

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -

The Fair Cooperation of the New Creature

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. When There Is More Than One

This new theme is part of the series on the New Creation in Christ and aims to follow up on the other subjects that precede 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.
- ⇒ 5) Conscious of the Context of Life and Destination of the New Creature.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the condition of the new creation that God grants to those who receive Christ Jesus as Lord in their hearts, in addition to many others presented in the Scriptures, among which several have already been seen in the themes mentioned above, is the one that expresses the fact that being a new creature is not a calling for a person to be isolated.

In the simple fact that a person was created by the Lord and received from God the condition of a new creature for believing in Christ Jesus, there is already a life relationship established between this person and one's Creator. When a life is conceived, one is automatically inserted into a context of a relationship with the Creator who sustains it, as well as with other individuals around that person.

And once an individual is part of larger sets that involve living relationships, one may cooperate with them or oppose them, for whenever there is a scenario that contains more than one individual, the theme about cooperation also automatically becomes present.

If a person is part of a set, what one does or does not do also affects, to a greater or lesser extent, the set in which one is inserted. And this same principle applies more widely also to the new creature in Christ. That is, a very expressive part of God's calling to those who come to be constituted as a new creature in Christ Jesus also encompasses a variety of aspects related to their participation in the collective contexts in which they find themselves inserted.

If the “natural man” was already created not to live isolated or dissociated from one's Creator or one's fellow men, much more is the “new man in Christ” called to relate to God and other people, for one of the central and essential aspects by which the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary was carried out has as its objective precisely the reconciliation of people with God and also among themselves.

On the other hand, as a new creature, a Christian is not called to seek to relate to God or other people merely in ways or forms that have as their reference point or are based on the relationship parameters of the natural man or that were adopted by a person before one was constituted a new creature in Christ or made new in the Lord.

Once a person has become new in the Lord by having received Christ Jesus into one's life, the fundamental aspects of one's relationship with God and with other people have also changed, even if other people around that individual who has received the condition of a Christian do not experience a similar change in their respective lives.

Those who individually come to believe in Christ Jesus, and therefore receive the condition of a new creature in the Lord, receive in Christ new heavenly enablement for a new living and walking in God, but also receive new enablement and provision from God to cooperate, according to the heavenly will, with the collectives that the Lord wants a Christian to cooperate with.

As a new creature in Christ, a person receives a new inner condition that also results in new conditions to experience in a differentiated way the relationship both towards God and towards other people. And these new conditions, in turn, need to be known and practiced so that they work in cooperation with the relationships that are objectified for those who have become new in Christ.

Aspects similar to those being described in the last paragraphs above are already mentioned in the themes *The Fellowship of Christians in the World* and *The Christian in the World in General*, in which we also mention the importance of fellowship among Christians and Christians “walking as children of light” so that they manifest themselves as the salt of the Earth and the light of the world, as is the express will of the Lord Jesus Christ for the lives of those who come to believe in Him.

And although there is already a broad coverage in the materials referenced above on various aspects of a Christian's relationship with the individuals of the groups with which the Lord intends for one to cooperate, it seems to us highly significant to still address a little more about the multiple or mutual cooperation that should take place when there is a multiplicity of relationships in focus.

When the matter of a person's relationship with God or with one's fellow people is present, a crucial aspect to be observed is that the participation of multiple parties also involves multiple responsibilities and measures of participation of each party in the most varied circumstances of these relationships.

To relate with God or other individuals, a Christian is invited by the Lord to know aspects that are up to this Christian regarding the other parts of the relationship, but one is also called to know the points that are up to the other parties in relation to the Christian and the sets with which they intend to cooperate.

When the matter that multiple individuals should have a role or participation in some collective set is put on the agenda, it is necessary for a Christian to grow in understanding about what the proper share of one's participation is, but also what a fair or appropriate share that is up to the other parties involved is.

A sober understanding of fair cooperation measures can contribute significantly and even immeasurably to the person who knows them, for a person may not be cooperating with a collective for which it would be appropriate to cooperate because one omits oneself from doing one's part, but also, on the other hand, because one wants to collaborate in an excessive measure or that is not due.

As much as a person may want to cooperate with God or help other people, if one does so in an inappropriate or disproportionate way to what is appropriate for him or her, the good one aims to do may actually be more subject to the risk of being harmful than beneficial.

Similarly, it is crucial for a Christian to exercise caution with the help that others offer him or her in order not to place oneself in subjection to propositions that claim to want to help, but which, in essence, are offered with characteristics of supposed help that is not pertinent to be carried out by those who offer it.

The willingness to cooperate and receive cooperation, as well as all other aspects of the Christian life, is also an aspect that needs to be seen, understood, and practiced according to what the Lord established as appropriate in this matter for His children, and not according to their own understanding or of the world.

Thus, in the following chapters, we would like to highlight once again some aspects specifically related to the context of fair cooperation to which Christians, as new creatures in Christ Jesus, are called by the Lord.

C2. The Greatest and Most Fundamental Cooperation of the New Creature Is Always Up To God

In the Scriptures, there are several figures that exemplify the calling of a person who came to be constituted as a new creature to cooperative participation with collective groups, such as:

- 1) Fellow citizens with the Saints;
 - 2) Members of the Family of God;
 - 3) A dwelling place of God;
- And several others.

We can observe below two texts that clearly exemplify some aspects mentioned in the previous paragraph, as follows:

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

1 Peter 2: 9 ***But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;***
10 ***who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.***

Each of the figures represented above has characteristics that point to the functioning of individuals in a collective set, that is, by way of example:

- ⇒ 1) A Christian is an individual part that makes up a set of inhabitants of a city;
- ⇒ 2) A Christian is an individual part that makes up a group of fellow believers of the same family;
- ⇒ 3) A Christian is an individual part that makes up a group of people in which each one is called as sanctuary of God or dwelling place of God in the Spirit so that the Lord may manifest Himself to each of His children, but also so that the Lord may manifest Himself through the set of His children to the world.

Thus, as each figure referenced so far points to sets with different purposes, we can see that the same individual is also called to cooperate with different roles or functions regarding each set with which one is called to collaborate.

For example, the Christian's participation regarding the aspect of citizenship is focused on points more related to people's dwelling places, their production, their exchange of goods and services, the general security of the population, education in knowledge in general, and so on.

The Christian's participation regarding the family of God is more focused on points related to the family of faith in the Lord, the conduct of cooperation guided and carried out as an expression of love and brotherhood, as well as the maintenance of mutual respect between fellow believers, knowing that in the family of God, all are equally children of the unique and eternal Heavenly Father.

In turn, a Christian's participation in the aspect of being a dwelling place of God is directly associated with maintaining the close and active presence of God in one's heart so that the Lord may guide him or her in everything by His Spirit and so that in everything and everywhere one may express the testimony of the newness of life in Christ that is in one's heart.

As a new creature in Christ, a Christian has one's citizenship in Heaven, has the condition of a heavenly child of God, and is a dwelling place of God in the Spirit to also be a fellow worker through each of these aspects.

*Galatians 4: 26 ... **but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.***

*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, ...***

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

Even living on Earth, a Christian is considered a citizen of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city that is up there. Therefore, one is called to conduct one's life as a citizen who is aware that one's personal actions cooperate so that the spiritual city is known more and more and so that it is more active and representative wherever this Christian is or goes.

Because one is a heavenly citizen, the Christian does not need to stop being righteous in one's conduct if the natural city in which one lives has a high rate of evil activity, just as one does not need to agree with the unrighteous acts of earthly cities just because one lives in them or thinks one could benefit from unrighteousness.

Knowing that one always or everywhere represents the heavenly city, the Christian is called to maintain one's behavior according to the principles of the kingdom of God. Whether a Christian is living in a place or is passing through (traveling), one is called to always act under one's condition as a new creature in Christ Jesus, for in the Lord, one never needs to stop being "a fellow citizen with the saints."

In buying and selling, Christians are called to do it according to a fair scale. When one produces, one is called to do so with fear and reverence for the Lord, also aiming to benefit people. As for serving, the Christian is called to aim to do good in everything and towards everyone according to what the Lord instructs one to do, and not according to what the world dissociated from God seeks to demand of people.

By knowing that one is a cooperator of the Lord, a witness of God, and has one's citizenship in the heavenly kingdom, a Christian should not aim at the practice of evil, even aiming, in what concerns this Christian, the search for peace with all, as also exemplified below:

*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.***

*20 **Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."***

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

The heavenly city of God does not inhabit an immovable place, a physical territory, or in some natural aspect called by people special or holy, nor can it be imprisoned by people who want to establish it under earthly boundaries and human standards so that they can establish their earthly and evil powers over it. The heavenly city is spiritual, has no earthly limits, or is completely free. And as such, this city manifests itself like the wind that people do not know where it comes from and where it is going.

Given this, as a heavenly citizen, a Christian is called to be an extension of the heavenly city in everything one does. That is, as we mentioned earlier, the Christian is called to act as a child of light in everything.

Similarly, as a new creature, a Christian is also called to fully be a member of God's family, the chosen generation, the holy nation, and so on. And as such, a Christian is called everywhere to pray for one's fellow believers, be solicitous toward them, and love them with the brotherly love one has received from God in one's heart.

Nevertheless, **in the face of the calling to act in cooperation with the heavenly kingdom, according to the new creature in Christ Jesus, and towards one's fellow people, it is essential that a Christian maintains the correct perspective that one is not called to carry out one's cooperation by one's own effort and nor is the Christian called to cooperate with what is not pertinent to him or her to perform or which is exclusively up to the Lord to accomplish.**

When God calls people who have been constituted new creatures in Christ Jesus also to be cooperators, He does not call them to act alone or without the Lord's help in accomplishing what they are called to do, as if God were a "lord" who delegates activities to others and expects them, by themselves, to do what has been commissioned to them to do.

For this reason, in all the themes of the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life, we have repeatedly sought to highlight and reemphasize the following words of the Lord Jesus Christ addressed to His disciples:

John 15: 1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

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."

God sent His Son Jesus Christ to provide salvation for all human beings, but He also sent His Beloved Son as a living offering to dwell in the hearts of everyone who believes in Him. And this, to strengthen and sustain them in the new condition of life to which the new creature is called in Christ Jesus, including what concerns aspects of cooperation with a collectivity.

The life according to the new creature to which a Christian is called to live and walk does not resemble the model of the Law of Moses, under which people made efforts or strived in the flesh to fulfill the law to be then favored by God. In Christ Jesus, God takes the lead of His people or children and cooperates with them so that they may first be strengthened in Him so that in Him and through Him they may also cooperate with that for which they are called by the Lord to cooperate.

In one's condition as a new creature in the Lord, God does not call a Christian to carry out cooperation with Him and with one's fellow people dissociated from God's very favorable action in the life of this Christian.

In his various letters to Christians, Paul also reiterates what Christ taught him. Paul teaches that "without Christ, we can do nothing" and that it is in the Lord that we are strengthened for any action according to the heavenly will, as the examples below show us:

2 Corinthians 3: 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God.

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

6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Philippians 4: 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

In their eagerness to be cooperators, Christians need to be very careful not to think or act as if their simple willingness to cooperate is enough for them to actually be collaborators with God or their fellow men, for without acting in the Lord and according to the Lord's will, no Christian can act in a position of effective cooperation according to the heavenly will.

The foundation or support of a Christian so that one can cooperate appropriately according to the heavenly will, a foundation from which one should never depart, is that a Christian depends, first, on the cooperation of God towards one's life and the actions in which a Christian longs to be a cooperator.

As new creatures in Christ Jesus, God does not call Christians to be only fellow workers with Him and cooperators of their fellow men, but, first, to be fellow workers together with the Lord and what the Lord is doing for people.

The fundamental and greatest cooperation towards human beings, including the support for them to be cooperators of one another, has always come and will continue to come from the Father of Lights, the Heavenly Father from whom, through Christ Jesus, is granted every good and perfect gift with which a person may cooperate with the heavenly kingdom and one's fellow people.

Even when a person is subject to human weakness, one can act in great cooperation according to the heavenly will, for it is not according to human weakness or strength that people receive cooperation for the good of their lives and the good of their fellow men, but according to the power and goodness of God towards them and through them.

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 weaknesses), that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

When God calls those who have become constituted as new creatures in Christ also to be His fellow workers and cooperators with those whom the Lord instructs them to cooperate with, God does not call them to impose an arduous or heavy obligation on them but calls them to enjoy, also in this respect, the presence and goodness of the Lord in everything towards them.

C3. The Necessity of Appropriate Moderation in the Practice of Cooperation

Romans 12: 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

One aspect that is associated with the matter of a Christian's cooperation with God and with other people refers to the fact that the practice of this type of action always involves more than one cooperative agent, as we saw in the previous chapter when we considered the aspect that the appropriate cooperation of a Christian is always associated with one carrying it out under the cooperation of the Lord towards one's life.

And once there is an understanding that a Christian is called to perform all one's acts of cooperation in conjunction with the Lord and also with those whom the Lord appoints to act together, there is also a need for a sober understanding of the attributions of each party involved and the extent to which each party is called to act in the respective cooperation.

If some parties involved in a context of cooperation do not have a sober understanding of the part that is appropriate to them, the objective collaboration of those who are unaware of what is expected of them may turn out to be more harmful than beneficial.

By teaching Christians to position themselves appropriately also in the collective aspects of life, Paul instructs them to “think with moderation or sobriety” according to what God distributes to each person. And this is necessary because, as explained above by Paul, lack of sobriety, even as a result of zeal, but without understanding, can manifest itself not only in the sense of a Christian's negligence of what is expected of him or her, but also regarding what a Christian thinks beyond or above what one should consider about oneself.

When people do not think in moderation about their role in cooperation with God and other individuals, they may fall into positions where they seek to take on inappropriate roles and may go so far as even to seek to take on roles in relation to other people's lives that are exclusively God's and certainly do not contribute to beneficial cooperation.

Moreover, when people seek to assume the functions that exclusively belong to God, they oppose not only the people with whom they declare that they want to cooperate, but they also oppose God Himself by trying to deny Him the power, position, or function that exclusively belongs to the Lord, as is also mentioned in the following texts:

Titus 1: 16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

*2 Timothy 3: 5 ... **having a form of godliness but denying its power (or denying the Lord's power). And from such people turn away!***

When, for example, a person thinks that one can cooperate with other individuals and God by offering oneself to be a mediator for others in their relationship with the Lord, one thinks of oneself more than one should and is already far away from "thinking soberly or in moderation," for by doing so, this person puts oneself in direct opposition to what the Lord declares in the Scriptures on this point, as follows:

*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.***

*Matthew 23: 8 **"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi' (or guide, teacher, or leader); for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.***
*9 **Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.***

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

On the one hand, appropriate cooperation includes a willingness to help and act in favor of others. On the other hand, however, it also encompasses respecting what others have to do, at the risk of a person who claims to want to cooperate trying to place oneself as an obstacle to God's action towards one's fellow people, thus becoming an instrument that may cause harm and pain instead of effective cooperation.

When the Lord Jesus teaches His disciples to seek first the kingdom and righteousness of God, which are both made known in the Gospel of God, He does so because it is in the knowledge of the Heavenly Gospel that the knowledge of the glory of God and the glory of Christ is also included, which, in turn, shows us the glory of which are the various assignments that are exclusively Christ's in the cooperative action of Christians towards God and other individuals.

Without the knowledge of what the Heavenly Father has established exclusively for Himself, for His Son Jesus Christ, and for the Holy Spirit, it becomes highly complicated for a Christian to carry out the task of cooperation with God and other people, for without a sober knowledge of what the Lord Himself longs to accomplish in mutual cooperation, a person will also be devoid of a moderated thought regarding both what one can do in the Lord and what one cannot or should not try to accomplish.

As much as someone claims to be trying to act for good, when a person tries to do what belongs exclusively to be performed by God, one does not cooperate with the Lord. Instead, one tries to hinder God's work in the lives of the people to whom one offers one's pretended cooperation.

Before wanting to carry out works and cooperation, a Christian is called to personal and direct fellowship with the Lord to be taught and strengthened by Him, but also to be instructed about the Lord's functions towards one's life and the lives of other people.

In the theme Works, Labors, and Services, we saw that the first and principal work that God asks of a human being is that one trusts in Christ Jesus and that one keeps practicing one's first love, remembering that the first love of a Christian, as a new creature in Christ, is the Lord Himself who called him or her to salvation and to the condition of being a Christian.

Likewise, also in the theme Vocation, Calling, and Election, we addressed that a central aspect of eternal life and the sovereign calling of God in Christ Jesus is reconciliation with the Lord so that people can know Him through fellowship and so that, through this fellowship, the Lord may grant other instructions of life to a Christian according to the heavenly will, including those that apply to cooperation with God and other people.

Thus, it is in the knowledge of who one's God is and who one's Christ is that a Christian can find the provision for "moderate thinking" or that is according to what "is due to think." For this reason, we have repeatedly emphasized the need for a more profound knowledge of the Gospel, highlighting among its various aspects also the points addressed in the themes The Gospel of the Righteousness of God and The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ.

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.

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

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

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.

*2 Peter 1: 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.*

C4. The Just Cooperation of Each Part in the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12: 27 ***Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.***

Another way the Scriptures describe a Christian as an individual new creature also called to cooperate with a collective of which one has become a part refers to the mentions of individual members of the unique Body of Christ.

Considering, however, that we have already addressed this point at length in other topics referenced in previous chapters, we would just like to remember that the comparison of the Body of Christ to a physical or natural body is a figure of speech or a comparison of some similarities, but not an exact equality.

Similar to how each member has an individual function in a physical body, in the Body of Christ, there are also diverse gifts and callings to be performed by its members. However, the Body of Christ, of which a Christian is a part, is not a natural body but a spiritual one with characteristics and functions that are proper to its spiritual nature.

When a person, by the Spirit of the Lord, is born again with the kind of birth that makes one a new creature in Christ, one receives the individual condition of a child of God and a Christian, but one is also automatically inserted into the Spiritual Body of Christ made up of many members who are those people who also believed in Christ, received Him as the Lord of their lives, and who remain connected to Christ and Christ in them.

And considering that this point has also been widely discussed in other topics, in this chapter we will try to highlight just a little more about the role of mutual cooperation that God desires to occur in this spiritual body or also called the Body or the Church of Christ.

If we observe the cooperation that God longs to be carried out by the people who believe in Him also regarding the Body of Christ, we can observe that the same principles of sovereignty and participation of the Lord in this whole context of cooperation seen in the previous chapters are again expressed similarly in this new approach of the performance of individual members in the Body of Christ presented to us in the Scriptures, as likewise exposed in the following text:

*Ephesians 4: 15 ... **but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ,***
*16 **from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.***

So, in the text above, we can again see that **before the cooperation of the members of the Body of Christ with each other is narrated, it is described that each member or each Christian should, firstly, follow the truth and**

grow in Him who is the Truth and the Head of the entire Body of Christ, namely: the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

“From whom the whole body causes growth for the edifying of itself in love” is the most central matter of the text of Ephesians 4, verse 15, so that later the other aspects may be reached.

If a Christian does not remain united to the Head of the Body or does not follow the Truth, one also no longer remains in cooperation with the growth of the Body of Christ. That is, one does not remain in cooperation with the growth of other Christians or individual members that make up the Body of Christ.

Also in this example of the Body of Christ, a Christian's appropriate cooperation with God and other people finds again its foundation or support primarily in this Christian's relationship with one's Lord, having only Christ as the Head of one's life.

In other words, any really effective righteous cooperation and all effective growth of the Body of Christ, that is, of the Christians who compose it, are the result of God's love for them and manifested to them and in them through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The actions that do not come from the love of God are not accepted or do not remain as part of the Body of Christ, an aspect that a Christian should know regarding one's intention to cooperate with God and one's fellow believers in Christ.

Christians may cooperate by praying to God for their fellow believers, by sharing the Scriptures with others, or by sharing their testimonies of life in the Lord, but they themselves can never provide growth in the lives of other members of the Body of Christ since this function is exclusive of the Lord.

***1 Corinthians 3: 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.***

When Christians cease to think soberly and with moderation, thinking that they are the providers of the growth of their fellow believers, they begin to act in opposition to the Body of Christ or their fellow believers, for in addition to thinking more than what is convenient about themselves, they still propose to offer to others what they cannot indeed grant them.

There are many Christians who long to be very helpful to the lives of others and the groups they attend, but they themselves, many times, do not have the same willingness to become, in Christ, what the Lord expects them to be.

Given this, **cooperating with others may be wonderful and refers to a practice encouraged by the Scriptures. However, the greatest support a member may offer others occurs when one is first willing to be in Christ what the Lord wants him or her to be and when one is willing to do what Christ wants him or her to do.**

Just as a symbolic example, what good would it do for a leg of the body to want to help an arm to be strong if it, as a leg, is fragile or weak when the body needs its support?

The just or fair cooperation of a member of the Body of Christ begins when one oneself, in the first place, does in one's life what the Lord, the Head, expects of him or her, remembering that to know what the Lord expects, one needs to have fellowship with the Lord and consult the Head of the Body about the function or cooperation that is expected of him or her.

Thus, the first “right or fair cooperation” expected of every person who is already a new creature in Christ, and therefore a Christian and a member of the Body of Christ, is that one first grows up in Christ Jesus and that one keeps oneself continually united to the "Head" of the body and obedient to the One who alone is the Head of His whole body or church.

The best cooperation that a Christian can give to the Body of Christ, that is, to the Lord and other Christians, is oneself, first of all, to be a Christian established in Christ, for without Christ, one can do nothing to bear fruit according to the will of God and for the good of the Body of Christ.

A member of the body that lives and walks guided by commands that do not come from the “Head” will not walk in coordination with the rest of the body that follows the “Head.” And this is also why every Christian should have one's relationship established with Christ for one's own good and for the good of the Body of Christ as a whole.

In many cases, helping others according to a Christian's own understanding and not according to Christ may seem to be so much easier than going personally and directly before Christ to be instructed by Him. However, the help offered to others, without a person first being taught by Christ according to the truth that is in God, many times leads to aggravating situations instead of cooperating so that a correct solution according to the will of the Lord is found.

The attempt to help other people or cooperate with them cannot compensate for a person's lack of permanence in Christ, nor does it serve as a palliative for this, for dissociated from Christ, a person is also dissociated from love since God is love. And, in turn, without love, a person's work is also devoid of benefit to him or her.

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

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

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

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

A member of the Body of Christ who does not “follow the truth in love,” no matter how much one strives to “help” others, does not actually grow personally and does not effectively help the Body of Christ, for one’s positioning of life dissociated from the will of God ends up being more a burden for the Body of Christ instead of a true “help.”

If a Christian dissociated from abiding in Christ and Christ in one’s heart cannot do anything according to God’s will and love, the acts one does dissociated from Christ are also not for the benefit of the Body of Christ. On the contrary, one’s acts are inclinations to the flesh that may reflect pain or unnecessary burdens on the Body of Christ.

So, if a Christian lines up with Christ and does His will, one is doing one’s righteous cooperation with the Body of Christ. If, however, one does not align with Christ, one’s misalignment no longer cooperates with oneself and the Body of Christ.

Therefore, **true love and a true positioning of cooperation with the Body of Christ are manifested in the life of a Christian when one voluntarily follows God’s instructions for one’s life**, as we can also see in the following text:

- 1 John 5: 1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.*
- 2 **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.***
- 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*
- 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.*
- 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*
-

In yet other words, when, then, does a Christian manifest one’s love for other Christians or the whole Body of Christ?

A Christian manifests one’s love for the Body of Christ when one abides in Christ, the Head, and when one abides in living and walking according to the will of the Heavenly Father.

Thus, if a Christian, even with great zeal, seeks to cooperate with the Body of Christ, that is, with Christ and with other Christians, but one oneself is not willing in one’s life to be instructed by Christ or to follow Christ’s instructions, one is not meeting the basic and essential requirements of what is righteous or true cooperation with the Body of Christ.

As a complementary observation, we reiterate here once again, as we have done in the various themes of the Systemic Teaching about Christian Life, that the commandments of God for the new creature are according to the living instructions of God for each person and in conformity with the most diverse aspects of the Gospel of Christ or the New Covenant, and not according to the commandments of the Law of Moses or the Old Covenant.

Furthermore, God established that His Eternal purpose is to converge everything to Christ Jesus. And for this reason, if someone acts dissociated from Christ, one is also not working in cooperation with the eternal purpose of God and for the good of those

who already belong to the Lord, no matter how much one offers them a variety of supposed “helps.”

The Lord Jesus Christ has declared that He will build up His own Church or Body of individual members who have come to believe in Him. And when someone seeks to edify oneself or others without going through the “Sheep Door” or the One Shepherd of the Heavenly Flock, that is, through the Lord Jesus Christ, one is opposing the way the Lord Jesus Himself established to grant growth to those who believe in Him.

Given this, when Christians run after other people to receive from them what they should receive directly from the Head of their lives or when people are willing to be the supposed “heads” of Christians, they are not cooperating with Christ, but rather are trying to divide what cannot be split.

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

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

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

The Scriptures explicitly teach us that there is one Body of Christ, one Spirit, one Lord and Christ, and one Heavenly Father over all and in all. And those who want to introduce divisions and mediations between God and His children do not really cooperate with the Lord, but rather scatter and do not gather into one faith, hope, love, and Spirit.

Luke 11: 23 "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters."

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

2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,

3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

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.

1 Corinthians 8: 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),

6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

So, to walk worthy of the vocation and in love towards other Christians, that is, to walk in a way that effectively cooperates with them, is to walk in the certainty that there is one Spirit, one Lord, and one Father over all and in all, and to whom each one should voluntarily and in the first place submit oneself, so that each one may live and walk under the proper heavenly instruction.

The old divisions caused by commandments that produced discord and divisions were revoked from the resurrection of Christ from the dead so that each member of the Body of the Lord can have direct and personal access to Christ to be instructed by Him also on how to cooperate with God and with the other members of the Body of Christ. In Christ, everyone equally has access to the way, the truth, and the newness of life in the Lord since all were also bought and redeemed by the same and only blood of the Perfect Lamb coming from God for the salvation of human beings.

The Lord Jesus Christ is God's perfect and complete provision so that a person, through faith in the Lord, can individually receive the condition of a new creature in the Lord. However, the Lord Jesus Christ is also God's perfect and complete provision so that a person can receive the newness of life to cooperate appropriately with the Living Body of Christ constituted of many members, the New Heavenly Jerusalem, or the Lord's holy nation composed of those who have received the gift of eternal life according to heavenly grace.

Considering that Christ is all in every Christian, He is also all in His whole Spiritual or Heavenly Living Body.

*Colossians 3: 9 **Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,**
 10 **and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,**
 11 **where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.***

Finally, in this chapter, we reiterate that we do not intend to dwell further on this aspect of fair cooperation with the Body of Christ in the present theme since this subject is presented more widely in the themes The Fellowship of Christians in the World; Works, Labors, and Services; Vocation, Calling, and Election; The Gospel of the Grace of God; The Gospel of God's Righteousness; and the Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, especially in this last theme in the various chapters that address the condition of Christ as the Head of each member of His Body, as well as the entire collective expression of this same Body.

C5. Precautions Regarding Cooperation with Others

The very definition of the word *cooperation* or *the act of effectively doing one's part voluntarily*, by itself, already expresses an absence of imposition.

Thus, when God calls people into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ to grow in Him and be instructed by Him even in how they can cooperate with sobriety and moderation, the Lord does not do so to impose heavy obligations or burdens on them, but He does so to offer them the newness of life in Christ and the benefits associated with it also in terms of the benefits of mutual cooperation.

If something is imposed on someone to be done, this action no longer follows the concept of collaboration and free voluntariness.

On the other hand, the fact that cooperation is associated with a calling to be carried out according to voluntariness does not always imply that the volunteer can do whatever one wants to do to show oneself to be a cooperator or how one wants to carry out one's cooperation.

When a person places oneself as a cooperator with God, another individual, or a project, one needs to assess whether one really wants to cooperate in the ways established by those in charge of the projects.

If there is an imposition of works on a person, this context no longer represents a scenario of voluntariness but of obligation. On the other hand, even if there is a context of voluntariness, and unless one is called upon to cooperate by expressing one's opinion or point of view, when a volunteer wants to provide cooperation in one's own way or contrary to what is asked, the volunteer also may be wanting to impose oneself on the party with which one claims to want to cooperate.

Given this, we can see that God calls people and gives them a free option to cooperate with Him, but whenever the Lord does, He does it for people to walk according to the heavenly will. The calling to cooperation is not the proposition of an imposition, but neither is it a way in which a volunteer seeks to subordinate God to the supposed cooperators.

In the Scriptures, we can see several examples in which those who proposed to be fellow workers with God ended up trying to subject God to them or to appropriate what they were called to only cooperate with and not dominate.

Nevertheless, also concerning cooperation between people, the Lord warns Christians to be attentive and cautious, for as seen in the chapter on Generosity in the theme *The Christian and the Riches*, it is crucial for a Christian to know that in the world, there are many individuals who seek to use inappropriately and maliciously the kindness of their fellow men towards them.

When a person comes to know the greatness and nobility of being helpful and cooperative with God and one's fellow people, it is normal for this person to be surrounded by joy and a growing willingness to cooperate. However, joy and willingness to cooperate should never serve as instruments to nullify or overshadow caution, moderation, or sobriety regarding the prudent judgment of what one is called to collaborate with and how one should cooperate.

Thus, **the fact that God's calling to Christians for righteous cooperation is a calling to do so jointly with the Lord and according to His instruction and**

will is for the protection and benefit firstly of those who are willing to be fellow workers with God.

Through His Scriptures, the Lord exposes that in the present world, there are many people who adopt postures by which they put themselves in situations in which Christians should not cooperate with them according to the corrupted intents associated with these situations. Another reason why a Christian is always called to seek discernment in the Lord also regarding the limits and forms of cooperation with other individuals.

It is also worth emphasizing here what has already been explained in more detail in the theme Works, Labors, and Services, in which we approach several texts that show that a Christian is called to serve Christ and human beings according to Christ and His instructions, and not simply or directly to serve human beings according to their own wills or yearnings.

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

Therefore, also concerning the precautions for proper cooperation, a Christian is called to take the main precaution in this matter, which is that one remains in fellowship with one's Lord Jesus Christ to be instructed by Him both in acting in cooperation and in refraining from cooperation when it is not proper or when one's collaboration is being improperly required to cooperate with that which is not according to the righteousness of God.

And so as not to dwell too long on this point, given that this aspect is addressed in other topics referenced above, we would like to recall once again just one example set forth by the Lord Jesus Christ regarding caution about cooperating with others or what can also be called serving others, as follows:

Matthew 20: 25 ***But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.***
26 ***Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.***
27 ***And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave,***
28 ***just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."***

Mark 10: 42 ***But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.***
43 ***Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.***
44 ***And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all."***

When speaking to His disciples about joint cooperation or mutual service between them, the Lord Jesus Christ warns them that individuals may arise among them who will aim to exalt themselves and magnify themselves above others, who, because of this, should not be served, but placed to serve others and even treated as if they were servants of all to return to the proper principles of serving others.

In other words, **a Christian's proper cooperation with those who want to rise to be greater or first among fellow believers of faith in Christ is to reduce them to the service of all so that they may be taught to lay aside their lusts after greatness, haughtiness, exaltation, and dominion over their fellow men.**

In various parts of the Scriptures, the Lord teaches that people who fear and love Him should seek humility towards God and their fellow believers in the Lord, also showing by this that the desire of some to be the first or greatest among the brethren should not receive any support or encouragement. On the contrary, this attitude should be the subject of a practical rebuke, placing those who want to rise above others in a position of service to all others.

We have also previously seen the text in which the Lord Jesus Christ exhorts His disciples not to consider and nominate themselves as teachers, fathers, guides, or leaders among themselves since all are fellow believers or brethren in the Lord and children of the same Heavenly Father. For this reason, no one who wants to exalt oneself over other fellow believers should receive the cooperation of others in these attempts, as they are contrary to the express and direct instruction of Christ Jesus.

Similarly, those people who only want to be served and do not want to participate with fair cooperation must also be considered with particular caution, for in one way or another, according to the diversity of gifts, services, and operations that the Lord bestows on His children, all are called to have a share of contribution or cooperation with their fellow men.

To those who want to exalt themselves or to magnify themselves before their fellow believers, the Lord calls them to return to humility and mutual service, but for those who refrain from cooperating by omission, the Lord also calls them not to be negligent with the portion of cooperation that is appropriate to each individual belonging to the people who are called by the name of the Lord.

Romans 12: 16 **Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.**

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

Proverbs 18: 9 **He who is slothful in his work Is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.**

*Proverbs 6: 6 **Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise,**
 7 **Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler,**
 8 **Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest.***

Since God grants the Lord Jesus Christ to the heart of every person who believes in Him, every Christian is also called to feed directly on Christ, not expecting to receive spiritual food only through the cooperation of one's fellow believers towards him or her.

Furthermore, for a Christian not to be complacent with fellow believers who are not willing to seek the Lord personally or directly, one is instructed to be cautious in one's cooperation with one's brethren, for whoever feeds on Christ lives by the Lord, but whoever does not, cannot be strengthened only by the people of one's surroundings.

*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.
 58 **This is the bread which came down from heaven, not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.**"*

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Body of Christ belongs to the Head of this Body and from whom comes all provision of nutrition and growth for each of the members belonging to this same body. For this reason, no fellow believer can replace or mediate the relationship of another Christian with the Eternal Lord, for all propositions in this sense cannot fulfill what they offer and are, therefore, corrupted or false cooperations.

Thus, when the Lord Jesus Christ promised to quench the thirst and hunger of people's souls for the truth and for the life that comes from the heavenly kingdom, He did not tell them to seek the provision first in other fellow believers, but in Himself as the provision granted by the Heavenly Father to everyone who needs it.

*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.***

...
 48 **I am the bread of life.**

...
 50 **This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.**"

*John 7: 37 **On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.***

- 38 *He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*
- 39 *But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

A Christian is indeed called to mutual cooperation, but not to any cooperation or cooperation with evil. The Christian, therefore, is called to dispose oneself to the Lord fervently and serve whom the Lord instructs him or her to cooperate with, but not without being supported by the sobriety that is equally available to him or her in the Lord.

- 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.*
- ...
- 7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*

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.

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

C6. The New Creature, above all, Is Called to Render the Account of One's Cooperation to the One Who Grants Newness of Life in Him

A Christian takes an enormous beneficial step in one's life when one understands that it is primarily in Christ and according to His instructions that one is called to live and walk in the world, and not according to the precepts of human beings dissociated from fellowship with the Lord.

Similarly, when a Christian is called to serve other Christians and other human beings, one is called to put Christ and His instructions first in one's own life, but also regarding the opportunity one has to be a fellow worker with Christ for the good of people on Earth and the spreading of the Name of the Lord and His kingdom.

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

*Colossians 3: 24 ... **knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.***

On the other hand, or going further on the subject of cooperation, we can still note that although a Christian may already have reached the understanding that one serves Christ and that by Christ's instructions one can also come to cooperate with good to other people, one still may not be aware that not all the service one does to please Christ will automatically also please the human beings around him or her.

That is, not every service of cooperation that Christ asks of those who serve Him is necessarily pleasant to the people who somehow find themselves in the context of the life of the one who is willing to cooperate with the Lord.

For example, if a Christian in one's professional field does not comply with a request for a bribe that a provider or a client asks of him or her, one is serving Christ according to the Scriptures and acting appropriately towards one's provider or client. However, this may not initially please the provider or client, but it certainly pleases God.

Thus, by being ready to cooperate with God for the sake of the kingdom of God and what is beneficial for other people, a Christian, as a new creature in Christ, is also called to be aware of whom one aims to serve and please, as exemplified below by Paul in his conduct as a servant of Christ in the world:

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

As a new creature in Christ, it is Christ that a Christian is called to listen to, but it is also Christ that one is called to please and, above everything and everyone, to give account.

A Christian may be strongly invested in serving Christ, but one may also still be strongly imbued with wanting to please the human beings around him or her. However, the attempt to combine these two desires may cost limitations in meeting God's will and may try to subject the Christian to unnecessary bondage.

No Christian should deliberately seek to do acts aimed at displeasing those around him or her. However, if what the Lord asks the Christian to do implies this type of situation, the Christian is also called to know that one serves the Lord and is ultimately accountable to Him.

*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.***

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

- 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.***
- 3 **But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.***
- 4 **For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.***
- 5 **Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.***

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

For a Christian, it is crucial to observe that some people improperly call themselves claimants of accountability from Christians about what they practice or fail to practice. When faced with an individual who presents oneself as a servant of Christ and God, some people think they have a right to present a list of tasks that they understand Christians should do for them or in the world in general. They are people who have their own concepts of what the Christian life is supposed to be and think they can demand them from everyone who wants to be faithful to God.

Nevertheless, the Christian is called to be a fellow worker of Christ, a faithful steward of God, and continually accountable to God, not to certain individuals and groups of people who see themselves in a position of comparing the activities of others with their lists of what they think is due to those who aim to serve God.

Many people try to create and spread the idea that every Christian should behave as they think Christians should behave, thus trying to impose on Christians the thought that they should be zealous for receiving the acceptance and agreement of other people or the supposed evaluators of them, as if their approval accredited or discredited a person as being indeed a Christian.

There are people in the world who value the glory of men more than God's testimony to them and about them. And in this position, they submit themselves to no longer cooperating soberly or appropriately with the Lord, for they begin to be guided by the yearning for the glory of their fellow people instead of God's direction and approval for their lives, as mentioned in another example below:

*John 12: 42 **Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;**
43 **for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.***

A Christian should indeed be careful to conduct oneself as a child of light in the world and to conduct oneself before others with reverence to God and the fear of the Lord. However, this is highly different from being focused on seeking the approval of men and women for all the things one does, for by following God's instruction, many other people will reject this Christian just as they rejected the King and Eternal Lord Jesus Christ.

*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.***
21 ***But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me."***

When a Christian chooses to serve people by God's instruction, one remains free to be pleasing and obedient to the Lord, but not necessarily pleasing to those around this Christian.

Even those servants of God described in the Old Testament who were physically subject to other nations were never prevented by God from praying directly to the Lord. And when they did so with their hearts surrendered to God's will, their cries to the Lord were always answered. Whether they had a high or low social position, whether they were free or enslaved, everyone was always called to pray directly to God.

And how much more, then, would not a Christian be able to come personally, directly, and firstly to God after Christ has opened the new and living way into the “Heavenly Most Holy Place”?

Thus, when the Lord sends a Christian to serve or cooperate with other people, the Lord does not take away one's freedom to be directly in Him, to be able to receive approval or disapproval from the Lord in what one does, and to have the Lord always as one's first love and primary position of reverence.

As a new creature, in Christ Jesus, a Christian is called to cooperate in the newness of life, but also to report in everything first to the Lord who grants all newness of life to be used appropriately and according to the heavenly will.

Philippians 2: 12 **Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;**
13 **for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

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

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

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.**

C7. The Strength of the New Creature for Righteous Cooperation Is in the Heavenly Grace, the Love of God, and the Spirit of the Lord

The calling of God to human beings for eternal salvation in Christ Jesus is made to them because of God's righteousness, mercy, and grace. However, also the calling to cooperation with God and the ability to act in it are likewise granted by the Lord's grace, as is also witnessed in the following texts written by Peter and recorded in the Scriptures:

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

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

Thus, in addition to the fact that the calling to cooperation that God extends to a Christian as a new creature in Christ Jesus is not imposed but to be voluntarily received, this calling is also not for cooperation to be carried out according to the “old nature” or the “old man.” The call that the Lord makes to cooperation is according to His eternal grace, which strengthens His children in everything to be able to carry out the heavenly will and which, according to this same grace, grants them the necessary provisions and gifts to carry out the cooperation to which Christians are called in the Lord.

All of God's provision for the calling to cooperation that He extends to those who are new creatures in Him is granted as gifts along with the bestowal of new life in Christ Jesus and together with the granting of the so-called “gift of God,” which is the bestowal of the Holy Spirit into the heart of everyone who receives Christ Jesus as the Lord of one's life.

In Christ Jesus, God calls people to receive the condition of new creatures, but also to receive all the provision according to this new creature that is offered to all human beings by the eternal grace of God.

Therefore, what strengthens a Christian as a new creature in Christ Jesus is also new regarding what the Christian knew before receiving the newness of life from the Lord, for this strength is based on the grace, love, and Spirit of the Lord, and no longer on the strength of the flesh and the creation's own understanding about cooperation.

Just as the condition of a new creature in Christ Jesus is a provision from God and the heavenly kingdom, so is every provision for a Christian to be able to properly cooperate with the Lord and other people according to the heavenly will, as discussed more fully in the theme Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift, which even presents a particular emphasis on the granting of the Holy

Spirit to the hearts of those who by the Spirit of the Lord have been made alive in Christ Jesus.

Finally, to conclude this subject without returning to the various considerations already made previously and in other themes, we would like to list once again and recall some texts that speak of the generosity of God towards those who receive from Him the condition of a new creature in Christ Jesus so that they too may live and walk in the hope that they, in the Lord, may also have the privilege of being fellow workers of the God Himself who grants them redemption and life 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.

1 John 4: 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

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?"

Philippians 2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

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

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.

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.

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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