

**“Words taught by the Spirit”** (2Cor.2:13)  
An Email Ministry for the Glory of God

A series of messages on:  
**FAITH IN CHRIST and ITS FUNCTIONING**  
*“...The just shall live by faith.”* (Rom.1:17)

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**“Verily, verily, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.” (John 6:47)**

**Chapter 1 (043 – EN)**

**Faith, its meaning and importance**

**Introduction**

My intention is, God willing, to present you with a series of messages on the subject of faith in Christ. This series is focused on a **simple and practical exposition** of three verses:

- **“Verily, verily, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.” (John 6:47)**
- **“But if also I am poured out as a libation on the sacrifice and ministration of your faith, I rejoice, and rejoice in common with you all.” (Php.2:17)**
- **“Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?” (2Cor.13:5)**

With the first verse John 6:47 is examined the “ABC” of Christian faith and life, which though very simple it is, at the same time, **VERY IMPORTANT!** Very important, both for unbelievers and for believers. I cannot forget that before I was converted to Christ, I was living in atheism. I was not a simple unbeliever but, in reality and without my knowledge, an atheist. Since the moment I was converted to Christ I have not stopped speaking of Him who saved me. I do say that it is He Who saved me! I have not saved myself. I humbly glorify in Him! He saved me from my sin, from the power of sin and from my troubles; He healed me from my sickness but He also and mainly saved me from Hell where I was heading to in my sins and unbelief. My intention since then was, is, and will always be until the end of my days, here on this earth of pain, affliction and frustration, to honor and glorify:

- **Jesus Christ, WHO, by his redeeming death, became my personal Savior and the Lord of my life;**
- **God’s Word, the precious and worthy of all acceptance Bible, which is the unique book in the world that can truly enlighten the eyes of the soul and can ...make us wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus...” (2Tim.3:15-17). Someone said: **“Study the Bible to be wise, believe it to be safe; practice it to be holy.”****
- **The role and the help of the Holy Spirit for the regeneration, sanctification and service of the believer.**

With the second verse Philippians 2:17 and particularly the expression **“service of your faith”** or **“ministry for the faith”**, which are biblical terms corresponding to the Greek terms **“λειτουργία της πίστεως”**, (leitourgia tis pisteos) and which mean **“the functioning of faith”** are examined the most widespread erroneous teachings, interpretations and opinions. **IF faith does not function well**, there will be problems not only in the spiritual realm but also

in the secular life. It is not enough that man has faith in God but it is necessary that his faith functions well according to the spiritual provisions of the law of Christ contained in the Bible. The theme of faith is treated in a **practical way** referring to the application of Christian faith in the everyday life of the believer. Paul used this phrase because he wanted that the recipients of his letter might understand that he had sacrificed and he had been sacrificed in order to transmit to them spiritual principles and truths that could help them in the good functioning of their faith (Rom.15:29).

Finally, with the third verse we will examine the reasons why the apostle Paul was exhorting with 2 Corinthians 13:5 to do a detailed self examination. Paul was calling them (after he had previously reproved them for their gross sins, on account of which he was afraid that that he would **mourn** for many of them who had previously sinned but **had not repented**), to stop doubting about his apostolicity, to examine themselves if they live “in the faith” and if they had a good conduct in Christ. One of the reasons why Paul calls on them to examine themselves was because many of them had been deceived. He was afraid that those men had not only lost the correct doctrine of the Gospel but also their self control and that **they were in danger of perishing**. This fear had made him to begin a campaign of their restoration by his letters. It was for this reason that he exhorted them to examine themselves and prove their own selves. What should they do? Surely, **first**, to examine **what they believed in** and **second**, to find out whether their **conduct** was worthy of the Gospel of Christ! This exhortation is valid for each and every Christian. Let us examine, we ourselves, for our profit, because our self examination should be one of our continuous duties in Christ Jesus. Without a continuous self-examination and **our compliance** to the truths of the Gospel it is impossible to have a real spiritual progress.

Let us examine these verses in detail beginning with the first one:  
“**Verily, verily, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.**” (Joh.6:47)

### 1. “**VERILY, VERILY**”: a double affirmation

The verse we are going to study constitutes a **declaration** that Jesus made, but it is, at the same time, a glorious **promise**. He wanted to introduce this declaration and promise by a double affirmation, saying “**Verily, verily**” (AV)! A declaration that inspires assurance and conviction to all those that hear it. This repetition puts the emphasis on the declaration that follows it. If His words even without any affirmation could give us an absolute certainty, how much more could they make us believe them with two affirmations! What God says He does it. This is why we treat the future as present and the invisible as visible, because **“believing” is “seeing”** (Joh.11:40).

- The Lord Jesus Christ said: “**Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away**” (Mt.24:35; Mrk.13:31; Lu.21:33);
- The Holy Spirit said: “**God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?**” (Num.23:19);
- God the Father confirmed it by an oath: “**...God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath**” (Heb.6:13-17); and
- The Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said: “**... all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us**” (2Cor.1:20).

**Conclusion:** The Word of God is **immutable**; whence, we may place our full confidence in God! But, what these statements mean, exactly, to me and to you, personally?

## 2. “HE who believes in Him:...” all men are included

When Jesus says “**he who believes in Me,**” HE means that all men are included, you and me and everybody else: The man, the woman, the young, the old, the white, the black, the small or the great sinner, the poor, the rich, the educated, the illiterate, **provided** he:

## 3. “BELIEVES in HIM”: that is, in His Words and trusts His character.

Let us see what the words “BELIEVE IN HIM” do not mean and what they mean:

### 3a) What the words “BELIEVE IN HIM” do not mean:

#### “Believe” does not mean what I “see with my eyes”

What does the word “believe” mean? He who sees the forgiveness of his sins or his salvation? Absolutely not! “**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? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.**” (Rom.8:24-25). And elsewhere it is written that faith “...is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb.11:1). Faith makes invisible things visible, absent things and very far off to be very near to the soul! The apostle Paul says: “**for we walk by faith, not by sight**” (2Cor.5:7).

Someone sent me the following dialogue among a teacher and two school children:

<<<*The teacher was going to explain evolution theory to the children. The teacher asked a little boy: Tommy do you see the tree outside? TOMMY: Yes.*

*TEACHER: Tommy, do you see the grass outside? TOMMY: Yes.*

*TEACHER: Go outside and look up and see if you can see the sky. TOMMY: Okay. (He returned a few minutes later) Yes, I saw the sky.*

*TEACHER: Did you see God? TOMMY: No.*

*TEACHER: That’s my point. We can’t see God because he isn’t there. He doesn’t exist.*

*A little girl spoke up and wanted to ask the boy some questions. The teacher agreed and the little girl asked the boy: Tommy, do you see the tree outside? TOMMY: Yes.*

*LITTLE GIRL: Tommy do you see the grass outside? TOMMY: Yessssss (getting tired of the questions by this time).*

*LITTLE GIRL: Did you see the sky? TOMMY: Yessssss*

*LITTLE GIRL: Tommy, do you see the teacher? TOMMY: Yes*

*LITTLE GIRL: Do you see her brain? TOMMY: No.*

*LITTLE GIRL: Then according to what we were taught today in school, she must not have one!>>>*

#### “Believe” does not mean “feel”

What does the word “believe” mean? Does it mean that he **feels** the forgiveness of his sins and his salvation? Absolutely not! Feelings change as the weather. God exists whether I feel His existence or presence or not! God’s promises are valid whether I feel them or not. We simply accept them on the basis of God’s Word, which is faithful and worthy of all acceptance (1Tim.1:15). Faith built on emotion is resting on a very changeable foundation. Jesus died on the cross for my sins whether I feel it or not, believe it or not. The Holy Spirit lives in the believer whether he feels it or not. **Facts are not influenced by our feelings. If we sincerely repent and believe** that our sins are forgiven and we are saved, **then**, feelings of joy and peace etc., prevail in our heart and in our life!

We must, at this point, add that it is a great mistake to confuse faith in God with “**positive thinking**” or with an optimistic view or with a vague optimistic hope of events and circumstances of life when one’s life has nothing to do with God or when there is known sin

in his life. “Positive thinking” and vague hopes can save nobody from Hell! True faith is beyond feelings, circumstances and human logic (Joh.6:6).

### **“Believe” does not mean legalistic piety**

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Pharisees, was a devout man according to the Law of Moses but he had not had the experience of the new birth that could renew him by the Holy Spirit, justify him by God’s mercy and grace and render him heir of the hope of eternal life. We know “... **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.**” (Gal.2:16). No one can ‘buy’ “heaven” by his so-called good works because “... **all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.**” (Isa.64:6).

### **“Believe” does not mean “sing, dance and shout halleluiah and amen”**

Singing hymns, shouting “hallelujah” and “amen” and dancing dances or ballets before the Lord do not guarantee or prove that we worship the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth (Joh.4:23) No! True worship is to live in “fear and trembling”, in repentance, in purity, in gratitude, in reverence, in prayer, in meditation and in complete dependence on God **and most of all in obeying His Word!** A true Christian worships God whether there is Christian music or not; whether he is in church or not. He does not need to be taught how to worship the Lord because his sincere faith in God and the Holy Spirit abiding in him push him to a continuous obedience, to an endless worship and to a continuous fellowship with God and with his brethren! “...**You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,**’ and ‘**your neighbor as yourself.**” (Lu.10:27). Love God and not our own interests, this is true worship! “**If you love Me, keep My commandments.**” (Joh.14:15). This is true worship! “**Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**” (1Th.5:16-18). This is true worship! “**Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.**” (Heb.13:15-16). This is true worship! **To love God’s truth and the truth that concerns us above all other things! This is the believer’s true worship!**

### **3b) What the words “BELIEVE IN HIM” do mean:**

#### **The word “believe” means:**

Man has a confident assurance, that he has faith in God’s Word and that he trusts His **character**: His love, His justice, His holiness, His omniscience etc. He that considers all His statements and His promises entirely worthy to be received and solid to lean and rest upon them! Unbelief is a great sin as it considers God as a liar and that He does not love man! On the contrary, the true believer has an attitude of confidence towards God who has sent His Son Jesus Christ for his salvation and the Holy Spirit to illuminate and guide him, etc. A trust that implies the acceptance of Christ as Savior **AND** as the **Lord of his life**. A trust, which incites to obedience coming from a sincere love that leads to good works. The Word of God confirms what I have just told you:

- **“He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself: he that believes not God has made him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son.”** (1Joh.5:10)

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

**The word “believe” means to trust, to depend on, and to rely on God**

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ means that I accept the fact that I am a sinner, that as a sinner I am worthy of the sin penalty, and that Jesus Christ died on the cross in my stead, was buried, and arose again on the third day to pay the moral debt I owed. It means that I completely trust Christ to save me and keep me, and that I will depend on Him alone. The Holy Spirit is my Helper in everything in order to live a holy life and to serve the Lord and His plans.

Salvation is not given as a reward for the faith that has been applied. Faith is the instrument by which man receives his salvation and appropriates all that salvation contains. Unbelief means rejection and faith means acceptance. Faith is, therefore, a conductor. Grace the source. Faith's function can be compared with the function of eyes which brings things near that are far, with the function of the hand that touches and takes, with the wings of a bird and the sails of a boat. It is the key that opens the door. Our faith is focused, therefore, on the Father God of the Holy Scriptures and on the Lord Jesus Christ, whom He sent (Joh.1:12; 5:49; 6:29; 14:1). Faith, consequently, admits whatever Jesus said about Himself, accepts whatever He said that He will do and finally waits for the accomplishment of God's promises. **Consequently: Faith does not save but it is God who saves through faith in HIM!** Then, if faith does not save but you are saved through it, you should not lift it more than the source of all blessings, which is God. The same thing, mutatis mutandis, holds good about prayer. We are called to have our eyes fixed on Jesus and not on our own faith. We can do all things through faith but our strength is not in our prayer but on God on whom our faith rests. It is worth noting what the Bible says, that **“If we believe not, yet he stays faithful: he cannot deny himself.”** This means that even if our faith is weak, God is not hindered to bless us in whatever situation we are, **provided we are sincere towards God and towards ourselves.**

And something else: Faith on an error does not save you but faith on Jesus Christ saves you. Put your faith on a lie and you will be imprisoned in it. Put your faith on a truth and you will be set free. What counts is the object of faith. Moody used to say: *“Trust yourself and you are doomed to disappointment. Trust your friends and they will die or they will abandon you. Trust your money and it may be removed from you. Trust your good fame and a wicked tongue will blow it up. But trust your God and you will never be ashamed neither now nor in eternity.”*

On the other hand, let us not forget that there are **different kinds of faith:**

- **The negative faith or the faith of demons**, which believe but tremble before God's holiness (Mat.8:29 and Jas.2:19).
- **The theoretical or dead or idle or hereditary faith**, that have those who are theoretically convinced about the Gospel truths, without, however being so strongly convinced that their will may be pushed to take decisions and act accordingly. Such men know and accept everything by logic, but in order not to lose the thing that they love, they do not let their heart to speak up and bring them to the light of the Gospel's saving power.
- **The temporary faith**, about which our Lord spoke concerning the second case of the parable of the Sower.

- Finally, **the saving or living faith**, which exerts its power on the sinner, which convinces him for the love of God in Jesus Christ, so that he is reconciled with God. The result is that his sins are forgiven; his heart is purified and overcomes the world and its lusts. This faith is manifest with a holy life and with good works. This kind of faith adopts all God's promises and waits for them patiently; also, in state of peace of mind, man accepts the will of God, which might be either according to His perfect will or according to His permissive will irrespective of the difficult circumstances of life.

### **The word "believe" means also "to repent"**

In John's Gospel as well as in his epistles the word repentance does not exist. Yet, it is included in faith. It is contained in the notion of faith, because faith contains it. A faith worthy of its name obliges the one that has it to a confession of his sins and to a complete abandonment of them... as well as to an absolute surrender to God and to His will... It suffices to read the book of Acts of the Apostles, the epistle of James or the first epistle of John to understand that Biblical faith does not exist without repentance, without the spirit of **mourning** for one's sins. To make this truth more explicit, I will mention 1Jo.1:9 that says: **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

We will come back to this point later and in a, relatively, detailed way.

### **The word "believe" means to walk by God's statements**

Man usually walks or lives by sight, that is to say, by the things he sees and feels. He bases the decisions of his life on his circumstances, on his five senses and on his ambitions and objectives. On the contrary, true believers walk or live their lives on the basis of a sixth sense, granted to them by the Holy Spirit, which is called "faith" and by which they can 'feel' God's character: Faith in God's Word, in God's statements and promises... He applies in his life a new spiritual logic. To walk by faith is also to wage a continuous spiritual war throughout his life by faith. This war involves many battles: **"And that you should visit him every morning, and try him every moment?"** (Job 7:18). This is why we must **fight by faith, contend for the faith, and preserve the faith**, which was delivered to us... (Jude 1:3).

Conclusion: **"...The just shall live by his faith"** (Hab.2:4). The true believer lives and faces all his problems by saying: **"Thus saith the Lord..."** This is the way the believer faces his external problems as well as his anxieties, cares, fears etc. This is the only way to live. When man honors God by faith, God honors his faith and rewards him (Heb.11:6).

God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that we may be able to bear it (1Cor.10:13). This encouraging promise also means that when we fall into diverse temptations and testings, if we sin it is our responsibility. We cannot blame God! The temptations that God permits in our life are never beyond our ability. When we believers are in temptations and testing, we should have in mind to pray, and apply something that someone said that **"When we pray, we talk to God; when we read and meditate on His Holy Word, the Bible, God talks to us; when we obey we give our testimony; and when we witness we talk for God!"** Very effective is this way of resistance!

The Bible says: **"...do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."** (Heb.6:12). What a basic text! When one has faith, I mean true faith, confidence and assurance, the same has endurance and **can patiently wait for God's promises to be accomplished!** He sees the invisible and waits for Him to come and keep His promises. He knows that He is faithful and that **He will keep His word!** Adversities and

vicissitudes do not affect him! Faith produces peace, patience (Rom.5:1-3) and endurance. Lack of faith makes people impatient... Faith can function provided that our conscience does not condemn us and that we forgive from all our heart all those that have offended us!!! Sin and faith are incompatible. They cannot coexist. **Faith cannot survive without repentance.**

**Conclusion:** Faith is the means by which we receive our forgiveness, our salvation as well as God's promises in our life. I would like, without entering into detailed commentaries, to refer to two passages of the NT that I consider of great importance:

- **“...Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: “Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; **Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.**” (Rom.4:1-8). When God sees the heart of a believer turn toward Christ in **sincere faith**, He forgives his sins, credits his faith as righteousness and accepts him as His child.**
- And elsewhere it is written: **“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, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been **justified by His grace** we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”** (Tit.3:5-7).

May God bless us **with a sincere faith.**

## Chapter 2 (044 – EN)

### Faith, its meaning and importance

#### Introduction

We examined in the first part (1a) briefly what, actually the words “BELIEVES IN HIM”, do not mean and what they mean. We will now examine in part 1b the characteristics of faith and the part of God and the part of man in man’s salvation.

#### Characteristics of faith

I would like to refer to certain basic points which constitute integral part of this series of studies concerning faith in Christ:

#### The importance of faith

Its great importance lies in the fact that faith blots out the injustice that man committed or continues to do against God dishonoring Him by unbelief; unbelief offends God both as far as His love or his good intentions towards man are concerned. Unbelief offends, insults and, as a consequence, commits an injustice. This is the reason why God counts man’s faith in Him as justice... Faith touches God and, as a result, the sources of His power. Unbelief has separated man from God and faith unites him again with God. I remember the case of a young lady who was telling me a lot of lies because she was afraid that I would reject her if she would tell me the truth and I would stop supporting her. I knew that she was lying to me and cheating me; I was sorry and troubled because she did not trust me; I was almost decided to stop helping her. When she finally was obliged to tell the truth, our spirits were at peace and our spiritual communion was re-established. The confession of her sin had quite the opposite result: When the young lady found out that I forgave her sin, that she was not rejected by me and that she would continue to be supported by me, she was deeply humbled before the Lord and I was honored in her eyes! Her unbelief dishonored me and her belief honored me... The problem, however, was that there was not yet proof of her producing fruits of repentance! This is just a poor example in the context of human relations.

The unbeliever in order to be saved must ask for the forgiveness of his sins, believe that his sins are forgiven and take the decision to follow Christ sincerely and wholeheartedly, that is **as the Lord of his life**. Certain people try to believe without repentance: It is in vain! **Faith is the mother of repentance and of obedience**. Along with this crediting of faith as righteousness, God also gives on the basis of Christ’s atoning – by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost – mercy, grace for salvation, for obedience and for sanctification (Tit.3:5-7). **Nothing, absolutely nothing, but Christ’s sacrifice on the cross at Calvary can constitute the ground for justification and reconciliation of man with God.**

#### Difference between the verbs “believe” and “trust”

A man of God said – while he was preaching – that he was trying hard to find a promise of God to “**believe**”, lean upon it for the healing of his wife who was seriously ill. Finally, as he did not manage to find the promise he was looking for, he decided to “**trust**” God’s character: His love, His plans, His faithfulness, His providence etc.! He said in the depth of his soul: *“The Lord Jesus loves my wife more than I do and He will do for her what is best for her. Then, let His will be done”*. His soul retrieved his peace... It is difficult to distinguish the difference between these two terms, because one cannot trust somebody if he has not faith in his words. However, we cannot exclude the case when you can be sure that someone tells the

truth but you cannot trust his character, that is to say, that you have to do with a person of love, of good will, of faithfulness etc.... It is not, however, the case with our omnipotent God who is a God of love, of wisdom etc...

Numerous are the cases in which our faith cannot find a specific promise to lean on either to rejoice in the hope of our deliverance or in order to be patient in tribulations (Rom.12:2). Consequently, many are the cases in which our faith can be tested: Such might be, for example, a serious disease, the lack of sympathy from the part of men, poverty, discouraging conditions, mockers, divine delays, decrease of strength, efforts that appear to be useless etc., etc. Our soul may pass from darkness and difficult testing that God permits **though we fear and respect Him**. The prophet Isaiah said: **“Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay on his God.”** (Isa.50:10). The only thing we can do is **to trust** in God’s everlasting love (Jer.31:3), His plans of peace aiming at our good (2Thes.1:11 and Jer.29:11) and find rest and peace. An excellent example of trusting in God is Job’s case who declared: **“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...”** (Job 13:15).

### **Repentance and good works form integral part of faith**

Faith is an activity of the whole being, bringing into movement the intellect, the emotions and the will. Anything less than this cannot be considered as Biblical faith. Saving faith is that act of the soul by which a man lays hold on Christ and has peace with God. By repentance man detests himself; by faith he leaves himself and seizes the grace of God. What saves is faith, but faith which saves is always combined with repentance. The faith which saves produces obedience and **creates a new “way of living”**. **Faith is the mother of obedience**. **Faith and works** are like the light and the heat of a candle; they cannot be separated. Faith justifies the person and works prove his faith. Unfruitful faith is as useless as useless words. **All the promises of the Bible depend on the fear of God, on faith in God and on repentance**. The faith which saves is a faith which leads to repentance. Repentance and faith are twins. The faith which saves is interwoven with repentance and repentance is interwoven with faith. The faith which saves is a living faith in an alive Savior. **The faith which does not love Jesus-Christ sincerely and does not obey Him, which does not show true interest for the work of the kingdom of God and which does not resist actively against sin cannot qualify as true faith**. He who wants to be saved must stick to and follow Jesus as the **Lord, the Great Boss of his life**. **True faith produces commitment and dedication!**

Let my insistence on this point be excused. When man is saved and is regenerated, it is **IMPOSSIBLE** to remain as he was! The Holy Spirit that regenerates him changes radically his intentions and desires of his heart, **in the twinkling of an eye** and sets him free **from the love of sin, because the Holy Spirit writes His laws in man’s heart**. He or she who thinks that has been saved but continues to be slave to sin, he or she **is in error and in self-deception...** He or she has never truly believed. His/her faith is but theoretical. We have simply to do with a religious person! True faith is never unfruitful but it is exercised in love and good works. Justification, regeneration and sanctification are inseparable qualities, just as light and heat from the rays of sun. Where there are no good works, there is no true genuine faith and, as a consequence, neither justification nor salvation. Faith is manifested by obedience in whatever God commands.

### **Faith and doubts are incompatible**

True faith should not be “infected” by doubts, despair and hesitations. True faith has the strong conviction, the assurance and the boldness that God **IS** and that **HE HEARS** and

**GRANTS** whatever we ask Him, provided it is according to His will, rewarding us for our faith in Him: It is written:

- “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them (*‘you have received them’*), and you will have them.” (Mrk.11:24)
- “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.....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.” (Heb.11:1-6).
- “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (Jas.1.6-8)

So, faith, as a hand, receives – if of course he asks with faith, without hesitating – God’s promises. So, he honors God who is love and establishes an intimate communion with Him. But what does it receive? Surely God’s mercy, grace and promises. It is good, therefore, to remember the phone number that God has put at our disposal which functions 7/7 and 24/24: Mark 11:24: “Therefore I say to you, **What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.**” But, let us not be deceived: God loves also the unworthy sinner and even his enemies (Rom.5:6-10); and let us never forget that Jesus Christ responds favorably to the man who humbly and sincerely goes to Him to confess his lack of faith: “...**I believe, help mine unbelief.**” (Mark 9:24 - DRB). **The problem is that in spite of His love for them, their sin and their enmity do not give Him the possibility to save them and have communion or fellowship with them!** Has it ever happened to you to love someone, to want to show him/her your loving care and be hindered on account of his/her character or attitude?

### **All spiritual things are under condition**

Our salvation and God’s promises are therein included! The ‘sine qua non’ condition is our sincere faith in Jesus Christ! This is the reason that more than 1.500 “IFs” exist in the Bible. ***All is under condition! The only thing that is unconditional is God’s love towards us. HE loves us as we are and in spite of what we are.*** If a man lives in incredulity, he dishonors Him and commits an injustice against Him; on the contrary, by faith he honors Him and does justice towards him...**Faith or better trust in God is an act of justice** because faith in His words and trust in His character honor God that **God is just and true**. **Repentance is an act of justice because it recognizes that God is just and that man is sinful and guilty.** When I humbly say to God: “Yes, Lord, I have sinned, what I did was not just etc.”, then I do an act of justice. ***God on the basis of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ considers me righteous and justifies me! No Church and no good work can justify and save me!***

### **By faith man becomes complete in Jesus Christ**

The first thing that man receives when he repents and believes in Jesus Christ is the **remission** of his sins and his **reconciliation** with God the Father. The fruit of having made justice towards God, **by trusting God**, is that he is **justified** by God through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and has **peace** with God (Rom.5:1-2). The grace that he receives **restores** his relation with God. Man has fallen by incredulity but by faith he is rehabilitated. God imputes his faith in Him as justice. God covers him with **privileges** that even the angels desire to look into... (1Pet.1:12). HE makes him **partaker of the divine nature** (2Pet.1:4) and He makes him **complete** in Christ (2Col.2:10). Henceforth – clothed with the power of the **Holy Spirit** (Eph.3:16) – he is called to walk before Him worthy of the vocation with which he is called (Eph.4:1). The true believer sticks to and follows Jesus Christ **as the Lord of his life**. **True faith produces consecration and commitment!**

### 3d) *God's part in salvation and man's part in salvation*

We must, at this point, notice the following truths:

- No man can forgive his own sins, regenerate his own heart and declare himself justified and cleansed concerning his sin before God. Only Jesus Christ can do it for man: **He, Jesus Christ, could die for us but He cannot repent and believe for our account!** Adultery or lying or anger or murder or hatred or love of money, for example, is an act of man for which he must accept full responsibility. *If we TRULY repent and believe we will not continue practicing our sins:* **“For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world works death.”** (2Cor.7:10)
- It is true that faith and repentance are given by God under certain conditions (Ac.11:18; Lu.24:25; Ac.16:14), **BUT** whether we shall act upon that faith and repentance or not depends completely on us. Many so-called Christians ‘believe’ without having first repented and having taken a hostile position against sin. They try to have faith without having the intention to bring their lives into moral conformity with the will of God.
- God cannot appropriate salvation for us. **Only man can appropriate by faith God's offered salvation.**

May God's Spirit open our spirit to understand, with our heart, these great truths of the Gospel!

## Chapter 3 (045 – EN)

### Definitions. He who believes in Him has everlasting life

#### Introduction

With part 1c we will close the exposition of verse John 6:47 by stressing the beneficial results of faith in Christ for now and eternity. Before we examine the rest of this verse, I deem it necessary to insert some basic notions and truths:

#### 3e) *The meaning of the terms of “justice”, “mercy” and “grace”*

**We must understand the meaning of the terms of “justice”, “mercy” and “grace”:**

- If God had applied **justice** to us we would have gotten what we deserved: Hell! And what we deserved was to **die on a cross**. Jesus died on the cross in our place!
- God, however, in His **mercy** has not given us what we deserved that is the cross and eternal death. On the contrary, Jesus has **propitiated** through His blood our sins and has cast them into the depths of the sea (Mic.7:19). We received the remission of our sins! (Ezr.9:13 and Ps.103:10-11).
- He has, in His **grace**, justified us and has given us a lot of **blessings** that **we did not deserve**. His grace is immeasurable!  
So, He has not only **REMOVED** our sins but has also **ADDED** a lot of virtues and blessings. Blessings upon blessings!

#### God’s Simple Plan of Salvation

Unfortunately, people do not understand that their joy or sorrow, happiness or misery for now and for all eternity depends upon their choices! God has, however, fixed a plan for our salvation, different from that of human mentality!

If we depend on our church affiliation to get saved from Hell, we are mistaken. Also, we are mistaken if we rely on how good we are and that because of our goodness we will be with God when we die! The Bible is clear on the point of salvation: In order to be saved from Hell, we must be born again (Joh.3:7). We cannot be born again by the Spirit unless we realize that we are sinners (Rom.3:23). As sinners we are condemned to death, for the wages of sin is death but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom.6:23). This includes eternal separation from God in Hell. Hell is not a falsehood of someone’s imagination or just a figurative term. Hell is very real.

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this is the judgment (Heb.9:27). **But God loved man so much that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to bear your sin and my sin and die in our place.** He came because of our sin, He died to pay our debt and He arose to keep us saved eternally. For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2Cor.5:21). Jesus had to shed His blood and die because without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb.9:22). We must accept that Jesus Christ has already paid our sin debt. “... **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**” (Rom.5:8). He became our substitute. We must accept by faith what Jesus Christ did for us. “**He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**” (Joh.3:36) This is the reason why God calls us to repent and thank Him for His unequalled gift (Ac.17:30).

Those who received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name (Joh.1:12). Therefore “...**whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.**” (Rom.10:13). If we believe on Him as our crucified, buried, and

risen Savior, we receive forgiveness for all of our sins and eternal salvation by faith. It is written: **“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”** (Mrk.8:36). If we lose our soul, we miss Heaven and lose all. **God can save us this very moment.**

### **The sinner’s prayer**

The moment one receives Jesus, God promises that he is not any more under condemnation but he has everlasting life and that he will never perish in Hell. **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”** (Joh.5:24).

Those who really believe should pray and say: *“Oh God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus was my substitute when He died on the Cross. I believe that His shed blood, His death, His burial, and His resurrection were for me. I now receive Him as my Savior and Lord of my life. I thank You for the forgiveness of my sins, the gift of salvation and everlasting life. I know that I am a sinner; if I died now in my sin, I would go to Hell. Right now, by faith, I trust You as my personal Savior and my only hope for Heaven. Thank you for dying on the cross for me and for saving me from eternity in Hell. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

If man believes he will be saved. No church, no good work can save him. Let us remember that it is God that does the saving. Those who are saved should not forget or neglect to witness for Him. **“Be not you therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner...”** And, **“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”** (Mt.10:32) And they should not forget that **“...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.”** (2Cor.5:10).

### **4. “...he who believes IN HIM”: not in angels or icons or departed saints etc. Just as man’s son is a man so God’s Son is a God.**

#### **God’s Son is the creator of all things.**

- **“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”** (Joh.1:3)
- **“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”** (1Cor.8:6)
- **“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:”** (Eph.3:9)
- **“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:”** (Col.1:16)
- **“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”** (Heb.1:1)

#### **He was loved by the Father before the foundation of the world**

- **“And now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was.”** (Joh.17:5)

- “Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me: for you loved me before the foundation of the world.” (Joh.17:24)
- “For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who has built the house has more honor than the house.” (Heb.3:3)

So, the expression “in Him” means that we put all our trust in Him exclusively for our salvation. Neither in angels, nor in icons nor in dead saints’ intercessions nor in their dry bones and skulls, nor in any human being, nor in the visible church, nor in a priest or pastor, nor in any religious movement but only in Him and directly in Him (John ch.14 and 16). In Him who is the WORD, God’s only begotten Son, who has been made flesh and has been delivered for our offences and Who has been raised from the dead for our justification. He who wanted “...through death ...destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb.2:14-15). He who is above angels and archangels (Heb.1:4-14) who loved us with an eternal love and who gave himself as an expiatory victim to transfer us out of darkness into the marvelous light of His kingdom (1Pe.2:9). He who is called “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”, (Tit.2:13) “...who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev.1:8) and Who will gather together all that belong to Him. Yes, all those who have made a “...covenant with Him by sacrifice.” (Ps.50:5).

Traditions and rituals have annulled the Word of God. Mariolatry has, in reality, replaced the worship of Christ who is the only mediator between God and men. Priests and people pray Mary, the mother of Jesus, to save them in their dangers, problems and difficulties. Is Jesus unable to save them? Are there two main Saviors, Jesus and Mary, His Mother? Are there also many other “little” saviors and mediators, the departed saints, who are omnipresent (!!!) and able to protect their cities, participate in their wars, hear them and save them from their dangers, problems and difficulties either through icons or directly? Lord, have pity on us!

Let us examine now the expression:

## 5. “HAS ETERNAL LIFE”

### **No condemnation provided we walk in the Spirit**

The phrase “has eternal life” or blessed “endless life” means that he who believes already HAS eternal life. Yes, yes, yes, he HAS it even from now. He has it by faith and in hope; he has it as a pledge of the Spirit of grace; he already has a before-taste of eternal life in his soul, and he will one day certainly enjoy it. He will not have it merely after death, because he already “...has passed from death into life” (Joh.5:24). And elsewhere God’s Word says: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...” (Rom.8:1). The assurance of salvation is not based on feelings but on facts concerning the life and the death of Jesus Christ. These facts secure him the certainty of a new life, of a new relation with his God and Savior. If Jesus’ death is indisputable, it is equally indisputable that the true believer, I repeat, the true believer, has already eternal life. To support what I have just said, I would like to mention two verses: First, Rom.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.”, and second Joh.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.” (Joh.3:16) Again and again we see one and only one possibility to be saved: to believe sincerely and wholeheartedly in Him!

The same verse says to us that he who does not believe in Christ **does not have eternal life**. His life finishes here; after that it is the judgment; and after that it is the eternal damnation. It is a hard word but at the same time it is a warning of love from God... **“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God stays on him.”** (Joh.3:36).

### **Love for the truth; love for sincerity**

The only condition is that we are **sincere** towards Christ, our Lord. We must not, however, let the truth slip out of our mind that Christ cannot become our Savior unless we have taken the decision to accept Him also as **the Lord of our life**. It is He who decides and it is we that must obey in sincerity and in good will! **Obey in what? Obey in works of the law? No, but obey by repenting, by believing all God’s words and promises and by trusting God’s character!** Not in words but in acts and in truth. Our society might not give a medal on integrity, but God does. We must **admit the truth in our heart in all we are and do**: For example: *« Yes, Lord, I sinned, what I did was unjust, what I said was an exaggeration, it was a lie, it was a subterfuge... Yes, Lord, I reacted in an angry and brutal way... Yes, Lord, my attitude was not honest... My attitude was selfish... Yes, Lord, what I feel is a feeling of bitterness, of revenge...etc. »* (Ps.15:2). *Change me, Lord, according to your Word.*

I would like to finish this point by referring to a great and glorious truth: The blessing on the life of the man is closely related to the fact that he fears the Lord, that he loves the truth and that he loves to do all that is good and right. His love: **“Rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth (1Cor.13:6).** On the contrary, **“... for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”** (2Thes.2:11-12)

## **6. CONCLUSION**

If true faith is all that man needs to have eternal life, spiritual growth, power to resist sin and Satan etc, etc – without being obliged to add something to it – ; if faith is the key to open the door to Heaven, then, you can understand how fundamental is its importance! We must thus pay great attention... Consequently, let us apply accurately the exhortation of the Word of God: **“Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?”** (2Cor.13: 5)

Let me repeat what I said in my previous message: When man is saved and is regenerated, it is **IMPOSSIBLE** to remain as he was! The Holy Spirit that regenerates him changes radically his intentions and desires of his heart, **in the twinkling of an eye** and sets him free **from the love of sin, because the Holy Spirit writes His laws in man’s heart**. He or she who thinks that has been saved but continues to be slave to sin, he or she **is in error and in self-deception...** He or she has never truly believed. His/her faith is but theoretical. True faith is never unfruitful but it is exercised in love and good works. Justification, regeneration and sanctification are inseparable qualities, just as light and heat from sun’s rays. Where there are no good works, there is no true genuine faith, and as a consequence, neither justification nor salvation. Faith is manifested by obedience in whatever God commands.

Having, therefore, a God such as ours, the Creator, who preserves the universe and the Savior of our soul, body and mind; having glorious promises concerning the forgiveness of our sins, the deliverance of our spirit from the dominion and the slavery of sin – here and now – and the redemption of our body when God’s Son will appear; having a God WHO, in the meantime protects us and takes care of us and WHO unties us of the Satan’s traps, let us call upon the name of the Lord and **“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”** (Heb.4:16) Amen!

## Chapter 4 (046 – EN)

### Repentance: Its meaning and importance

#### Introduction

I mentioned earlier that we will deal with the subject of repentance “relatively more extensively”. “**Relatively**” more extensively, because the subject of repentance is so vast, important, delicate and misunderstood that it is not proper to analyze it in the context of this present study, which concerns the importance, the main characteristics of faith and the erroneous teachings, traditions, opinions etc., which prevent its good functioning. We will limit, therefore, ourselves to certain general and basic characteristics of repentance. It suffices, at this point, to mention that John the Baptist, our Lord Jesus Christ, the apostles as well as all the Old Testament prophets never stopped calling people to repent and believe in God. **There can be no salvation and comfort of heart without repentance** (Mat.5:4; Mark 1:15; Ac.2:38, etc.)

When a person believes sincerely in Christ, that person turns his face to God and, as a consequence, his back to his sins and his idols, and at the same time waits for a glorious future that the love of his God has in store for him “**For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.**” (1Thes.1:9-10). That person loves God that saved him/her and keeps saving him/her from all his/her sins and weaknesses. He/she hates sin that had captured him/her and was leading him/her to eternal perdition. The basic characteristic of this radical change of his/her spirit is that it produces **fruits worthy of repentance** (Lu.3:8) He/she is not satisfied in words and worshipping manifestations but proceeds in works that honor God. He/she is not only satisfied in admitting his sins but he/she also **rejects them**. Only in such a way can he/she be blessed: “**He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.**” (Prov.28:13). He/she changes **radically** his/her behavior and his/her whole life.

All those that had this experience show the same reactions/results that the Corinthians demonstrated: “**For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you (deep desire to make repair), what clearing of yourselves (desire not to ‘excuse’ yourselves but to render you righteous), what indignation (against yourselves because you let your community being «tainted» by such an abominable sin), what fear (for the consequences of your conduct), what vehement desire (for your restoration before God), what zeal (for your duty and the restoration of the truth and the justice), what vindication (decision to discipline yourselves and to apply discipline in the church)! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.**” (2Cor.7:11).

Solely in this manner can we prove that **godly sorrow that produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted**, has created **a deep and radical change in us**, as well as a proof that we love and respect wholeheartedly the One **who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification** (Rom.4:25). Let us pray to God so that such repentance and conversion and such purity abide in us! Amen.

### **An example to be avoided; confession and repentance are not synonymous or identical!**

Unfortunately, it should be said that there is a disastrous misunderstanding between confession of sin and repentance. It is well known the verse that says that: **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** (1John 1:9). It is, however, deplorable that this so simple and explicit verse is so often misunderstood. I want to clarify this point with an example: King Saul envied and hated deadly David. God, however, permitted Saul to fall twice into David’s hands, who could very well kill him. David, however, fearing God, did not stretch out his hand to harm him. When Saul realized that David had spared his life, **he even cried** in front of the two camps, he admitted that David was fairer, recognized that this was to be the future king of the people of Israel **but never** ceased to hate and seek to kill David. We are not, therefore, permitted to identify and confuse the words “confession” with “repentance”.

When one really repents, he proceeds also in confession and in abandonment of his sins; he does good works. When you admit and confess your sin, this **does not constitute a guarantee** that you have sincerely repented. Many, or rather all, admit and confess that they are sinners but few are those that reject their wicked acts from their life and get attached to what is good; few are those who hate sin and love truth. Many are those that know the Word of God by heart and they also teach it but who – for the sake of even little personal interest – hold the truth in unrighteousness (Rom.1:18), do against the truth directly or indirectly (2Cor.13:8) and **“...do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness...”** (Rom.2:8). When they are reproofed, they harden their neck; they become, for this reason, spiritually blind. When, however, they accept God’s reproofs either directly from God or from other people, then God opens their spiritual eyes and outpours His Spirit on them: **“Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit to you, I will make known my words to you.”** (Prov.1:23). God’s reproofs that inspire and give wisdom should be sought and kept!

I would like to refer to Heb.13:20-21 that say: **“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”** (Heb.13:20-21 RSV). *Therefore, if and when we do what is pleasing in His sight (in this case: the acceptance of His profitable reproofs), then He will also make in us what is pleasing before Him. He will bless us!* Let us arm ourselves, therefore, with this humble and receptive spirit that is prompt to accept God’s blessings. If then we ask Him for His inspiration – that is to say, His Holy Spirit – is He going to refuse Him to us? (Lu.11:13). Absolutely not! Our spiritual intelligence is from Him. To Him, then, the glory for ever and ever!!! Amen. God gives His Holy Spirit **only** to those who obey Him: **“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him.”** (Ac.5:32)

### **True repentance is based but on facts**

True repentance should not be based on feelings but on facts and on heart’s position! In other words, it must produce fruit worthy of repentance. True repentance should not be confused with the impatience or with the momentary feelings of contrition, which push each other and give a deceitful image of true repentance. King Saul’s tears, his public confession in front of two armies, and the recognition of his sin vis-à-vis David did not profit: What was missing was the fruit worthy of repentance! And, in order to produce fruit of justice, in the form of repentance, one needs time to evaluate the situation, decide and express oneself in a conscious and conscientious confession, in a spirit of **mourning**, of deep godly sorrow, which work

salvation not to be repented of (2Cor.7:10). True repentance never draws back! Repentance is an act of justice: The sinner who admits his sin or fault or error admits, at the same time, the uprightness and the justice of God.

### **The lack of trust in God's love and truthfulness constitutes an act of injustice**

In reality, injustice towards God is but the lack of faith or trust in Him: "... he that does not believe in God has made him a liar..." (1Jo.5:10). He dishonors God's veracity, goodness and love for man! Unbelief to God is equal to an act of injustice and faith or trust is equal to an act of justice. Faith and trust in God do justice. Adam and Eve did not believe in God's love and veracity. They committed an injustice. They dishonored God. Abraham, on the contrary, believed in God's Word, did an act of justice and honored God, trusting His words and His love. His faith was imputed to him as justice. We also do justice by speaking the truth in our heart (Ps.15:2) about our sins and our sinful nature (Rom.3:4).

### **The best example of repentance; its characteristic: the acceptance of punishment**

I do not know of a better example of this kind of justice, of expressed repentance, than that of the criminal on the cross of Calvary who did it spontaneously. With a humble spirit, he condemned both himself and the other criminal on the cross and said: "**And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.**" (Lu.23:41). My friends, let us say to the Lord: "*Yes, Lord, you are right, and I am wrong..., I am a sinner... but you are holy etc., etc.*" I have good grounds to believe that if a man does not do that act of justice of condemning himself, admitting that what he deserved was death and Hell, God cannot forgive him, justify him and render him just. When someone admits, confesses and accepts his sins and the punishment of his sins (Lév.26:40-42) **AND rejects his sins** (Pr.28:13), he will **then and only then** obtain the forgiveness of his sins, **life, righteousness and honor** (Pr.21:21). One does justice when, without complaining, without pitying himself, without excusing himself, without throwing his responsibilities on other people, without pretending to be the victim of others – while he (she) is obviously guilty – accepts the punishment of his sins.

Two verses render this point clear:

- "**Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD! Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven...**" (Lam.3:39-41);
- "**And (if) they [shall] confess their iniquity, and ... their unfaithfulness... If then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant...**" (Le.26:40-42).

Let me use one more example of **an unacceptable excuse**: Cain was not only guilty of having assassinated his brother Abel but he also lied and wanted to refute his responsibility: "...**Where is Abel your brother?**" He said, "**I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?**" (Ge.4:9). How often do we stay away, far off our fellow man's problem and pain, which sometimes are created or provoked by us? "**But whoever has this world's good, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.**" (1Jo.3:17-18).

On the contrary, the best example of uprightness is given to us by one of the criminals who were crucified with Jesus. He did not try to justify himself but spoke the truth both in his heart and publicly. He said: "...**Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under**

the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong. Then he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Lu.23:40-43). What a lesson for us all!!! May God open our eyes and our ears to hear the message coming from this wonderful story! It is only then that we will receive the same blessing that the “honest” criminal enjoyed... However, many of us say: “...**Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me: I have not sinned.**” (Jer.2:35). But the Word of God continues and says: “**Only acknowledge your iniquity...**” (Jer.3:13).

Please, notice that, for the Jews and the Romans, Jesus was a common man worthy to be put to death. On the contrary, for that “honest” criminal Jesus was an innocent man and something more: a divine heavenly King! How was it possible? The “honest” criminal had, on account of his sincerity and of assuming his responsibilities, been the object of a privileged treatment from God: His spiritual eyes were opened to understand that Jesus, the man who was dying on the cross, was the divine heavenly King, and that He could take him to His heavenly kingdom! Incredible but true!!!

I can tell you, on the authority of the Word of God, that the same blessings of spiritual light, of spiritual insight and of heavenly heritage are also for you and me if we are **honest**, by telling the truth both in our heart and, if necessary, publicly, that is by assuming our responsibilities and guilt!!! Notice, again, the wonderful verse: “**Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you**”, or better, as it appears in the Greek text: “**I will make you understand my words.**” (Pr.1:23).

### **Repentance is an act of justice; God should never be misunderstood**

I believe you remember the case of the two men who went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee was boasting of his “good works” but the tax collector would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘**God, be merciful to me a sinner!**’ The tax collector’s humble, just and repentant prayer resulted in his justification! (Lu.18:10-14). Repentance is the basic characteristic of a true Christian. A genuine believer, in the first place, accepts himself as morally guilty before God, not alone because he has committed certain sins but because sin dwells in him and that he is a sinner by nature. This act of repentance and confession is an act of justice, which allows God to bless him. God is just and good and merciful! “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**” (1Jo.1:9).

We also do an act of justice when we do not permit the painful conditions, the difficult circumstances of life, as well as our failures to lead us to misunderstand God, turn against God and permit our heart to be offended with God. God is just and good! His acts should not, therefore, be misunderstood. God is good and does not push anybody to sin. God does not do any injustice and does not tempt any person to sin, but each is tempted when he is attracted and pushed by his own lusts and by his own proud and arrogant reflections. Let us tell, dear friend, to the Lord our God: “*My Heavenly Father, my Lord God, I cannot understand your ways: Why, for example, you permitted Job to suffer; John the Baptist and James to be beheaded; Peter’s guards to be executed; innocent children to be sold, raped and/or assassinate; natural calamities removing the lives of thousands of people etc., etc. Help me not to misunderstand You and not to be offended in You... We know that you are holy and righteous, that you know all things, that you love us with an everlasting love, that you are*

wise in all your doings, that you are almighty and that you cannot lie! Father, many true Christians and giants of faith have passed through painful experiences: They were **perplexed but not in despair**... (2Cor.4:8). Do not ever permit that I am offended in You, Lord, or move away from You or that I err and be deceived. Amen!" **God has always His reasons for the things He does or permits** (Eze.14:23).

### **Repentance must have a permanent character**

Repentance must have a permanent character. If **to everything there is a season** (Ec.3:1), as regards repentance there is no season. Repentance should be applied every time we grieve God. **Repentance is the corner stone of true Christian life...** Let us not become like some people, **even Christians**, who have deleted from their dictionary the words "forgive me", "excuse me" or "I repent". This is the reason why the Word of God says: **"...unless you repent you will ALL likewise perish."** (Lu.13:3). When the Lord Jesus Christ says **ALL**, He means **ALL** without any exception! The expression, **"if you do not repent"** means **"if you do not keep repenting"**... We must, therefore, do justice before God and men in the form of an on-going or permanent readiness for repentance!

### **Excuses that God can accept**

God consents to 'converse' with those who have true excuses and encourages them. He converses with those who are aware of their true weakness such as their personal incompetence, their lack of social position or, or, or but accept to humble themselves. Here are some examples: God has condescended to converse with Moses (Ex.3:11; 4:1, 10; 4:1-12); with Gideon (Jud.6:12-17); with Jeremiah (Jer.1:6-7); and with Mary, Jesus' Mother. God has given them explanations, instructions, even proofs, in the form of signs, to encourage them. It is not the proper time to refer to them in detail.

**Conclusion:** What counts is **our motivation!** God has no "conversations" with people who live in indifference, in wickedness, in pride, in arrogance etc.

### **Exhortation**

Closing, I would like to put or rather recapitulate some important questions to all of us without exception:

- Do we do, in the measure that is possible, all that is **INDEED** possible to us... with the faithfulness due to the Lord and not according to the theory of the "non-perfect Christian", which accepts and tolerates many things that the Word of God does not permit? We can escape now with some intelligent excuses before men, **BUT**, shall we be capable of presenting the same excuses before God's Judgment Seat?
- Are we servants who have done **all the things we were commanded** to do? Are we "unprofitable" servants or are we more than unprofitable? (Lu.17:9-10). Is it not true that **"... to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."**? (Jas.4:17)
- Do we make use of the excuse: *"We are weak human beings! It is normal to fall"*? If so, then the commandment of God to love Him with all our being and live a holy life is not and cannot be of application! There is and there will be no excuse for not having done our duty in the Lord: **"Jesus said to him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."** (Mrk.9:23). And Paul declared elsewhere, **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."** (Php.4:13). So, there is no Christian task that is too difficult or too hard for a true Christian.
- Do we use our intelligence in order to find some loopholes to our obligations and for the non accomplishment of God's will in our life?

Dear ones! If **our treasure** is God's will, we will never try to find inexcusable excuses! And if **God's fear** is in us, we will repent and cry bitterly if we ever fall into sin. If we resist that evil spirit, the evil spirit of taking refuge in excuses, it will flee. Let us not forget that excuses are a kind of lie or hypocrisy. **"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."** (1Cor.10:13). Consequently, if we fall into sin there is no excuse. The temptations and testing that God permits in our life are **not beyond our strength**. In other words, God does not prescribe for us things, which are either too mysterious for us or are far off. They are things, on the contrary, which are very near us, in our mouth and in our heart, that we may do them (Dt.30:11-14). And let us never forget that **"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."**!!! (1Th.5:24). BUT let us never forget, also, that there is no forgiveness of sin, without **repentance**; there is no forgiveness of sin or of false excuses if there is no **confession** of them (1Jo.1:9); there is no **revival** without contrition of heart, without repentance, without mourning for our sin, without confession of our sin, without rejecting our sin and without **consecration** to God! (2Ch.7:14).

If we fear God in our heart, if we hate sin, if we deny ourselves and our interests – in case they go against the will of God – if the Lord and His will are or become our treasure, if our repentance, our trust in Him and in His Word are continuous, profound and sincere, then we do not risk to fall sick of that illness of "excuses" and die spiritually on account of it. If, finally, we love God the LORD our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with our entire mind and our neighbor as ourselves (Lu.10:27), **then and only then**, we will no more have problems of that kind. On the contrary, the Lord promises to him who keeps the word of perseverance in Him (Re.3:8,10) that He will give: Favor and Power: He will open to him doors that no one will be able to close... power against the enemy, power to do his duty. He will eliminate obstacles and will give authority, assurance and boldness and mainly great faith! He will protect him against temptations; He will give him victory and will make him pillar in His Church. He will not permit that any one removes his crown. His spiritual progress will be manifest to all. He will give him more light and blessings.

**"Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."** (Ac.3:19)

## Chapter 5 (047 – EN)

“Yes, and if I be offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.” (Php.2:17).

### Obstacles to the correct operation of the faith

#### Introduction

As mentioned before, my intention was and is, God willing, to present you with a series of messages on the **Faith in Christ and its Functioning**. This part of the series deals with the **Obstacles at the existence and the correct functioning of faith**: I want to point out right at the beginning that the verse, which will be treated is Philippians 2:17 whose terms “**service of your faith**” or “**ministry for the faith**” are biblical terms corresponding to the Greek terms “**λειτουργία της πίστεως**”, (leitourgia tis pisteos) and which mean “**the functioning of the faith**”. **IF faith does not function well**, there will be problems in the secular life as well as in the spiritual one. It is not enough that man has faith in God but it is necessary that his faith functions well according to the spiritual provisions of the law of Christ contained in the Bible. Let us pay attention to verse John 20:29: “**Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.**” This principle is valid for all Christian life and walk as well as for all God’s promises, independently of the adversities of life!

I would like to repeat that two verses have exerted a major influence in my life of faith since the dawn of my Christian life. They are:

- “**Truly, truly, I say to you, He that believes on me has everlasting life.**” (Joh.6:47). I already treated it with my preceding message (**Part 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d: FAITH: its meaning and importance**)
- “**Yes, and if I be offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.**” (Php.2:17).

Now, we will treat this second verse. Notice please that Paul used this phrase because he wanted that the recipients of his letter might understand that he had sacrificed and he had been sacrificed in order to transmit to them spiritual principles and truths that could help them in the good functioning of their faith (Rom.15:29).

### OBSTACLES TO THE EXISTENCE AND CORRECT OPERATION OF FAITH

#### An impure heart

Faith in order to **function** well in a believer, the believer must necessarily meet certain conditions. When faith functions well man can obtain the forgiveness of his sins, the grace of God and all the promises of God! Moreover, on the one hand, he can resist sin and, on the other hand, he can manifest the fruit of the Spirit. The Bible says that “... **without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him**” (Heb.11:6). **In the same way, it is impossible without faith and patience to inherit the promises of God** (Heb.6:12)

It is necessary to refer briefly, in the context of this study, to a very important term that we very often mention: **The heart**. This term corresponds to the will of man. It corresponds to the capacity to choose, decide and act according to his choice. In certain cases, for example, in 1Jean 3:20-21, the term “heart” refers to **conscience**. Man has a judge in himself, which is his conscience! And this judge knows, for example, if we lie or if we tell the truth (according to Rom.9:1). All that will follow depends on the choice or the decision of our heart according to Prov.4:23: “**Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the**

issues of life.”). There is a difference between these two terms but it is not the proper moment to speak about it in detail. God asks us: “**My son, give me your heart (your will), and let your eyes observe my ways.**” (Pr.23:26): Here is the reason for which the philosopher Kant said that “*there is no substitute for the goodwill.*” Paul wrote: “**Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.**” (Héb.13:18). In other words: We have a good conscience **because** we **want**, **because** we **desire** to have a good conduct in all things.

True faith is interwoven with a sincere heart, which has passed and continues to pass through the baptism of repentance and of good choices (continuous conversions). This fundamental principle (Hab.2:4; Rom.1:17; Gal.3:11; Heb.10:38) controls our relationship with God and our salvation granted by Jesus-Christ. When the believer preserves a pure heart and a good conscience, he begins understanding the things of God, which were either hidden before or covered. Also, he obtains force and spiritual authority coming from the presence of the Holy Spirit in him and – he, in a spirit of humility and submission – entrusts all that he is and all that he has in Christ. Therefore, faith leads to the justification of man and his sanctification (Rom.5:1 and Eph.2:8-9) and constitutes the base for the continuation of his justification and sanctification. “**Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:**” (1Tim.1:5). Of course, it goes without saying that the base of all what we say, faith comes from the **fear of God**, which is the **greatest treasure of the believer**: The fear of God gives to man the necessary wisdom to repent; his repentance breaks up the fallow ground and prepares the ground for the installation and the functioning of faith. Faith adds one Christian virtue after the other, according to the heart’s spiritual needs, and **activates them** (2Pie.1:5-7). John Bunyan said: “*The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and they that lack the beginning have neither middle nor end.*” Then, which are the necessary conditions so that our faith might function well?

#### **That our conscience does not condemn us for abiding in a known sin**

It is written: “**For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight...**” (1Joh.3:20-23).

A question: *Do you put pure water to drink in a dirty glass?* Absolutely not! Thus, our Heavenly Father does not want to entrust faith in a heart, which is not pure! **Moreover, if we do not hold faith and a good conscience we will make shipwreck concerning faith** (1Tim.1:19). **The mystery of the faith cannot be held but in a pure conscience** (1Tim.3:9). The good conscience is the result of good choices! This truth was already known since the time of David who had declared: “**If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me**” (Ps.66:18). *Would it ever be possible to see faith remaining in me when my heart remains in known sin, without repentance and when my spirit refuses to admit the truth?*

A “mistreated” conscience does not have only undesirable effects **on faith** but it also has other “side effects”, one of which is a **blunted spirit, which does not act**. When you see people who are deprived of spiritual perspicacity, do not tire to understand the reason. The reason is obvious: It is lack of repentance! They do not obey and do not do justice neither in themselves nor with others nor before God... The expression “excuse me” or “sorry” does not mean “repentance”! **Repentance produces fruit; it changes irreversibly man’s life!** On the contrary, when his heart is burdened by excess of worries of life or by a deep desire to please people or by the fear of the men or by the success in society, it produces only sin and errors! Those who are afraid of men or want to please people do not fear God and are not interested

to please God (Lu.21:34; Mat.13:15). Such people, independently of their words and activities in favor of God to honor Him, their heart is far from God (Mat.15:8 and Mrk.7:6). The solution to this problem must be found in the book of Proverbs 1:23: **“Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit to you, I will make known my words to you...”** If we accept God’s reproofs, God opens our spirit and we understand His truths. Even madness, in certain cases, comes from the heart. The lack of capacity to believe and understand comes from the heart... (Lu.24:25, 32). Sin and faith are incompatible; they cannot cohabit. **Faith cannot survive without repentance.** The only way out is to obey wholeheartedly to the instructions of the Bible. Thus, let us embrace the well-known currency: **“Study the Bible to be wise, believe it to be saved; practice it to be holy.”**

### **That we forgive those who offend us**

The Lord taught us in the Lord’s Prayer to say to our Heavenly Father: **“...forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”** (Mt.6:12). And, just after this taught prayer, He gave us an explanation or rather He made a short but very important commentary: **“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”** (Mt.6:14-15). In Mark’s Gospel it is repeated: **“...whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”** (Mrk.11:24-26). I would like to add to it that the Lord Jesus made another short comment about forgiveness: **“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”** (Mt.18:35). The above-mentioned verses mean that God **requires** expeditious reconciliation between brothers and sisters; otherwise, there will be very undesirable repercussions. **“Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.”** (Mt.5:25). And you know well, my friends, that there are also spiritual and psychic prisons!

**Conclusion:** Faith in life of the believer can function well **provided** that his heart is pure, is entirely given to do God’s will, **that** his conscience does not condemn him and **that he forgives with all his heart** all those who have offended him! This conclusion helps us to understand another important truth, i.e.: **Forgive an offense and to have brotherly fellowship are two different things.**

A brother in Christ behaved badly and in an unjustified way towards my wife and me. After two or three days, he telephoned us and asked us to forgive him. My answer was: *“If I do not forgive you, God also will not forgive me. I will have problems with God”!* After this event, I began asking myself and I told myself: **If a believer does not ask God to forgive him for his known sin, can he have fellowship with God?** (1Joh.1:6-7). Mutatis-mutandis, **can I have true brotherly fellowship with you, my brother, my sister, without having put the things in order in my heart and with you, and you in your heart with me?**

It is necessary to distinguish the difference on this point, which is very delicate: He who forgives forgets the offense! It is written, **“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”** (1Pet.4:8). **BUT**, the fact that I have forgiven somebody from the bottom of my heart and I do not think of his offense anymore, does it give me the possibility of having brotherly fellowship with him who sinned against me, when that person **refuses, in full knowledge of the facts,** to confess his sin and to humble himself before God? God has offered us forgiveness by the cross of our Lord Jesus-

Christ, but, can He have fellowship with all those who have not repented, who have not humbled themselves and who have not put their life in order?

The Lord before His crucifixion and at the time of His crucifixion had forgiven all those who wanted to do Him evil or who had done Him evil, saying: **“...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...”** (Lu.23:34); could He, however, ever have fellowship with the Pharisees and Sadducees? Jesus was preparing for peace but they for war! After His resurrection, in spite of the forgiveness that He had offered to those who had crucified Him, did He have brotherly fellowship with them? No! He had communion and fellowship only with His disciples! The Father of the parable of the prodigal son had no bitterness in his heart against his prodigal son but it was necessary that the prodigal son to come to himself and say to his father: **“...Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.”** (Luc 15:17, 21). Then an intimate fellowship was restored between the father and his son!

Let us understand what the Word of God says to us in 1John 6-9: **“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleans us from all sin... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

Let us thank the Lord for brothers and sisters who, in our respective churches, are in good relation with each other! I am, however, extremely afraid, my friends in Christ that, within our churches, there are social rather than brotherly relations, because there are many problems outstanding... May the Lord forgive us! **In similar cases, can we have a spiritual REVIVAL?** May the Lord help us to have always a pure heart, a good conscience and a spirit open to forgiveness. Then, all will go well so much for us and for the glory of God! Amen!

### **Unstable faith: Will not given to God**

Believers very often face serious crises which shake their faith. If believers are mature and stable, they recover their forces relatively quickly because they know where to go to find peace and rest: **To the cross of Christ!** If they are not well founded in faith and non-diligent to maintain their **conscience pure**, they can be relieved temporarily by external sources, such as a good consultation or a good sermon but they rebound to the state of perplexity and depression.

I had the occasion to counsel certain people, guide and comfort them. The Holy Spirit helped me to transmit words of God adapted to their needs; they were relieved and were in joy. Two or three weeks later, I discovered that they were in the same situation of despair and distress; some of them required of me additional assistance but others avoided me. Their consolation was not permanent; it was not stable! What had occurred? Why was their consolation not stable? Finally, I discovered that it was because the person **was not separated from his/her desires, his/her own will or because him/her or he/she did not have the patience to wait for the moment of God and because he/she or they wanted to make their own thing immediately** (Ps.107). The desires of their hearts and their own wills returned and **invaded the spirit and the heart**, which was not really invested in the will of God. (It is our **pride** that does not accept God's will; this is, therefore, the root of our unbelief!). The faith in God's promises and His immutable love and faithfulness did not occupy their heart. Why? Because of **lack of purity**; because the believer, he or she, **wanted what he/she wanted...** Their will had not been identified harmoniously with the will of God. Thus, the will of God could not reign in a permanent way in their heart. His/her will was not given to God. God comes and gives abundantly His words of comfort, but His consolations cannot be held but collapse! They break down because the heart of the believer does not wait or does not want to

wait for the moment of God's intervention (Ps.106:13) and/or does not want to be comforted with God's consolations but in his/her own manner and according to his/her personal wishes or his/her own goal! Faith in such people is an unstable faith which cannot be employed and can receive nothing (Jas.1:6-7). The Bible indicates that **“Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.”** (Pr.25:19).

## Conclusion

We will briefly mention, in conclusion, the reason why our faith does not develop and why we become shipwrecked in the faith. The Holy Bible gives the answer, not with ambiguous words but with a very clear language. The reason is the **lack of purity or repentance or “uprightness” or fear of God**. The Word of God speaks about an **“evil heart of unbelief” (Heb.3:12)** or a **“perverse heart”**. When we accept the perfect work of Christ on the cross but also His Word worthy to be believed by the heart – then, we can stand without fear but with boldness that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph.6:13)... Let us never forget the people of Israel who, because of unbelief, could not enter the Promised Land. You and I, also, have inherited a great fortune! If we do not believe it and do not accept it, we will not have it. It will be made according to our faith or to our unbelief. And which is this heart if not the heart which offers its hospitality to sin? The Bible speaks about a **“hardened heart”**. And which is the hardened heart if not the result of a continued disobedience, the result of a non-admitted sin, the result of a sin made in full knowledge of cause? In a word, the **result of a non-admitted and non-rejected sin!** **God does not put his faith in a dirty vase, in a dirty heart.** Is it ever possible to see faith abiding in such a heart? Listen to what the Bible indicates:

- **“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:”** (1Ti.1:19);
- **“...The Lord knows them that are his. And, Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”** (2Ti.2:19)

Is it never possible to have a faith, which will be able to withstand **while we stick to our own will and desires?** No, surely not! If we reject from our own heart our good conscience, we will make shipwreck concerning faith... In such cases, the fear of God is not in us. And a last remark: The Bible says: **“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.”** (Jude 1:21). It depends, therefore, on us to keep ourselves in the love of God. That is why the Lord said: **« As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: continue you in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. »** (Joh.15:9-10). **God loves all of us and always, but His love cannot do us good if we do not hate sin and if we do not put in practice His commandments. He cannot regenerate us and bless us if we do not repent for our sins, if we do not believe His words and if we do not put our trust in His character.**

## Exhortation

In closing this part of this series of Bible studies, allow me to make a short exhortation:

**The unbeliever** is invited to believe in God. He has to believe in the Bible, that Jesus-Christ is born of the virgin Mary and that He is raised from the dead and to accept Him as His Savior and Lord of his life: **“That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.”** (Rom.10: 9).

**The believer** is called to learn the basic lessons, which are repentance and faith or trust in the love of the omnipotent God and to stop living in a spirit of murmurs... May we all learn

which the promises of God are; whether it has to do with His promises of specific character or of generic one, which concern us. Let us find out which is His will for us personally. Let us learn not to postpone the moment of our good decisions or choices... And in conclusion, let us not forget any of His blessings but evaluate and appreciate them. Let us consecrate ourselves, therefore, to God as a faithful Creator willing to do good to us (1Pet.4:19); let us examine our behavior and **continue being transformed...** Let us trust God who has thoughts for us, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give us an expected end (Jer.29:11). We are for Him like the pupil of His eye (Zec.2: 8). Let us be calm because all that God allows is for our good... Even our afflictions come in our life for our good. Let us not be anxious. God has prepared the solution and knows in advance what He will do... (Joh.6:6). Let us not forget that if a great storm emerges suddenly, so that our boat is covered with waves of trouble and of afflictions and Christ (Mt.8:24) seems to be sleeping, we must be absolutely secure since He is with us in our boat! Let us hope in God and let us not count on our wisdom. Let us not disdain God's chastisement because that shows that He accepts us as His children to whom He takes pleasure... Let us thank, therefore, God, in advance, for **“the surgical operations”** which He makes in our spiritual body for our good. Let us not forget the blessings which God projects to grant us if we pass **patiently** from the valley of Achor, the valley of disorder, as a door for hope (Hosea 2:15).

## Chapter 6 (048 – EN)

### Erroneous Teachings, interpretations, opinions and traditions (Part A)

#### Introduction

We examined in the five previous chapters of the series **FAITH IN CHRIST and ITS FUNCTIONING**, the meaning and importance of faith, its essential component, which is repentance and finally the obstacles in the functioning of faith. We will, therefore, examine henceforth the undesirable repercussions of erroneous teachings and traditions both in the life of the Christian and of the Church due to erroneous faith, such as: *“The so-called “FULL GOSPEL...”*; *“We can but sin”*; *“Can Satan upset the plans of God?”*; *“The thorn in the flesh”*; *“The acquisition of Christian virtues”*; *“The defeatist position: ‘I have no faith’”*; *“About great faith”*; *“Sin too big to be forgiven”*; *“Faith is not a means of blackmailing God”*; *“Trust versus worries”*; and certain other points... **WHEN OUR FAITH IS ERRONEOUS WE CANNOT FUNCTION WELL; WE WILL COMMIT ERRORS AND SINS...**

#### **The so-called “FULL GOSPEL...”**

The so-called “Full Gospel” is a Gospel that does not correspond to the true Gospel of God because it proclaims the love of God but does not give the necessary warnings; it overemphasizes the gifts of the Holy Spirit and especially the “speaking with other tongues” (glossolalia) and divine healing; it divides Christians and Churches on account of the “speaking in tongues” by distorting the Bible, teaching and inventing unscriptural excuses. At the end of this Bible study we will examine what the Bible teaches.

#### **1. The true Gospel, and its warnings**

For the last few decades we have witnessed a tendency to put the accent either on just faith or on the love of God or on the grace of God or on the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and also, of a tendency **to neglect or rather to avoid speaking systematically** of God’s justice and the consequences of incredulity and disobedience! A tendency to comfort anxious sinners **without telling them God’s conditions!** To preach on the love of God is a marvelous thing. To proclaim the free salvation of God is a valuable subject! Nevertheless not to explain or not to give a description of what man is saved from is very dangerous: About eternal judgment or perdition, the wrath of God or not to mention what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb.10:31). The church must be protected from such truncated or false doctrines and from such false consolations!

Men do not want to remember how severe God has always been with disobedient people or with apostates. When they preach on 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”** or simply refer to this verse or to other similar verses (John 3:18; 3:36; 5:24; 6:54), they put the emphasis on the love of God and on man’s faith but they **systematically** avoid describing what the word **“perdition”** means... and to say that whoever does not believe will perish and what “salvation” actually means and implies! They avoid mentioning, for example, John 3:36, **“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God stays on him”** and other similar verses. They avoid speaking of the wrath of God. This Gospel is not **“the Full Gospel”!** It is a lame Gospel, a crippled Gospel! The words or expressions like **“shame and everlasting contempt”, “everlasting fire”, “the wrath of God”, “everlasting punishment”, “hell fire”, “perdition of ungodly men”, “second death”, “the lake of fire”,**

**etc.**, are not even mentioned... And the fear of God disappears... These are, however, words that were uttered from the mouth of our Lord, His prophets and apostles... who did not try to please people but to save those who were listening to them!

If we do not know from what we have been saved, how can we appreciate our salvation? If we break the law of our country, we are imprisoned or we pay a fine. What is going to happen if we break the law of God who is a God of principles? Will there be no consequences? God has his own moral laws. If we want to do our own thing, ignore His will and to disobey His spiritual laws, surely and certainly **God will resist us, we will have a deplorable life on earth and we will eternally reap the consequences of our disobedience. He who does not know from what he has been saved can never appreciate the salvation that God has given him!**

In every local church, there is always a mixed crowd: true believers, weak believers, carnal believers, sympathizers, baby-believers and unbelievers! Some need salvation, others edification and others spiritual revival. I firmly believe that in each and every sermon addressed to a church, a note of evangelization must be included, unless the speaker gives his message to a group, which consists exclusively of true believers.

### *He who loves warns!*

Those who avoid even mentioning how terrible the end will be for the wicked and disobedient people, argue that they preach all the truths which are included in the Gospel but in a positive way. No, this is not true! **This is not the full Gospel but a Gospel emptied of its basic “components”!** It is just a euphemism! **Positive sermons and positive thinking are marvelous things but if they are not combined with the necessary warnings, they cannot save.** Our Lord Jesus-Christ, let me repeat it, did not limit Himself to positive sermons but He severely warned His listeners about the “everlasting fire”, “the wrath of God”, the “everlasting punishment”, etc. Jesus was not simply a positive preacher... The same thing is also valid for the prophets of the Old Testament, for John the Baptist and for the apostles.

They say that they preach the whole Gospel, but they do not, because they give exhortations, consolations but almost never warnings. It is a false consolation! **He who loves warns!** They try to be pleasant to their listeners because they know that people do not endure “sound doctrine” but they have ears itching (2Tim.4:3) to hear pleasant things, good news. There is a tacit alliance between them. **Parents who are not sorry or do not get angry at the sins of their children and do not warn them about the consequences of their sins do not love them!** In the same way, God’s workers who do not warn unbelievers and even believers concerning the consequences of their indifference, disobedience or even of their lukewarmness, do not love them! **He who loves warns!**

## **2. Emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and on worshipping habits**

The so-called “Full Gospel” teaches persistently and emphatically the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as the speaking in tongues, the divine healing, prophecies, etc.; in addition, it insists in deafening decibels of music, in dance and ballets in the church services etc. All these activities do not mean that it proclaims **“all the counsel of God”** (Acts.20:27; Mat.3:2; Marc 1:15; Luc 24:47), whose **basic components** are **“...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (Acts 20:21; Mat.3:2; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:47). This is the reason why we see great crowds when such pastors, healers and especially miracle makers

“‘scream’ their sermons”, go to and fro on the platform and transform Christian meetings into theatrical representations.

The Bible speaks clearly about the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes to believers. Consequently, we, too, must speak about them with the necessary wisdom and understanding and within the context of a spiritual equilibrium and without exaggeration. Unfortunately, in our days, we see that the necessary spiritual equilibrium is not respected and particularly as far as the speaking “with other tongues” and divine healing. Some arrive at the point of asserting **that ONLY those who have spoken in tongues have been baptized in the Holy Spirit!** Then, a practical question arises: The giants or heroes of faith and holy life **of the past** (before the appearance of this teaching/doctrine) that have been used by God for the salvation in Christ of millions of souls, were they never baptized with the Holy Spirit because they never spoke in tongues? I consider, therefore, necessary to treat this point relatively in detail!

#### a) Alteration of the true Gospel: Theories and practice

A man of God that I deeply love and appreciate, a missionary, doctor in theology, wrote to me that only those who have spoken in tongues according to Acts 2:4: “**And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance**” are baptized in the Holy Spirit and that all the other believers from all the other Christian denominations who have not spoken in tongues have just the experience of the disciples according to John 20:22: “And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, Receive you the Holy Ghost”! I was shocked ... My soul began aching! **IF** this is so, then **ALL TRUE Spirit filled CHRISTIANS** who have not spoken in tongues have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit! They belong to the period prior the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension of the Lord Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit, which gave birth to the Church of the period of grace!

**I put the question:** Everything that happened before Christ’s crucifixion, after His crucifixion, His resurrection and the Day of Pentecost are they applied or repeated on the believers of our days, in the same absolute way as on that day, with a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and cloven tongues like as of fire sitting on each one? (Acts 2:2-3).

#### b) Invention of excuses

Those who support this erroneous interpretation – **being unable to face up to strong relevant Biblical arguments** – have **invented** a way out from this deadlock: They argue that, “*The Initial Physical Evidence...*” should not be confused with the **gift** of speaking in tongues. **I put the question: Where, IN THE BIBLE, have they found such distinction? What kind of hermeneutics is this?** This is a man-made conclusion and requirement! Speaking in tongues was intended to be a **SIGN**, a means of reaching out to **unbelievers** in their own languages. That was translated later into pomp, vain glory and false imitations, even to worse acts... (1Cor.12:3). This is the reason why the apostle Paul sharply reprovved, among other sins, this fault and abuse in the Church of Corinth! **Neither** Paul and nor any of the other apostles **EVER** required such a thing from Christians or from Christian leaders! The apostles John and Peter speak a lot (in their epistles), about the Cross of Christ, the Blood of Christ, Redemption, Repentance, Holiness, etc. If Speaking in Tongues is so crucial for Christians and Christian leaders, why is there no mention whatever of that so-called **prerequisite**? The Word of God says: “**Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:**” (Heb.12:14). It does not say “follow the **“The Initial Physical Evidence, which is the ‘Speaking in Tongues’”**... without which no man shall see the Lord..... **If there are believers who rely on “speaking in tongues” in order to have**

the certainty that they are saved, they are **FATALY** deceived and do not differ from the Galatian believers for whom Christ was not sufficient for their salvation but they wanted **ALSO** to be circumcised. If there are such believers, then, Christ is for them, dead in vain (Gal.2:21). Christ is become of no effect to them that believe that in order to be saved they need to speak in tongues; they are **fallen from grace!** (Gal.5:4).

*c) Some important declarations of the Bible*

1. The Bible clearly and repeatedly states that the Holy Spirit is given us by hearing of faith (Gal.3:2 - Gal.3:5);
2. It also says that it is accounted for righteousness: As it happened to Abraham so it happens also to us in the same way (Gal.3:6-9) and we receive, through Jesus Christ, **the promise of the Spirit through faith** (Gal.3:13-14);
3. We also receive eternal life (Joh.6:47);
4. God has sent forth the Spirit in our hearts, because we are His sons, crying, Abba, Father (Gal.4:6) and by whom we have become heirs of God through Christ (Gal.4:7);
5. «...**If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.** (John 14:23)
6. The fact that the Holy Spirit did not give **to all** believers the sign to speak in unknown tongues when they received the promise of the Spirit (but he who reads carefully the Word of God and especially the **whole** of the book of Acts will find it out), does it mean that those who have not spoken in tongues have not received **the promise of the Spirit?** And something else: Let us not forget that the speaking in tongues of the Corinthians did not help them get rid of their disorderly walk or, put a better way, of their sinful life. What greater profit for them if they had made the Lord Jesus Christ **LORD** of all the moments of their life and in everything.

*d) Some wonderful promises of God*

All **true** Christians from all **existing** denominations have, among others, the following divine privileges:

- “**In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory**” (Eph.1:13-14);
- “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**” (1Pet.1:3);
- “**And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption.**” (Eph.4:30);
- “**Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.**” (1Joh.3:9);

**I put the question: All those who are born of God and sealed with the Holy Spirit are they not baptized in the Holy Spirit because they have not spoken in tongues?**

*e) Practical questions:*

- **ALL THOSE WHO ARE BORN AGAIN BELIEVERS** that have **given their heart to God and their eyes observe His ways** (Pr.23:26);
- All those who **bear their cross faithfully**, and come after Him (Luke14:27);
- All those in whose heart God has put **His laws into their mind, and has written them in their hearts** (Heb.8:10);

- All those who have presented their bodies as a **living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, and do not conform to this world but are transformed by the renewing of their mind and prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God** (Rom.12:1-2);
- All those who have been made **free from sin and become servants to God, having their fruit to holiness and everlasting life** (Rom.6:22) and to whom **God has been giving the Holy Spirit because they obey Him** (Ac.5:32);
- All those who have accepted **to live for Jesus and be persecuted to death** in order not to dishonor Christ's precious name **Who saved them and has given them divers gifts such as of teacher, prophet, etc.**

**I put the question:** ALL THE ABOVE MENTIONED BELIEVERS are they not baptized in the Holy Spirit because they have not spoken in tongues? What kind of Holy Spirit have they received to live such a holy and powerful life?

*f) God's Spirit dwells in us*

Paul has written: **“Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”** (1Cor.3:16; 2Cor.6:16). God, according to His good pleasure of His will He builds us together for a **habitation of God through the Spirit!** (Eph.2:22; 3:17). He has also written: **«But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. »** (Rom.8:9, 11). **Do these words hold good only for those who have spoken in tongues, who had the “Initial Physical Evidence, ‘which is the speaking in tongues’”?** This is the reason why some, (fortunately very few), arrived at the point of saying that whosoever has not had **the Initial Physical Evidence to speak in tongues** has not received the Spirit of God and consequently does not have any relation with Christ. I pray with all my heart to forgive them and let them see the light!

*g) Will the believer be rewarded for the gift of the Holy Spirit or for his fruit?*

The believer will not be rewarded for the gift that the Holy Spirit has bestowed on him, in His sovereign will, but only if that “sign” or “gift” was used by him for the salvation of unbelievers or for the edification of believers. The Bible says in many ways that we will be rewarded if we believe Christ's words, if we assimilate them, if we apply them, if we share them with others, if we accept to take up our cross, if, after having put our hand to the plough, we do not let our hearts look back and if, in two words, we bring forth **fruit and fruit that remains!** Yes, if all the sectors of our life were sanctified and were changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the LORD (2Cor.3:18). If we lived with the **“unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”** (1Cor.5:8). If we were always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (2Cor.4:11) and if the love of God was shed abroad in our hearts **by the Holy Ghost which is given to us** (Rom.5:5). Will those **who have not spoken in tongues but who have sincerely trusted their life in Christ** be ashamed when they stand before the throne of God?

**I put the question:** Has not God given all true believers **the earnestness of the Spirit** (2Cor.5:5) and has not Christ Jesus been made to those who have not spoken in tongues: **wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?** (1Cor.1:30).

Peter, in his second epistle, addressing himself to brothers – and consequently to us – he tells them that they have obtained **“like precious faith”** (2Pet.1:1) with the apostles through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. He also reassures us, that **“...his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through**

the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue” (2Pet.1:3). What does it mean “all things that pertain to life and godliness”? What does the word “all” contain? Forgiveness, justification, salvation, adoption, eternal life, power to overcome sin, sanctification and a continuous change into the same image of the Lord Jesus Christ from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the LORD (2Cor.3:18) etc. How is it ever possible to have received all these prerogatives of the grace and of the Holy Spirit and not have been baptized by the Spirit? With what Spirit do we abide in Christ and with what Spirit do we bring forth spiritual fruit? ARE **ALL THESE not baptized in the Holy Spirit because they have not spoken in tongues?**

### The Consequences

**THIS DOCTRINAL ERROR CREATES DIVISIONS, FRICTIONS AND SCANDALS** among believers and among churches! **Speaking in tongues of the Spirit is taught in the Bible** but this erroneous interpretation, which excludes all other true Christians from never having been baptized in the Holy Spirit is a twisted and a false interpretation, which leads to spiritual blindness and spiritual apartheid! Beyond that, it divides into first and second class Christians! And by extension: as a result of this error in “the book of life” (Luke 10:20; Rev.3:5; 22:19) there will be two lists of names of Christians: One list will contain Christians baptized with the Holy Spirit, because they have spoken in tongues and a second that will contain names of Christians not having been baptized with Holy Spirit, because they have not spoken in tongues! According to these erroneous hermeneutics, the millions of true born again Christians of other denominations have never been baptized in the Holy Spirit! **Billy Graham who has not experienced the “Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is Speaking in tongues”, as well as those who have slept in the Lord: Finney, Moody, Spurgeon and many others have never been baptized in the Holy Spirit!** It is another kind of Spirit that has blessed them?

Since we are exhorted to follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts and especially prophesy (1Cor.14:1); since he that prophesies speaks to men to edification and exhortation and comfort (1Cor.14:3); since greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks in tongues, except he interprets that the church may be edified (1Cor.14:5); and since **charity never fails** (1Cor.13:8), **why do they put the priority and the emphasis on speaking in tongues?** (1Cor.14:1-8). Tongues, prophecies and knowledge shall cease (1Cor.13:8) but charity and holy life, which are the product of true love for God and for man, will never fail but will be rewarded. Bad attitudes, quarrels and divisions will be condemned... The fact that Paul wanted or, in fact better still wished to see all believers speak in tongues, does not mean that this is a commandment of God (just as You shall not kill; Neither shall you commit adultery etc.) because it is the Holy Spirit Who, in His sovereignty and for the edification of the Church, divides this gift or sign **AS HE WILL.**

### WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

Our theology should not be based on experiences but on the teaching, spirit and principles of the Bible. Otherwise, we will go astray. In general terms, 1Cor. chapters 12, 13 and 14 as well as Ephesians, chapters 1 and 4 tell us the following things concerning the point under discussion:

**1Cor.12:1-30:** “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I would not have you ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, even as you were led. Why I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that **no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.** Now there are diversities of gifts, **but the same Spirit.**..... **the manifestation of the Spirit is**

given to every man to profit with. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; But all these works hat are one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally AS HE WILL..... For by one Spirit ARE WE ALL BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY..... AND HAVE BEEN ALL MADE TO DRINK INTO ONE SPIRIT. For the body is not one member, but many....That there should be NO SCHISM in the body; ... And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers..... Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"

1Cor.13:1: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

1Cor.14:1-39: "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy..... But he that prophesies speaks to men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the church. I would that you all spoke with tongues BUT RATHER THAT YOU PROPHESED: for GREATER is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying..... Brothers, be not CHILDREN IN UNDERSTANDING..... Why tongues are for A SIGN, not to them that believe, BUT TO THEM THAT BELIEVE NOT: but prophesying serves not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.....Why, brothers, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues."

Eph.1:13-14: "In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were SEALED WITH THAT HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory."? The sealing with the Holy Spirit does it refer only to those who have spoken in tongues?

Eph.4.11-13: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"

Notice, please that in 1Cor. chapters 13 and 14, Paul speaks about the restricted utility of speaking in tongues and the restrictions that should follow those speaking in tongues in the assemblies.

There are two categories of people: a) Worldly people who are spiritually dead sinners and b) Born again believers. In other words: the lost and the found! In addition, born again believers are either baby-Christians and/or carnal believers and/or spiritually mature believers. All believers have been baptized in one Spirit... What makes a carnal Christian pass from the carnal state to the spiritual one? Baby and/or carnal believers become spiritual and mature on one condition: If they make the good choice to follow Christ wholeheartedly, take up their cross and follow Him and obey the Holy Spirit. Only to those who obey God (by sincere repentance and faith and love without dissimulation), God gives the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32). This is true spirituality!

Does the act of speaking in tongues, this manifestation of the Spirit, constitute the guarantee of spirituality and maturity of the believer? Does the speaking in tongues make

the believer wiser to take care of his family and of his local Church and his neighbor? Absolutely not! Consequently, according to the erroneous interpretation in question, the believer without that “Initial Sign or Evidence” may only come to church, occupy a bench, support it financially and listen but he will never be treated on an equal footing! This position, as a “**sine qua non**” prerequisite, either for membership and/or in the Church leadership, is **fatally misleading** or constitutes a very bad pattern of “spirituality”!

### **CONCLUSION**

**When we stay before the throne of God, the question that will be put to us will it be WHETHER WE HAVE SPOKEN IN TONGUES OR RATHER IF WE HAVE LIVED A HOLY AND FRUITFUL LIFE? “Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples.” (John 15:8).**

May God help us to understand and apply these great truths!

## Chapter 7 (049 – EN)

### Erroneous teachings, interpretations, opinions and traditions (Part B)

#### 1. The erroneous doctrine that “we can but sin” because:

- a) We human beings have weaknesses, and
- b) The power of sin is always present as long as we live.

These are largely diffused doctrines, which have rendered God weak and unable to deliver us from our weaknesses and certain sins inherent in our character such as anger, gluttonness, pride, the love of money etc. We pray to God to forgive us but we are afraid – I would rather say that “we believe” – that we will continue to fall into the same sins. We cannot maintain the conviction that God is able also to **SAVE US TO THE UTTERMOST that come to God by him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us** (Heb.7:25) and that **Faithful is He that calls us, who also will do it** (1Th.5:24). Because of our inability to believe correctly, it is done according to our incredulity! And another thing: The fear that we will continue to fall into the same sin is an error and a trap, due to incredulity. We fear that our temptations are beyond our strength... That means that we do not believe in the promise of God, namely, that “...**There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.**” (1Cor.10:13). In this way, it happens to you and me according to our incredulity. That means that when we fall into sin, **it is of our responsibility...**

It is written that God has placed, at our disposal, all power necessary to overcome the power of sin and temptations of Satan by which he tries to make us fall and imprison us in the slavery of sin. The Word of God proclaims that we are not anymore under the Law of Moses but under the alliance of grace. And the grace that God has given us is superabundant to help us to overcome the power of sin, power in order not to accomplish the will of the flesh and of our thoughts, as well as to resist temptations and the tricks of the devil. The Holy Bible invites us:

- a) To believe in every word of God and to trust Him without any exception;
- b) **To reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord** (Rom.6:11), and
- c) To remember that we were crucified with Christ, buried with Him and raised with Him and that now we walk in newness of life.

We must, therefore, being armed with the conviction that we have ceased sinning in order to live the remainder of the time of our life not according to the will of the world or the flesh but according to the will of God. The Bible invites us to believe **that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin** (Rom.6:6) but that we are delivered from sin. There is a word of God which puts “knock out” this fear and this false doctrine: “**Why he is able also to SAVE THEM TO THE UTTERMOST that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.**” (Heb.7:25). Jesus can save us perfectly, not only in the future but also now, from our passions and the slavery of Satan! Certain people teach that in spite of the fact that we are crucified, we can get down from the cross and do our own will! Silly thing! That silly thing is applicable to all those who do not believe in everything that the Bible says and/or because they have not presented their whole being a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, and are not transformed by the renewing of their mind, that they may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom.12:2).

We died with the Lord, once-and-for-all to sin and we are now “in Christ” for God: **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”** (Gal.2:20). And especially, the Bible invites us to believe that our love for sin is equally dead in us. This is why it is written, **“Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”** (1Joh.3:9). It has to do with the **normal experience of each true Christian, and in particular, of each true worker of God!**

As sure and undeniable is that Christ died on the cross and that He was buried and He was raised from the dead, it is also equally sure and undeniable, according to the Scriptures that:

- **“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died to sin once: but in that he lives, he lives to God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** (Rom.6:6-11). I am not any more slave to sin but it is the Spirit of God that has delivered me and continues to deliver me from the law of sin and death. Moreover, it is sure and certain that:
- My sins are forgiven, that God justified me and that He saved me. **“Juridically”, I am justified. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit!** (Rom.8:1).

Who is this, my old man, if not my sinful tendencies and their power over me? It is true that the power of the habit of sin exists: The attraction of sin which comes from our physical desires is strong and temptations of the devil exist and can be numerous and powerful. However, it is also true that **the true believer does not take pleasure in sin**; on the contrary, **sin makes him suffer and he cannot support it**. And this is especially true when the power of resurrection and the power of the blood of Jesus are always at his disposal! Here is the reason why it is written in the book of Revelation 12:11: **“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives to the death.”** Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Rom.5:20). **“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.”** (Rom.6:14). Moreover, it is true that the Spirit Himself abides in the true believer, makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. He abides in him; he is also built for a habitation of God through the Spirit in the true believer (Eph.2:22) and gives him power against sin. He is not any more slave to sin and its tyranny. That is why John, the apostle, says: **“...let no man deceive you.....Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.”** (1Joh.3:7-10).

**The apostle Paul exhorted the believers to become his imitators.** If Paul lived under the state of: **“...for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I”** (Rom.7:15) or in other words: **“I want to do what is good but I do not achieve to do it but I do what I hate”**, or as it is written **“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ...”** (Rom.7:24), he would never have made all his exhortations. Quite to the contrary, he exhorted the believers to remember that **He thanked God through Jesus**

Christ our Lord... (v.25). Elsewhere he wrote “...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom.8:2). In addition, he invites them to imitate his behavior as he had described in his epistles to the Corinthians and elsewhere, by telling them: “**I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.**” (Php.4:13). Moreover, he proclaimed: “Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;” (2Cor.6:3-9).

May the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised! Amen!

Our weakness to believe and to live such a holy life leads us to adopt another error, that is:

**2. The erroneous doctrine that it is “necessary to consecrate ourselves each day”:**

Because of a problem of incredulity or of a false teaching, many Christians believe that it is necessary to re-consecrate or to re-abandon themselves to God every day. Let us stop and think: We offer ourselves as a living sacrifice on the altar of God today; the next day we still come “to offer ourselves”, to abandon ourselves, to Him, either because we fell into a certain sin or because we are too zealous. Then the following question is raised: Since we put and left our “**offering**” – that is ourselves – on God’s altar yesterday, as a holocaust or as a living sacrifice, how is our offering still in our hands today? Did God accept us yesterday or not? The only case that God does not accept what we put into His hands is if we are not sincere! The weakness of the flesh and our walk by “**sin**” make us fall from the position of faith.

Those who believe that it is essential to consecrate ourselves to God every day assert that it is normal that man re-devotes himself every day to God; they say that there is nothing wrong with this daily re-dedication or this re-abandonment; it is just a renewal! They argue this way because it is written in the Bible that we must take up our “**cross daily**” and follow Jesus Christ. This position, as they mean it, is very incorrect. It is very incorrect because what the believer does can be compared with an agreement or a contract signed between man and God, that is to say that the believer will follow Him faithfully. It can also be compared with somebody who is enrolled in the university. I repeat: This teaching is very incorrect because:

- They confuse the execution of their “contract” or of their “agreement” with God – call it as you like – with the paraph or signature of this agreement or contract day after day! Or
- They confuse their faithful and diligent presence at the courses of the university, in which they have been registered, with their inscription at the University. One should not be re-registered at the university every day! The only thing which can take place is to be more or less diligent concerning his duties... He who decided one day to become a missionary or a pastor or a priest does not make the same decision each and every day. It took it once-and-for-all.

It is true that we must take up our cross “daily” and follow our Lord but it is not true that we must make the same decision every day. What is going to happen if we forget and/or if we neglect one day to renew our re-abandonment decision to God? Since we made the decision and declared this decision to Christ, **ALL THAT IS NECESSARY IS SIMPLY**

**TO KEEP OUR PROMISE.** If you promised on the day of your marriage to be faithful to your wife every day of your life, do you repeat the same promise daily? If you repeat your promise every day, she will end up by suspecting that there is something wrong! Do you repeat your promise to her by also repeating the marriage ceremony?

Let us not be misled. The person who has NOT TAKEN the SUITABLE DECISION to follow Jesus Christ honestly, sooner or later he/she will be victim of his/her error and will think that because of a committed sin, he/she is obliged to renew her “contract” with God. *The only thing that is necessary is to continue diligently and HONESTLY, independently of the problems and the difficulties, to keep firmly what was agreed between us and God.* **The Lord who knows man’s heart, will never accept the responsibility to help him to keep his promise if that man is not sincere in his intention to keep his promise and to respect his contract with God! On the contrary, God is ready to assume all responsibility for the life of the person who sincerely wanted to entrust his life to Him! God does not accept to give his Holy Spirit and His power against sin to people who will not be faithful and who will become allies one day of sin and the devil and the other day will try to flatter God!**

God reveals to us from time to time a sin or a weakness of which we are not conscious, in order to purify us. Unfortunately, we are **stiff necked people.** God is obliged on several occasions, to bring us to the same weak point of our existence so that we may have enough of ourselves and that we ask from the bottom of our heart our deliverance: **“Thus said the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go (Gr.: ‘that you should have gone’. O that you had listened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea”** (Isa.48:17-18).

Another problem in the spirit of many believers is that there is:

### **3. A confusion between a “victorious life” and “sinless perfection”**

There is, unfortunately, the distorted impression that those who preach “the victorious life”, i.e. that it is possible to be delivered of the “flesh” such as from bad habits, passions and covetousness, that they teach the false doctrine of “sinless perfection”. The truth of God, however, remains: The truth is that **“sinless perfection” does not exist** but that victorious life is possible and **it is required.** It is a **commandment** for believers! **And if it is a requirement according to the Word, then it is possible. God can save perfectly!** It is written: **“Why he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.”** (Heb.7:25). The Word of God says, **IF ANY MAN SINS,** if any man falls (1Jo.2:1). **A life of “ups and downs, ups and downs” is not a normal Christian life!** Here is how Paul describes the normal life: **“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, LET US GO ON TO PERFECTION; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,”** (Heb.6:1). **What counts is not if it just happened to lose a battle but if we are committed to win the war! “Moreover you shall say to them, Thus said the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?”** (Jer.8:4). Is it a normal Christian life to be a slave, for example to anger during twenty years or to lies or to greediness or to hypocrisy, or, or? The Bible declares: **“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”** (Gal.5:24). It also indicates: **“Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”** (1Joh.3:9). One cannot have a victorious life unless one gets rid of the burden of sin and has not made up his mind to follow faithfully Christ. You cannot run the race with an overcoat. Sin is the enemy of faith.

It is not permitted to have the name or the “etiquette” of a Christian but not the nature of a Christian, because it has been given him exceeding great and precious promises so that by these he might be partaker of the divine nature, having escaped ‘the corruption that is in the world through lust’ (2Pet.1:4). The true Christian is a new creature; **old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new** (2Cor.5:17). God has declared that « **...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, said the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people**» (Heb 8:10 and Ezek.36:26). God is asking from every Christian to follow « **...peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord**» (Heb.12:14). A Christian is not permitted to **draw near to Him with his mouth and honor Him with his lips but his heart be far from Him but in vain worship Him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men** (Mat.15:9).

God has given him a **glorious place and destiny** (Eph.2:6-7). **HE has predestinated him to be conformed to the image of his Son** (Rom 8:29). **He is not allowed to defame his Savior with his sinful or superficial way of living...**

Our difficulty to respond to God’s requirements is partly due to the:

#### **4. Confusion between the expressions “having sin” and “committing sin”**

Many are those which confuse the expressions “**to have sin**” (1Joh.1:8) and “**to commit sin**” (1Joh.3:9). It is written: “**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**” (1Jean 1:8). **To have sin(s)** means that there are sins in our life but of which we are not conscious but that God reveals them to us through different testings and temptations while we walk before Him in the light. When we realize the existence of a sin or of a defect, etc., God invites us to hate it and to reject it. We must not be weary of His correction but **we must love His correction** because this is the only way to be purified and to make spiritual progress (Prov.3:11). **To commit sin** refers to a sin, which we already know! God will give his blessings **only to those** who have decided to purify themselves **from every known sin of our life**. “**Whoever offers praise glorifies me: and to him that orders his conversation aright** (Gr: Puts his live in order) **will I show the salvation of God.**” (Ps.50:23). Let me make it clearer: The Bible says that “**...and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. ...**” (Ec.9:3) and that “**...there is not a just man on earth, that does good, and sins not.**” (Ec.7:20). This is why God sanctifies us... We have within us, **much “rust”** of which we are continuously purified. God, during all our life, **shows us vile things which exist hidden in our fallen nature**, which must **be rejected** as soon as we become conscious of them.

**Conclusion:** Sinless perfection does not exist but true victorious life exists and it is required. This way of life is the **normal Christian life**. The victorious life is given only to them who are upright in heart, to them who love Christ with all their heart, to those who trust Him in all things and have decided to take up their cross and follow Him. “**No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, said the LORD.**” (Isa.54:17). Thus, the satanic excuse which says that we are weak human beings and that it is normal to have a life of “**ups and downs, ups and downs**” **should immediately and completely be rejected.**

## Chapter 8 (050 – EN)

### Erroneous teachings, interpretations, opinions and traditions (D)

#### 1. Man's passive and defeatist position: “*I have no faith*”

Many Christians say, “*Unfortunately, I have no faith*” or “*I am of little faith*”. They do not have faith, which is confidence, OK, but in whom? In God? Do they not trust God? Which words of our Lord Jesus Christ are not true and are not worthy to be accepted? If one wants to believe, he **can learn to believe**. Faith is based on sure and certain knowledge. Also, the Bible says that man can **learn how to fear God** (De.4:10; 14:23; 17:19; 31:13) **and to act** consequently.

I was a man who lived without God but one day I said to myself: “*If what the Bible says is true and there are eternal life and eternal damnation, where are you John and where are you heading to?*” I searched and found out the truth. I discovered that all the prophetic words during eleven centuries before Jesus Christ were accomplished in the life of Jesus and the life of the people of Israel. **God's arguments and in particular His prophecies and their accomplishment convinced me and I learned to believe in His words and to rely on His character.** I do say: **I LEARNED TO BELIEVE AND TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH WHAT I BELIEVE!**

Let us note, at this point, **that faith can be increased**: “**Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,**” (2Cor.10:15). Just like knowledge increases so can faith be increased concerning the will and the promises of God. Yes, because faith is a sure and unquestionable knowledge. The problem is that we are not sufficiently interested to know the truth and to distinguish the will of God! On the contrary, we **are extremely interested in knowing how to face our financial problems**. **The new-born Christian** believes in the measure he knows, that is to say that, his sins were forgiven and that he is now an adopted child of God by the sacrifice of God's Only Son Jesus Christ. He knows that there is a Will for him. **The mature Christian** has studied the provisions of the Will, he knows his duties and privileges which result from the fact that he has been adopted by God and that he is called to believe.

#### 2. Incorrect ideas about the great faith

Many are the Christians – especially in our days – who ask for “great faith” in an abstract, however, manner without intending to employ it for a concrete goal and in a concrete way. If they do not obtain it, they express their sorrow and... indirectly, accuse God... Let us put certain things in order: Certain Christians are interested, actually, in becoming able, when God entrusts them with the **gift (charisma) of faith** which operates miracles and exploits, to use it for the glory of God and the progress of the church. There are, however, others who wish to have and show this gift for their own promotion in the church and/or to make money... Do you remember the case of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:9-24?

It is true that great faith is a gift of God. God, however, gives it to those who HE wants to. It is not, nevertheless, true when we speak about common faith, simple faith, which **is also given** by God, if those who are indeed interested have the good will to obey the truth and to repent... It is enough to refer to three verses to understand this point of paramount importance **concerning the simple or common faith**:

- John 6:47: “Truly, truly, I say to you, He that believes on me has everlasting life.”
- Mark 11:24: “Therefore I say to you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.”; and,
- 1John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

This faith refers to the act by which the believer – obeying the truth of God – accepts Christ as his Savior, receives the remission of his sins and his deliverance of the power of sin and of his control by Satan. This faith is available to all.

The faith gift is given only to those to whom the Holy Spirit wants, in His sovereignty, for the edification of the church. This faith is mentioned among the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1Cor.12:9-10. It is a faith which makes exploits by surmounting humanly insurmountable obstacles. I wish that we all have that great faith but what is most important is to have the simple faith, the common faith, in a GREAT GOD. We, therefore, conclude that **there is, on the one hand, the common faith, the simple faith, accessible to any person in order to be able to receive his salvation and the necessary power of the Holy Spirit to live a holy life filled with power and spiritual comfort and, on the other hand, the great charismatic faith which operates miracles.**

### 3. Incorrect ideas about the increase in faith

Let us return to the point of the increase in the faith, which we have already mentioned. Is it possible to see our faith increasing?

- **The first answer** is that there can be no increase of faith in God if faith in God does not exist. Our Lord Jesus Christ could not have, among His other titles, the title of the **author and finisher of our faith** if there was no possibility of seeing our faith being increased and improved... (Heb.12:2);
- **The second answer** is that there could be no question of prophesying “**according to the proportion of faith**” or according to “**the measure of faith**” (Rom.12: 6, 3) if there were no possibility of increase of faith. Would our Lord blame certain people as men of “**little faith**” if they were not responsible for their “little faith”? And would HE praise others for their great faith? Thus, it is sure and certain that it is possible to make faith increase or, the opposite, to make faith fail (Luc 22:32). We should never let escape from our spirit that there are people who **have made shipwreck because they have lost the good conscience** (1Tim.1:19) or because they **did not hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience** (1Tim.3:9).
- **The third answer** is that faith grows as we apply it in the things of everyday life, in all things and circumstances! Faith develops by the study and assimilation of the promises of God. Faith develops, **in particular**, while **obeying the truth**. Faith is strengthened during the moments of testing... Faith can receive what man asks from God – according to His will – if he has a forgiving and persevering spirit:
  - “Therefore I say to you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them. And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mrk.11:24-26).
  - “That you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Heb.6:12).

Many things could be said on this point but I think that it is preferable to close it by stating again a great and glorious truth: **Let no man believe that his faith in Christ’s words and his trust in God character can increase if he does not love truth above all and does**

**not keep steadily his conscience pure! God does not put the mystery of faith in an unclean heart and in an evil conscience!** (Heb.10:22).

#### 4. **The false idea that one's sin is too big to be forgiven**

It occurs sometimes that a believer falls into a sin, which seems to him to be too repulsive to be forgiven. Then, he loses his boldness or assurance to approach God and to ask for the forgiveness of his sin. It is something, which afflicts him so deeply that he cannot find rest. The affliction of the believer becomes even deeper if he is falsely convinced by Satan that he has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit... Satan, when the believer is not versed in the Scriptures, manages to discourage him and to even move him away from God. It is only a trap! God forgives every sin and blasphemy except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

It happens sometimes that man does not want to forgive himself even if God is ready to forgive him! He cannot tolerate the fact that "he", such a spiritual person (!), fell into such a horrible sin! If, however, he examines his attitude closely, he will discover that it is about a hypertrophic sensitivity, whose root is nourished by pride, arrogance and lack of faith in God's mercy! It is a good thing for the believer to be in a major pain for his sin and not let the memory of his sin escape from his spirit. David, after having committed the terrible sin of murder and adultery, said: **"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."** (Ps.51:3). It is, however, **too bad and extremely dangerous** to lose hope in the mercy of God Who forgives abundantly!

#### 5. **Faith is not "a means of blackmailing God"...**

Honest and faithful people do not negotiate with God: They do not say, *"if You give me this or that then I will obey and do Your will"*. There are people who, lacking faithfulness, decide to move away from God because God did not give them what they hoped to obtain from Him.

A young lady said to me: *"What is the use of belonging to God and of serving Him since He has not given me a husband?"* I then remembered a verse of the Bible, which says: **"You have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?"** (Mal.3:14). The same person arrived at the point of saying: *"Since God has not satisfied my request, I decided to become a worldly person in order to oblige God to give me what I asked Him for. Let Him seek and find me..."*

Another person told me: *«Since I have read the Word so many times, why has God left me to fall into sin and suffer so much?»* Then I replied: *«I did not know that you did a favor to God by reading His Word so many times and, as a consequence, God was obliged to protect you from sin, whatever you did and whatever you liked! Since you have read it, have you never paid attention to the fact that **«We know that whoever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not.»**; (1Joh.5:18).* The fact that I asked God to protect me in my trip, does it mean that I am allowed to drive recklessly and break all traffic regulations? She was dumb-founded...

God is not a "little good God" to be exploited or to become an object of blackmail by His creatures. God is great, majestic and sovereign! He who goes to God must go to Him **humbly**, get rid of the burden of the guilt of his sin and especially be saved from Hell by the blood of Jesus Christ. By love and gratitude, he must try to please God in all things. At this point, God, seeing that the person seeks His justice and His kingdom, meets all his needs according to the richness of His grace (Mat.6:33). When the believer tries honestly to make himself capable of every good work for the accomplishment of His will, then God does in him

what is pleasant for Him, by Jesus Christ... as it is written in Heb.13:21. God is revealed to us when we seek Him **with all our heart** (Jer.29:11).

## 6. Resistance to “worries”

Another sector in which our faith is called, very often, to function is concerns or worries or anxieties of life... Very often? What do I say? No, every moment! The needs and the problems of our life lead us to worries, afflictions, troubles, anguishes or distresses but God invites us not to worry. **He invites us to take care diligently of all things concerning our life but not to worry** (Mat.6:24-34; 1Pet.5:6-7). From the moment when our legitimate cares start getting mixed with anxiety, sin is at the door... Which sin? **The sin of: (a) incredulity, (b) idolatry and (c) stupidity.** God takes care of us... He knows which are the things that we need and He provides them to us (Mat.6:8). Anxiety is a vain mental activity, an activity of the soul, a stupidity, because man can change nothing that God has decided. Moreover, he imagines that a little worry and anxiety make us wise and help us to show dynamism. Such a thing, however, constitutes an indication or a proof of how weak or at which point we are bad... **Worry puts things in the first place**, which should be in a second or last place; if things, persons or success take the priority in our life, then we become idolaters who have nothing to do with God! God takes care of us. Why should we then worry? Somebody said: **The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith and the beginning of faith is the end of anxiety.**

We must, at this moment, stop and speak about the **confusion which exists in our spirit between “care” and “worries or concerns or anxiety”.** **The farmer must sow but he does not visit his fields with anguish every day or at any moment to see the evolution of his plantation... He waits for the moment of harvest patiently and, if necessary, he intervenes to rectify the situation!** Anxiety comes from our desire to follow our own way or our impatience or the way in which we believe that our success or prosperity depends according to our own thoughts and opinion. Abraham left without knowing where he went... **He did not know where he was going but he knew who was He who was leading him...** Our Lord never worried because He never desired to do His own will.

This difficulty becomes more dangerous for the children of God when it appears in a spiritual form of success in the life. They think that their worldly success in society glorifies God in their lives. God, however, does not need our successes according to worldly mentality to be glorified; He wants to see **our repentance and our faith in His Word as well as our trust in His character;** also, **our faithfulness in obeying His commands.** **Our faithfulness in the execution of our duty is the only thing, which counts before of God.** Let us learn how to commit all our problems to God but also our own so-called spiritual ambitions. Our works, our ministry and we ourselves belong to God. Let us let God take care of them. **Let us commit everything to Him and leave them there.** Yes, and **let us leave them with Him** (Ps.37:5). Faith brings our problem to God and it leaves it there!!!

In Ps.13:2 there is a revealing verse: **“How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? ...”** The sorrows in the Psalmist’s heart were due to the **conflict** between the desire of his soul and the will of his heart, which wanted the will of God. The conflict between the will of God and the will of man creates in man’s heart a painful and unstable situation in man’s soul...

When your wrist watch is broken, you give it to somebody to repair it; you leave it there and you leave. You do not stay close to him to dictate him what to do. If you try to dictate him what to do or how to repair it, he will be offended, he will return it to you and will say, *“Take it back, and leave me alone.”* Unfortunately, that is what we often do with God. **We say that we have committed our problem to Him but we are so impatient as if He did not**

know what to do for us or to fix our problem or that He takes too much time to repair it. **“Commit your way to the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”** (Ps.37:5). This verse is the verse of my life... I try to apply it continuously, particularly when I am worried and risk losing my spiritual orientation!

### 7. Faith and afflictions or “disguised blessings”?

In the book of Job 7:1, it is written that the life of man is warfare, a hard service (also Job 11:1-20; 33:8-33 (YLT and ASV). It is full with afflictions because **“...man is born to trouble...”** (Job 5:7)... It is full of tribulations because **“we are appointed thereunto”** (1Th.3:3). Afflictions, tribulations, difficulties and adversities make our faith pass from difficult moments. Then the sky becomes black and the presence of God seems to disappear from our eyes or from our feelings. It is at this point in time that you and we must remember that the Almighty is full of love and full of words of comfort and must consider crises as opportunities for our improvement... Our consolation will not come from our efforts to relieve ourselves by worldly entertainments or by false consolations but by every word coming from the mouth of the Most High.

When I know that God chastens me by afflictions, difficulties, testings or persecutions for my profit, in order to make me partaker of His holiness (Heb.12:10); when I know that He purges me that I may bear more fruit (Joh.15:2); when I know that He protects me from calamities (Ps.57:1); when I know that the afflictions that I am going through under His control are disguised blessings, and that the spiritual material that I will gain and assimilate is intended to be employed by me to the profit of others so that I may be able to comfort those which are in any trouble, by the comfort with which I myself am comforted of God (2Cor.1:4); when I know that He refines me and makes me invaluable in the furnace of the adversity (Isa.48:10); when I know that my light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2Cor.4:17); when I know that I do not know what is good for man in the life (Ec.6:12); when I know that all things work together for good to them that love God (Rom.8:28), **THEN**, do tell me, how should I not be unceasingly comforted and how should I not be full of peace and gratitude springing out in a spontaneous way from the depths of my heart?

Listen to what the Word of God says in the book of Job, in my own words: He charges of vapors the clouds, He disperses them sparkling; their evolutions vary according to His intentions, in order to achieve all that He orders them to do, **for correction**, **for the earth** or as a **sign of His mercy**... (Job 37:11-14).

### 8. In perplexity but not “in despair”

Of course, there are cases where believers who, in spite of the fact that they fear the Lord, that obey the voice of His servant, that walk in darkness, and have no light; it is then that they are exhorted by the Lord, as it is written in Isa.50:10, **to trust in the name of the LORD, and stay on their God**. This is what **confidence in the Lord** means. Even if the true believers are troubled on every side, they are not distressed; **perplexed, but not in despair**; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; **always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in their body** (2Cor.4:8).

Sometimes we do not know which promise we must believe and which command of God to obey exactly. It is then that we must apply our trust, our confidence in the immutable love of God and on the immutable faithfulness of God. **Faith** has to do mainly with the commands and promises of God but **trust** in God has to do with confidence in the holy character and the attributes of God.

## Chapter 9 (051 – EN)

### Erroneous teachings, interpretations, opinions and traditions (Part D)

#### 1. The erroneous opinion that “Satan can upset even the plans of God”

There is a belief or an incorrect conviction that Satan is so strong that he can prevent not only our own plans but also God’s plans. Theoretically, of course, we do not believe such a thing but **it is that which we actually live at the bottom of our heart**. We very often say: *“The devil did this and that, the devil prevented me from doing that... the Devil destroyed... etc”*. Lord, have pity on us!

The truth is that Satan is already a defeated enemy. The prince of this world was judged on the cross. He was thrown outside and judged (John 12:31 and 16:11). Christ **“...Blotting (blotted) out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”** (Col.2:13-15). Moreover, it is written: **“But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.”** (2Th.3:3). In the same manner, it is written: **“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”** (2Tim.4:18).

Some of those who hold this opinion base it both on verses of the Bible and on experience: **“Why we would have come to you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.”** (1Thes.2:18). Satan can provoke man’s soul (1Chr.21:1), can come and take away the word (Mark 4:15), can bind man’s body (Lu.13:16), can enter man’s heart (Lu.22:3 and John 13:27), desires to sift man as wheat (Lu.22:31), can fill man’s heart to lie (Ac.5:3), can tempt man (1Cor.7:5), can be transformed into an angel of light (2Cor.11:14) and can do, up to a certain point, “miracles”. Yes, Satan can create persecutions, hinder the free distribution of the Bible, can prevent the free establishment of churches etc. If we examine closely all these cases, we will find out that Satan can do nothing without the collaboration of man’s heart or without God’s permission. God has His own sovereign purposes. All Satan’s power lies in lies and false or erroneous doctrines.

The victory against the Wicked is not mentioned in the Word of God in a **doubtful** way but it is openly proclaimed from Genesis to Revelation. The Holy Spirit tries to convince us that the devil is already a defeated enemy ... By faith, we put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of Satan (Eph.6:10-18). The believer must have always in his spirit that he should not resist Satan by his own forces, by squeaking the teeth and/or by showing him his fists or by using certain curses against him but by standing on certain promises or by being based on certain statements of the Word of God, which is worthy of all acceptance... If we want to see the LORD **bruise Satan under our feet shortly we must be wise to that which is good, and simple concerning evil** (Rom.16:19-20). It is not written, “Bruise Satan by your imprecations or your curses.” This is also held in a similar way by Peter in his epistle: **“Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brothers that are in the world. ...”** (1Pet.5:9).

If we believe, therefore, that Christ overcame Satan, we will see that we are able in the Name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit to resist him effectively. **His power is in his lies and his erroneous doctrines**. We should never forget what is written in the book of Revelation: **“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of**

**their testimony; and they loved not their lives to the death.”** (12:11). We must believe that he is defeated: **“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”** (1Joh.5:4-5). The winner is he that believes... **The cross of the Christ, which is also our cross,** is the most essential point about our justification by faith, our victory against sin, passions, our bad habits and weaknesses, as well as our victory against Satan. When our faith in the redeeming sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is intact and healthy, we will see the victory with our own eyes... **“Jesus said to her, Said I not to you, that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?”** (Joh.11:40). Amen! **“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living”**, said the Psalmist (27:13). Closing this point I deem necessary to mention a couple of verses concerning the Word of God and the Christ’s church:

- **“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even to bonds; but the word of God is not bound.”** (2Tim.2:9)
- **“...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”** (Mat.16:18)
- **“No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, said the LORD.”** (Isa.54:17)

## **2. The incorrect opinion about the “thorn in the flesh”**

This opinion is based on the verse: **“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”** (2Cor.12:7). God the Father, by what He allowed in the life of Paul, HE wanted to bring him to humility, to save him from any presumption and to emphasize the all sufficiency of the grace of God.

Paul, by the expression of the **“thorn in the flesh”**, made allusion to some infirmity or perhaps chronic body disease which reoccurred from time to time. Perhaps, there was an anomaly in the eyes and or of vision of which he was affected. We have a mention of it in Galatians 6:11: **“You see how large a letter I have written to you with my own hand.”** (great letters in the ancient Greek texts) ! Nothing is specified concerning the nature of this infirmity. In addition, it is necessary to take seriously into account what is written in Galatians 4:13-15: **“You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh you despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness you spoke of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.”** ..... It is not a proof but it is a **good indication...** Another serious indication is the fact, while he was judged by the Council, **he did not discern that the man who commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth was the high priest Ananias ...** (Acts 23:2, 5)

Very probably this was why he had the habit or the need to dictate his letters. In the case of the epistle to Galatians, Paul was obliged – perhaps because of a lack of a secretary or for reasons of safety, so that his letter could not be considered as falsified by malevolent people – to write this epistle with his own hand with large letters. Some suppose that his eyes were terribly irritated... red, because of a chronic inflammation, appeared periodically or they were even swollen... and consequently **disgusting!** Who knows?

We have a similar or parallel case in the testing of Job: The Word of God says that Job was a man “...perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” and “there is (was) none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil” (Job 1:1, 8). In the case of Paul there was a possibility to fall into arrogance on account of the holiness of his life, the excellence of his work and because of the **above measure through the abundance of the revelations**. In the case of Job, there was an intense tendency of self justification (Job 33:9) because of his perfect character and the blessings with which God had surrounded him. They both were in danger of being trapped in a spirit of arrogance and fall under judgment. God, because of His love and protection, allowed Satan to buffet them and impose on them torments in their body so that they are kept humble and be prevented from falling into the horrible sin of pride. Let us pay attention to the fact that in both cases, source of their affliction was Satan whose aim is to buffet, to torture and to destroy. It is good to always remember what is written in the book of Job: “**That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man (remove pride from man - Gr.)**.” (Job 33:17). Let us also mention what the Holy Spirit expressed through David: “**Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins (arrogance - Gr.); let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.**” (Ps.19:13). The enmity or the scorn from their enemies or from their friends was faced, by both Job and Paul, with courage, boldness and power. Job had not seized the cause of his humiliating testing but Paul understood it because of the light he had received from above and particularly through God’s refusal to exempt him from his thorn in the flesh. So, Paul accepted gladly to transform his weakness into a challenge for more blessings and for God’s glory. Job arrived at this point when God reproved him and put him in his place. His murmurings and his protests were changed into Job’s humiliation and in God’s glory. Both of them were protected and were blessed and became precious examples to be imitated.

I remember the case of a dear brother, how often he felt humiliated when he could not take part in the discussions because of his partial deafness... I remember vaguely a phrase that he had used: “*I do not manage to follow what they say and I feel like an imbecile*”. It was as if Satan “buffeted” and humiliated him... The disease or rather the diseases do not come from God. They come either from Satan (the Bible testifies) or as a result of our own sins (for example: aphrodisiac diseases) or because of hereditary defects...

It should not be forgotten that because of the sin of the man the ground is cursed; yes, because of us! The earth is sick! “**For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.**” (Rom.8:22-23).

Many believers have adopted the incorrect belief that it is useless to cry to God because they believe that God does not want to deliver their life from their disease or from other problems. They say that everything comes from God; thus **they accept all passively**, calling their problems, their diseases or afflictions “**a thorn in the flesh**”, **identifying or confusing, in many cases, the problem of Paul with theirs**. Let us clarify some things:

- The word of God says that Christ came not only to forgive our sins but to also heal our diseases and to comfort us in our afflictions... Isaiah says, “**...Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was on him; and with his stripes we are**

**healed.**” (Isa.53:1-5). We see application of this principle in Mat.8.13-17 in the case of the centurion, the mother-in-law of Peter who was sick and confined to bed with fever, in the delivery of a man who was possessed by demons and in many others who were sick: **“...He took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses. He took Himself our infirmities and carried our diseases.”** (Mat.8:17)

- We are exhorted to call upon God on the day of distress to deliver us, and we in our turn, to give glory only to God in words and acts, because glory belongs to Him, with Him. If things are so, then there can be no excuse that, when we are visited by disease or tribulations or afflictions or sadness, we should not accept them passively or without any kind of resistance. **The first thing** that we must do is to ask God, **with reverence**, why He allowed the “visitation” of such a crisis in our life.
- Many are those who have swallowed these incorrect doctrines believing that their disease or problem is a **“thorn in the flesh”** which was given to them, just like that of the apostle Paul (2Cor.12:7). “The thorn” of Paul brought glory to God because the power of Christ could rest on him. And while in the case of Paul “the thorn in the flesh” was to protect him from pride or arrogance due to the excessively great revelations, on the contrary, in a considerable number of Christians, the so-called “thorn in the flesh” is due to the abundance of darkness, sins, weaknesses, disobedience and lukewarm spirit that we have in our life! God is obliged to raise His stick of punishment and to take measures of correction! Some Christians do not understand the Word of God! And some of them do not read His Word or if they read it, they do it sporadically! If we distinguish ourselves, God would cease to chastise us severely: **“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”** (1Cor.11:30-32). If we become zealous and repent, God, in his mercy, will remove our affliction. He will give us the Great Interpreter, the Holy Spirit and the unction, which are planned for each child of God and would allow us to get rid of our covetousnesses, sins or weaknesses and to live a holy life, pious and worthy of His call. We cannot, naturally, exclude the case of pious Christians who, in spite of their testing, tribulations, diseases and the blowing by Satan, bring glory to God because of their patience, tenacity, perseverance and faithfulness; in a word, because of their attachment to God.
- Let us believe, brothers and sisters, that many are the afflictions of the just but let us not remain only in that. Let us also believe the continuation of the verse, which indicates that God will deliver us from all our troubles... (Ps.50:15). Our Lord Jesus-Christ, the Man of sorrows, came to give us life and that one abundantly (Joh.10:10). He came to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, to renew our force, to do us good and to deliver us from the bonds of sin and Satan’s slavery! The goal of Satan is to afflict the children of God in their heart and their body. The goal of Satan is to bind the body and the soul. On the contrary, the goal of God is to untie our body and our soul in order to be able to appreciate the blessings and His astonishing grace. We should never believe that the chastisement of God has a permanent character in the life of His children. If it is so – and it could be so – let God say it to us, as he did to Paul about his thorn in the flesh. Let us not hasten to say it ourself. **As for us, let us pay attention not to leave in us a sin or a weakness or bad habits, which would oblige God to chastise us.** Let us never forget that our heavenly Father is afflicted in all our afflictions, and the angel of His presence saves us. In His love and in His pity he redeems us and He bears us and carries us all our days (Isa.63:9). He is afflicted with us and His Spirit seeks the depths of our heart in order to help us to come to the **repentance** so that He can bless us. **He is ‘after us’ to bless us.** Let us learn our lesson and we will see how the things of our life will change! Let us put

our life and our behavior in order and we will see that God will show us and to bring itself to the plenitude of our salvation and deliverance (Ps.50:23; 91:14-16).

### 3. The erroneous opinion concerning the acquisition “Christian virtues”

Faith accepts and faith obtains! Faith receives the great and invaluable promises of God by which the believer becomes partaker of divine nature. Moreover, faith adds virtues, one after the other. From the moment man becomes a child of God, he becomes also heir to God and co-heir with Jesus-Christ! Then all God’s promises are deposited into the spiritual bank account of the believer. And some of the promises of God can be received in the twinkling of an eye but for other promises it is required to await them patiently. God’s promises are inherited by faith and perseverance (Heb.6:12). With regard to the remission of our sins, it is given to us as soon as we repent sincerely and reject our sins (1Jean 1:9). In the case of certain virtues, things are a little different. By faith, we add virtues, as it is written: “...add to your **faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.**” (2Pet.1:5-7). Each one of these spiritual virtues is added ONLY if we admit their lack or their inexistence and ask for it with all our heart by faith to the Father, in the name of Jesus-Christ. God adds each virtue in one moment, in the twinkling of an eye, but their increase takes place gradually by our exercise, obeying to them and by facing the circumstances of life by faith... Thus, the word of God is accomplished that, “**For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.**” (Rom.1:17). This great truth is confirmed and corroborated by the verse Mark 11:24: “**Therefore I say to you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.**”

Some of these virtues are the product of other virtues: Meekness, for example, is the product of wisdom as it is written in Jacques 3:13. Take, as example, the case of Moses who was very meek, above all men – who were on the face of the earth – because of his wisdom (Nu.12:3).

The problem still, even for a good number of believers, is the insistence of man to see in order to believe! Some want to see or feel the Christian virtues in their life in order to believe them. This behavior, however, is a behavior which is not compatible with faith but with sight... God, nevertheless, has put another order. Here it is: “...**Jesus said to her (to Martha), Said I not to you, that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?**” (Joh.11:40). Thus, man cannot see, feel and appreciate the salvation of God as well as His virtues and His promises being realized in his life unless he believes in the first place God’s words and unless he honors God for His love and faithfulness. God will not conform to our manner of thought and with our mentality. Naturally, there are cases in the Bible where God, in order to encourage humble and good willed men to believe, He condescended to give them some signs, as in the cases of Gideon (Judges Ch.6) and Abraham (Gen.15:8). However, Jesus always refused to give signs to the haughty and arrogant men who required signs because of curiosity or because of a provocative spirit...

Allow me to insist on this point: The believer looks for feelings to believe that he has already received the virtue that was missing in his life and that he had requested from God. It is a serious error due to the weakness of our flesh, which wants to see and feel in order to believe. Religious people can be easily imprisoned in the error to put sight and feeling before faith. “**For we walk by faith, not by sight**” (2Cor.5:7). He had the same believer, most probably the same problem, when he faced the problem of salvation... He wanted to feel

something before believing. For example: He prays to God for self-control and waits to feel something to believe that God has heard his prayer. But things are not so.

Suppose that you receive an official document from the government announcing to you that there was an error about your wages during a certain number of years and that the government owes you a considerable amount of money! When are you going to rejoice? Only when you put the money in your pocket or from the moment that you received the official document? Naturally, from the moment you received the official document! The certainty and the joy which you feel encourage you to start making plans how to spend or invest this money! **The Bible is the official letter of God, the official document! It means what is written inside! The certainty and the feelings which are created in you put your will and feelings in action!**

If you open my “old and used” Greek Bible, you will see certain dates on the margins. For example, 10/6/1959, 3/8/1988 etc. On those days, I beseeched God to remove, for example, the spirit of impatience and to give me the spirit of patience. I believed that God heard me. I did not feel anything at that time. After some time, and without having seen any miracle or having felt anything, I discovered that the impatience of which I suffered and I was fighting for did not exist anymore. It was replaced by patience and my heart started to bless God!

The Bible says:

- **“Therefore I say to you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.”** (Mrc.11:24)
- **“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us: And if we know that he hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”** (1Jean 5:14-15). May God bless us abundantly!

The goal of this series of studies aims at the spiritual deepening of us all!

**At this point, we must add that the promises are inherited “through faith and patience” and not little by little.**

I repeat: There are cases when man is called to wait patiently until he enjoys the accomplishment of a promise of God. Then, he must **consider the promise as already accomplished** and wait patiently it in order to see it accomplished. Perhaps, this promise will take a certain time to become obvious. At this point in time, he must resist the vultures of doubt as Abraham drove away the fowls that came down on the carcasses that he was going to sacrifice (Ge.15:11). Man must drive them out by the power of the Word and the Spirit of God. Our hearts are not always alert or vigilant or patient until their accomplishment. The promises of God are inherited **by faith and patience** (Heb.6:12). Abraham believed the promise of God but he waited 25 years to see the promise of God being accomplished to have a son! In many cases, we do not await them because we are not actually interested in them. We wish them but, actually, we do not await them or worse we do not want them.

Allow me to mention a personal example. When I was about to finish high school, a friend of mine and I decided to learn English all by ourselves by using a self-teaching method. We started studying it together. I learned English, but he did not. Why? Because he **simply wished** to learn English, but **I desired and wanted** to learn it. There is a world of difference between wishing and desiring something and wanting (or willing) it. There is a world of difference between desiring or wishing the will of God and to be decided at **any cost** to see the will of God to be realized in our life...

It is by faith in God that we receive all we need from God for the spiritual warfare of our life (Job 7:1). Our faith in God gives Him the possibility of rendering us active so that He can act through us. **And when God acts through us, then all is possible for us...** This is

why all is possible to him that believes. **“Only believe”!** And elsewhere it is written: **“If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”** (Jean 13:17), our Lord said!

## Chapter 10 (052 – EN)

### When faith functions well...

#### Introduction

During one of our recent spiritual discussions with my wife, she expressed reverently and with deep gratitude a little phrase: *“Everything depends on God!”* I hastened to respond, *“Amen!”* After a few seconds and, on second thought, I added: *“Yes and No!”* She looked at me astonished and asked me: *“What do you mean?”* I answered: *“In reality, everything depends on us and not on God! God’s love has done everything for us. He has sacrificed Christ for us and has deposited for us in our spiritual bank account all kinds of blessings. It depends on us to make use of them in our life. God is ready to bring them into being in our life provided we ask them with all our heart and are always and in everything sincere towards Him! If we do not repent and do not keep repenting sincerely for our sins, if do not believe in His words and do not trust our life in Him, how is it then ever possible for Him to bestow His blessings to us? **If our heart condemns us for a known sin and/or for sinful compromises in our life, we hinder Him in hearing our prayers and doing us good! Consequently, everything depends on our attitude towards Him and towards our fellow men! Among these things, the efficient functioning of our faith is also included!**”*

The purpose of this present series on “Faith and its Functioning” was and is to highlight the importance of faith and its functioning as the key to every spiritual progress as well as the “sine qua non” prerequisite that man be agreeable to our Father in Heaven. I have done my best to include the most important points in the previous chapters, but there are many other things to be said on this subject. This series is not, therefore, exhaustive!

My purpose within the framework of this series was and is:

- To put the accent on the basic and unique importance of repentance and the absolute need to keep a conscience void of offence before God, which, according to God’s principles and commandments, does not accuse us of a known sin in our daily life.
- To put the emphasis on the inevitable necessity to exert our faith completely in God’s Word and put our trust in God’s character.

#### WHEN REPENTANCE AND FAITH FUNCTION WELL:

##### 1. *Man is forgiven, justified, saved, adopted and is given eternal life:*

- “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.” (Acts 10:43)
- “Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19)
- “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:” (John 1:12)
- “For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal.3:26; Joh.1:12)
- “Verily, verily, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.” (John 6:47)
- “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God stays on him.” (John 3:36)
- “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:” (Eph.2:8)
- “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved

**me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.**” (Gal.2:20-21)

Saving faith is always a penitent faith; sincere faith saves and consoles; a weak but sincere faith receives an Almighty Christ. *Jesus has never rejected weak faith but only fake faith. All those who have put their trust in Christ will enjoy incorruptibility and immortality* (1Cor.15:42-54) *but also a glorious future during which he will not only become like Jesus Christ* (1Joh.3:2) *but they will reign with Him* (2Tim.2:12). *He will wipe away all tears from their eyes.....* (Rev.21:4).

**What is, however, going to happen to the unbeliever?**

Here is the answer: **“.....but the wrath of God stays on him.”** (John 3:36)

**2. When man believes sincerely, he receives the promise of the Holy Spirit (Gal.3:14) and is sealed by Him (Eph.1:13). God’s laws are written in the mind and the heart of the believer (Heb.8:10). True faith is crowned by the fruit of the Spirit and it is active and productive: it deadens man’s heart to the things of this world.**

- **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”** (Gal.5:22-24).
- **“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”** (Ps.1:2-3; Col.3:2)
- **“I am the vine, you are the branches: He that stays in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.”** (Joh.15:5)
- **“Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.”** (Jas.2:17)
- **“That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;”** (1Tim.6:18).

***The best way to learn, assimilate, and share the Bible, the believer must try to apply it.***

**True faith produces spontaneous obedience and changes radically the way of life; it cannot be idle; it leads man to a commitment without reservation. It does not remain silent. It speaks God’s Word and testifies to the wonderful things that God has wrought in the believer’s life** (Ps.116).

**IF NOT, what is going to happen to the non believer?**

**3. True faith is victorious; true believers are never defeated**

- **“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”** (1John 5:4)
- **“No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, said the LORD.”** (Isa.54:17).
- **“No, in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through him that loved us.”** (Rom 8:37)
- **“It (faith) quenches the fiery darts of the devil”** (Eph.6:16).

It excludes doubt, discouragement and impossibilities. **True believers resist to blood, striving against sin** (Heb.12:4). **True faith does not accept defeat... because the Word of God cannot be bound and Christ’s purposes are never annulled!** Churches decide and

work on a majority vote but true and correct faith in God even of one believer constitutes the majority, majority which sooner or later will prevail. The Word of God does not return to God void but it accomplishes all His will and prospers in the thing whereto He sends it.

Someone said: *“The committed Christian does not need the approval of others anymore than a lion needs the approval of sheep!”* “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (Gal.1:10).

**IF NOT, what is going to happen to the unbeliever and to the man-pleaser?**

#### **4. True faith is the key to peace, joy, stability, etc.**

- “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me.” (Joh.14:1)
- “When he gives quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hides his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only:” (Job 34:29)
- “For he is our peace...” (Eph.2:14)
- “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.” (2Thes.3:16)
- “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you: because he trusts in you.” (Isa.26:3)!
- “LORD, you will ordain peace for us: for you also have worked all our works in us.” (Isa.26:12).
- “Great peace have they which love your law: and nothing shall offend them.” (Ps.119:165).

True faith provides peace of heart and mind! **True faith in God casts out fear...** (1Jean 4:18), **because God loves with a perfect love, reigns and cares for us.** Thus, God’s Word is proved:

**“...IF YOU WILL NOT BELIEVE, surely you shall not be established.”** (Isa.7:9)

#### **5. True faith makes believers “prisoners of hope”:**

- “Turn you to the strong hold, you prisoners of hope...” (Zec.9:12).
- Those who have true faith can they hope even when there seems to be no hope. Faith does not accept defeat: “Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall your seed be.” (Rom.4:18)
- “For the scripture said, “Whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed.” (Rom.10:11)
- “And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us” (Rom.5:5).

True faith is never in despair. Faith, I repeat it: It does not tolerate defeat... Faith creates hope; no faith means no hope, but just vague wishes, possibilities or probabilities.

**“Hope is never ill when faith is well”**

(John Bunyan)

#### **6. True faith grants man a sixth sense:**

- Faith can “see” even invisible things and wait patiently for them: **“for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”** (Heb.11:27). Faith can see and feel things that the common

human soul and eye cannot perceive; it renders invisible things visible; it can even “see” in the dark moments of life and trust His Faithful Guide! **“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.”** (Heb.11:8)

- Faith precedes vision and understanding; it transcends our understanding; faith is man’s sixth sense... **“Jesus said to her, Said I not to you, that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?”** (Joh.11:40)

Faith is not in need of diplomas in theology in order to speak, preach, witness and act; it can prophesize according to the measure God has bestowed: **“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;”** (Rom.12:6).

**What is going to happen to those who do not believe?** Here is the answer:

**“In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds OF THEM WHICH BELIEVE NOT, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them.”** (2Cor.4:4)

### **7. Faith is the only thing that pleases God’s heart:**

- True faith rejoices God’s heart because man honors His truthfulness and love: **“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”** (Heb.11:6); God, therefore, is not ashamed to be called their Father (Heb.11:16)
- Simple but true faith gives a good testimony: All those who had or have that faith obtain a good report (Heb.11:2), although some of them have not received the promises in their lives (Heb.11:39-40).

Consequently:

**“...If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.”** (Isa.7:9)

### **8. True faith trusts God’s love, His good plans and leading; it is never in haste.**

- Believers do not know the way but they know Who leads and accompanies them: **“Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay on his God.”** (Isa.50:10)
- True faith trusts God for what HE is for him; the believer does not pay attention to what happens all around him or in his feelings... He is “blind” and “deaf” for the things of this world but pays attention to and has his eyes open in God’s things. This is the reason why God calls him ‘perfect’ (Isa.42:19): **“Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD’s servant?”**
- **True faith is never in a hurry and anxiety**: **“...you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.”** (Isa.52:12);
- **“Therefore thus said the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: **he that believes shall not make haste.**”** (Isa.28:16).
- Paul says in Romans: **“As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed.”** The true believer does never act in haste in order to avoid being ashamed.

Consequently:

**Whoever does not believe on him shall be ashamed. It is unavoidable!**

### **9. True faith makes always good choices:**

- “Chooses rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”; (Heb.11:25); true faith does not pay attention to the mockery of unbelievers against believers.
- “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: why God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he has prepared for them a city.” (Heb.11:16). The present world is not worthy in the believer’s eyes... **He sets his affection on things above, not on things on the earth...** (Col.3:2)
- True faith chooses not to be afraid of bad news. **The believer lives in a state of true and stable optimism:** “LORD, you will ordain peace for us: for you also have worked all our works in us.” (Isa.26:12)

Consequently:

**“Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”** (Prov.4:23),  
and

**“As he loved cursing, so let it come to him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.”** (Ps 109:17)

### **10. True faith adds one virtue after the other:**

- “And beside this, **giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.**” (2Pet.1:5-7). One can add no other virtue in his life unless one admits humbly in repentance that it is missing in his life and asks it with all his heart in sincere faith.
- “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraides not; and it shall be given him. **But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.** For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” (Jas.1:5-6)
- “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in him: **Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.**” (Col.2:6-7).

Only true faith receives God’s promises; **true faith has no faith in faith but in Jesus Christ, the Almighty. Faith does not look at itself and does not admire itself. It admires Jesus Christ!**

**“But he that lacks these things (virtues) is BLIND, and cannot see afar off, and HAS FORGOTTEN THAT HE WAS PURGED FROM HIS OLD SINS.”** (2Pet.1:9)

**What a warning!**

### **11. A righteous man’s fervent prayer of faith is efficient:**

- “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.**” (Jas.5:16)
- “Therefore I say to you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, **believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.**” (Mark 11:24)
- “Beloved, **if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.**” (1Joh.3:21-22)

Prayer is the key that opens the gates of heaven. Without confession, a pure heart and a clear conscience, which does not condemn us, our prayer cannot be heard. That is why it is written:

**“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:”** (Ps.66:18)

### **12. True faith transforms the valley of Achor (Trouble or problem) into a door for hope**

- **“And I will give her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor (Trouble) for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.”** (Hos.2:15)
- **“In the multitude of my anxious thoughts within me thy comforts have delighted my soul.”** (Ps.94:19)
- **“Who passing through the valley of Baca (Tears) make it a well; the rain also fills the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appears before God.”** (Ps.84:6-7)
- **It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn your statutes... I know, O LORD, that your judgments are right, and that you in faithfulness have afflicted me. Let, I pray you, your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to your word to your servant. Let your tender mercies come to me, that I may live: for your law is my delight.** (Ps.119:71, 75-77)
- **And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.”** (Rom.5:3-5)

Sound and sincere faith always waits for the accomplishment of God’s promises. The man of God is nourished, reassured and comforted by God’s promises! On the contrary:

**“There is no peace, said my God, to the wicked.”** (Isa.57:21)

### **13. True faith makes man obedient and faithful**

- **“*Faithfulness in little things is a big thing*”** said J. Chrysostom
- Without consistency, there is no moral strength.
- **“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”** (1Cor.4:2)
- **Reverent fear of God is the key to faithfulness in any situation.**
- **O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”** (Deut.5:29)
- **“Jesus answered and said to him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our stayed with him.”!!!** (Joh.14:23). Unbelievable but true!
- **“But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”** (Jas.1:25)
- **“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”** (Rom.2:13)
- **“Not every one that said to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.”** (Mat.7:21)

*In conclusion*

“And we know that **all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom.8:28)**

**And vice-versa:**

**And we know that all things work together against him for bad to them that do not love God.....**

**Or**

**“Cursed be he that does the work of the LORD deceitfully (negligently).....”**

**(Jer.48:10)**

**“Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.” (Jas.4:17)**

**All these thoughts push me to pray daily so that God our Father fill all those who belong to Him with a spirit of faith, with obedience to faith, with a good conscience and with the presence of His Holy Spirit; to warn those that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, to fill with zeal the lukewarm and above all to fill all of us with a spirit of faith and with purity of heart; also, to destroy all the works of Satan.**

## Chapter 11 (053 – EN)

**«Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be (in some respect -YLT) reprobates?» (2Cor.13:5)**

**Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves**

### Introduction

We are closing this series of spiritual messages with the examination of the verse: **«Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?»** (2Cor.13:5). The second epistle as well as the first one to the church of Corinth was written because of carnal divisions. Serious sins had been added to these divisions. Their spiritual situation had provoked feelings of indignation and pain in the soul of Apostle Paul, feelings which pushed him to write these two very edifying epistles to his brethren in Corinth!

Paul was calling them (after he had previously reproved them for their gross sins, on account of which he was afraid that he would **mourn** for many of them who had previously sinned but **had not repented**) to stop doubting about his apostolicity, to examine themselves to see if they lived “in the faith” and if they had a good conduct in Christ. One of the reasons why Paul called on them to examine themselves was because many of them had been deceived. He was afraid that those men had not only lost the correct doctrine of the Gospel but also their self control and that **they were in danger of perishing**.

This fear had made him begin a campaign for their restoration through his letters. It was for this reason that he exhorted them to examine themselves and prove their own selves. What should they do? Surely, **first**, to examine what they **believe** in and second, to find out if their **conduct** was worthy of the Gospel of Christ!

This exhortation is valid for each and every Christian. Let us examine, we ourselves, for our profit, because self examination should be one of our continuous duties in Christ Jesus. Without continuous self-examination and our compliance to the truths of the Gospel, it is impossible to make any real spiritual progress. I would like, therefore, to look at some relevant Bible verses:

- **“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”** (Gal.6:4)
- **“Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands to God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled...”** (Lam.3:39-42)
- **“Why whoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”** (1Cor.11:27-28)
- **“Now therefore thus said the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways...”** (Hag.1:5-7)

In order to fully understand the content of this verse under study, we will examine the following points:

## A) EXAMINE YOURSELVES IF YOU ARE IN FAITH, PROVE YOUR OWN SELVES

Man's life is like the voyage of a ship. Before a ship is launched into the sea for the first time, it is **examined** thoroughly and repeatedly but it is not put in regular voyages before some **trial voyages** so that its state and good functioning can be proven. The aim of such testing is detect existing or possible future malfunctions. Also, every ship or airplane is examined before it is used. That is what every Christian should do. His march toward heaven is extremely difficult because of his internal and external enemies but also because his destination is of the utmost importance. Self-examination is, therefore, enjoined and indispensable!

- **“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.”** (Lam.3:40)
- **“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”** (Heb.12:15)
- **“Remember therefore from where you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent.”** (Rev.2:5)

Given that Paul was **addressing believers**, the expression “in the faith” constitutes an exhortation to walk by faith and not by sight. It refers to the way they should face their thoughts, desires and acts **in full conviction and trust in God** concerning their salvation and dependence on Him. It also generally means that they must act with confidence and that do not condemn themselves in the things that they accept: **“Have you faith? have it to yourself before God. Happy is he that condemns not himself in that thing which he allows.”** (Rom.14:22). In other words: I am sure that what I decided is just and good: What I do, what I write, what I say etc. It is further written in God's Word: **“And he that doubts is damned if he eat, because he eats not of faith: for whatever is not of faith is sin.”** (Rom.14:23).

### 1. Paul recommends them to examine themselves and not the others

The Word exhorts all of us because – one more than the other – we have the same hypocritical behavior. I say ‘hypocritical’ because this is the way the Lord calls it: **“You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the mote out of your brother's eye.”** (Mat.7:5). Yes, such people are called hypocrites by Christ...

We must, therefore, examine ourselves and not the others, because each of us will be accountable to God and not to others. **We will not be able to justify our sins because of the sins of others.** This, however, does not mean that we must close our eyes and not see what is happening in our brother's life, because where is then the mutual exhortation, admonition and reproof? Sincere and out of love interest in others' lives, it is not only permitted but it is also an obligation... for the good of our brothers and sisters and for the welfare of the church.

### **An important parenthesis: the use of a secure and trustworthy measure...**

In order to examine ourselves, it is necessary to use a secure and trustworthy measure of comparison. Divers measures are unacceptable, and they are an abomination concerning spiritual matters. **“Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.”** (Pr.20:10). Our conscience is a bendable and not sufficiently secure measure. Our conscience cannot give us a perfect judgment (1Cor.4:4; Ps.143:2). God, however, has set the touchstone of self-examination and judgment. This touchstone is the Word of God.

Let us not forget that men **have** sin in their life that limits their light and there is “...madness is in their heart while they live...” (Ecc.9:3). Of course, what is encouraging is that God consents to hear us **when our conscience in Christ does not convict us**. Then, we have boldness toward God and then He hears our petitions. Let us not, however, forget what Paul said: “...I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judges me is the Lord.” He who really has the right to judge is the Lord. He is the only one who knows men’s heart (1Ki.8:39; Ps.139:1-5; 1Jo.3:20; Rev.2:13). “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.» (1John 3:20). **Fortunately, Christ, instead of judging us, He intercedes for us.**

He has given us His Word so that we may judge ourselves and be prepared for the hour of judgment. The Holy Spirit has, to that end, an active role to play, It searches our depths and brings to the surface the hidden things of darkness and the imaginations of our hearts. As for us, **in the measure that we give up ourselves, our material and spiritual things to God, in that same measure we become spiritual**. If we accept the searching work of the Holy Spirit we will be much better and many people should pay attention to our words. This is not true for everybody because some do not let God judge them, how much more for us. And if they have never, during their whole life, accepted being examined by God and being humbled, are they going to obey our own examination? **Let us love God’s judgments** and let us repent because, **then and only then**, the Holy Spirit will be poured on us and will make us understand His words (Pr.1:23). **Let us, also, love the reproofs of God’s men** inspired by goodness and justice even if they are not absolutely just and exact. “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.” (Ps.141:5). **When God judges, there is mercy in His judgment.**

## **2. Self-examination should be honest and detailed**

Let us keep our clemency and compassion not only for ourselves but also for the others. Let us be satisfied with the mercy that God has shown to us. Let us pray the Lord and say:

- “**Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.**” (Ps.26:2)
- “**Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**” (Ps.139:23-24)

So, self-examination must be done **diligently and in the fear of God**. It should extend to our words, thoughts, feelings and especially our Christian character and conduct in our family, our work and our church.

## **3. Self-examination should be continuous and without ceasing**

The verse under study is in the imperative present tense, which means that self-examination must be done without ceasing. Through continuous self-examination, man brings to the surface his dark depths, which disappear as soon as the light of the Word of God falls on them, because “... **all things that are reprovéd are made manifest by the light: for whatever does make manifest is light.**” (Eph.5:13). The study of the Bible contributes greatly to such self-examination. Self-examination is all the more necessary when the believer goes through tribulations or afflictions. **Self-examination is enjoined but should not be done anxiously. Even this should be committed to God so that His Holy Spirit might do it unhindered and search our motives and our acts!**

## **4. Things that we should examine:**

- Our convictions, that is, if our **credo** is according to the Word of God, lest there is an error, small or great, because even a little error, a little leaven can leaven the whole lump

(Gal.5:9). We must always, as good scribes, which are instructed to the kingdom of heaven bring forth out of their treasure things new and old, having always in mind that whatever we know, we know nothing yet as we ought to know (1Cor.8:2)... In other words, **if we believe WHATEVER God says... and not simply what we can endure from the word of God!**

- We must especially examine **the choices of our heart** with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life. (Pr.4:23), because our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer.17:9). Without a severe self-examination it is impossible to detect any improvement. Mistakes, failings and sins are impossible to see them disappear without self-examination and their rejection. Self-examination is very difficult for our souls because it requires humiliation and confession, which are painful for the soul. It is difficult because the **pride** of the soul alters judgment. Our pretensions concerning our piety will be tested at the moment of danger and of our interest... I repeat: From **the choices of our heart** depend the issues of life. **The events that will follow are bound to the choices of our heart.** From the moment we have made our choice, the events will begin to take their course and we will not be able to influence them. From the moment we have pushed the trigger of our choice, it is impossible to change the course of the events that will follow our life. The Word of God says:
  - **“Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”** (Pr.4:23)
  - **“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.”** (Jer.10:23)
  - **“A man's heart devises his way: but the LORD directs his steps.”** (Pr.16:9)

In other words, **from the moment man has made his choice, the course of his life is decided and regulated by God.** May be our works appear to be good but they may not be done with a perfect heart. We must examine which are our desires and our goals, and where and which is our treasure and how our thoughts are absorbed day and night...

## **5. The believer must examine his spiritual situation and his behavior**

He must examine himself whether he has put on the whole armor of God (Eph.6:10-18):

- If he loves the truth and uses **always the truth, whether in little or in big issues;**
- If he does **justice towards God and man** (that is, if he **repents**), recognizing God's rights as well as his own sins;
- If he is ready to give his **testimony**, under favorable and unfavorable conditions for himself, on behalf of Him who saved him and loves him;
- If he has learned to **resist by faith the temptations** of Satan and of his flesh, by obeying the Word of God;
- If he believes in **God's protection**, if he has the **certainty of his salvation** and realizes that none can snatch him from God's hands;
- If he is well **armed with God's Word**, so that he may use it properly, both as **a defensive arm and as an offensive arm by using the most appropriate “it is written”**;
- If he has made the **unceasing prayer** his breath and prays to God lifting up **pure hands**;
- If he wants that God's will should always be done in his life and in the life of both his friends and his enemies;
- **If he believes** that all his requests which are according to God's will can not remain unanswered and finally;
- **If he takes care to keep the clothes of righteousness that God has given him always pure. Then, God the Father will continue to give him unceasingly the Holy Spirit and His fruit and His gifts!** (Ac.5:32).

**IF NOT, he will become spiritually blind, unfruitful and he will forget that he was purged from his old sins! (2Pet.1:9)**

God uses His own ways to bring us to a situation or to a place in order to be tested so that our content be manifest, to know what is in our heart, whether we will keep His commandments or not (De.8:2). He brings us to the “desert” of afflictions to be tempted by the Devil; He brings us to the desert to speak to our heart and to give us the valley of Achor (Trouble) as a door of hope (Hosea 2:15), in order to transform the crisis into an occasion of spiritual maturity. If we do not “stone to death” the sin that God has revealed to us there is no hope of improvement and of spiritual progress. Conclusion:

**No repentance? No correction! No repentance? No improvement and no progress! No repentance? No Christ! No repentance? No life eternal but everlasting death!**

Blessed is, however, the soul that was able to discern its own situation through the Word of God and was not necessary to pass through a serious crisis... I enjoyed the greatest blessing of my being when I was under such a testing: I compared the ‘pros and cons’ because there was a serious problem in my life. There was an easy solution: To ignore it and forget it. There was also the difficult and painful solution, which might have disastrous results. I knew, however, that the easy solution would damage my spiritual life while the difficult one would become a source of blessing. I preferred the difficult and painful one, which would assure me **the peace of my soul** and, **above all, a clear conscience**. In addition, I would have good relations with my heavenly Father! God, in His mercy, did not permit me to undergo that situation and blessed be His name. From that day of that terrible crisis of soul and spirit, a new era of spiritual life began, of light and power!

## **B) KNOW YOU NOT YOUR OWN SELVES, HOW THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU?**

Let me begin the second part of my message by citing certain verses:

- **“Jesus answered and said to him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our stayed with him.” (Joh.14:23)**
- **“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” (Ro.8:10)**
- **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Ga.2:20)**
- **“Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1Cor.3:16)**

If “Christ is in us” – that is, if we are true Christians – this truth compels us to live in fear and trembling concerning our words, our works and the thoughts of our mind... If we really have Christ in us, then we have the responsibility to evangelize precious souls on behalf of which Christ died.

## **EXCEPT WE ARE REPROBATES...**

### **1. Christ and sin cannot cohabit; they are incompatible.**

Otherwise, we are **reprobates** (not approved, disapproved, rejected, unable to stand the trial, castaway) or false Christians. Let me refer to some important verses, which clarify the notion of the word “reprobate” and the message of this verse:

- **“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.” (Tit.1:16)**

- “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” (1Cor.9:27)
- “But that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near to cursing; whose end is to be burned.” (Heb.6:8)
- “If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard,...” (Col.1:23)

We conclude, therefore, that Christ is in all true believers! This is the meaning of the expression “Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you?”. Christ, therefore, is not in someone who is reprobate (disapproved, rejected, and castaway) in something ... although he professes that he knows God (Tit.1:16). What makes someone reprobate? It is sin. And to be more exact and clear, sin from which man has not repented. So, one becomes approved from the moment he has repented for his known sin. “Why by their fruits you shall know them.” (Mat.7:20). Man is not reprobate if he cleanses himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2Cor.7:1). In addition, if he keeps himself pure, he will become a vessel of honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use and prepared to every good work (2Tim.2:21). Such man can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth (2Cor.13:8). What kind of man is he who, on account of his traditions, annuls the Word of God? Only “...as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom.8:14).

*If we are reprobate, what is going to happen if we do not repent? (Heb.6:8)*

2. He who is not possessed by the fiery desire to get rid of every sin and by a heart burning to share the Gospel, he will do well to put a big question mark against his genuineness...

*If we are lukewarm, what is going to happen if we do not repent? (Rev.3:16)*

3. There are believers who think that they are pure but they are not, in reality, washed from their sin, as the Word of God says (Pr.32:12). This, though it seems improbable, it constitutes very often a sad reality, which is widespread among religious people. There are believers that are deceived and err. The following words are not written in vain:

- “But be you doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” (Jas.1:22)
- “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” (Gal.6:7)
- “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain.” (Jas.1:26)
- “Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:” (Rev.3:17)
- “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” (Gal.6:3)
- “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” (1Cor.15:33)

*What is going to happen if we are deceived and do return to the truth?*

4. In order not to be “judged”, when we take part in the Lord's Supper. The consequences for those who do not take part of the body and blood of the Lord worthily can be very serious, up to death... To take part in the Lord's Supper is a solemn act and there will be fearful results if it is celebrated in an improper way. We should search out and remove all things that are offensive to God. This self-examination should be done always but especially

before the Lord's Table (2Cor.11:28). Our participation is a solemn profession of our attachment to God and an act of consecration. Man should see if he is born again, if he discerns the Lord's body, if he has truly repented for his sins and has a sincere desire to live the life of a Christian. Also if he has put in order his relation with those with whom he has spiritual problems and is reconciled. Consequently, our participation at the Lord's Table should always be preceded by honest and prayerful self-examination.

*What is going to happen to us if we do not discern ourselves and do not repent?  
(1Cor.11:30-32 and Luke 13:3, 5)*

5. In order to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, **lest in any way we should slip away** (Heb.2:1); or **in order not lose what we have wrought**, but may receive full wages (2Jo.8); or in order not to become blind, short-sighted, **and forget the purging of our former sins and make our calling and election sure!** (2Pet.1:9-10)

*What should we do in order not to lose what the Lord has given us in His grace?*

6. In order to get ready for the day of the great judgment before the Judgment Seat... **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.”** (2Cor.5:10). On that great day, every man's work will be made manifest. The secrets of all hearts shall be revealed: Whether the believer has held truth or error; whether he has had correct views of piety or false; whether what he has done was something that he should have done or not. Everything shall be revealed by fire, even our zealous but useless activism!

*What is going to be our apology when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ?  
Have we thought what is going to happen if we have not loved Christ with all our heart and if we avoided or refused to lift up our cross?*

7. Self-examination is useful even for our comfort and our spiritual revival because many times the enemy of our soul either by thoughts or by feelings brings discouragement, exploiting our mistakes and our shortcomings. Our self-examination brings to the surface our true will and not false feelings that the enemy creates in our souls. By false and unjustified accusations he condemns us and brings us to perplexity. Our self-examination reminds us of the unchangeable mercy of our great God and Savior. **“Because he considers, and turns away from all his transgressions that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.”** (Eze.18:28) **(Please, read also Ps.77:1-10).**

The usefulness, therefore, of this self-examination is great:

- **“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”** (1Cor.11:31)
- **“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”** (Gal.6:4)
- **“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”** (1Jo.3:20-22).

## **EXHORTATION**

I deem necessary, as I am closing this series to refer to certain words of the apostle Paul of utmost importance:

- **“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he stays faithful: he cannot deny himself.”** (2Tim.2:11-13)

- « Moreover, brothers, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, **if you keep in memory what I preached to you, unless you have believed in vain.** »  
(1Cor.15:1-2)

May none hear from the Lord's lips "...I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Mat.7:23). Let us make a convention with God on the basis of the verse: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."** (Ps.139:23-24).

**"Now to him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."**

(Jude 1:24-25)

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**End of the series on the subject:  
"FAITH IN CHRIST and ITS FUNCTIONING"**