual garment. And as such, it should be used continually and never be taken off or undressed.

Considering that the context of the devil's wiles is governed by spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places and that also affect the natural, “the whole armor of God” necessarily also needs to be spiritual and with effects on the spiritual and the natural. And considering that in the world, the context of spiritual struggles is in constant activity day and night, a Christian should also put on “the whole armor of God” day and night, to the point that the Christian is under the light of God even when for the world it is night or darkness.

- 1 *Thessalonians 5: 4* **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.**
- 5 **You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.**
- 6 **Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.**
- 7 **For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.**
- 8 **But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.**
- 9 **For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,**
- 10 **who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.**
-

“The whole armor of God” is offered by the Lord to Christians so that they may be immersed in it by day, by night, in joy, in sadness, in work, in rest, in time to plow and sow, in time to reap, store, use, or distribute what was harvested, in time to be at home with family members, in time to be with other Christians, as well as in time to be on a trip and even in time to be on vacation.

In declaring his confidence in the Lord's mercy, the psalmist and king David also says that everywhere he is called by the Lord to walk in righteousness, beginning in his very home, as follows:

- Psalms 101: 1* **I will sing of mercy and justice; To You, O LORD, I will sing praises.**
- 2 **I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.**
-

Similarly, also in the last text of 1 Thessalonians exposed above, we can note that even when a Christian sleeps, one should do so clothed with “the whole armor of God,” for “the whole armor of God” is not a garment of the physical body, but, instead, of the heart that therefore needs to be kept in the Lord even when the body needs physical rest.

Putting on “the whole armor of God” is clothing oneself in the inner man. It is to become dressed from the inside out, just as it is the putting on of the faith, hope, and love of God in the heart of a Christian.

For example, it is useless for a person to cry out that one is wearing the “belt of truth” if one does not indeed wear the truth in one's heart and if in one's heart one prefers the lie. In reality, trying to put on the “whole armor of God” by a mere announcement or prayer that is only external may be like or more harmful than not doing it, for the mere cry or superficial prayer still adds the idea of hypocrisy and falsehood to the one who only outwardly claims to be putting on the various aspects of “the whole armor of God.”

The way for a person to clothe oneself in the spiritual is different from the way for a person to dress oneself in the natural, prevailing in the spiritual what is in the heart and not only what is expressed by mere words or outwardly apparent acts and which are devoid of consistency before God, the One who does not see according to the appearance that so much human beings mistakenly honor.

*Proverbs 13: 5 **A righteous man hates lying, But a wicked man is loathsome and comes to shame.***

The “armor of God” protects the Christian when one has genuinely put on “the whole armor of God,” and not just figuratively or by mere figurative speech.

In the natural world, a person, for a while, may present a life of appearances that is not consistent with real facts, but this does not work in the spiritual world.

*Hebrews 4: 12 **For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.***

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

God declares that the “full armor” He offers Christians to put on is always strong enough to protect any Christian who wears it, but God is under no obligation to support people, even Christians, who wear armor that is false, forged, or even seem to be true without actually being “the whole armor of God.”

As the Scriptures also mention, in the world, there are many illusions, fascinations, fantasies, and enchantments, but these aspects do not sustain the Christian against the father of fascinations, deceptions, and lies, which is the devil, who also sees the spiritual world and recognizes that which is based on the falsehood and deceit of the powers that are under his rule.

Thus, the false armor does not resist the devil and the principalities that, with their structures, cooperate with him. However, the darkness is obstructed in its vile intentions against the person who wears the “true armor of God.”

What, then, once again, is to put on “the whole armor of God”?

It is truly putting on the “armor” that is proper to the children of God or those who are part of the heavenly kingdom's army, knowing that this “armor” represents the weapons of our battle and that these weapons are definitely not fleshly despite affecting the natural life. These weapons are mighty “in God” to resist the devil's wiles and destroy haughty thoughts that seek to become like strongholds that try to imprison people in them.

*2 Corinthians 10: 3 **For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.***

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

What is interesting to note again at this point, too, is that the Christian's weapons for the protection of their faith and life in the Lord, or the set of items of "the whole armor of God," are made available to function in Christ and that their effectiveness lies in taking every thought captive into subjection to the discernment and instruction of Christ.

And advancing a little further in this chapter, yet another way of speaking of putting on "the whole armor of God" can be observed in the texts that follow below:

Romans 13: 13 **Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and
drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.
14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the
flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**

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.**

Therefore, **putting on "the whole armor of God" or the spiritual weapons of those who are part of God's army is putting on Christ, that is, being in Christ.**

To put on "the whole armor of God" is to accept and enter, through faith, into the simplicity that in Christ and from fellowship with Him comes all the direction of life for those who have received the condition of a new creature, including everything that pertains to the provision for the safety and security of their lives while they are still in the present world.

Colossians 3: 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; ...**

What, then, is putting on the armor of God?

It is to put on Christ and keep united with Christ.

It is a Christian abiding in Christ so that Christ may also abide in the Christian.

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

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."

And what is "the whole armor of God" that protects a Christian?

The only "armor" that can protect a person from the powers of darkness, their structures, and their wiles is called the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and all the provision that is in Him.

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

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A Christian is called to be in Christ Jesus to receive heavenly life from Him, the life according to the will of the Heavenly Father. However, a Christian likewise is called to be in Christ Jesus so that this newness of life in the Christian also may be perfectly or adequately protected both in the world and for all eternity.

The very protection to remain continuously connected to the love that comes from the Heavenly Father and that makes us children of God is also found *in Christ Jesus*. Christ is the safe treasure. Christ is the eternally safe place in whom the Heavenly Father entrusted the wealth of His immeasurable love, as well as the protection of those who want to live and walk according to this heavenly love.

Finally, as we have seen before, **to put on Christ, in turn, is also done by fellowship with Christ and by the Christian walking according to the instructions (words, direction, and teaching) that Christ gives to each Christian to follow or perform.**

And considering that Christ, fellowship with Him, and walking according to His instruction express the proper relationship to the very "armor of God" for Christians, it is no wonder that the devil so intensely seeks to draw people away from the simplicity that God has provided so that any person might be supplied in all things in the Lord Jesus.

Similarly, it is also sad to observe a reaction that occurs in many people who hear about the life of abiding in Christ, for many people who hear that they should remain in Christ, as the branch remains in the vine, react with expressions similar to these:

- ⇒ 1) So, then, am I not going to do anything else and just will sit around waiting on Christ and expecting Him to do everything?
- ⇒ 2) So, then, am I going to spend the whole day praying and not doing anything else in life?
- ⇒ 3) Did not God say that it is “in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread”? And how, then, can anyone stay or remain all the time in Christ?

Nevertheless, when people use the types of phrases or expressions similar to the previous paragraph, they actually demonstrate ignorance of what it is to abide in Christ and what it is to put on Christ or “the whole armor of God.”

The Lord explicitly said that those who remain in Him, in due time, will bear much fruit and that those who are continually clothed with “the whole armor of God” will be able to stand firm against the wiles of the devil and even in the evil day.

Therefore, **abiding in Christ is not a state of dormancy and inactivity, but it is a position of readiness to receive the Lord's enlightenment. It is a condition of an active willingness to obtain from the Lord the instruction of His will, as well as a willingness to practice and follow the instruction given by the Lord. It is an active and intense search like that in which the psalmist declared that he takes pleasure in God's instruction so much that he meditates on it day and night.**

Let us see below once again the active participation to which the Lord calls His children to act as children of light, according to the following two texts:

Ephesians 5: 8 ***For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light***
9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),
10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.
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.

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

- 2 ***So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;***
 3 ***Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,***
 4 ***If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;***
 5 ***Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.***
 6 ***For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;***
 7 ***He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;***
 8 ***He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints.***
-

Actions that seek to abide in Christ have nothing of numbness, drowsiness, inactivity, or apathy. The Christian is called to an active, continuous, and insistent search for the Lord, and that is watered by the willingness to know the will of Christ to the point of being coated with it inwardly and to the point of being willing and ready to practice it.

2 Corinthians 4: 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

Ephesians 3: 14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 15 ***from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,***
 16 ***that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,***
 17 ***that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,***
 18 ***may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height;***
 19 ***and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.***

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

And once well coated, immersed in Christ by fellowship with Him and His instructions, the Christian is also clothed in the "armor of God" so that one can resist the wiles of the devil, whether these are by oppositions of collective structures or by mentalities and philosophies according to the creation and not according to the will of God.

Nevertheless, whoever does not actively present oneself to Christ to be enlightened and coated with Him is subject to remaining in the condition of not knowing where one is going and wasting one's life with the evil days and their wiles.

In addition to the above, the expression *to take up* “the whole armor of God” also has the connotation of “*to raise and to take up a thing in order to carry or use it indeed.*”

Thus, “the whole armor of God,” which grants firmness and protection against the “crafty” wiles of Satan and against the most diverse principalities and their structures that cooperate with Satan and his derivations of power, is not given to Christians only to be contemplated and neither to be seen in a symbolic and imaginary way. On the contrary, get up, get ready, and stand up you who sleep, to put on the armor of Christ, are instructions from God for an active posture of those who believe and who are in the world that is so permeated by the oppositions of darkness.

A Christian is called to actively take up “the whole armor of God” and be willing to be deeply in it, just as one is called to be conscious that God is ready to generously bestow, by His grace, this same armor on anyone willing to put it on.

“The whole armor of God” is equally available to all Christians, but taking it up and personally putting it on is a decision and an action that is up to each Christian to take in the Lord.

Therefore, an essential part of fulfilling God's will is for a Christian to put on Christ and His instruction so that one no longer allows one's days to be consumed by the global flow of the world, which, in turn, acts according to the one who opposes God, Christians, and the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God.

The “armor of God” is given to be used tirelessly in a practical and continuous way in the Christian's career and in one's battle for faith in the Lord in all the time that one has left to live and walk in the world, just like the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of Man, also never departed from the “righteous and mighty heavenly armor” over His life, remaining in God in everything, including in moments of extreme anguish, pain, and furious opposition from darkness against His life.

1 Peter 4: 1 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,
2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

Hebrews 12: 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

C10. Conscious of the Various Aspects of the “Armor of God” Available in Christ to Every Christian

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

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

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

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

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ...

1 Thessalonians 5: 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

After we noted in the previous chapter that taking up or putting on “the whole armor of God” is also presented in Scripture as putting on Christ, the action of recognizing the various aspects of this same armor can also be performed more appropriately or objectively.

Also in the text in which Paul mentions “the whole armor of God,” we can see that the referred text is preceded by the guidance about a Christian being strengthened in the Lord and the strength of His power, reminding us that the weapons that the Lord grants to a Christian in the world are mighty “in God.” And this, in turn, also implies declaring that these weapons are not available in a living and walking dissociated from the Lord and His instruction, an aspect also confirmed by Christ when He explicitly said that ***“without Me you can do nothing.”***

Therefore, as we can see from the list of attributes of “the whole armor of God,” all attributes of this armor are aspects of God's divinity and available only from the heavenly kingdom, for putting on “the whole armor of God” begins with the description of “***stand therefore***” or “***therefore stand firm,***” which can only be accomplished on the only firm eternal foundation which is Christ.

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

Let us see below, then, once more, the aspects of “the whole armor of God” in an enumerated manner according to the order presented in the text that refers to it and according to the purpose of each attribute being made available for the Christian to establish oneself through them in the Lord, as follows:

- ⇒ 1st) **Stand therefore** in the Lord, **having girded your waist with truth**;
- ⇒ 2nd) **Stand firm therefore** in the Lord, **having put on the breastplate of righteousness**, also called in other texts as the breastplate of faith and love;
- ⇒ 3rd) **Stand therefore** in the Lord, **having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**;
- ⇒ 4th) **Stand firm therefore** in the Lord, **always taking the shield of faith**;
- ⇒ 5th) **Stand firm thus** in the Lord, **also taking the helmet of salvation**, which is also called in another text as the helmet of the hope of salvation with which a Christian should always be clothed;
- ⇒ 6th) **Stand firm in** the Lord, **taking the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**.

In this way, **just as putting on “the whole armor of God” is equated in the Scriptures with putting on Christ, so each of the various aspects of this armor points to a characteristic or virtue of the Lord Jesus Christ, or that comes from the Lord Jesus Christ**, as we will seek to exemplify below with texts from the Scriptures related respectively to Christ and each of the aspects of the armor of God for Christians.

1st) Christ, the Truth:

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

2nd) Christ, the Righteousness of God:

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

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

3rd) Christ, the Gospel of Peace:

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."**

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.

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."**

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

4th) Christ, the Shield on which faith in God should be deposited:

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

Psalms 18: 30 **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 28: 7 **The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him.**

Psalms 115: 11 **You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.**

*Hebrews 12: 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.***

5th) Christ, the Salvation:

*1 Thessalonians 5: 9 **For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,**
10 **who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.***

*Hebrews 5: 9 **And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,** ...*

*Psalms 27: 1 **The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?***

*Acts 4: 12 **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."***

6th) Christ, the One who is the Life-giving Spirit, the Living Word of God who gives life, and the One who gives the Spirit of God to those who believe in the Lord:

*John 6: 35 **And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."***

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

*2 **He was in the beginning with God.***

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

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

...

*14 **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.***

*15 **John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"***

*16 **And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.***

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

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

1 Corinthians 15: 45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

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."

Thus, being in Jesus Christ or putting on the virtues of the Lord is how every Christian can find complete heavenly provision for one's safety, protection against the wiles of the devil, and protection against the oppositions of principalities and their various derivations and structures.

Only or exclusively the Lord Jesus Christ is fit to be the perfect or perfectly sufficient "spiritual covering" for a Christian to put on "the whole armor of God" and for a Christian to be able to live and walk safely according to the will of God in a world permeated with so much darkness.

By establishing Christ Jesus Himself and His virtues as the protection or spiritual covering with which Christians are called to clothe themselves to live and walk in the present world, God has given Christians an armor, covering, or garment that can be with them everywhere and at all times. It is a "spiritual covering" that is not like the temples made by human hands with their imperfect and weak priests who cannot really protect people in the most diverse circumstances of their daily lives.

When a person has the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord of one's life and begins to live and walk in the world under the virtues of Christ or has these virtues as the clothing and protection of one's life, the Lord Himself is committed to protecting, guarding, and instructing the one who trusts in Him. For those individuals who receive Christ as Lord and remain living and walking in the Lord, there is no need for all those structures and external rituals that are proclaimed by those who do not keep themselves in a condition of life according to the simplicity that is offered to the Christians in Christ Jesus.

As being "the whole armor of God," Christ is offered by the Heavenly Father to those who believe in the Lord to guide them safely in everything in the will of God, being with them every day and in all moments, to the point of dwelling in the heart of every Christian, as we remember in some texts below:

Matthew 1: 23 **"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."**

Matthew 28: 20(b) **"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**
Amen.

1 John 4: 4 **You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**

Acts 17: 24 **"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands."**

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

Recognizing that the attributes of "the whole armor of God" are virtues of Christ or attributes that are uniquely bestowed by Christ is of vital importance, for the act of putting on, for example, the truth and the righteousness of God is an act that extends much further than adopting a willingness to no longer lie or to act honestly and fairly, although these aspects are also part of being dressed in all the armor in reference.

So, **first, coating oneself in the depths of the heart with the revelation that Christ is the truth of God encompasses, above all, believing and accepting that everything the Lord is and declares is the expression of the truth worthy of being fully trusted and kept in the most intimate of the heart.**

Among other aspects, to gird oneself with the truth is to believe what Christ declared when He said that He is The Way, The Truth, and The Life, and not just a way, a truth, or a way to obtain life according to the heavenly kingdom.

Among other points, to gird oneself with the truth is to put on the firm conviction of understanding and faith that believes in the testimony of eternal life that God declares to be available in the Lord Jesus Christ to everyone who believes in Him.

1 John 5: 9 **If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.**

10 **He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.**

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.**
-

Among other things, to gird oneself with the truth is to put on the firm conviction of understanding and faith that believes in the testimony that declares that Christ is the Only Begotten and Eternal Son of God and that He came from Heaven into the world to manifest God also through a body of flesh and blood to human beings. And this, to reveal and offer them eternal salvation in the Lord widely.

John 3: 16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

1 John 4: 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

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2 John 1: 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

To gird one's inner man with the truth, among other points, is to take on the firm conviction of understanding and faith that believes in the testimony that declares that Christ, despite being born of a woman as a child, was born a "king" and that this same Christ died on the cross of Calvary to make provision for the eternal remission of all human beings, as well as that this same Christ was resurrected in glory on the 3rd day and that He was ascended to Heaven to sit at the right hand of God as the Eternal High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek, who is also the Eternal King of Righteousness and the Eternal King of Peace.

Matthew 2: 2 ... saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

1 Timothy 3: 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

Hebrews 8: 1 **Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,**
2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

Hebrews 2: 9 **But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.**
10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Ephesians 1: 19 **... and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power,**
20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,
21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

The belief that in contemporary times invokes the “baby Christ” or the “Christ hanging on a cross” is not a faith clothed in truth, for although Christ was born of a woman as a child and crucified as the provision for the redemption of humankind or people from the condition of subjection to sin, the Christ who was born as a boy is no longer a boy, just as the Christ who was crucified has already been resurrected in power and glory and is already established as the Eternal King of Righteousness and Peace over every principality or power whether in Heaven or on Earth.

Among other aspects, to gird oneself in the intimacy of the heart of the truth is also to take on the firm conviction of understanding and faith that believes in the testimony that declares that Christ is the end of the law according to the Old Covenant for whoever believes in the Lord Jesus, as well as that the Heavenly Father, in Christ Jesus, likewise revoked the validity of the priesthood according to the Law of Moses and its structures, rites, sacrifices, offerings, and tithes.

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

Hebrews 7: 11 **Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?**

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

...

15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest

16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

17 For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Gird oneself in the heart with the truth also encompasses putting on the firm conviction of understanding and faith that believes in the testimony of God that declares that the hope of glory is deposited directly in the hearts of those who believe in Christ, not needing, these, the structures and liturgies of human religions to be able to be in God and God in them.

Colossians 1: 26 ... the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

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

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

Romans 5: 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

As we already mentioned above, **girding oneself with the truth goes far beyond a person just being willing not to lie anymore. Girdling oneself with the truth is an active act that is attentive to the knowledge of the truth to have the understanding, mind, conscience, or convictions transformed and renewed by the truth in order to also be able to live and walk according to the truth and to reject what does not come from the truth.**

In previous chapters, we have also mentioned the text that says that **“the love of the truth” is the protection of a person against the working of Satan's deceptions in his lying actions and that the “love of the truth” is to have in the heart the love that was given in love by God to save and guide us, namely, the Only Begotten Son of the Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Girdling oneself with the truth implies taking active and practical actions to objectively and increasingly know the One whom God has established as the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings, as the High Shepherd and Apostle of our souls, and as our

Eternal Advocate, as well as it refers to the continual search on how to live and walk in that for which Christ was assigned by the Heavenly Father to us.

Girdling oneself with the truth ranges from learning how to Rightly Divide the Word of Truth to continuous growth in the knowledge of the glory of God and the glory of Christ in the face of the Lord Jesus, aspects already covered more extensively in the corresponding themes.

Secondly, putting on the breastplate that Christ is the righteousness of God, which aims to protect primarily the heart of the believer, implies recognizing and believing in the heavenly righteousness as it is presented, offered, and granted to us from the heavenly kingdom or God, and not according to the righteousness of human beings.

Although putting on the breastplate of righteousness also encompasses a willingness to act justly and honestly in the world, which is also part of the calling to walk in the light and not in darkness, the essence of putting on the righteousness of God is not the clothing of the thought that a person can be justified before the Lord, before sin, before the law, and before death through human works that aim to produce the justification of those who practice them.

To put on “the breastplate of the righteousness of Christ” is to put on the firm conviction of understanding and faith that believes that God and all His acts are grounded in eternal righteousness, as well as that believes in every act of justification done by Christ on the cross of Calvary on behalf of sinful men and women, accepting that the justification provided by Christ, by heavenly grace, is the only justification that can be presented before God for obtaining salvation and eternal life in the Lord.

To put on the righteousness of God is to put on the righteousness that Paul declared as the fundamental reason why he left behind all those things that became unfit for his life from the moment of knowing Christ as the Lord of his life, 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;***

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

“**Being found in Him,**” in Christ, is another way of expounding having put on the Lord Jesus. And Paul's target of faith was to be clothed in Christ by being clothed with the righteousness that comes from faith in the Lord, and not the righteousness that comes from the law according to the Old Covenant, which, in turn, aimed at justification through human works and not by the provision of remission, redemption,

forgiveness, and salvation fully provided by God by His grace and not by the fallen creature and subject to sin.

By the Law of Moses, laws similar to it, or by human works, no person can be justified before the Lord. Therefore, seeking to do good works to be justified from sin before God, before sin itself, and before the condemnation of eternal death is not putting on the righteousness of God. Instead, it refers to putting on the unrighteousness that opposes and resists the only righteousness accepted by the Lord for salvation and newness of life for human beings.

Romans 3: 20 ***Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.***

...
28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Yes, all Christians are called to walk in good works and perform good works, but this calling is not for them to try to be justified by the good works they do. People are first called to believe in the righteousness that justifies them, and then, as justified by the Lord's grace and righteousness, they can do good works.

When Christ tells His disciples to seek first the righteousness of God, He is instructing them to seek the righteousness that is provided by God to make them justified. Christ does not teach His disciples to try to justify themselves by pursuing what they call "good works" or "doing what is right," as some bad translations or biblical paraphrases erroneously or perversely present by the fact that their own translators have not yet understood the true breastplate of God's righteousness.

To put on the breastplate of righteousness "of God," and not of men, women, and their works, is to put it on firmly in such a way that any thought or proposition that wants to replace justification through faith in the righteousness of Christ with any other kind of justification is promptly and entirely rejected, regardless of whether the erroneous propositions propose justification by laws, works, or any other human resources.

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

Titus 3: 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.***
4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,
5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

- 6 *whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,*
 7 *that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*
 8 *This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*
-

First, God calls people to believe in the righteousness that He offers to all in Christ so that after being justified in Christ and confidently clothed in Christ's righteousness, they, as justified in the Lord, may become willing to do good works.

Putting on the breastplate of heavenly righteousness is essential for the newness of life received through the Lord's salvation, which also requires dedication and time in a Christian's life. And great and mighty is the righteousness of God towards those who believe in it and receive it into their hearts to be protected by it. For this reason, the Lord reveals His righteousness widely to all who want it through His Eternal Gospel, according to the text presented below:

- Romans 1: 16* ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***
 17 ***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***
-

Putting on the breastplate of God's righteousness encompasses a person trusting that even though one is not yet perfect, if one continues to trust in the Lord, His mercy, and God's offer of justification for one's life, one has the protection of the righteousness of the Lord towards one's life eternally, being able, therefore, to live by faith in the Lord.

We remember yet that regarding God's righteousness and the fundamental aspect of seeking it first in life, there is a broader and more specific approach also in the themes The Gospel of God's Righteousness and The Gospel of God's Grace.

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

Matthew 5: 6 ***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.***

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

Continuing with putting on “the whole armor of God,” we find in the narrative of Ephesians 6, as a third aspect, the point of **having shod the feet with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.**

And although the text in reference does not explain much about what comes to be the “preparation” itself with which the feet should be shod, it is clear that a Christian, even before going out into the world preaching the Gospel, is called first to be prepared in the Gospel or by the Gospel in one's own life, for how can a person try to preach and announce what one oneself has not yet come to know minimally or adequately?

The Gospel of Peace is given to Christians to know that they are bringing a heavenly offer of peace to the people of the world, but in the same Gospel are also found the Lord's instructions on how Christians themselves can walk in the world according to this Gospel. And this, so that they may also be guarded and provided by the Lord to do so.

Thus, to have the feet shod with the Gospel of Peace is first to have had a preparation of understanding or comprehension about the Gospel of God and several practical facets of life under this Gospel for the one who received it.

When the Lord sent His first disciples to go and preach the Gospel to the world, He had already instructed these disciples about His Gospel. However, even so, He added the instruction for them to await the provision of the Holy Spirit over their lives before getting out to do the mission assigned to them.

Similarly, when Paul was called by Christ to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and the children of Israel, he was not sent to do so until he spent three years at the feet of the Lord Jesus to be instructed by Him in the Gospel that he was called to announce. And at each new place that Paul went to for the mission assigned to him by the Lord, Paul strengthened himself in the Lord to be with his feet shod and strengthened with the preparation in the same Lord who had called him.

As we mentioned in the opening themes of the series on The Gospel, The Good News of God, the Gospel of the Lord, in addition to being for people not yet saved, is also the Gospel for Christians who have already received it, for it is also through the Gospel of the Lord or the Heavenly Kingdom that the Christian finds all of God's provision both for one's salvation and one's life as saved and announcer of this same Gospel.

Having the feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, even before going out into the world to preach it, is having one's feet immersed in this Gospel to the point of being secure in the Lord to walk in everything in life according to the instructions of this same Gospel. To have the feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, among others, is to be firmly established in the willingness to practice it in all areas of life that a Christian is instructed by the Lord to walk.

In this way, **if the Lord Jesus instructs a Christian to walk through a world with hostile soil, this Christian will find in the Gospel of God the Lord's instruction and provision on how to walk through this soil without damaging one's life in Christ. However, if the Christian goes out into the world without the preparation that the Lord has for him or her, this Christian may expose oneself to unnecessary risks and unpleasantness.**

One of the central aspects of the calling that the Lord Jesus presents to people through His Gospel refers to them becoming His followers and no

longer following paths according to the people themselves. Thus, having the feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace also implies learning to wait for Christ going ahead so that the path of the Christian according to the Gospel is one of Peace in the Lord and not of unnecessary conflicts.

In one of the texts above, we have already seen that the Lord Jesus Christ calls His disciples to have “peace in Him” and to learn that it is “in Him” that the Christian is called to walk, representing this one of the main aspects of having the feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, for when a person “*is in Christ*,” one finds rest for one's soul in Him and His instructions.

Matthew 16: 24 ***Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."***

Matthew 11: 27 ***"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.***

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

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

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."

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

A person may seek to establish oneself in the most ingenious techniques of communication, oratory, and announcements of the Gospel, but if one oneself does not know and does not experience in one's own life the Gospel that one says one intends to spread, one is similar to a person who wants to enter a very arid, sharp, or hostile ground using only visual, outward, and ineffective protections, being, therefore, without any protection for the feet to walk on this ground.

As much as a person tries to develop the most ingenious techniques of communication, oratory, and announcements of the Gospel, and even if a person wants to gather and send a contingent of announcers of this same Gospel, but without first properly knowing the Gospel of God for one's own life and for the lives of those one intends to gather and send, this person will be acting under a proposition not suitable

for one oneself and others to be prepared or approved for the objective they declare to want to achieve.

In addition to this, we recall here again that a vast amount of material on the various references that the Scriptures make to the Gospel of God and the multiple names that are associated with this Gospel is available in the specific series on the Gospel that has already been mentioned above, including on the very Gospel of Peace.

And moving forward here one more step, a fourth attribute that we find in the sequence of aspects related to standing firm in the Lord by putting on “the whole armor of God” is the aspect associated with **embracing the shield of faith, with which a Christian “will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”**

Initially concerning this point, we would like to mention, then, that embracing the shield of faith is not a person adopting a simple outward posture of shouts and declarations said to be of faith or made in faith, but which are not backed by a trust in the Lord or that are not supported by the firm foundations that support faith in God or the faith of God in a person's heart. On the contrary, the shield that the Christian is called to embrace is the shield of “God-given faith,” and not any of the other beliefs shields by which people believe in the most varied aspects of life and which do not conform to what the Scriptures teach about believing in God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The faith given by God, first, has God as a firm foundation. And the faith that comes from God also has the promises of God as a firm foundation, which means that hopes dissociated from a promise from the Lord or divergent from heavenly promises are not actually based on faith but on vulnerable beliefs and, therefore, invalid to serve as an appropriate shield of protection.

“The substance or assurance of things hoped for,” which, according to Hebrews 11, is the definition of faith, is God Himself and His promises. And there is no real assurance apart from God. Therefore, what is dissociated from God and His promises is not faith indeed, but a belief in what has no lasting foundation to support the respective hope.

Thus, **embracing the shield of faith encompasses knowing what faith is, that it is granted by the Author of Faith, and how it is established by the Finisher of Faith.** Aspects addressed more broadly in the theme The Gospel of the Promise and the chapter on The Glory of Christ who is the Author and Finisher of Faith from the theme The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ.

Whether in times of peace or in times of anguish, if a Christian remains confident in Christ and exposes one's anxieties to the Lord through fellowship with Him, it is also in the Lord that one will find the shield that guards and protects him or her against any arrow of doubt or any fiery dart of lies and deceit, for Christ, as the shield of the Christians' faith, is also able to keep unshakable the minds of those who believe in Him.

*Philippians 4: 6 **Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;***

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

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

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

Continuing here again a little further on the aspects that make up "the whole armor of God," we find in the sequence a fifth highly special part because it is, at the same time, an aspect offered in great simplicity but, on the other hand, also vast, which refers to taking up or putting on the helmet of salvation.

If we first look at the broader aspect of salvation, we can see that all other attributes of "the whole armor of God" are actually available to Christians through the salvation provided for them in the Lord. It is the salvation by which every Christian is redeemed from bondage to sin, the condemning law, and eternal death, but also from subjection to the powers of darkness. It is the salvation by which God conveys every Christian to the kingdom of the Son of His Love.

Colossians 1: 13 ***He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,***
14 ***in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.***

And one of the aspects that most identifies the soldiers of a certain army, kingdom, or people is the helmet they wear. And in this sense, every Christian is called to wear the helmet that identifies him or her as one saved by the Lord, as a person who is justified by Christ, who believes in Christ as Lord, and who is not ashamed to carry the name of the One whom one has come to choose as the Lord of one's life.

Thus, in a more specific sense, to be clothed with the helmet of salvation is also to be clothed with the conviction that salvation places the person who has received it in a different condition from those who have not yet received salvation. In addition to the deliverance one receives from subjection to darkness, the person saved in Christ also receives the condition of a child of God, justified in the Lord, a child of light, a new creature in Christ, a member of the Body or the Church of Christ, and holiness or sanctification in the Lord. And it is according to the condition granted to him or her in Christ that a Christian is also called to begin to see and consider oneself to live and walk in this newness of life.

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.

The salvation granted to a person in Christ Jesus is not only one's rescue from a former condition of perdition, but it is a broad change into a new condition for which, as a saved individual, the Christian is called to come to know it increasingly to live and walk by it, as approached more fully in the themes of the Gospel of God series and more specifically in the subject on The Gospel of Salvation.

On the other hand, **if we look at salvation from the aspect of the simplicity with which it can be obtained, we could also consider putting on the helmet of salvation as staying in the simplicity that there is in Christ for a person to receive and have salvation for eternal life.**

As much as the Lord calls the saved to be salt and light in the world, in order to cooperate so that others also come to know Christ Jesus, the salvation of Christians remains available to them by the same aspects by which they received it when they came to Christ. That is, by the righteousness of God, by the grace of the Lord, and by receiving salvation through faith on the part of the one who receives it.

If a Christian is willing to cooperate with the Lord in good works, this is not what saves him or her, for what continues to keep a Christian saved is the maintenance of faith in salvation by the grace, righteousness, and mercy of the Lord.

Knowing that salvation is granted and continues to be granted by the same aspects that a person can receive it is fundamental to the security of one's salvation, for if a Christian is willing to serve the Lord but eventually stumbles, one's salvation is not founded on one's own works, but on the work that Christ has already done, once for all, on the cross of Calvary also to sustain one's salvation.

Thank God that sinful people do not depend on human works to be able to receive the Lord's salvation, but thank God likewise that Christians also do not depend on their human works to be saved. By human works, no one could ever be saved, for as long as people still are in the natural body, no one lives and walks in full perfection.

Therefore, to have the helmet of salvation includes having peace that the same criteria by which a person came to become a Christian or a new creature are also the criteria of faith by which one's salvation is sustained.

If a person who "did not yet receive" the redemption offered by God calls on Christ as the Lord of one's life, God promises that this individual will be saved. However, this also applies to every Christian, for each of them is equally called to continue to call on Christ as the Lord of one's life since the basis of the eternal promise of salvation in the Lord is the same for all. "Whoever" calls includes "everyone," whether one is not yet a Christian or is already a Christian.

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

The Lord calls the saved to walk with the helmet of the saved, that is, to live and walk as saved or children of light, for *in Christ*, there is provision for them to do so. However, as salvation is by grace, through faith in Christ, and not by works, if a Christian stumbles in one's way, one can still stand up before the Lord, confess one's sin, and remain confident that in the Lord one's salvation continues eternally extended to him or her by the same grace, righteousness, and mercy that redeemed him or her from bondage and subjection to darkness when one had not yet known the Lord.

Psalms 37: 23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.

1 John 1: 3 ... that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

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.

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

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

And still regarding the matter of putting on the helmet of salvation, we would like to point out that this aspect also encompasses the point previously seen in which **those saved in the Lord also find in Christ all the provision of salvation against all sorts of evil, even if the natural life of a child of God comes to an end. In Christ, the natural death of a child of God does not imply dissociation of one's soul and spirit from the Lord, for the life granted by God to those who remain in Christ is also based on the Eternal Love and Eternal Life of the Heavenly Father.**

Romans 5: 8 **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**
9 **Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**
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.**

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

Romans 8: 35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**

...
38 **For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,**
39 **nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

And last, or as a sixth part in the list of attributes of "the whole armor of God" in Ephesians 6, but no less important than the other aspects, **the Lord exhorts all Christians to take the sword of the Spirit in their hearts and their hands, which is presented in the same text as the word of God.**

Thus, the use, by the Christian, also of the sword of the Spirit or hearing and using the word given to this Christian by the Lord through the Spirit is essential, for it is through the word of God spoken to the Christian, and understood in the light of the instruction which the Lord grants through the Holy Spirit, that a child of God receives the instructions that can even divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow, be a discernor of thoughts and intents of the heart, and can instruct the Christian in that which is given freely by the heavenly kingdom. Aspects that the natural man, with mere human understanding, cannot reach or understand.

Let us see below some other texts that teach us about this last point:

Hebrews 4: 12 **For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

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

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

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

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

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

John 14: 26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

The use of the sword of the Spirit, which is primarily trust in the Lord's instruction given to the Christian by the Holy Spirit, leads to an understanding of God's word or instruction in such a way that it is possible to comprehend many depths not accessible in any other way, being able to divide even what appeared to be indivisible.

Therefore, by the sword of the Spirit, that is, by the word or living instruction that the Lord Jesus and the Heavenly Father give to a Christian, one can discern and distinguish the will of one's own soul, the purposes of the world that opposes one's life, and the will of God, which is good, perfect, and acceptable in everything. And this, so that one might voluntarily choose to follow the heavenly will.

And when there is an understanding of the will of the Lord, as Paul declares, a Christian can begin to serve Christ in Spirit and Truth, and no longer walk predominantly guided by the flesh or according to the course of the present world and its prince, as also the following texts teach us:

Romans 7: 23 ***But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind (or understanding), and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.***

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

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

Romans 8: 1 ***There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***

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

***3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,
4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.***

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

On the other hand, **for not taking the sword of the Spirit first towards their own hearts, many Christians have remained infants and devoid of the heavenly discernment and wisdom that they so much need for the most diverse moments and areas of their lives.**

If a Christian neglects to use the sword of the Spirit in one's own life, one also neglects one of the main aspects of the calling to discern good and evil, thus not becoming able to resist the law of sin and the flesh that fights against the Law of Understanding by which the Christian is called to live and walk.

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

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

Additionally, **by the sword of the Spirit, which is God's heavenly word given by the Lord through the Holy Spirit, a Christian can:**

- ⇒ 1) **Resist evil by declaring the will of God in a similar way to how Christ did in the face of the temptations He faced;**
- ⇒ 2) **Announce the Gospel appropriately to those who do not yet know it;**
- ⇒ 3) **Respond to those who question one's faith, when this is the case;**
- ⇒ 4) **Bless with words of truth those whom God wants a Christian to bless in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ;**
- ⇒ 5) **Pray according to the will of God, and much, much more.**

Therefore:

Hebrews 4: 14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.**

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 10: 23 **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.**

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

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

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

17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

2 Timothy 1: 7 **For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (or moderation).**

We recall here yet that more aspects about the Law of Understanding and the guiding of the Christian by the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit are also described, respectively, in the themes The Law of Understanding and Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift.

Finally, in this chapter, we would also like to highlight the fact that the text that exposes the exhortation to Christians to put on the armor of God, to be able to resist the wiles of the devil and be firm in the evil day, refers to an instruction to use "the whole armor of God," and not only one or some of its parts.

Under the guidance of a structured army, a soldier is not sent and trained to go into battle with parts of the armor but is enabled to put on all of it. An aspect that also applies to those who are children of light to be duly equipped against the wiles of the devil and the evil days of the present world.

For example, what good would it be for a person to want to spread the Gospel of God to the world and this very person does not have the helmet of salvation or does not remain with it over one's own life?

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

Still as a second example, if a person does not cover one's heart with the conviction that one's righteousness is in Christ and His work on the cross of Calvary, and not by human works, this person may have one's heart reached with the idea that one is doing fewer works than those who live by human works and not by the exclusive redemption of Christ, and thus, being tempted to go back to wanting to justify oneself by works and not by grace, through faith in Christ, and the Lord's provision of redemption.

*Romans 10: 9 ... **that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.***

*10 **For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***

Similarly, if a Christian is not clothed with the conviction that Christ is indeed the truth, one may be confused when presented with philosophies that falsely or supposedly propose "alternative truths." Doubts may try to penetrate one's inner thoughts to draw this Christian away from the only real truth and the only true shield of faith.

A soldier is called to keep oneself attentive and trained in the equipment offered by one's army, just as one is called to review one's complete armor periodically and not just one or some of its parts.

So, a Christian is also called to check periodically whether one continues to hold Christ as the unique source of truth, righteousness, the good news of God, heavenly salvation, and the living word that quickens, instructs, purifies, and gives wisdom and discernment to live and walk in the present world.

Every Christian should periodically check if one remains aware and convinced that one's justification is by the work of Christ and not by human works.

Every Christian should periodically check the state of one's trust in one's Lord or whether one remains firm and convinced that the Lord goes ahead as one's shield and of all those who are the Lord's.

Similarly, every Christian should also check whether one remains conscious of the Gospel one trusts and its fundamental aspects. And this, also not to fall into the traps of the so-called Another Gospel or before the temptations of propositions of returning to the Law of Moses or laws similar to this one.

Every Christian is called to continually check whether one still is allowing the living Word of God to search one's heart and whether this word is one's basis for filtering, dividing, or discerning what is presented to him or her in the world. And this, so that this Christian may be sober in everything in the Lord, just as the psalmist who took pleasure in God's instruction did and who, therefore, meditated on it day and night.

And above all, every Christian should always find out whether one's goal remains "the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus" or whether one's goal remains faith in one's Eternal Lord and Savior until that glorious day when one will leave life on Earth to enter forever into the glorious presence of the Lord.

The Christian's great joy on Earth should always be knowing that one's name is written in the Book of Life forever if one perseveres in believing in Christ and declaring Him Lord of one's life.

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

*8 **Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.***

*Luke 10: 20 **"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."***

It is highly important to know that the Lord Himself declares that everyone who relies on Him and uses all His armor is also the one who remains firm forever, even when the wiles of the devil try to get in one's way.

Thus, **no part of the armor of God should be neglected, for the Lord Himself is the one who endorses the attributes of Himself as an unshakable refuge, safety, and protection, namely: The attributes that make up "the whole armor" that He prepared and offers for everyone who is a new creature in Him.**

No part nor "the whole armor of God" represents a heavy yoke or a heavy burden on the lives of Christians, for each of the attributes of this armor is bestowed in perfect measure by the One who perfectly knows all who came to exist through Him and who by Him were bought as a ransom by His blood shed on the cross of Calvary to save them and call them to live and walk in Him.

*Matthew 11: 30 **"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."***

Putting on "the whole armor of God," then, is putting on what the Lord Jesus Christ Himself offers so that those who believe in Him may be kept in the One who died for them and rose again so that they may remain eternally in God, the Eternal Creator of their lives.

*Psalms 16: 1 **Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.***

*2 **O my soul, you have said to the LORD, "You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You."***

...

*8 **I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.***

*9 **Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.***

Psalms 18: 2 **The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of
my salvation, my stronghold.**

C11. The Greatness of the “Armor of God” in Contrast with the Breadth and Intensity of the Conflicts in the World

As we have seen in previous chapters, something highly relevant to observe in Paul's description of the central wrestle of Christians in the world is regarding who or what this fight takes place.

If, on the one hand, we have simple people who individually come to believe in the Lord Jesus being called to put on the armor of God, on the other hand, we have principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places that oppose those who come to believe in Christ Jesus, as we can review once again in the text that follows below:

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

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

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

When describing the context of the wrestle of Christians in the world, Paul reinforces that their struggle is not merely against other individuals who oppose them or simply against “blood and flesh,” showing that if, on the one hand, there are simple people who believe in Christ, on the other side, there are structures and enemies gathering against their lives.

A Christian, in particular, might even be physically stronger than some people who cooperate with a principality, kingdom, or sub-kingdom. However, the Christian as a person, individual, or human being is undoubtedly smaller than many principalities and the structures they use to manifest themselves and act in the world.

Given this, can a simple Christian coated with “the whole armor of God” then resist evil and remain unshakable in the face of the amplitude of actions that a Christian's opponents often come to present?

In answer to this last question, we understand that if a Christian thinks of the apparatus of God's armor in an equivalent comparison to a soldier's armor only under natural conditions, one, of course, may be inclined to think that one is not indeed protected as one needs to be.

Nevertheless, if a Christian remains aware that putting on the “whole armor of God” is equivalent to putting on Christ Jesus in several of His attributes, this same Christian will be able to understand that despite one's smallness before the enemies, “the whole armor of God” offered in the Lord is incomparably more sovereign and powerful than one's enemies, for it is the very protection of Christ and His attributes over one's life.

Thus, no matter the size or breadth of the Christians' opponents, God's declaration to His children in Christ Jesus is:

*1 John 4: 4 **You are of God, little children, and have overcome them (the false spirits or false prophets), because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.***

*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."***

*2 Thessalonians 3: 3 **But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.***

Regardless of the breadth or appearance of greatness of a principality and its structures, the word of God declares that a Christian clothed in "the whole armor of God" can, yes, resist the wiles of the devil presented through the principalities and their structures. When one remains in Christ Jesus, the One that neither death nor the powers of darkness could hold in their cravings, shackles, chains, pains, or prisons, a Christian can indeed remain steadfast in one's condition as a child of God or a child of light.

*Acts 2: 21 **And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'***

*22 **"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know:***

*23 **Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;***

*24 **whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."***

Yes, having put on "the whole armor of God," a Christian can resist the wiles of the devil and redeem the time of one's life to live and walk according to the will of God, for the armor that the Christian is called to put on is He who, in addition to overcoming sin, the condemnation of the law, death, hell, and all the powers of darkness, is also the One who was raised from the dead and established by God as Lord and King over all principalities and powers that can be named in Heaven or on Earth, except, obviously, the Heavenly Father Himself who subjected everything to the feet of Christ.

*Hebrews 2: 14 **Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself (Christ) likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,***

*15 **and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.***

Acts 2: 36 **"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."**

1 Corinthians 15: 27 **For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.**

If a Christian thinks of the armor of God as a set of postures that must be carried out by a human being and that depend on one's own strength to be carried out, one should indeed be very concerned in the face of vile and powerful enemies who oppose him or her. However, when the Lord calls Christians to put on "the whole heavenly armor," He does so because God Himself and His virtues are the Christian's protection.

Thus, it is up to the Christian to respond to the call to put on "the whole armor of God" through fellowship with Christ Jesus, as well as to remain coated with it regardless of the size of the opposition against one's life, knowing that the armor itself is what effectively protects when coated with it, which is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, His authority, His word, and His power over everything and everyone.

Because they chose the Lord for protection, the psalmists expressed themselves to God by saying, ***"The Lord is my shield and my fortress,"*** not depending on themselves but taking care to abide in Him who was the protection and firm refuge of their lives, whether the oppositions were small or specific or whether they were like big storms.

In the description of the battle's context presented in the text that mentions "the whole armor of God," the Scriptures do not deny the breadth or the strength of the opponents of Christians and do not even tell Christians to despise or be frivolous with the forces contrary to their lives in Christ, for they indeed may be much stronger than a Christian merely in one's natural condition. On the other hand, however, the Scriptures do not declare for Christians to be afraid of enemies, for in "the whole armor of God" offered to them from Heaven, there is also a perfect provision for them to be able to resist the wiles and the evil day because this armor is equivalent to the Lord's very protection for those who trust in Him.

We understand that it is highly necessary and significant for Christians to be aware of the extent involved in their struggles in the world, for the instruction of the Scriptures for a Christian to strengthen oneself is not for a Christian to develop and grow in one's own strength and power to face principalities, but for the Christian to personally strengthen oneself in the Lord by putting on "the whole armor" that God makes available, for it is in the armor, which is the Lord, that the power of protection for a Christian dwells.

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

...

7 Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD."

A Christian is not called to glory in one's own strength before one's fellow people, and similarly not before the enemies of one's soul, for the Christian oneself, before the world, is very weak, but not God by whom a Christian was saved and in whom one is called to glory.

The armor of God does not make a Christian a strong or big man or woman as if it were a tonic or anabolic, but it expresses the possibility that a man, a woman, or a child, despite being weak, can be coated with an immeasurable power that is fully powerful to protect them in everything so that they can remain in the will of God.

2 Corinthians 11: 30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity (or weakness).

+

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 (or weakness), that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

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

If a Christian puts on the truth, righteousness, faith, the gospel of peace, the word, and the salvation of the Lord, or which are in God, the Christian is strongly clothed even though the Christian oneself is still weak in one's natural condition. Or yet, it is the virtues of God over the Christian or in the Christian that give him or her the cover and protection that one needs for one's heart and life.

The personal posture of a Christian *being in Christ* is credited to him or her as a guarantee of protection that nothing can separate him or her from the love of Christ, for Christ is love eternally, and nothing can separate Christ from His virtue of being love and each of the aspects of "the whole armor of God."

Therefore, **the apparent contrast of the conflict between the principalities and their mighty structures against a single Christian can seem immensely disproportionate and frightening. However, if a person is in Christ and Christ is in this individual, this proportionality, in the spiritual realm, is seen from the opposite perspective, for nothing is comparable to the greatness of the Lord and His power.**

Never can any creature, individually or organized in principalities, reach a condition of being greater than the Heavenly Father, His Beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Psalms 2: 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,

3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."

4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.

...

10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Isaiah 40: 25 "To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing.

27 Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the LORD, And my just claim is passed over by my God"?

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

29 He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,

31 But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

Despite the seeming contrast of proportionality that may exist between a Christian and the principalities that operate in the world with their structures, the Christian rests secure in one's Creator, Savior, and Lord when one uses what God provides for him or her. An aspect that highlights once again how essential it is for the Christian to know that "the whole armor" that God provides is the living person of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as to live and walk according to the instructions of the Lord.

The contrast between an individual who wears the armor of God compared to the size of the principalities operating in the world may indeed be immense. However, this contrast is in favor of the Christian who reverently wears the armor that Heaven offers, for the Lord puts Himself beside the one who trusts in Him.

When, for example, a Christian puts on the righteousness of God, one is putting oneself under Christ Himself or in Christ. So, this protection of righteousness could only be bypassed if the opponents could overcome Christ Himself and His righteousness. Similarly, when someone embraces faith in the Lord, the Lord Himself

interposes as the one who nullifies the force of the enemy's fiery darts that want to shake a person's faith.

And before finishing this chapter, we believe it is still highly necessary to point out that **the fact that the Lord is God Most High, incomparable, or the Almighty Lord and that a Christian can put on this God or can find oneself in Him does not imply that a Christian is called to be endued with power to make haughty or extravagant displays of power before one's fellow people, the world, and the principalities.**

Although God has all the power to carry out actions that are extraordinarily large in power to carry out the deliverance of His children, the Lord, many times, chooses the simplest and most humble ways in the eyes of the world to intervene on behalf of those who place their trust in Him.

God knows how to deliver or protect everyone with whom He intends to do so through interventions and demonstrations of great visibility. However, God also knows how to do it perfectly through instructions, guidance, and interventions that lead Christians to find the provision of deliverance and protection in aspects considered humble or even despicable by the world and its principalities.

2 Peter 2: 9 ... then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, ...

By acting in everything in righteousness, the Lord knows how to strengthen a Christian to remain working in certain aspects or places even if one has opposition in them, as was the case with Daniel in the court of four different empires. On the other hand, for always operating grounded in His righteousness, God also knows when a Christian should withdraw or even flee from a particular situation in which the Lord will not yet confront those who oppose the heavenly kingdom, as He instructed Joseph to flee when the Lord Jesus was still a little boy in the world.

Thus, in His supreme wisdom, God can guide people both to avoid conflicts and also to resist the enemy to the end through heavenly righteousness, similarly to how the Heavenly Father instructed and strengthened Christ to overcome to the end on the cross of Calvary to, through Christ's death, expose to shame the principalities and powers that so strongly opposed Christ in the world, and, above all, because this was the way to grant us the newness of life in the Lord.

Colossians 2: 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Furthermore, putting on “the whole armor of God” cooperates with the Christian also in a preventive way against the actions of evil, for by knowing the truth, righteousness, and the instruction of the Lord granted through the Holy Spirit, a Christian also walks in paths beforehand chosen by the Lord and in which this Christian may avoid many unpleasantness and confrontations with the wiles and opposition against one's life.

That is, **“the whole armor of God” is to be used continuously or even in times of peace so that the Christian also may be instructed previously by the Lord to walk in the ways of peace. A Christian who turns to the Lord in times of peace may even be spared from many temptations**, as shown in some texts below and addressed more widely under the theme The Gospel of the Righteousness of God:

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

Matthew 6: 9 **"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.**

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

13 **And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.** *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*

Romans 12: 17 **Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.**

18 **If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

19 **Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.**

Therefore, **the fact that God is mighty to deliver and protect Christians from the devil's wiles and evil days should in no way be seen as an incentive for a Christian to be unnecessarily exposed to evil or to be frivolous with any kind of evil, for evil is not a thing with which a Christian should recklessly deal.**

It is not because God is able to save His children from opposing principalities and their structures that Christians should take deliberate actions that place them in constant or greater danger or conflict. It is not because God has provided a perfect or complete armor for the Christian that one should go out to every corner and place to face evil and test this armor.

For being faithful to the Lord, Daniel was cast into the lions' den, and the Lord delivered him. However, Daniel, by no means, did intend to enter the lions' den, and he would not even throw himself into it just to see if God would deliver him.

A sober soldier, aware that a specific fight may cause one's death, should never want to enter into a real and dangerous combat just to test one's strength even though one has prepared oneself in case the fight is inevitable.

The Lord yearns to lead His children to green pastures and beside still waters. And if the children have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, there, too, the Lord leads, protects, and comforts them. However, on one's own initiative, no Christian should seek to go to dangerous places, for if one does so without the Lord having gone ahead, one will also be exposed to not having the Lord as the shield of one's life.

In the sense considered in these last paragraphs, the consciousness of the great contrast that may exist in the opposition of principalities and their structures regarding a Christian should, then, serve for the Christian not to think that the conflict is not that fierce, for it may indeed be. And prudence is one of the Christian's essential virtues for resisting evil, and so, in everything, it should be part of one's living and walking in the world.

Throughout the so-called New Testament, the Christian is much more instructed to be in a position of being *in Christ* and in a position to resist the kingdom of darkness than to adopt a position of confronting the powers of darkness and their agents.

A Christian should always be cautious regarding standing up and being indignant about certain oppressions and injustices one sees in the world, for, often, the chain of command behind them is more extensive than one actually sees. And therefore, one's opposition to the injustices one perceives in the world should, first of all, be presented before one's Lord, who is powerful to hear and answer those who cry out to the Eternal King of Righteousness and Peace.

*Ecclesiastes 5: 8 **If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province (or principality), do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them.***

*Luke 18: 7 **"And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?"***
*8 **I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"***

In this way, **instead of wanting to have faith to go out into the world facing all unrighteousness practiced in it, embracing the shield of faith is first to embrace the faith that is persevering in praying before the Lord, day and night, asking the Lord to manifest righteousness according to the heavenly righteousness.**

A God-fearing person is not called to create "indignation ministries" and go out and face all the principalities and structures in the world that oppose God and the righteousness of Christ. Before other things, a Christian is called to first please oneself with one's God and to entrust one's ways to the Lord to be "shielded" in everything by the Lord, which is also so clearly exposed to us by the psalmist in the text below:

*Psalms 37: 1 **Do not fret (or become indignant) because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.***
*2 **For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.***

- 3 *Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness (or truth).*
 4 *Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*
 5 *Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.*
 6 *He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.*
 7 *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.*
 8 *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret, it only causes harm.*

Is not what this last Psalm teaches, then, precisely the Lord's call for everyone who fears God to delight in God or to put on God? Is not what the Psalm above teaches that people should embrace trust in God and incline their hearts to follow the paths that the Lord instructs them to follow?

And yet, is it not for people to put on the righteousness of God to which they are called in the Lord instead of putting on their own righteousness and vengeance?

Is not what the text of the last Psalm teaches exactly allowing the word or instruction of God to show what the soul's reactions are and what the truth in the Spirit of the Lord is, dividing so soul and spirit? Is not what this Psalm teaches precisely that the Lord is salvation in all situations?

Thus, when the words of the Psalm in reference declare that the Lord will bring forth "our righteousness," they, according to the principle of the colligated words, are referring to Christ as "our righteousness," with which every Christian should firmly clothe one's heart.

*Jeremiah 51: 10 **The LORD has revealed our righteousness. Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.***

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

Once again, then, we ask: What is the first position that the Christian should adopt to avoid conflicts or be prepared in the face of opposition with which one may come across?

In everything, a Christian is always called first to be in Christ and to be in the Lord who goes at the head of His troops or the Eternal Shepherd who goes in front of His sheep.

So, when a Christian is called to put on "the whole armor of God," one is called to be aware that one's first attention in the struggles in the world is

not principalities and powers themselves, but whether one is abiding humbly in fellowship with the Lord, remembering that it is from the Lord that all one's strength and provision of life and protection comes from.

We recall here again that before Paul narrates about “the whole armor of God,” he urges Christians to strengthen themselves in God, as well as he did when he said, “*stand firm in the Lord, putting on each of the aspects made available by Him to all those who believe in Him.*”

As we can also see in the text below, “submitting oneself” to God in humility precedes resisting the devil, for it is only by the Lord, in the Lord, and according to the Lord's instruction that a Christian can stand steadfast against the enemies of one's soul.

*James 4: 6 **But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."***
*7 **Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.***

“The whole armor of God” never fails, no matter the size of the opposition of darkness. What may happen is that a Christian abstains from seeking to find oneself coated with “the whole armor of God” or abstains from seeking to be in Christ Jesus to also live and walk through Him.

If a Christian humbles oneself before God and resists the devil, God protects the Christian, gives him or her wisdom from above, and provides this Christian with righteousness from heaven, even causing the devil to flee before that person.

*James 4: 7 **Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.***
 ...
*10 **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.***

Therefore, **the Christian's victory against principalities and their structures of powers should begin even before the direct conflict with them. It should start in the Christian's position of humility before the only Lord who can prepare an individual, clothe His children for the oppositions that may arise in the world, and grant victory.**

The Christian is called to prepare oneself in Christ and wait for the Lord's instruction on where or how far one should advance in the world. And once one is in the world in line with God's will, the Christian continues to be called to remain united with Christ in everything one does and where one goes.

*1 Corinthians 9: 26 **Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.***

*1 Thessalonians 5: 8 **But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.***

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

When a Christian is more conscious of the main battles and wiles that the devil tries to present against one's life, one will realize that the more significant struggles and the vilest oppositions against one's life will probably be those that want to distance this Christian from Christ so that one does not remain truly and continually in the Lord. And this is because when an individual ceases to be *in Christ*, the contrast of the extension of the principalities and their structures begins to weigh much more against one's life.

And among the wiles that the devil proposes through many principalities and their structures is, for example, the pleasant, prosperous, and comfortable natural life, materially speaking, where this condition may become one of the potent weapons used by darkness against the life of the Christian. Although the devil may not be fighting directly against the life of a Christian, he may be doing it indirectly so that the Christian neglects, because of the things of the world, to put on "the whole armor of God," thus weakening the Christian regarding future wiles and clashes against one's life.

In conclusion, we would like to recall here also that when people resist becoming mature *in Christ*, which includes putting on "the whole armor of God," they also do not grow up to perceive and adequately resist the reality that surrounds them and that seeks to push them away from Christ.

Only the Lord knows the real structure of a Christian, and only the Lord knows the conflict a person can endure. For this reason, it is so fundamental for Christians to be attentive to the "escape" that the Lord provides for those who wait in Him. "The way of escape" that the Scriptures of Ephesians 6 also teach as being "to put on the whole armor of God."

1 Corinthians 10: 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

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

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

15 I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.

Only *in Christ* is there the prevention and proper provision of deliverance from the wiles of darkness and the opposition of its structures. And it is also about this central condition that exists in Christ that a Christian should be conscious of and in which one should always seek to abide, asking for the Lord's help so that He grants him or her to remain in this position continuously until the end of one's time in the present world.

1 Peter 1: 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into.

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Psalms 17: 5 Uphold my steps in Your paths, That my footsteps may not slip.

6 I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech.

7 Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You From those who rise up against them.

8 Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,

9 From the wicked who oppress me, From my deadly enemies who surround me.

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

C12. The Conscious or Reasonable Worship of God

After addressing, for several chapters, various aspects concerning which a Christian is called to be conscious or have firm convictions in the world about one's condition in Christ Jesus, because of the context in which one is still inserted while one is in a natural body, we would also like to propose a reflection on a text that can significantly collaborate with the calling of Christians for a “reasonable” posture regarding the Christian life to which they are called, as follows:

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.

When the subject of being conscious or convinced about aspects of the life of faith in Christ Jesus is brought up, some people try to claim that the life of faith is a life that believes in the unknown and, therefore, it is full of uncertainties where it is important to remain firm in faith in the Lord even if devoid of deep convictions. However, when we look at the last text mentioned above, we see that serving God is not a service dissociated from what is reasonable, just as we also saw in several texts in the previous chapters that exhort Christians to be established in the Lord with a firm conscience about what they believe, or to be provided with ***all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.***

On the other hand, the text of Romans 12, verse 1, cited above, needs to be seen carefully so that one does not incur in the attempt to reverse what is taught in it and does not incur in the attempt to propose what is “not” exposed in it.

Nevertheless, even before we go further on what the word *reasonable* represents in the text in reference, we would also like to highlight that the word *service* may be tricky to some people in terms of understanding what comes to be a Christian also to present one's body in a living, holy, and acceptable way to God, for when hearing the term *service*, some people may want to associate it with the idea of “ceremonial or community meetings, masses, or services” performed in institutions that practice liturgically organized services.

The word recorded in the original language of the text to refer to the reasonable action that offers to God also the body as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice is a word more frequently used to denote “*the act of rendering or performing a service or work to God,*” which, in turn, is the idea of the word that is often translated also by the term used to express the *worship* of God.

In other words, to say then that a given action is “your reasonable service of God” is appropriate if that action is seen as “the reasonable actions or doings of God” or as “the reasonable worship of God,” and not as a “service” in the liturgical sense used by many people.

And the “service to God” or the “worship of God,” in turn, and also as we discussed more widely in the theme Works, Labors, and Services, does not refer to mere contemplation of the Lord, but refers to a life in which, in everything, a Christian seeks,

in a practical way, to live and walk in the will of God also to glorify the Lord in everything.

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

The verse quoted in the introduction of this chapter that presents the call to offer the body as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God, to serve or worship God in everything, can also be seen according to other texts that are equivalent to the text in reference, as exemplified below:

Romans 6: 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.**

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

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

Thus, to offer one's natural or mortal body as a “reasonable service or worship to God,” while a Christian still inhabits the present world, is to offer it to God so that, through the members of this natural body, a Christian may live and walk according to the righteousness of God and be a cooperater of this righteousness in everything one does in this present world.

And once we have clarified a little more about the term *service*, which in reality is related to the expression *worship* or *doing everything as to God*, we would like to return to observing, then, regarding what point the term *reasonable* is mentioned in the text initially referenced in this chapter. A point concerning which, we also mentioned that it cooperates with the calling of Christians to be conscious about the aspects of their faith in the Lord.

Furthermore, throughout the world, there are many commentaries or definitions that propose that “the reasonable service or worship of God” refers to the service or worship of God also with the human rational mind and understanding, which, however, also may lead inattentive people to incur a dangerous attempt to invert and distort the text of Romans 12 verse 1.

The fact that the text in reference uses the word *reasonable* and the Scriptures teach that a Christian should be conscious of the aspects of one's faith in God are points that do agree with the calling for Christians to have full assurance of understanding in that to which they are called in the Lord. On the other hand, however, this does not mean that Christians are called to worship or serve the Lord according to their own rationality or understanding, or even according to the propositions that human beings

themselves or the world, in general, suggest as rational or reasonable for the Christian life.

We understand that it is crucial to observe that the narrative of the text of Romans 12, verse 1, does not declare that the simple use of human reason is a service or reasonable worship of God. What the text of Romans 12, verse 1, teaches is that the action of also presenting the natural body as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God is what represents an action of reasonable or sober worship or service to the Lord.

The reasonableness mentioned in the text of Romans 12, verse 1, is that a person who declares that one has Christ as the Lord of one's life and who says that one wants to serve or worship the Lord should also have the proper rational, reasonable, and sober understanding that serving or worshiping the Lord also implies doing so in what is done through the natural body, or also called the mortal body.

The word *reasonable* in the text in reference is not associated with a simple use of the mind, but it is associated with the idea or concept of acting according to something that has a coherent logic, something that is reasonable, sensible, considerable, or related to situations logically plausible and righteous in their explanation and acceptance.

Thus, there is a very great reasonableness for a Christian to offer oneself to serve God in everything or to offer also the members of one's body to serve the Lord in everything according to the righteousness of God. And this is because every Christian has been saved by the Lord from perdition, unrighteousness, subjection to sin, and the condemning law, as well as because one has been saved to live and walk in the world in what is righteous and correct before the Lord.

If a person has been saved from subjection to darkness to no longer live according to the course of the same darkness, it is also reasonable, rational, sensible, or sober for an individual to adopt conduct in conformity with the light in one's spirit, soul, and body. And it is to this reasonableness that the text of Romans 12, verse 1, is calling Christians, which is also confirmed in other texts of Romans, as well as in other books of the Scriptures, as follows:

Romans 6: 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

- 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*
- 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*
- 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.*

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.

Therefore, **it is not reasonable, rational, or logical for a person to think of having Christ as the Lord of one's life and not wanting to surrender aspects of one's natural and daily life to the Lordship of Christ.**

If a person wants to *be in Christ*, it is also sober or reasonable, concerning one's faith, wanting to be led by the Lord in everything one does through one's natural body and, still, desiring to do it in a way quickened by the Spirit of the Lord and in such a way that in everything one can also behave like a child of God who wants to please one's Heavenly Father.

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

Ephesians 5: 1 ***Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.***
2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

The will of God for which a person is saved is not a punishment, something bad, or something harmful for the one who was saved, but, quite the contrary, it is good, perfect, and acceptable in the good that the Lord desires for people. Therefore, it is also reasonable or of proper sense for the Christian to present oneself to the Lord in order to live and walk according to this will in everything while one is still in the present world.

It is logical, rational, reasonable, sober, or of proper sense for a person who wants the good for one's life also to choose to live and actually walk in the way or will that is indeed good for one's life. A reason why the “reasonable service or worship of God” or this stance is the path of coherent logic to which a Christian is called in the sovereign or upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The offer of the Gospel of God is an offer of “good news of salvation and newness of life according to the good and righteousness of God.” Therefore, it is reasonable, sober, or of a proper sense that an individual who wants the good for one's life also receives the Gospel of God and lives and walks according to what this Gospel offers, unless an individual does not believe that the Gospel is in fact an offer of true, good, precious, and worthy life by expressing, above all, also the life coming from the heavenly kingdom to be received and lived eternally.

The words of Romans 12, verse 1, are equally reasonable or sober regarding the other Scriptures also because they are not, in any way, contrary to what is exemplified in the texts 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.

Isaiah 55: 8 **"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.**
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

Jeremiah 29: 11 **For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.**

In this way, a person who intends to live the Christian life according to one's own understanding, or according to the world's understanding about God and what the Christian life should be, is a person who is not acting reasonably or soberly toward the Christian life offered from Heaven by the Lord. Similarly, a person who intends to live the Christian life, but without also presenting one's natural body and what one does through it to the Lord, is also not based on reasonable, sober, or rational goals according to the reasonableness of the kingdom of God.

God being who He is, and the creature being who it is, the continual rational or reasonable service to God which an individual is called to practice is to keep oneself as a creature under the Lordship of one's Creator to be instructed and strengthened by Him in everything.

The reasonable, logical, and intelligent service or worship that a human being can do before the Lord is in everything to present oneself as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God to live and walk according to the will of the Lord.

Given that God is who He is and the creature is who it is, it is not, then, "rational" or reasonable for the creature to offer itself to serve the Lord under thoughts that do not proceed from God and that lack heavenly wisdom, as well as it is not logical, sober, or of a proper sense that the human being does not serve the only Creator God or that one wants to serve Him without knowing the heavenly will, or even that one aspires to serve the Lord contrary to His will.

Serving or worshipping God in everything does not refer to a service worked out according to human wisdom. Instead, it refers to a voluntary surrender of the personal life in its various aspects to serve the Lord according to the instruction and direction granted by the Lord through His Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures are full of rationality or logic of how the Lord expects that those who are willing to believe in God also live and walk in the world, as exemplified also by the following texts:

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

Galatians 5: 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

*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."*

From this, we can see that for the Lord, the wise or reasonable person is the one who hears the words addressed to him or her from the heavenly kingdom and practices them according to the instruction given by the Lord. On the other hand, the foolish or unreasonable person is the one who despises the words of God or the one who hears them but, in one's personal logic, decides not to practice what the Lord, the Sovereign God, instructs to be followed or done.

When, at the beginning of the chapter of Romans 12, Paul uses the words "***I beseech you***" or "***I beseech you therefore***," he indicates that there is a series of information that preceded this plead that is made with "beseeches" and in the name of the Lord's mercies, previous information that serves as a basis for the explanation of God's good will towards human beings.

Thus, by the text of Romans 12 in reference, **the Scriptures show us that God does not want people to be deprived of an adequate understanding of the ways He offers them. On the contrary, God wants people to have confidence and full assurance of knowledge in what and in whom they will place their trust, where the willingness to practice the assurance of understanding is the "reasonable" matter of serving the Lord.**

God is not afraid of people knowing His truths so that they may choose voluntarily, firmly, and with understanding for them, for all His paths are perfect. And the Lord, being Himself light, rejoices when people want to know the heavenly will under heavenly light and discernment.

The work of the newness of life that God performs in those who believe in Him also includes restoring an understanding of the ways and facts of life according to God's will so that a person can soberly, voluntarily, and practically choose the ways of the Lord.

Isaiah 42: 16 I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, And crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, And not forsake them.

Psalms 32: 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

Psalms 119: 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

For this reason, **it is very significant for a Christian to understand that God rejoices and wants Christians to be aware that the Lord values the voluntary service that results from them having reached a sober and conscious condition in the Lord about the heavenly will.**

1 Timothy 1: 3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,
4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.
5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, ...

Hebrews 9: 14 ... how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Returning to the text of Romans 12, we can notice that when Paul uses the expression “***I beseech you therefore,***” he is as if pausing in what he has been writing to call the attention of the people who had access to his writings so that they should reflect and understand the reason for all those writings. And this, so that they could position themselves in everything favorable to God's will for them.

“***Therefore, I beseech you,***” that is, “having seen all that I have already told you or have just told you” appears as an exhortation of Paul, apostle of Christ, asking with “pleads” that Christians depart from the position of spectators of information concerning the will of God and present themselves in everything vividly and fully to the only living God and worthy to receive the service of His children according to the will of God which has just been described to them. The will, which in turn, is to live and walk according to the Spirit of the Lord, and not according to the will of the world, the creation, the flesh, the repealed condemnatory law, or the powers of darkness.

What Paul began to write from the first paragraph of the letter to the Christians in Rome was written to culminate in the understanding that what a person can do with sobriety regarding the true worship of the Lord is to present even the members of one's body to the One Lord and for the sake of life according to the heavenly righteousness revealed throughout the entire book called Romans, and not for the sake of life according to the righteousness that longs to elevate the creation to the position of God and reduce God to the position of the creature.

Repeatedly, the word of God points out that the reality of all true life is in Christ, including what is done in the mortal body, being this the tireless logic for the Christian to live and walk according to the will of God.

The call to serve God in everything according to the reasonableness of the Christian faith always indicates to the Christian the calling to live and walk according to the truth and heavenly righteousness. The life that can only be lived by one who is willing to worship or serve God in Spirit and Truth.

John 4: 23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

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

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

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

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

So, again, after a person has one's mind renewed in the Lord, it is also "reasonable," "logical," sober, and wise that the understanding given according to the Spirit and the Truth be applied in what is done through the natural body.

After salvation has already been received or a person has already reached the condition of being saved, justified, or a new creature in Christ, living and walking in the strength and direction of the Lord, through the Spirit of God, is one of the central aspects of reasonableness narrated throughout the texts of the book of Romans until reaching the text of Romans 12 verse 1.

The world, with its prince, principalities, and structures, is intensely opposed to the true, simple, direct, and coherent reasonableness proposed for life *in Christ Jesus* and that is offered to all human beings. Therefore, they aim to affect Christians' convictions about the condition available to them *in Christ*.

On the other hand, this is also one of the points because of which a Christian is called to present oneself first and continuously to the Lord to renew in Him one's conscience, understanding, or convictions about the upward vocation of God in Christ

Jesus and also to be strengthened to practice what from Heaven one is taught and guided to do.

*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.***

*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.***

The lack of understanding and conviction about God's will, because Christians do not present themselves personally before the Lord, is one of the most accentuated reasons why many Christians have also failed to practice a life of sober service or worship to God and before the world. But even if there are manifestations and opposition to the will of God in the context around a Christian, this should not be seen as an impediment for a Christian to present oneself to God in everything and to redeem, being in the Lord, the precious time of one's life.

*1 Peter 4: 1 **Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,***
*2 **that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.***

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

C13. Conscious that A More Sublime and Eternal Destination is Reserved for Those Who Are New Creatures in Christ Jesus

In the midst of the darkness that exists in the so-called present age, there are many aspects that seek in a marked way to impose afflictions, discouragement, and fears on the people who live in the present world, which may become even more alarming if people become aware of their great weakness in the face of the many circumstances that are contrary to them.

On the other hand, the consciousness of weaknesses in the face of so many adverse circumstances can serve, in a highly useful way, to highlight the need for the Eternal Creator that the human being has as a creature, as well as to highlight how great is the Lord God Creator of the Heavens and the Earth and all that is in them.

Despite the darkness and adverse circumstances for people in the world, the Lord, in His sovereign position, continues to provide those who believe in Him with the abundant provision of His heavenly kingdom.

In a world permeated by unrighteousness and resistance to God's good, perfect, and acceptable will, no one can stop God from continuing to provide righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit to His children who are still in the present world or in a fragile natural or mortal body.

*Romans 14: 17 ...**for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.***
*18 **For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.***

Despite the context adverse to God, the Lord, out of love and mercy, sustains all those who believe in Him with the characteristics of His kingdom, as well as He is also mighty to provide them with many other natural aspects, making it so that His children may always be protected in Christ Jesus and, yet, that they also may make known to the world and to principalities the manifold wisdom of the God in whom they trust.

Although the so-called present age is associated with disobedience to God and permeated with darkness, the Lord offers His mercy to all the people of the world and shows great benevolence particularly to His children who live by faith in Him and to glorify Him.

In His immeasurable goodness, the Lord has a specific path of provision for each of the works that He intends to be carried out by His children. And the Lord, as to be able to bless those who are His, is in no way limited to the principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The Lord is mighty to do even infinitely more than His children ask of Him, just as the Lord is powerful to give His children overflowing grace to carry out every good work they are called to do in Christ, as we can recall in the following texts:

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

*2 Corinthians 9: 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.
9 As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."
10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,
11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.*

On the other hand, however much a Christian may have plenty of God's provision for life on Earth, the territory in the world is a place of constant strife and opposition from darkness, and it will be so until the end of the so-called present age when the current world will be destroyed and removed by the consuming fire to which it will be exposed.

And without a doubt, this continuous environment of risks, struggles, and opposition from the powers of darkness may cause fatigue and a great desire to one day be freed entirely from all of this.

And it is precisely an even more extensive release that the Lord has prepared for everyone who has opened one's heart to receive, from God, the condition of being a new creature in Christ Jesus and remains in it.

Therefore, **thank God that the final destination of the children of God is not to spend the rest of their existence in a weakened body and in a world that largely resists the goodness of God and does not want the love of the truth in Christ Jesus.**

One of the main provisions that the Lord grants to those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus is, then, a firm hope related to their complete redemption from this daily and arduous fight against sin and darkness to a time of rest and a complete refreshment in the Lord.

*Romans 8: 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;
21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.
23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.
24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?*

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

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

Thus, although, *in Christ Jesus*, a Christian already has abundant provision for living and walking according to the will of the Heavenly Father, God has something even greater prepared for those who remain in Christ and the hope of the complete redemption that is to come after one's time of life in the natural body here on Earth. That is, the redemption for the eternal citizenship in Heaven of those who are the Lord's and in which they will also receive a new body according to the glory of the resurrected body of Christ, as also described in the text that follows below:

Philippians 3: 20 **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,**

21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Despite the abundant mercy and goodness of the Lord towards the children of light while they are still on Earth or in the present world, the Lord has reserved an even more glorious manifestation that extends the perfect salvation that already operates in those who believe in Christ Jesus in the world to a fully eternal condition and free from the present struggles of the world, as also the texts below from the book of Revelation teach us:

Revelation 7: 13 **Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"**

14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Revelation 21: 4 **"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."**

Given this, we can know that the teachings about the Christian life that do not point to the glorious days that await the Christian in eternal glory after one's life in the present world are incomplete or even perverse.

If we also look at the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, we similarly see in this book that the reason why the witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 11 followed God by faith in the Lord was not related to the expectation of obtaining a present world in perfect conditions of peace or the expectation of receiving an earthly homeland or citizenship better than those they left behind to follow the Lord. The people listed in Hebrews 11 have their names recorded in this chapter by the fact that they followed God because they believed that the Lord is also able to provide them with a superior and eternal homeland for the time that follows a person after one leaves the present world and life in a natural body, as follows:

Hebrews 11: 14 **For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.**

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Thus, the proposition that the essence of the Christian life is to obtain a better life in the present world or that a pleasant temporal life should be the primary goal of a Christian is a misleading and false proposition, as well as considered by God as a position adopted by those who are enemies of the cross of Christ. And this is so because although the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary to offer the deliverance of people already in the present world from the yoke of sin and the law of eternal condemnation, the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary also and mainly for the salvation in which people are called to be eternally with the Lord.

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

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

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

26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Although the condition of a new creature in Christ is already inestimable in the present world, there is still so much more to come in the eternal glory of the Christian life that has not yet been revealed before the eyes of

those who already on Earth and in a mortal body believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

*2 **Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.***

In this last text, we can see that those who are new creations in Christ Jesus are indeed children of God even though they are still in the world. And the Heavenly Father's love has also been bestowed upon them immeasurably to the point of being called "children of God." However, what now is already wonderful falls far short of all those things that will still be revealed to those who abide in Christ to the end.

Although the Christian life of the Christian on Earth is already a perfect provision that has already conveyed him or her from subjection to the powers of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of God's Love, the condition of Christian life on Earth is still a first part of what will actually be one's life in eternity with the Lord.

The Christian life or life in Christ that the Christian receives on Earth is already eternal. And precisely because it is already eternal from the moment someone receives it, it is not limited to living and walking in Christ on Earth, but, rather and mainly, to be lived forever.

So, in the world, there are struggles or tribulations, but there is also the light of Christ when the Christian abides in Christ and the provision to overcome the world by faith in Christ. However, the Christian's future is not to remain in the present world. God's future for the Christian is for him or her to live eternally in the fullness of the light of God and Christ, having, in the present, the Lord's promise that in this future, there will never be moments of darkness in the lives of those who are eternally saved in Him.

*2 Corinthians 4: 17 **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,**
*18 **while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.****

*2 Corinthians 5: 1 **For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.***

*2 **For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,***

*3 **if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.***

*4 **For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.***

- 5 *Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*
- 6 *So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.*
- 7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*
- 8 *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*
- 9 *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*
- 10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

- Revelation 22: 1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*
- 2 *In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*
- 3 *And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*
- 4 *They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.*
- 5 *There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*
- 6 *Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.*
- 7 *"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."*
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Therefore, Christians are called by God to be firmly conscious that, as new creatures in Christ, they have a future of glory in the Lord's eternal presence and that this trust serves as support, encouragement, and hope. One more reason why the words about the glory that awaits the children of God in the future should also be a regular part of the conversations of those who serve Christ so that they do not faint or move away from the disposition of standing firm in Christ Jesus.

- 1 *Thessalonians 4: 13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*
- 14 *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*
- 15 *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*
- 16 *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

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

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

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

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

5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

Concluding, then, this chapter, we can understand that if people who do not have fellowship with Christ are frightened by the end times of Heaven and Earth that they see with their eyes at present, for Christians, these same days are times of great expectation for the redemption that awaits them in the Lord.

A Christian is not called to rejoice in darkness or unrighteousness. Instead, one is called to pray continually for the manifestation of the light and righteousness of the heavenly kingdom in the present world and to offer oneself as God's instrument of righteousness on Earth so that God's mercy may be revealed even more to all human beings. However, or on the other hand, when a Christian's days on Earth draw closer and closer to an end, the Christian should know that the Lord has in store for him or her the eternal crown of righteousness and newness of life in the eternal light of the heavenly kingdom.

Because of the transient condition of the actions of darkness and because of the firm promise of eternal life that the Christian has in Christ, even amid struggles, a Christian should continually be willing to present oneself available in a living, holy, and acceptable manner in the hands of God while one lives on Earth, for one has the promise of the Lord that this passing time of afflictions is in no way comparable to the coming time that awaits him or her in one's Eternal Savior and Lord.

2 Peter 3: 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the

- elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*
- 11 *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*
- 12 *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*
- 13 *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*
- 14 *Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;*
- 15(a) *and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.*

Romans 14: 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

C14. Conscious that Adherence to the Simplicity that is in Christ and the Practical Life in it are by Personal Choice

In the first letter to the Christians in Corinth, Paul teaches that no one can lay any other foundation for the edification of the new creature than what is already laid, which is exclusively the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

The Lord Jesus Christ is the same and only foundation for all people who choose to believe in Him and receive Him as Lord of their lives.

If thousands of people believe in Christ, He remains the only foundation. If billions believe in Christ, He remains the one and the same foundation for all.

Considering that in Christ is hidden all the fullness of God and are found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and that through fellowship with Christ a Christian can have access to all instruction and strength for life as a new creature, we can understand that the “simplicity that is in Christ” is the same or unique “simplicity” that is available to all people who come to the Lord.

At no time, as some try to claim, did Paul teach that he himself aimed to be the basis of Christians' protection and growth, repeatedly stating explicitly or objectively who is the source that bestows all the growth of a Christian in one's new condition in Christ Jesus.

*1 Corinthians 3: 5 **Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?***
*6 **I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.***
*7 **So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.***

Nevertheless, **the acceptance in the heart of the only eternal foundation for life and the edification of a person in this simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus, that is, the edification that each new creature is called to do in Christ, depends on the cooperation of each individual**, as described in the verse that follows the description of the foundation itself, and which follows below:

*1 Corinthians 3: 10 **According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.***

Paul declared that he could even be a fellow worker with God to announce the only eternal foundation for it to be welcomed into the heart of a person who would choose to receive the Lord's offer of salvation and newness of life in Christ. However, once the

foundation was laid in a heart, the person who received it would need to be attentive oneself to how one would build on the foundation granted by the heavenly kingdom.

Even being an apostle of Christ, Paul did not want people to place their expectations and hopes for growth in him but in God. Paul explicitly declared that neither he, Peter (or Cephas), nor Apollos were worthy of being the foundation of any person, for only Christ is the Only Begotten and Eternal Son of God, and only Christ died and rose again so that people can come to receive life according to the new creature in Him.

Paul announced the Gospel or the good news that it is in Christ that the firm, unshakable, and true life is, as well as the eternal foundation capable of sustaining it. And Paul did this both so that people would receive Christ exclusively as the foundation of everlasting life and so that people would not seek their source of growth in their fellow men, not even in the announcers of the Gospel.

In the world, there is a strong temptation that seeks to attract people to want to become too attached to those who bring them good news instead of hearing and practicing the good news that the messengers bring them, which, in turn, is that each person can draw near to the Heavenly Father personally and directly through the Lord Jesus Christ.

For this reason, speaking and writing in the name of Christ, Paul repeatedly taught those who received Christ that their edification was to be done in Christ personally and directly. Paul explicitly refuted the possibility that he, or any other person or aspect of the creation, could become the basis for people's edification because one preached or announced that reconciliation with God is already provided in Christ Jesus.

*2 Corinthians 5: 18 **Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,***
*19 **that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.***
*20 **Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.***

Thus, a Christian may teach other Christians how essential it is for them to seek fellowship with Christ and grow in the Lord, but no Christian can and should not even try to replace another Christian in one's personal relationship with Christ and the Heavenly Father.

A Christian may teach other Christians about the importance that the Scriptures attribute to practical Christian life according to the will of God, which has its essence primarily in the fellowship with Christ and in the simplicity with which every Christian can come to Christ without the need or possibility of any other mediators. However, who gives the practical and personal direction of how each Christian should apply the principles of faith in the Lord in one's own life is the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

As for life in the New Covenant that the Heavenly Father offers us in Christ Jesus, the Lord declares to us:

Hebrews 8: 10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."

In this way, the one who proposes to supply in the lives of other individuals what can only be supplied by the "simplicity that there is in Christ," in which everyone can approach God from *one's own* heart, is also the one who tries to place oneself as a mediator of one's fellow people with the Lord Jesus Christ, which is entirely undue in the Christian life. (A subject discussed in more detail in the themes Knowing About God or Knowing God and The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

Thus, **the edification of a Christian does not happen mainly because one is always close to a person more experienced in Christ, but it happens when one oneself begins to seek Christ directly and to work out one's salvation in the Lord.**

Fellowship with fellow believers in Christ is helpful when they encourage and strengthen one another so that "*each one*" continues to seek life personally in Christ in all that one does.

In other words, **one of the central essences of the Christian life is that Christ came to reconcile the relationship of individuals with God so that "*each individual*," in any place and at any time, can live in fellowship with the Lord.**

If we recall some earlier chapters of this present subject, we may remember that a Christian is called to put on Christ as the Lord being one's armor. And it is well known worldwide that an armor refers to a set for personal clothing. That is, a first individual to expect that another person will relate to Christ in one's place is to expect that another person will feed on the food of the first individual or wear this person's armor still hoping that the individual who delegated the eating and clothing to others also becomes fortified, fed, and clothed without actually doing it personally. Something that is simply nonsense.

Therefore, **just as there are aspects of the natural life that no other person can do for one's fellow people because of the individuality of each natural being, so there are several aspects of the Christian life that no other person can do for another also because of the individuality that is pertinent to "*each one*" who has become a new creature in Christ Jesus.**

No matter how many resources a person has in the world, all one's resources do not grant this individual the condition in which one oneself can stay away from being nourished in one's own body if one wants to remain healthy. Similarly, even if a person wants to give offerings, tithes, and many other resources for others to feed spiritually on one's behalf, if one insists on not feeding and building oneself directly on the eternal

foundation of one's life, one's condition of spiritual starvation cannot be overcome, letting this person still subject to the consequences of the severe damage that starvation can cause to those who remain in it, including shipwreck regarding faith.

Not even having an enormity of natural resources available to be used, there are certain aspects of life that can never be transferred to others or outsourced.

*Psalms 49: 6 **Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches,***

*7 **None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him***

*8 **(For the redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever)***

*9 **That he should continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit.***

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

*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.***

Several times, many Christians stray from the primary or fundamental principles of the Christian life, thinking that they can use their fellow people as mediators. However, all propositions in this sense are broadly contrary to the principles of the life of faith in Christ or “the simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus.” Fellow believers that are more experienced in life with Christ should encourage the Christians who are still firming themselves in this faith not to lose heart in their actions of always seeking direct fellowship with the Lord and to seek in the Lord the guidance for their lives, but never take a position that suggests that some can mediate others because they are more experienced.

Emotionally, it may often seem easier for a person to lean on those one can see with one's natural eyes, but no Christian can be a foundation for another Christian. And in the end, if there is an insistence on doing so contrary to God's will, this type of option will always prove disappointing and frustrating.

Christ, then, was established by the Heavenly Father as the only foundation that needs to be firmly laid in the heart of every Christian. However, Christ was also appointed by the Heavenly Father as the Lord who guides each one of those who believe in Him, for only Christ was established by the Father of Lights to be, through the Spirit of the Lord, at all times with *each person* and in *each heart* that receives Him as Lord.

The essence of the Christian life is Christ in the heart of the one who believes and the one who believes abiding in Christ as much as this may disappoint many people who want to avoid presenting themselves, from their hearts, personally and directly to God.

And we remember here again that when people insist on basing themselves on other people, groups of people, or institutions, they create bondages and prisons of souls, letting themselves to be imprisoned and imprisoning each other in what they were never called to do as children of God.

A person's freedom is to abide in the Son of God and His teaching, and not under the spiritual covering of another individual, image, idol, or any other human or natural structure, for Christ alone is the firm eternal foundation and Head of His Body and **each of** the members of this Spiritual Body. (A subject widely discussed in the themes The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ and The Fellowship of Christians in the World.)

Still looking at human history, but also human history regarding the proposal of the Christian life in Christ Jesus, we can see how big was and is the reluctance of many people, and even of huge crowds, to accept this "simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus." However, it is also very challenging for a large portion of Christians to remain aware of the Lord's calling to be in Him and to abide in Him directly.

And as a consequence, when a person does not relate directly to Christ, the Living Word who in a living way gives life, or one only maintains oneself in relationship with the writings on the elementary principles of the Christian faith and in horizontal relationships, one does not take the minimum steps necessary to leave one's position as an infant in spiritual things, exposing oneself to so many unnecessary oppositions and risks to one's life in the world, according to the texts that we recall below:

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

Hebrews 5: 11 **... of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.**

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

John 5: 38 **"But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.**

39 **You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**

40 **But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."**

Similarly, also to the prophet Jeremiah the Lord declared that when a person who says one fears God subjects to one's tutorship or tutelage others who should walk in freedom, both become imprisoned by their corrupt attitudes and can no longer freely follow the Lord.

Jeremiah 34: 15 **'Then you recently turned and did what was right in My sight, every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor; and you made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name.**

16 'Then you turned around and profaned My name, and every one of you brought back his male and female slaves, whom he had set at liberty, at their pleasure, and brought them back into subjection, to be your male and female slaves.'

17 "Therefore thus says the LORD: 'You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and every one to his neighbor. Behold, I proclaim liberty to you,' says the LORD, 'to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine!' And I will deliver you to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth."

Now, from the revelation of Christ Jesus to the world, what has become the house that is eternally called by the name of the Lord and in which a covenant of freedom is made with the Lord?

From the revelation of the Son of God as the eternal Christ, the Lord's house among people or the Lord's dwelling on Earth became the life of those who believe in Christ and who became children of God through faith, for it is **each child** of God who is regarded as the temple or sanctuary of the Lord. And as such, **each Christian** is called to the freedom in which one has the Lordship of Christ in one's life and not of others who want to assume the position of mediators that is not due to them regarding their fellow men.

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

1 Corinthians 6: 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

John 8: 36 "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

Still in the last text of the prophet Jeremiah mentioned above, we can see that the propositions in which a brother tries to dominate another brother are not only harmful to both who are subject to this type of condition, but they also express actions that seek to profane the name of God and the name of His Eternal Son, which the Heavenly Father established as the name above every name.

Philippians 2: 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

“***Each Christian***” is the house that receives the name of the Lord. And as such, one is called to be free in the Lord and not to have one's heart dominated by one's fellow men, for the Lord dwells in the places where there is freedom for Him to act through His Spirit.

1 Peter 4: 16 ***Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.***

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

2 Corinthians 3: 17 ***Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.***

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.***

Thus, when those who call themselves Christians do not grant freedom to others so that their fellow believers of faith in the Lord may seek personal and free edification in Christ or when some who call themselves Christians want others to be their mediators in their relationship with the Lord, they put themselves in a position to profane the name of God on Earth by no longer walking according to the covenant by which they joined Christ to have Him as Lord, Mediator, Way, Truth, Life, High Priest, and Eternal King of their lives and so that they, through Christ, may draw directly near to God in everything.

2 Timothy 3: 5 ... ***having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!***

Titus 1: 16 ***They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.***

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

In addition, many places where services supposedly to God are practiced may present an appearance of humility and godliness. However, when, in them, there are spiritual hierarchies of dominion over each other and the restriction of freedom from one fellow believer to another, this shows that it is not the life in the “simplicity that

there is in Christ Jesus” that they propose. On the contrary, they demonstrate the performance of a work opposed to the “simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus” so that those who believe in the Lord no longer come freely, personally, or directly to God.

Christians can get used to living with other Christians to the point of thinking that they are enough for each other and forget the personal relationship with Christ to which “*each one*” is called. When, however, this occurs, the cycle of oppression and lack of freedom begins to set in quickly. And if those engaged in these practices do not soon return to repentance, they place themselves in the condition of the leaven that leavens the whole lump.

When a person's individual and direct relationship with Christ begins to be neglected, the Christian, who is the dwelling house or a temple of the Spirit of God, is liable to have a heart permeated with bitterness by the disappointments and pains that over time may emerge from one's erroneous posture, and one may even turn away, because of disappointments and bitterness, from the grace of the Lord and still be an agent by which many become defiled, as mentioned in the texts below:

Hebrews 12: 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:
15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

1 Corinthians 3: 3 ...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?
4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

When people begin to expect that mere human beings, naturally mortal, can provide them with what only God can grant them, a scenario with enormous potential for them to incur deep frustrations is established. And the situation may be even more aggravated for these same people if they still try to attribute to God the blame for their disobedience for not having followed the Lord's instruction and having erroneously followed those that God, by the Scriptures and by His Spirit, so insistently instructs not to be followed.

And this situation that opposes the “simplicity that there is in Christ Jesus” for *each Christian* to come personally to the Lord may be even more aggravated when some start to realize that the subjection of their supposed fellow believers to them may be materially profitable, although destructive to their faith. When this happens, many indulge in greed or avarice, which, according to the Scriptures, also expresses a synonym of idolatry. (A subject discussed more extensively in the theme The Christian and the Riches, in the chapter on The Trade or Commerce of the Word of God, Souls, and Christians, and in the theme called Another Gospel or A Different Gospel.)

Due to the negligence of many Christians regarding the practice of “*each one*” of them seeking to establish a direct relationship with Christ, or due to the cunning and vileness of those who enjoy subjecting the inattentive to their strategies of domination

of their fellow men, many individuals, despite all being called to free access to Christ, make of themselves or of their fellow men the idols and gods in which they place their trust and their hopes.

When people cross the proper boundaries of relationship with other people, there is only one thing to do: Repent and return to the direct relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and, under the Lord's instruction, have a relationship in proper measure with others. And this attitude of returning to a direct relationship with Christ is also or again personal or individual.

2 Corinthians 3: 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.***

Jeremiah 25: 5(b) ***Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.***

Christ is the Good and Eternal Land which the Heavenly Father promised from ancient times and on which there is foundation forever. Therefore, an individual placing one's trust in other people, including other Christians, in the sense of considering them as foundations, heads, or leaders of one's life, is a bad way. This is running after men and women, or it is adopting distorted actions through which people try to resist or deny the eternal purpose of God, which is to converge everything and everyone to Christ, in whom every promise of the newness of eternal life is fulfilled, as announced from ancient times.

Galatians 3: 16 ***Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.***

...

24 ***Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.***

25 ***But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.***

26 ***For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.***

The Lord Jesus Christ invites all people, without exception, to have peace in Him, for He is the Prince of Peace. And it is only in Christ that “*each Christian*” finds the peace one indeed needs both for one's present life and one's eternal life.

Christ also invites all who are weary and burdened to come to *Him* to be relieved by *Him*. And it is not Christ who invites people into an endless series of men, women,

meetings, associations, or institutions to replace what only the Lord can provide. And yet, Christ invites those who are weary and burdened to come to **Him** and not for them to seek others who could supposedly take their place in their coming to Christ.

It is from the coming to **Him** that Christ promises to grant rest to the weary soul.

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

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

On the one hand, the fact that a Christian has Christ as the foundation of one's life does not mean that one should seek isolation from other Christians and people in general, for fellowship among Christians is widely encouraged in the Scriptures, as is the participation of each person in the role God assigns him or her in the world.

Thus, a Christian is always called to be aligned first and foremost with the will of one's Lord and Eternal Creator, a will that is revealed primarily in personal fellowship with Christ.

And yet, since the Christian is not called to base one's life on someone else, some might think, then, that the Christian life is the expression of the attitude of each Christian to be centered in oneself and that each one should seek one's own interests or "take one's life into one's own hands." But here, too, the opposite of not edifying and not building on others is not building on oneself and for oneself.

Every Christian is called to build one's life on Christ and fellowship with Christ, not on others, but also not on oneself or according to one's own understanding.

Every Christian is called to be built up in the Lord as the house of the Lord that *each Christian* is. *Each Christian* is called to be attentive to the fact that one's life is built up as a house of God together with God so that the Lord can dwell and manifest Himself in and through this Christian in love, righteousness, and power.

Psalms 127: 1 **Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.**

2 Corinthians 2: 14 **Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.**

God longs to work through all His children. This is why He also wants them to be voluntarily grounded in Christ and have their lives established in Him, for through Christ, the Christian is led in triumph in the Lord. And when this occurs, God also

manifests the fragrance of the knowledge of Him through this Christian to one's fellow believers and to the world in which one lives.

2 Corinthians 2: 14 ***Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.***

15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?

And here yet, before concluding the current theme, we would like to mention that **another crucial aspect for a Christian to be conscious of regarding one's personal stance in life in Christ is related to a continuous reassessment of one's participation in collective aspects to check before the Lord if one is not involved with places, groups, or works that are undue or inappropriate for one's grounding in Christ and to be under the Lord's protection.**

Before the Lord, "***each Christian***" may also face situations in which one is responsible for leaving where one should no longer be due to what one has already been instructed by one's Lord.

In this way, when a Christian is alerted to position oneself in relation to places or mentalities that have become corrupted and moved away from the will of God, even if they even seem to be Christians or call themselves Christians, this Christian will not be able to use the argument that the collectivity has not listened to God and that the collective forced him or her to follow what is contrary to the Lord, for the positioning required by the Lord is addressed to ***each person individually***, even if a multitude does not heed the Lord's instruction.

2 Corinthians 6: 16 ***And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."***

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

7: 1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Revelation 18: 4 ***And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."***

*Jeremiah 51: 6 **Flee from the midst of Babylon, And every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, For this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; He shall recompense her.***

*Jeremiah 51: 45 **"My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the LORD."***

By way of complementary information, we recall here that in the theme Colligated or Associated Words and Riddles of Antiquity, we briefly saw a basic idea that is involved in the Scriptures regarding the term *Babylon*, which means "mix," "mixture," or "confusion of language."

Thus, **many times, through messages addressed to entire groups or entire peoples, God can make appeals for people to repent and turn their hearts to Him, but still, even in these cases, the decision to heed or not to heed God's call is an individual decision.**

*John 7: 37 **On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."***

No one who has clearly heard the offer of the Gospel of God and the life offered according to this Gospel will be able to accuse other people, principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, or even spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places for not having personally responded to the appeal of God to receive Him in one's heart, as well as to withdraw from places that are inappropriate for one's life and that act contrary to one's personal and direct relationship with the Lord.

Although there are several unfavorable contexts in the world regarding a person's life in Christ Jesus, the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart of the one who receives Him is greater than these contexts. And the Lord is mighty to instruct those who trust in Him on how to properly position themselves in the face of adversities in the world, including those presented through collectivities.

Adversity may present itself through different collective facets. However, in contrast to this, the Lord presents Himself as the One who does not forget each individual and assists each one who seeks a safe refuge directly in Him.

*1 John 4: 4 **You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.***

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

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."**

Faced with the fact that each person is called to give a personal account to God, the inappropriate search for collective coverage, or of groups, institutions, and so on, has no substantial and lasting foundation for the most crucial eternal aspects, also showing in this sense that personally looking unto the Lord is the really essential need of every individual.

Romans 14: 12 **So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.**

Jeremiah 17: 10 **I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.**

Matthew 16: 27 **"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."**

1 Corinthians 3: 13 ... **each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.**

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

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

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

Finally, as already mentioned above, when the Lord calls people to answer for their lives before Him personally, He does not do so without also offering all the help and provision so that a Christian can live and walk according to the heavenly will.

By calling ***each one*** to be in Him, the Lord also offers the conditions for each person to triumph in Christ and live through the strength that Christ gives.

For ***each person*** who remains in Christ, the Lord grants abundant grace so that this individual may reign over the most diverse aspects of one's own life.

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

John 1: 16 **And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.**

So, to practice good through one's body, soul, and spirit, a Christian needs to establish one's life in the simplicity that everything one needs is in Christ or is given from Christ, but also to know that the decision to actually present oneself willingly to Christ, to be guided and strengthened by Him as well, is a personal decision that is up to each person to make before the Lord.

The Christian is not primarily called to account for the many or few works one has done or is doing through one's life on Earth, but whether or not one has chosen to live one's life in a practical way *in Christ and through Christ Jesus.*

Romans 6: 11 **Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

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

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

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

Faith, believing, or placing trust in someone is a personal position of each heart, for no one can do for another person what has been designated by God to be done exclusively by the other person.

And it is very precious for a Christian to become conscious that "**each one**" is called *in Christ* never to move away from this position, whether many around do so or whether there are no others nearby who do so.

Therefore, at the "ultimate end" or in the "hour of accountability," "**each one**" will give an account of oneself if one built up in Christ and through Christ or built up apart from Christ and based on the abilities and ideas according to the creation and not the Creator. Thus, the central decision and action required of a Christian is not the bearing of much fruit but abiding in Christ, in whom there is the promise of obtaining the appropriate fruits also at the proper time.

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

Hebrews 6: 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,
 12 *that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

1 Peter 1: 17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;
 18 *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,*
 19 *but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*
 20 *He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*
 21 *who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

May the Lord, then, extend His goodness and mercy widely so that many more people may come to Christ in these days and that Christians of this generation, as well as those yet to come, may reach more and more the conscience or firm conviction that the way of adherence to the "simplicity that there is in Christ" to be able to live and walk in Him is offered by the Heavenly Father to all of them, but also knowing that it is up to "***each one***" to receive and make use of what is already offered to all in the Lord.

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

John 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."

Luke 8: 15 "But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."

1 Peter 2: 6 **Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."**

Ephesians 3: 14 **For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

15 **from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,**
16 **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,**
17 **that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,**
18 **may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height,**
19 **to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

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

11 **To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

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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