

Basic principles relating to faith

This text is a translation from
French.

Where the Bible text is quoted,
it is a translation on the French text.
We advice the reader to read also in
his Bible, where the translation is
not clear!

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Introduction

This document covers the fundamental points concerning the Christian faith.

Recognising the importance of these fundamental teachings, a brother from the city of Lusambo in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) took it upon himself to publish them in a document in the Tshiluba language.

The original document, written in collaboration with this brother from Lusambo, contained questions at the end of each chapter with answers at the end of the document. I have not included these questions in this version.

These basic concepts are increasingly ignored or at least overlooked and less and less taught. On the other hand, they are being replaced by a teaching of rules to follow, replacing what the believer receives by simple faith and also enjoys by faith, not what impresses human nature, introducing a set of human emotions foreign to divine life.

May these lines bring the reader back to what he heard from the beginning, and if he never heard it, may he find in these lines what responds to the real state of his soul.

Dear fellow believers, even those who have already become true children of God sometimes confuse spiritual teachings with truths such as: New Birth, Believing, Repentance, Conversion. While unbelievers wonder how to achieve these things in practice, believers wonder individually: have I already achieved them? Others, too, in presenting the Gospel to lost sinners, forget the essential principles of God's work through His Son for the salvation of man, concepts such as eternal damnation, love, God's justice, etc. If these words do not have the same meaning, then what is the meaning of the truths they express?

It is in an attempt to provide an answer in the light of the Word, not for the sake of satisfying our intellectual knowledge (knowledge puffs up), but in order to help:

- Unbelievers to realise their state of perdition and to grasp the salvation offered by God's grace
- Believers to enjoy full assurance of their acceptance in Jesus their Lord and Saviour
- Servants to present them well to sinners in order and in their full meaning.

A- Natural birth

What is sin and its consequences

Before addressing the question of natural birth, it is important to be clear about what sin is.

Sin consists of having a will that opposes or refuses to submit to God's will! Sins are **acts against God's will!**

In Genesis 2:15-17, God expresses His will to man in the context of the Garden of Eden, in ideal conditions never equalled on earth.

We read in chapter 3 that man failed! He ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, committing an act that was contrary to God's will!

Adam thus left his state of innocence and acquired a conscience, giving him the notion of good and evil. He became a sinner, with a will always ready to oppose God's will! From that moment on, he could only know God as a Judge, and for this reason he hid from God's presence, together with Eve, his wife. (*)

(*) *"They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden"* (Genesis 3:8).

From then on, God's sentence applied, for He had said to him: "*... in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis 2:17)!

The race of Adam's sons

Adam carries within him this root of sin, which he passes on to his entire race, leading them not only to physical death but also to the second death!

The first man, head of the human race, led his entire race to death through sin, not only the first death but also the second (*).

(*) "*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth fled away, and the heaven... I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne, and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And **the dead were judged according to their works**, by the things which were written in the books. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is **the second death**, the lake of fire. And if anyone was **not found written in the book of life**, he was cast into the lake of fire.* (Revelation 20:11-15)!

The character of his descendants is revealed in the person of Cain, a very religious man who refuses to offer a sacrifice for sin and kills his brother! This is the first act of death!

Genesis 5 gives a summary of the lives of Adam's descendants from the line of Seth, up to Noah! With the exception of Enoch, all must pass through death. Except for Noah and his sons, all the descendants of Seth, like those of Cain, perish in the flood because of their wickedness. This has been the case throughout the ages.

Adam is also called the 1st Adam, because there is a second Adam, whom we will discuss later. He is thus the leader of all his descendants. Therefore, all men without exception deserve to appear before the great white throne to be judged for their acts of free will opposed to God's will! "*... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...*" (Romans 3:23) "*... just as through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death spread to all men, in that all sinned ...*" (Romans 5:12).

The importance of BELIEVING what God says!

We have seen that sin consists of having a will that opposes God's will. It is worth pointing out that in order to submit to God's will, we must first **BELIEVE** what He says in His Word.

Not believing what God says is to oppose God's clearly expressed will, and **therefore to sin!**

It is a matter of **BELIEVING everything God says; to believe only part of it** is also to oppose God's will, **and therefore also to sin!**

B- The work of the Holy Spirit

We have seen that Adam, having become a sinner, was afraid of God; he could only perceive God as a Judge. He knew that he had committed an act that was against God's will! He hid himself, and God had to come to him and clothe him in a garment of skin, having required the death of a victim!

Thus, the Holy Spirit has been doing His work of ploughing since the Fall, and even more intensely since He came to earth as a divine Person at Pentecost, as we read in Acts 2.

This work of ploughing is described very vividly in the parable of the sower (*).

(*) *"Ye, therefore, hear the parable of the sower. From every one who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the wicked one comes and catches away what was sown in his heart: this is he that is sown by the wayside. But he that is sown on the rocky places - this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, but has no root in himself, but is for a time only; and when tribulation or persecution happens on account of the word, he is immediately offended. And he that is sown among the thorns - this is he who hears the word, and the anxious care of this life, and the deceit of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he that is sown upon the*

good ground - this is he who hears and understands the word, who bears fruit also, and produces, one a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty.. " (Matthew 13:18-23). [See also Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:3-8 & 14-20; Luke 8:5-8 & 11-15]

This consists of working on the conscience of Adam's descendants, every man and woman, so that they may receive the Word. Because God "*wants all men to be saved...*" (1 Timothy 2:4).

The different types of grounds describe the state of the heart, what man thinks in the secret of his heart, allowing his conscience to act to a greater or lesser extent, and resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in various ways, until the ground is good and can then bear fruit. The seed germinates and produces fruit in eternal life, which will be the subject of the next point.

The rocky ground represents the state of a soul that resists God's will a little less. It partly believes what God says, but it refuses to admit what God says about its condition. It refuses to believe that it is completely lost! It has a false joy, it has the appearance of life, but it is not eternal.

The good ground is the state of the soul that no longer resists the Holy Spirit at all. It does not experience joy; it is desperate to meet God as a Judge, and believing without reservation what God says, it sees itself as having to be

judged at the great white throne and condemned to the second death! (Revelation 20:11-15)

In His grace, God Himself comes to meet a soul that is thus ripe to receive the Word of life, which is what we will see in the next point: the new birth!

C- The new birth

We return to this soul who no longer resists the Holy Spirit and who finds itself in a big distress! It is convinced by the Holy Spirit that if it must appear before God, it can only rightly be judged for its acts of rebellion against God, that is, its sins, and be condemned to the second death, i.e., to spend eternity in hell, suffering the same fate as Satan and his angels!

It is to souls in this state of anguish, and to them alone, that God freely offers to be born again. It is therefore of the utmost importance to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and to recognise our complete perdition!

It is necessary to be born again, for we read: "*Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3).

But what does it mean to be "born again"? The Lord answers: "*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5). And the Lord insists, "*You must be born again*" (John 3:7).

But God does not leave the soul in this state of anguish and misery. He comes to this soul, like the father in the parable of the lost son who sees him coming from far away and runs unto him (*).

(*) *"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son" (Luke 15:20).*

God request nothing from this soul except to simply believe what He Himself has done in the person of the Lord Jesus on the cross! He comes to him and let him read:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever BELIEVES in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever BELIEVES in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:14-16).

N.B. God uses the story of the serpent of brass in Numbers 21 as an image.

God places no conditions on the desperate soul fearing to stand before God as Judge! This same God then reveals Himself as the God of love who did everything on the cross, in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus, so that the soul that sees itself as eternally lost may be saved by the hand of the God of love!

It is important to note that God request nothing! He gives divine life to the soul that simply believes what God tells it! There are no prerequisites for receiving life and being born again!

In the new birth, water, the image of the Word of God, washes when it is believed, and it is the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) who acts, from the "ploughing" of the parable, to reveal what God the Father accomplished on the cross in the person of His Son!

God request nothing, because man is unable of doing anything! This is what the soul had to recognise when the Holy Spirit was working on it to make it good soil.

We will see in the next paragraph that the first fruit of life **must** then be repentance! But repentance (not to be confused with the need for conviction of being guilty of eternally loss) is not a prerequisite for receiving divine life!

Through the new birth, the soul, clothed with divine and eternal life, is introduced into a new sphere, inaccessible to natural man, to the son of Adam. This new sphere is the **new creation (*)**.

(*) *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:14-15).*

At the new birth, a new moral man is born, whose domain of life is the new creation, where everything is of God! We will see everything concerning him in the paragraph dedicated to the "new man".

D- Repentance, confession & conversion

*"**God**, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent"*

(Acts 17:30).

We saw in the previous paragraph that God has no pre-requisites for giving divine and eternal life to the soul that sees itself as eternally lost and simply believes what God tells it! And yet, **God enjoins to repent!** It is an order!

To understand this apparent difficulty, we must remember that **God never demands anything without giving those to whom He speaks the means to respond to His demand.** This is also true of repentance.

Repentance should not be confused with simply regretting having done wrong things, with the untenable commitment to never do it again! This is impossible because of sin. The natural man, in all the states described in the parable of the sower, is incapable of repentance, because in order to repent, we must be able to judge our actions before we are born again in the same way that God judges them, which is why the Lord Jesus had to go through three hours of abandonment on the cross!

It is as solemn as that!

It is therefore impossible for a soul that does not have the life of God to repent, and on the other hand, as soon as a soul possesses divine life, **it must repent**, otherwise it has not considered its past life as God judges it, and in such a case, it is a soul that receives the Word partially, as described in the parable of the sower! (*)

(*) Accepting eternal damnation is not repentance!

The object of repentance is confession, expressing what one repents of!

Conversion incorporates the entire divine work, from the conviction of eternal perdition to repentance.

If repentance is not a prerequisite for obtaining divine life, a person who has not repented does not have divine life and is not converted!

This is solemn!

It is true that this is sometimes a difficult subject, because the meaning of repentance is deduced from the context. Here are a few examples: Acts 17:20; Acts 20:21; 26:20; Romans 2:4 & 5; Hebrews 6:1 & 6; 2 Peter 3:9

There are languages that do not have a word to express the meaning of repentance. In Dutch, for example, the word

is translated as "conversion", a word that has a much broader meaning than repentance.

N.B. The word repentance is only used in the specific sense related to new birth. It is used in other contexts, but always means to see something as God sees it. The baptism of John the Baptist, the baptism of repentance, has a different scope of application.

E- The new man, the man in Christ

Introduction

We have seen in the previous paragraphs what each of us is as a natural man, whose leader is Adam, the man who, in his nature, opposes the will of God, refusing to believe what God says, even though He says it clearly in His Word: the Bible. This is exactly what I was, just like you who are reading these lines, before I was converted, as described in paragraphs B, C & D.

We will all have noticed that in these three paragraphs, everything was **accomplished by God alone**, and **nothing by me!** In point B, it is the work of the Holy Spirit alone; my part is simply to **stop resisting Him**. In point C, it is the exclusive work of God in the person of the Lord Jesus; I clearly have no part in it, I benefit from it simply by believing, that is, **by faith**. And even at point D, it is also **the Holy Spirit who acts on me, a newly born man**, so that I repent of all the acts committed before my conversion, and the objects of my confession. It is as a result of all these actions of the Holy Spirit using the Word (*) that I am then converted. **Everything is grace from God!**

(*) "... *born of water and the Spirit ...*" (John 3:4) "water" = the Word and "Spirit" = the Holy Spirit (God)

Everything was accomplished on the cross in the person of Jesus, the Son of God!

It was on the cross that all God's thoughts were realised in favour of sinful man. It is for this reason that the Lord Jesus said these last words:

*"When Jesus... he said, '**It is finished**'. And having bowed his head, he delivered up his spirit"*

(John 19:30).

What was accomplished? To understand this, the Word gives us images in the Old Testament.

- **What the Lord Jesus accomplished "FOR ME"**

- He took upon Himself **everything that deserved my second death!** He suffered in my place the judgement that I deserved! A beautiful image is the scene of the Passover in Egypt: the sacrificed lamb. The blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of the house provided protection from judgement! (*)

(*) *"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak to the whole assembly of Israel, saying: On the tenth day of this month, each of you shall take a lamb for each father's house, one lamb per house. And if the house is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbour nearest to his house shall take one according to the number of souls; you shall count for the lamb according to what each one can eat. You shall have a*

*lamb without blemish, a male, a year old; you shall take it from the sheep or from the goats; and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it between the two evenings. And they shall take of the blood thereof, and put it on the two side posts and on the lintel of the houses where they shall eat it; and they shall eat the flesh that night, roasted with fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. You shall not eat any of it half-cooked or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire: the head, the legs, and the entrails. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste. It is **the LORD's Passover**. For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and I will execute judgments upon all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when **I see the blood**, I will pass over you, and there shall be no plague to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." (Exodus 12:2-16). [Note: "... **I will see the blood**, and I will pass over you ..."]*

- He bruised Satan's head. The enemy of my soul, the one who kept me enslaved to the world and the evil that is practised in it, was definitively defeated on the cross! A very beautiful image can be found in the story of the Red Sea! Pharaoh and his army are an image of Satan and his angels. With the enemy closing in, God opened a trench in the sea, the people passed through on dry ground, the enemy wanted to join them, but in

His power the Lord closed the breach in the sea, and the enemy was swallowed up forever! This is exactly what the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross for me.

(*)

(*) *"And the Lord said to Moses, 'Why are you crying out to me? Speak to the children of Israel, and let them go. And you, lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and let the children of Israel go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. And I, behold, will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them; and I will be glorified in Pharaoh, and in all his host, in his chariots, and in his horsemen; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I am glorified in Pharaoh, in his chariots, and in his horsemen. Then the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, departed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, and came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to one and light by night to the other; and one did not come near the other all night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided; and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued them, and went in after them, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen, into the midst of the sea. And it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. He took away the wheels from their chariots and made them drive heavily. The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from Israel, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.*

*And the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, and the waters will return upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and their horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its strength, and the Egyptians fled towards it. and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. **The waters returned and covered the chariots and horsemen of the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.** But the children of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. And the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore. And Israel saw the great power that the Lord had used against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in Moses his servant. (Exodus 14:15-31). [Note: "...the waters returned and covered the chariots and horsemen of the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; **not one of them remained.**"]*

- **What the Lord Jesus accomplished "IN ME"**

The Lord Jesus, through the cross, accomplished not only a work "for me," but also a work "in me": What I am, as a son of Adam, the natural man that I am by birth, as described in paragraph A, has come to an end! That man is called "the old man" in the Word! This old man was crucified with Christ on the cross ("...our old self was crucified with him, so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." [Romans 6:6])

But if there is an "old man", there is also a "**new man**", created not at the time of the first creation (Genesis) but at the time of the new birth! ("*... **the new man, created according to God, in righteousness and holiness of truth.***" [Ephesians 4:24] "*... **the new man, renewed in knowledge according to the image of the One who created him...***" [Colossians 3:10]).

The crossing of the Jordan is an image of the death of the old man and the new man who came out alive following the resurrection of Christ (of which the ark is an image). Read Joshua 3 & 4. Note that we logically speak of our death with Christ, and then of our resurrection with Him, but in the image of the Jordan the order is reversed! The reason for this is that one must first be born again for the natural man, the son of Adam, to be dead and called the old man!

We will have noticed that **everything depends on the ark** (image of the person of the Lord Jesus) which first enters the depths of the Jordan, the people cross it, and then the ark comes out of the Jordan!

- The 12 stones taken from the Jordan, where the feet of the priests carrying the ark stood, and placed on the other side of the river, on the bank, an image of the

land of resurrection, are an image of the "**new man**" ("*Take twelve stones from here, from the middle of the Jordan, from where the priests' feet stood, and carry them with you and place them in the place where you will spend the night.*" [Joshua 4:3])

- The 12 stones, which Joshua (*) placed where the feet of the priests carrying the ark had stood, represent the "**old man**" placed at the bottom of the Jordan, symbolising death! ("*Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day.*" ") [Joshua 4:9]. Like these 12 stones, in the eyes of the new man, it is in death that the "old man" remains to this very day!

(*) Joshua is a type of the Lord Jesus, but also of the new man, that is, "*Christ who lives in me*" (Galatians 2:20).

A verse from the Epistle to the Galatians expresses these two facts very well: "*I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, I [I = the old man], but Christ lives in me [I = the new man]*" (Galatians 2:20).

All this was accomplished by the Lord both "for me" and "in me," but it does not stop there. What was accomplished on the cross also has **an effect "ON ME"**!

- The effect "ON ME" of what Christ accomplished both "for me" and "in me"

The Epistle to the Galatians teaches us this again!

"... they that are of the CHRIST have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires..." (Galatians 5:24)

N.B. It is important to understand the meaning of the word "flesh", as it is used in several senses. It does not refer to what makes up our mortal body, but rather to the power that drives the natural man, the power that causes him to resist the will of God! This power is always at war with the power that animates the new man, which is the Spirit (the Holy Spirit)! "...the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another..." (Galatians 5:17).

It does not say that we must crucify the flesh, but that we have crucified it! It is something that has been done, not something to be done!

This is what the new man does as soon as he is born!

Here too, the book of Joshua gives us an image that helps us understand. The Lord said to Joshua (an image of the Lord Jesus but also of the new man, who is "Christ dwelling in me"): "... make yourself stone knives, and circumcise the sons of Israel once again (*) ... and they called that place Gilgal" (Joshua 5:2 & 9). Gilgal is exactly the place where the 12 stones taken from the Jordan (image of the new man)

were placed ("... *these twelve stones which they took from the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal*" [Joshua 4:20]).

(*) *"Once again" does not mean that it must be repeated (this is physically impossible), but that those who had been circumcised when they left Egypt had all died, and their descendants had not been circumcised!*

N.B. Circumcision consists of a cut made to the organ that transmits natural life from generation to generation, thus transmitting the sinful nature of man characterised by the power of the flesh.

Circumcision is thus a picture of **the crucifixion of the flesh** by the one who is born again, for he is indeed **OF CHRIST!** as **a new man!**

Only he who is born again has crucified the flesh, the power that animates the old man! And this is reflected in what we saw in the previous paragraph: repentance **for the deeds done by the old man** under **the power of the flesh**, for which he who is born again **repents!** **Repentance** is therefore the consequence of the effect "on me" of what Christ has done both "for me" and "in me"! One must therefore have divine life in order to be able to repent!

All this is true as soon as a soul is born again; it is as realty for a young convert as it is for a "father" according to the Word who has been converted for 60 years!
It is through **FAITH** that all genuine Christians possess all this!

The characteristics of the new man

We have therefore understood that the new man begins his life, which is divine and eternal, from the moment when the soul that was previously destined to suffer the second death believes what God tells him, that is, what He did on the cross in the person of the Lord Jesus, as clearly stated in John 3:14-16 (*).

(*) *"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 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."*

The new man is divine in nature; he lives the same life as the Lord Jesus did at his resurrection.

The new man has nothing in common with the old man, whose nature is that of Adam, a nature marked by sin, and whose power is the flesh!

Contrary to what false doctrines teach, this is **not a gradual improvement of the natural man**, the old man of the believer! We have seen that the old man was crucified with Christ, forever, and no longer has any right on the believer!

However, there is a similarity that highlights the total opposition between the old man and the new man, just as there is total opposition between the flesh and the Spirit!

We saw in the paragraph "natural birth" that Adam (the 1st Adam) was the leader of all those who born from him. The same is true of the Lord Jesus, who is also called the second or last Adam: he is the leader of all those who benefit from his work on the cross. This is what we read in Romans chapter 5, where we have already considered what concerns the first Adam. We now continue with the last Adam (*):

(*) He is called the last Adam, for there is no one after him!

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, ...

*... (for until the law, sin was in the world ... is it not the same with the gift of grace as with the offence? For if, by the offence of one, many died, **much more did the grace of God and the gift abound to many by the grace of ONE MAN, JESUS CHRIST.** ... judgement comes from one in condemnation, but **the gift of grace, from many offences,** in justification (*). ... through the offence of one, death reigned through one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through one, Jesus Christ)*

... as by one offence the consequences of that offence were condemnation for all men, so also by one act of righteousness the consequences of that righteousness were justification of life for all men. For as by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:12-19).

(*) "Justification" means to be made righteous

Thus, those who are born again, as new men, receive the characteristics acquired for them on the cross by the Lord Jesus, the leader of all those who benefit from his resurrection, having been raised with him! (*)

(*) *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth; for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God"* (Colossians 3:1-3).

F- The walk of the believer

Introduction

What we have seen so far is what the believer is in Christ. This is what we call position. Now we must consider his walk on earth!

We call the walk the way in which the believer reflects on earth what he is in Christ. In other words, it is the way in which he reflects the characteristics of the new man, that is, those of Christ!

Perhaps we have not emphasised one important point sufficiently. Everything we have considered in the previous paragraphs is a reality for faith! It has not been a question of experience but of FAITH!

The believer does not experience being born again, nor does he experience dying with Christ, nor does he experience being resurrected with Christ, nor does he experience crucifying the flesh! He has acquired all this by faith alone! It is on the basis of faith alone that the believer can enjoy these things! As soon as they leave it, they lose not the benefit of what they have received by faith, but they lose the enjoyment of it!

This is what distinguishes the position from the walk.

The Lord Jesus clearly shows this in the Gospel according to John, where He speaks to us about "eating His flesh" and "drinking His blood", which means "making this truth intimately ours, accepting it without reservation"! He appeals to **what took place on the cross!**

N.B. This is not about participating in the Lord's Supper as some false doctrines teach!

The position by virtue of the new birth:

"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:53-54).

Walking in communion with the Lord Jesus:

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood ABIDES IN ME, and I IN HIM" (John 6:56).

Thus, in order to remain in communion with Him, the believer must remain on the ground of faith, returning each time to where he received life, Christ having accomplished everything "for him" and "in him", he has therefore and implicitly "crucified the flesh", that power which animates the old man!

The old man and the new man have opposite natures

It is by faith, and not by experience, that the old man is dead! If the believer leaves the ground of faith and examines himself, instead of looking by faith at what the Lord Jesus is, that is, at what he is in Christ, he experiences that the old man is very much alive, because he has forgotten what happened on the cross! He has left the ground of faith.

This is the situation in which the believer finds himself (for he is indeed a true believer), whose condition is described in the Epistle to the Romans:

*"For we know that the law is spiritual, but **I am carnal,** sold under sin. For what I do, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practise; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law, that it is good. Now **it is no longer I who do this,** but it is sin that dwells in me. For I know **that in me,** that is, in my flesh, there dwells **no good thing;** for the will is present with me, but I find no way to accomplish the good. For the good that I want, I do not do; but the evil I do not want, I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but **sin that dwells in me.** So I find this law at work in me: when I want to do good, evil is present with me" (Romans 7:14-21).*

This is what the believer experiences when he does not stand on the ground of faith!

But when faith awakens and the believer turns his eyes to the Lord Jesus, in other words, "eats his flesh and drinks his blood," remembering what Christ has accomplished "for him" (no condemnation) and also "in him," being able to walk according to the Spirit and have the thoughts of the Spirit:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus... we who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, on the things of the Spirit; for the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace... If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:1, 4-7, 11).

N.B. The subject dealt with in Romans 7 & 8 requires further study that goes beyond the scope of this document, but it will be very useful to return to it for the believer's full liberation.

We therefore find ourselves faced with two "domains": that of faith and that of sight. In **the domain of faith** is **the new man**, and in **the domain of sight** is **the old man**!

The new man has the power of **the Spirit** (that is, the Holy Spirit, God Himself), and **the old man** has **the power of the flesh**!

Thus, in my mortal body, the earthen vessel that is still bound to the first creation, dwell **two** completely opposite **moral personalities**, of totally different natures: **the old man**, possessing **the sinful nature of the first Adam**, and **the new man**, possessing **the divine nature of the One who begot him** at the new birth!

The believer, standing on **the ground of faith**, understands by faith that his **old man** has been put to death by Christ, that having been raised with Christ, he has also been raised morally with Him, and that a **new man** has come to life in him. These two facts are what Christ accomplished on the cross "**in him**"!

Just like sin (1*), **the flesh** is not dead; it constantly covets against the Spirit (2*). They are two antagonists!

(1*) See Romans, it is "I", the old man who died to sin

(2*) "*the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*" (Galatians 5:17).

We therefore have **two moral beings** within us, one of whom is dead **to sin**, the other having received the power of the Spirit to walk according to the Spirit and not fulfil the desires of the flesh (1*). But conversely, if we do not abide in Him (2*), **we leave the domain of faith for that of sight**, and the flesh is free to act, "awakening the old man", for the Spirit is then grieved (3*), and sin inevitably manifests itself! We then need to confess our sin in a spirit of repentance and be forgiven (4*).

(1*) *"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh"* (Galatians 5:16).

(2*) *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him"* (John 6:56).

(3*) *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"* (Ephesians 4:30).

(4*) *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

Let us remember these four important verses:

"... Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:56).

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

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

What is the world to the believer?

We have seen that the direct and implicit effect of what Christ has accomplished "for me" and "in me" is that "**I have crucified the flesh**" (Galatians 5:24). But walking in the world, I also have to deal with it! And I also read in connection with the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that through it "**the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world**" (Galatians 6:14).

The history of Israel helps us understand.

Israel left Egypt, where it was enslaved by Pharaoh (an image of Satan), and was first led into the desert, a place of trials (an image of the world for believers), on its way to the Promised Land (for us, heaven).

In the desert, God took care of his people, giving them manna, bread from heaven (symbolising the Lord Jesus as food for the desert), and water flowing from the rock that followed the people. (Exodus 16; Exodus 17; 1 Corinthians 10:4)

Thus, **the world is a desert for the believer; the new man** finds no food there, no water to quench his thirst! He must

feed on the person of Christ in all his characteristics described in the Word; he must drink from the source, water being the image of the Word.

Conversely, **Christian life is a desert for the old man!** He finds nothing there that can satisfy him, that can satisfy the flesh, which loves and delights in what sin produces. We see an example of this in the attitude of the people of Israel when they wanted to return to Egypt, because there they found food that they liked: fish, cucumbers, melons, etc. ... all the produce of the river and the earth, and nothing from heaven! On the contrary, they complained about the manna, which they called "miserable bread"; they were disgusted with the bread that came from heaven (*). Just as **our old man** is **disgusted with the One** who says:

"I am the bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:41).

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven: if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

(*) *"And it came to pass, when the people complained, that it was evil in the ears of the Lord; and when the Lord heard it, his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed the outskirts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses, and Moses prayed unto the LORD, and the*

fire was quenched. And they called the name of that place Tab-héra, because the fire of the LORD had burned among them.

And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, 'Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for free, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; and now our souls are dry; there is nothing but this manna before our eyes. The manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance was like the appearance of bdellium. The people scattered and gathered it; and they ground it in a mill or pounded it in a mortar; and they cooked it in pots and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of a cake with oil. And when the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna fell on it' (Numbers 11:1-9).

*"The people spoke against God and against Moses: Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread and no water, and **our souls are disgusted with this miserable bread**" (Numbers 21:5).*

How can we walk by the Spirit?

The Lord Jesus gives us the answer: it is by abiding in Him, and He in us!

But for this to happen, the Lord gives us the condition: "eat His flesh and drink His blood." So we must return to what was accomplished on the cross, where at our conversion we crucified once and for all the flesh, that power which gives life to the old man, while Christ put it to death, and we received it by faith!

In the section entitled "The new man, the man in Christ", we saw the image of the 12 stones set up at Gilgal, where Joshua (an image of the Lord Jesus but also of Christ who "dwells in me") circumcised the people. This circumcision is an image of the fact that the one who is born again has crucified the flesh (*).

(*) *"Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).*

When reading the book of Joshua, we notice a very important point: in order to be victorious against the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, the people had to return to Gilgal, the place of circumcision, each time, and also set out from that place in order to be victorious! We read in the book of Joshua that every time the people did not return to Gilgal to set out from there, they suffered a terrible defeat! (For example, Joshua 7)

So, in order to abide in Christ according to the Lord Jesus' own words in John 6, we must "eat His flesh and drink His blood", that is, return to the very place where we crucified the flesh (but also the world)! It is not possible to abide in Him without returning to that specific place.

Thus, with the Spirit not being grieved, we can walk by the Spirit and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The flesh can only lust after whatever it finds pleasurable in acts of sin!

How can we be victorious in the battle against the flesh?

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

N.B. The **flesh** (the power of the old man) and **the Spirit** (the divine person, the power of the new man) are **antagonists**, and the believer knows from experience that this is indeed the case! It is in this sense that there is indeed a "struggle". But as the text clearly shows, it is not a question of the believer trying to fight the flesh through his own efforts, which is impossible!

We find ourselves in a world that is a desert for the believer as a new man.

We cannot prevent the flesh from fighting against the Spirit through covetousness! It covets incessantly and finds its pleasure in the things of the world!

The Old Testament gives us an image that helps us understand how to be victorious in this battle. We find this in the account of the battle against Amalek in the desert (*).

(*) *"And **Amalek** came and fought against Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose us some men, and **go out, fight against Amalek**; tomorrow **I will stand on the top of the hill***

with the rod of God in my hand. And Joshua did as Moses had said, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on this side and one on that side; and his hands were steady until sunset. And Joshua smote Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in the book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar and called its name Jehovah-Nissi; and he said, Because the Lord has sworn, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exodus 17:8-16).

Amalek is an image of the flesh acting under the influence of Satan, who wants believers to succumb to temptation. This is what he tried to do when he tempted the Lord Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:1-10).

We read two important things in the account of this battle against Amalek. One takes place in the valley, the place of battle (for us, the world), and the other takes place on the mountain (for us, heaven).

Who leads the battle in the valley? It is Joshua! Joshua, a type of the Lord Jesus, and therefore necessarily of "Christ who dwells in me", i.e. the new man! (*)

(*) "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Who is on the mountain? Moses raising the rod towards God! It is Aaron's rod ("*of God*" [v.9]), the rod of the priesthood that had produced life from death (*).

(*) *"On the next day, Moses went into the tent of meeting, and behold, Aaron's rod for the house of Levi had budded, and put forth buds, and brought forth blossoms, and yielded almonds. ... The Lord said to Moses, 'Put Aaron's rod before the testimony, to be kept as a sign for the sons of rebellion'"*
(Numbers 17:8-10).

In order to be victorious, the two actions had to be interdependent!

Thus, for us, in order to fight in the world, while the flesh wants us to succumb to covetousness, the battle must be fought by the new man in communion with the Lord, who fulfils his office as High Priest in heaven, as we can read in Hebrews 4 (to be read)!

In summary, in this battle, it is indeed the new man who leads the fight, and victory is only possible by coming to the throne of grace for help at the right time:

"Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in all things as we are, apart from sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the

throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16)

How can we emerge victorious from the battle against the occupants of heaven?

The book of Joshua, which tells us how Israel took possession of the land, illustrates well the truths of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

It describes all the blessings we have in Christ. **Through faith**, God has **already** seated us in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6).

But in order to enjoy these privileges now on earth, just like Israel, we have a battle to fight, and to fight this battle, we must put on the armour that comes from God:

*"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. **put on the full armour of God**, so that you may be able to stand firm against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but **against the rulers**, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and **against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**. Therefore take up **the full armour of God**, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having **girded your loins with***

truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the wicked one. Take up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Where is the place where we can put on this armour, to fight and already enjoy all our blessings that are in Christ, as well as all the privileges that come with them?

It is like Israel at Gilgal, there at the cross, where we crucified the flesh at our conversion!

It is there that we put on the full armour of God, and thus, from victory to victory, we will make progress and, from little children, we will grow towards what our fathers can enjoy.

To conclude

We have just reviewed our entire history, from the day we no longer resisted the Holy Spirit who convinced us that we must meet God, not as a God of love, but as a judge because of the acts of sin we have committed. We then reviewed the day when, in our extreme distress, God Himself came to meet us, to show us what He Himself had accomplished in the person of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He revealed His love to us, and without demanding anything from us, He gave us divine and eternal life simply by believing what He said and did. That is how we came to believe in the Lord Jesus and were born again.

We then entered into a new life, the new creation, where we live as new men, whose power is the Holy Spirit.

What we were as sons of Adam, natural men, became our old man who was crucified with Christ on the cross. We are also completely and eternally safe from all judgement. This is what Christ did "for us" and also "in us".

Having believed what the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross, as the effect 'upon us' of what Christ did 'for us' and 'in us', we have forever 'crucified the flesh', the power of the old man.

We therefore begin our career on earth where we must then reflect what we have become in Christ through our new birth.

We have also considered what resources God's grace has given us to be able to walk in fellowship with Him, and what resources we have if we encounter an accident along the way.

We have learned how to fight in the wilderness, in the world, to walk by the Spirit so as not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and also how to fight against Satan and his angels, who still occupy the heavenly places, where they strive to prevent us from enjoying them.

We have thus reviewed the foundation of the Christian life.

Let us note that there has **never been any question of following any rules**, whether drawn from the law of Moses or even from the teachings of the New Testament.

The people of Israel placed themselves under the law, saying, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). They were unable to keep their promise! The law, like all rules, however good they may be, does not give us the ability to follow them because of sin! We must possess divine life and also live this new life in order to respond to what

God desires to see in man, as He saw in the person of the Lord Jesus.

The end result of the law was the rejection of the promised Messiah: as Peter declares in his first speech, "*Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2:36).

This system of rules to be applied came to an end, and a new era began with the Pentecost of Acts 2, to live the divine and eternal life received, in the midst of the difficulties of a hostile world that has not changed in character!

We have at our disposal, **not rules to follow**, but **resources** that we have tried to explore. Having received by grace **a new life, whose nature is that of God**, it then produces **as its fruit a reflection on earth of the will of God**, expressed in the commandments of the Lord!

In relation to all that the believer possesses in Jesus, let the believer reading these lines ask himself the question: Who did God choose for these blessings? Where did God find the believer when He gave him divine and eternal life, to bring him into all the blessings of the new creation? Every believer will answer that he was **a poor sinner, dead in his**

trespasses and sins, a SLAVE to SATAN and the FLESH!

He can now open his mouth in worship as he reads:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself, to be put into effect when the times would be fulfilled, to bring all things together in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth, in him, in whom we have also been made heirs, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we might be to the praise of his glory, we who have hoped in Christ beforehand: in whom you also trusted, having heard the

word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, for the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:3-14).

The believer thus possesses **everything in Jesus**, and **nothing in himself!**

May everyone who reads these lines, whether young in the faith, perhaps newly converted, or even a father in the faith, make use of these resources until the Lord Jesus comes to take us from this world, so that we may be where we are today only by faith, but then faith will be changed into sight: "*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him... God has revealed to us by his Spirit...*" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)