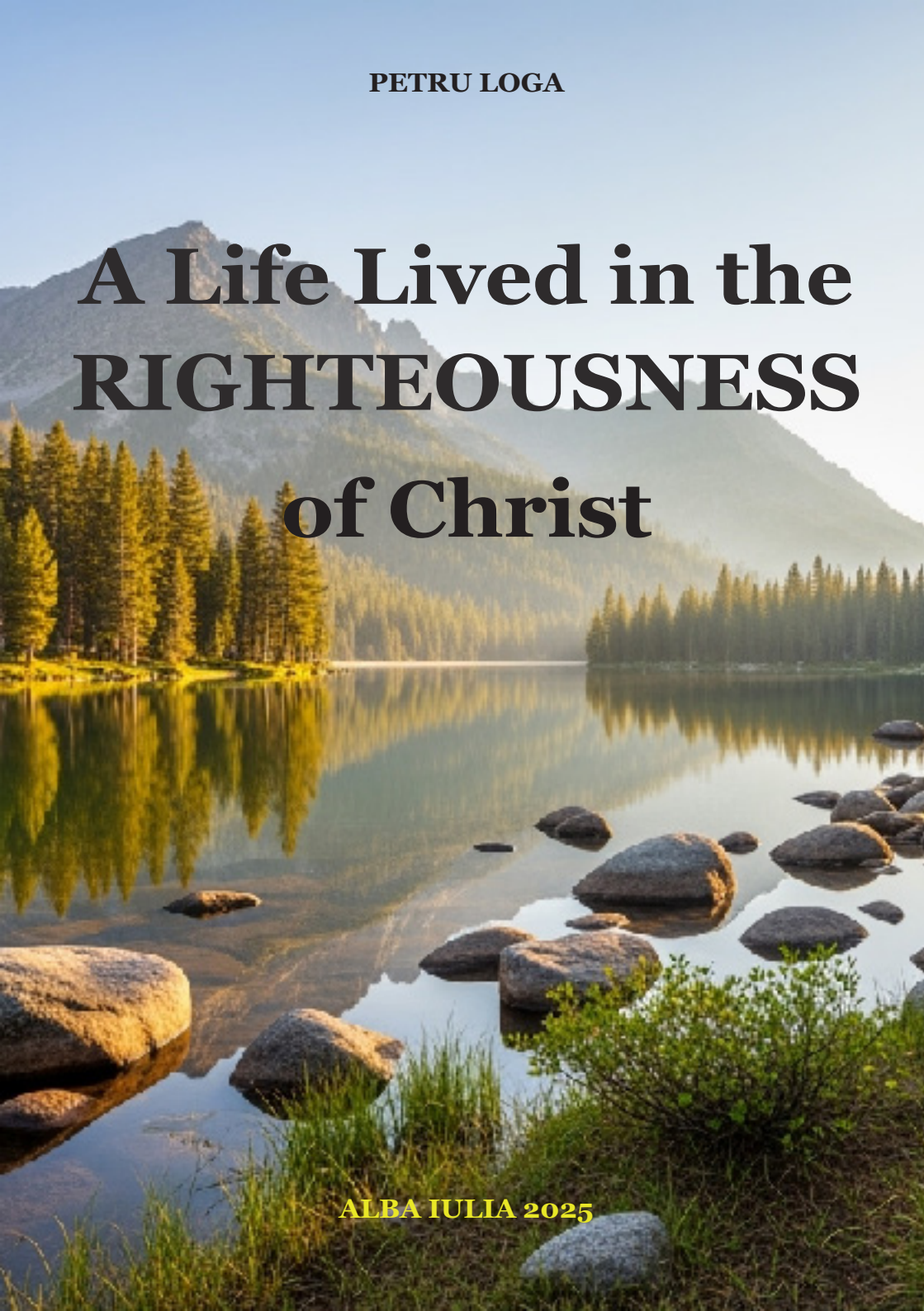
PETRU LOGA

A Life Lived in the RIGHTEOUSNESS of Christ



ALBA IULIA 2025

Have you truly experienced the righteousness of God?
Has your life been transformed by God, or only influenced by people?
Are you truly living a life of discipleship to Christ?
Discover the answer!

"The getting of treasures by a lying tongue Is a vanity tossed to and fro
of them that seek death." Proverbs 21:6

"As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool." Jeremiah 17:11

"Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong!" Jeremiah 22:13

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The kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.
Romans 14:17

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil:
whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.
1 John 3:10

The meek will he guide in judgment:
And the meek will he teach his way. Psalm 25:9

Evil men understand not judgment:
But they that seek the LORD understand all things. Proverbs 28:5

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,
wherein dwelleth righteousness. 2 Peter 3:13

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1. Introduction

We live in a time in which moral values are more and more confused, and the truth is often distorted, played down or called into question. Today, things that were once considered sin are presented as acceptable, normal or even worthy of promotion.

More and more often, the pleasures of sin for a season — such as the pursuit of worldly entertainment or exposure to settings that encourage the flesh — are taken up without discernment by those who call themselves Christians. These choices not only weaken the testimony, but bring reproach on the Name of God, compromising the call to holiness and to separation from the world.

The righteousness of God — a central theme of Scripture — no longer stirs interest, because it strikes directly at the unjust practices and sinful habits of many who claim to be born of God.

Like a pandemic, the desire for gain obtained by dishonest means has spread throughout Christendom, affecting consciences and weakening the testimony of those who ought to live in the light. Integrity is more and more often sacrificed for personal interest, and holiness is replaced by a relative morality — flexible and adapted to circumstances.

Sins such as anger, disobedience to the authorities or the consumption of carnal content are more and more ignored, although Scripture warns us that they separate us from the Kingdom of God. Slander, likewise, is no longer considered a serious sin, but an acceptable form of expression — tolerated today in the church that says it belongs to Christ.

In the present times, marked by a deep spiritual straying, the church is losing more and more of its identity, becoming more and more like the world. The values of the Kingdom are replaced by personal opinions, and the call to holiness is often silenced for fear of losing acceptance and popularity. Instead of being a light that shines in the darkness, the church has come to be only a pale shadow of what it ought to be — a living testimony of the character of Christ.

A "Jesus" is preached who asks next to nothing, who does not rebuke, who does not require a life lived in His righteousness — a false, convenient Jesus, who does not disturb the conscience. In such a setting, man's righteousness — based on appearances, personal justifications and changing standards — is often confused with the righteousness of God, which is holy, just and unchanging. Scripture warns of this danger in Proverbs 14:12: "**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof are the ways of death."**

In this context, the brochure "A Life Lived in the Righteousness of Christ" comes as a clear cry — a prophetic one — calling us to return to the heavenly standard: to the righteousness that springs from the holy character of God. This

work is not a theological reflection, but an urgent call to genuine discipleship, to a life that reflects the light of the Kingdom of Christ in every aspect of our lives.

It does not offer spiritual comfort, but provokes a deep searching of the heart. It does not flatter human nature, but confronts it with the reality of sin, with the need for genuine repentance and with the price that must be paid by the one who chooses to live in the righteousness of God — a price that includes self-denial, material losses, suffering, rejection and even persecution.

It is an invitation to a life lived in the light, in the truth, in obedience to the commandments of Christ. It is a call to transparency, to giving up dishonest gain, to compensating the one who has been wronged and to a holy separation from every form of compromise.

We want it to be a spiritual guide that brings to light the deep discrepancy between the eternal values of the Kingdom of God and the values of the kingdom of darkness, which dominate the religious world. It does not only inform, but confronts the conscience, calling the reader to choose between two incompatible realities.

The Kingdom of God rises on the foundation of His righteousness, being a kingdom of absolute justice, in which purity and integrity define the character of those who are in it. Scripture reveals to us that the souls hungry and thirsty for this pure life press into it, longing ardently to live according to its values. As it is written: "**the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence**..." (Matthew 11:12).

By contrast, the kingdom of darkness promotes opposite values: slander, corruption, dishonest gain, lying, immorality, disobedience to the authorities and many others. These are not only social deviations, but sins which, according to Scripture, exclude people from inheriting the Kingdom of God: "Be not deceived: ... **nor thieves, nor covetous**, nor drunkards, nor revilers, **nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God**." (1 Corinthians 6:9–10)

The brochure calls every reader to a radical separation from sin, to genuine repentance and to a life lived in the light of the divine righteousness.

2. The Righteousness of God — the Essence of His Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is not a reign like any other. It is a kingdom of absolute justice, where every decision is just, every judgment is pure and every action is in full harmony with the truth.

The Kingdom is ruled by God Himself. He is the King of righteousness — not only because He does what is right, but because He is justice itself.

Righteousness is not a quality He adopts, but a reality that springs from His nature. He cannot be unjust, He cannot be partial, He cannot err. In Him there is no shadow of turning, and His throne is founded on justice and truth. "**Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne**: Mercy and truth shall go before thy

face." — Psalm 89:14 To acknowledge God as the King of righteousness means to accept the values of His Kingdom, in which **there is no injustice of any kind**. It is the call to live not by the fluctuating standards of the world, but by the eternal values of heaven.

The righteousness of God is not only a moral virtue or a chosen religious conduct — it is the very expression of His character. It is the absolute standard of purity, justice and truth that governs His Kingdom.

In a world in which good and evil are more and more relativized, His righteousness remains unchanged, holy and eternal. It does not adapt to the times, it is not negotiated and it is not diluted. It is the light that cannot be mixed with darkness and the foundation on which everything that is pleasing before God is built.

Righteousness is not an abstract ideal, but a reality, present in the Kingdom of God, where justice, truth, holiness and pure love reign. It does not tolerate lying, injustice, greed or cunning, but excludes them completely. In this righteousness there is no room for darkness, because "**God is light, and in him is no darkness at all**" (1 John 1:5).

In the Kingdom of God there is no: lying, deceit or manipulation, greed, love of money or desire for power, pride, selfishness or desire for self-exaltation, immorality, uncleanness or shameful thoughts, hatred, revenge, gossip or destructive speech, corruption, injustice or favouritism.

Instead, the Kingdom of God is full of: truth and transparency, justice and fairness, holiness and moral purity, integrity, self-sacrificing love and compassion, meekness, humility and patience, joy, peace and complete trust in God, obedience to the will of God from the heart, sincere fellowship and unity among its citizens.

This is the righteousness to which we are called — not a superficial or outward one, but the absolute justice of God, a justice that does not change and makes no compromises, according to the standard of the Kingdom of God. (But seek ye first the kingdom of God, **and his righteousness.** Matthew 6:33)

The righteousness of God is not an abstract idea, but a living reality, which enlightens and draws the sincere soul that thirsts for truth. It is perfect, pure and brings peace — a light that not only exposes the darkness, but offers a way to likeness to Christ. As Deuteronomy 32:4 says: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: **For all his ways are judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, Just and right is he**."

When Scripture says that "there is no unrighteousness in him", it firmly affirms that God does not act with cunning, does not hide intentions, does not manipulate. In His relationship with man, God is completely transparent, sincere and just. There is not the least bit of concealment in Him, no shadow of deceit, not even a subtle departure from the truth.

He is just in the smallest things. He does not tell half the truth. He is not partial. He does not unjustly favour anyone. He is objective in all that He does, fair,

uninfluenced by appearances or interests. He does not deceive, does not promise without fulfilling, does not judge superficially. His justice is absolute, without a crack, without compromise, without exception.

This is the image of God: the Rock — stable, unchanging, trustworthy. He is the supreme model of righteousness, and this righteousness of His is the goal of those who sincerely seek it. It is not a human righteousness — limited, relative or founded on one's own efforts — **but the righteousness of God Himself: holy, perfect and unchanging.**

3. A Life Lived in Righteousness — the Sign of Being Born of God

The Lord Jesus says: "**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness**: for they shall be filled." — Matthew 5:6 This hunger and thirst are not bodily, but spiritual. They describe a deep, burning desire for the justice of God — a pure, upright life, without a trace of compromise. It is the desire of the one who feels the emptiness left by sin, who recognizes the need for purity and who is not content with religious appearances or human justifications.

Imagine a man lost in the middle of a desert, **without water and without food**. In that state of exhaustion and despair, he does not need explanations about hydration or theories about nutrition. His thirst is real, urgent, vital. He is not content with words, but desperately seeks the water that can save his life.

So it is with the soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. It does not need abstract theological concepts or doctrinal definitions, but the righteousness in which God lives, to transform its life. Theology is not the need, but daily living in the purity and light of the righteousness of God. The soul that longs for His righteousness seeks not only to understand it, but to be pervaded, cleansed and led by it, so that its life may reflect the holy character of the One who is righteousness itself.

This desire is not superficial, but deep — a hunger that comes from an awareness of one's own need, from the recognition that nothing else can bring peace, meaning and true life. The one who hungers after righteousness is not content with religious appearances, but seeks with all his heart to obtain the righteousness of the Lord. This means that he longs with all his being to be:

- Upright — that is, whole, without moral cracks. For example, he refuses to cheat, to steal, to lie, even when the truth costs him, because he wants to remain clean.
- Honest — he lives with transparency, without hidden intentions. He covets nothing that belongs to others, and does not hide the truth to protect his image.
- Just — he makes decisions based on the truth, not on emotions or personal interests. When he has to choose between what is popular and what is right, he chooses what is right.

• Fair — he treats everyone with the same measure. He does not make distinctions between people on the basis of status, but sees the worth of each one through God's eyes.

• Impartial — he judges without favouritism. He does not let himself be influenced by social pressure or by personal relationships when he has to apply justice.

• Unswerving — he remains firm in what is right, even when he is alone or when the situation pushes him toward compromise.

On the other hand, the one who does not feel the hunger for righteousness does not seek and does not receive. He considers God's values inconvenient or too strict, preferring a morality adapted to his own interests. In this way he resists the light that calls him to change.

The discrepancy is evident: the hungry one runs toward the light, drawn by the life that righteousness offers, while the one who resists rejects it, preferring the comfortable darkness of his own justification. The one is open, ready to be filled, and the other remains empty — not because God does not offer, but because he refuses to receive. It is the difference between a sincere desire for change and a stubborn resistance to the truth. The hungry one recognizes his need and draws near; the full one closes himself off and goes away.

The Lord Jesus does not say "blessed are they who discuss righteousness" or "they who analyse it", but "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst" — that is, those who desire it with their whole being. And the promise is clear: "for they shall be filled". God does not ignore sincere hunger, but rewards it with life, with peace and with His presence.

Righteousness (or justice) is not merely one virtue among others, but the foundation of life in the Kingdom of God. It is not optional, but defining. It is what identifies us as citizens of heaven and what makes our light shine in the darkness of the world. In this Kingdom, righteousness is not an abstract ideal, but a lived reality — a life in harmony with the holy character of God, who is the King of righteousness.

It is the source of real peace, rest and joy. It is not an abstract concept, but a living reality — **the sign of being born of God** and the final aim of salvation. The one who lives in the righteousness of God tastes of the fullness of the Kingdom, because his life is in harmony with the divine character. But the one who loves darkness, even if he utters holy words, remains far from this reality.

The apostle John states clearly: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that **every one that doeth righteousness is born of him**." (1 John 2:29) This verse offers a simple but profound criterion: **living in righteousness is the proof of being born of God.** It is not enough to claim that you are a believer — your life must reflect the character of the One in whom you say you believe. If God is righteous, then those born of Him will show His righteousness concretely and constantly.

This reality is more than a moral choice — it is a testimony of spiritual identity. Those born of God **carry in them the "genetic code" of righteousness**, because they have been begotten of the Holy Spirit. Just as a child carries the features of his parents, so the man born of God will reflect the nature of the heavenly Father. Righteousness springs from within, as a natural expression of a regenerated life.

As Scripture says: "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; **behold, all things are become new**" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This "new creature" is not just a spiritual label, but a visible reality in the life of the one who is born again.

One of the "new things" that God brings into the life of the believer is righteousness — not a human one, relative and changing, but the righteousness of God, which shows itself through a transformed life, lived in integrity.

If this righteousness is not at the centre of the new life, but is absent or pushed to the margins, then it is a clear sign that the new birth has not truly taken place, and the man goes on living in the old patterns, without having been genuinely renewed by the Spirit of God.

So if righteousness is not one of the visible realities of our life, it is a clear sign that the process of renewal has not truly taken place. The new birth produces a new life — and this life bears the imprint of the righteousness of God.

Scripture leaves no room for doubt: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: **whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God**" (1 John 3:10)

This verse underlines a deep spiritual reality: righteousness is not optional for the one born of God. The lack of an upright and pure life is not merely a weakness, but **a clear sign of a heart that does not belong to the Kingdom.**

To live in righteousness means to live in the presence of God, in harmony with His will, in the light of His truth. It is a life in which Christ lives in us, and we become ambassadors of the righteousness of His Kingdom right here on earth.

4. Diluted Righteousness — a Life Below the Heavenly Standard

One of the most subtle spiritual dangers is the tendency of the religious man, given over to sin, to build himself a diluted standard of righteousness, in order to keep the illusion that he is on the road to salvation.

Instead of looking to the righteousness of God and conforming to this absolute standard, he redefines what "being a believer" means, choosing a convenient version that does not require renunciation, real repentance and deep change. This self-deception is fed by a lack of knowledge of the Scriptures, in which God's plan is revealed — to bring man to the measure of the stature of Christ.

As Scripture says in Ephesians 4:13, God "gave some, apostles; and some,

prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, ... till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.**"

Most people base their hope of salvation exclusively on the mercy of God, without understanding that this mercy is not an excuse for remaining unchanged, but an opportunity offered by God for transformation.

Thinking of the kind "God is merciful, so I will be saved regardless of my life" ignores the fact that the mercy of God is always accompanied by the call to holiness.

This mentality contributes to undervaluing the heavenly standard, because **man no longer feels the need to conform to the righteousness of Christ**. Instead of seeing grace as a support for rising to the stature of Christ, he uses it as a justification for spiritual stagnation. So he no longer seeks a transformed life, but only emotional comfort.

Scripture shows us that the grace of God is not meant to keep us in a state of spiritual comfort, but to lead us to a life transformed through repentance.

As Scripture says in Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

When it is misunderstood, grace becomes a pretext for avoiding the confrontation with sin, self-denial and the painful but necessary process of sanctification.

In this way spiritual discernment is affected, and man comes to ignore **the final aim of salvation — likeness to Christ.** Instead of letting himself be transformed after the divine model, he creates his own criteria of spiritual evaluation.

This approach produces a diluted version of righteousness, in which man reserves for himself the right to decide which sins are serious and which can be tolerated. He decides which areas of life must be changed and what can remain unchanged. It is a subtle form of self-justification, in which sin is played down and the conscience is quieted by comparison with the deeds of others, not by reference to the standard of God.

Sins such as drunkenness, fornication or smoking are easily recognized as serious and condemnable. But the diluted standard shows itself when other sins — more subtle or socially accepted — are ignored, played down or tolerated.

This approach creates the illusion of a clean life, but in reality it hides a false righteousness, built on human criteria, not on the standard of God. So sin goes on working in secret, under the mask of a religious life.

God's call is clear: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, **and his**

righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) — it is not an invitation to a selective morality, but to a high life, lived after the model of Christ. It is not about a few outward adjustments or religious gestures, but about a radical transformation, according to the heavenly standard of God.

Genuine righteousness is not relative, but is the righteousness of God — absolute, holy and unchanging. It does not adapt to man's preferences, but calls man to conform to the divine character.

Only by aspiring to this absolute righteousness can we be worthy of being "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God", as Ephesians 2:19 says: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

In the light of this righteousness of God, we must search ourselves not only concerning the obvious sins, but also concerning those accepted by most of those who consider themselves born of God, yet which remain sins in His eyes and make us unworthy of being fellowcitizens with the saints, and of His household.

Examples of ignored sins — diluted, but real and not accepted in the Kingdom of God: evading taxes and legal debts, slander or speaking evil, uncontrolled anger, consuming carnal content (TV, internet), beaches and swimming pools – exposing the body, disobedience to the authorities (one example — driving illegally, breaking the traffic laws on public roads), theft committed by cheating...

In contrast with righteousness, a life lived in sin — even when it is masked by a religious identity — brings unrest, inner emptiness and discontent. The man who declares himself a believer but goes on living in sin does not find the rest promised by God.

Sin is not limited to visible deeds, but also includes attitudes and choices that contradict the character of God. True righteousness requires a life that is clean not only in appearance, but in the depth of our motives and decisions. That is why we are called to look with sincerity and courage at those areas of life that are often overlooked.

One such area, often overlooked, is gain obtained unjustly — a widespread sin, but one too seldom confronted. Though it is justified in many settings or ignored out of habit, this kind of gain, when it is practised by one who claims to have been born of the righteous God, gives grave offence to the righteousness to which Christ calls us and defies the justice of the Kingdom of God.

More than that, a dishonest life brings reproach on the Name of God, as Scripture says: "**For the name of God is blasphemed** among the Gentiles through you" (Romans 2:24).

This brochure is published because the phenomenon of dishonest gain has become alarming, being disturbingly widespread among those who consider themselves born again.

It is meant to be both a cry of alarm and a help for those who have been misled into believing that dishonest gain is not a serious sin — one serious enough to prevent being born of the righteous God.

5. Unjust Gain in the Light of the Righteousness of God

In the Kingdom of God, justice is not an optional detail, but a fundamental condition. It is not decorative, but essential — a visible expression of a transformed heart and a renewed life, which lives in harmony with the character of God.

This way of living does not come from religious obligation, but from the deep desire of a heart that hungers and thirsts after righteousness — a heart that longs for purity, truth and light, and that is not content with appearances, but seeks to reflect genuinely the holiness of God.

Righteousness is reflected in every area of life, including the way we respect the rights of others. That is why any gain obtained unjustly — whatever its form — is a grave violation of the order ordained by God.

It is not only about the direct taking of an object, but about any form of robbing others of what does not belong to us: material things, money, opportunities or advantages obtained unjustly.

The justice of God tolerates no compromise of any kind. He forbids not only stealing, but also the coveting of what does not belong to us. To covet another's goods — whether material or social — means to contest the order and justice established by God. It is an offence against His holy character and a proof that the heart is not aligned with the righteousness of heaven.

To live in the righteousness of God means to be **honest, upright, just, fair, impartial and unswerving** — even when no one sees, even when the situation would allow a compromise. In the Kingdom of God, every choice counts, because it reflects who we are and to whom we belong.

In this light, **undeclared work** is not merely a questionable economic practice, but a transgression — a form of organized theft, by which the payment of taxes is avoided and the laws established for the common good are broken. Though it is widespread and often justified by personal needs or a lack of options, in God's eyes it remains iniquity.

By avoiding these contributions, society is deprived of the resources needed for education, health and social protection — especially for the elderly who have worked a whole lifetime. Keeping one's legal obligations is not only a matter of social responsibility, but also an expression of love for one's neighbour and of submission to the order ordained by God.

The apostle Paul states clearly: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. **Whosoever**

therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." (Romans 13:1-2)

Therefore, to work "off the books" or to encourage such practices means to defy not only human law, but also the divine order. The believer is called to live in the light, with integrity, even when others choose the way of compromise.

Scripture condemns unequivocally gain obtained by unjust means: "**Rejoice not, O Israel, ... thou hast loved a reward** upon every cornfloor." (Hosea 9:1)

This rebuke addressed to the people of Israel brings out the gravity of attachment to material gain obtained through compromise, at the expense of the divine blessing. When man loves unclean profit, he moves away from the holiness required by God and from fellowship with Him, showing the character of Balaam. Scripture says of Balaam that he "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15), showing that the thirst for gain blinded him and led him to choose the iniquity that leads to death. Those who love unclean wages follow the same way of death.

This reality is confirmed in Jeremiah 2:33, where God says: "Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? **therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways."**

This verse shows that the man who is drawn by greed, whether poor or rich, consciously shapes his behaviour to sustain it, becoming more and more skilled in iniquity. "**For the love of money is the root of all evil**: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith". (1 Timothy 6:10)

Hiding income, avoiding taxes, corruption or manipulation are forms of lying and theft. They cannot be blessed and they keep man in a state of spiritual death, being in direct contradiction with the righteousness of God. Such a practice not only breaks the moral law, but contradicts the holy character of God, who hates unclean wages and requires a life lived in truth and justice.

Every form of gain obtained by deceit — whether it is tax evasion, corruption or manipulation — is a rebellion against the character of God. These deeds are not simple administrative mistakes or "adaptations to circumstances", but sins that separate us from God.

God cannot count pure the one who hides his income and uses unjust means for personal gain. Scripture is categorical: "**Shall I count them pure** with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" (Micah 6:11)

This rhetorical question expresses the divine indignation at the hypocrisy of those who claim to be righteous, but when they have to declare their income use "crooked measures" — a symbol of deceit and dishonest gain.

Stealing taxes may seem a financial gain, but in reality it brings no lasting benefit. "**Treasures of wickedness profit nothing:** But righteousness delivereth from death." (Proverbs 10:2) They offer no protection, bring no peace and give no life. Only righteousness — that is, living in truth and justice — delivers. Hiding

income to avoid paying taxes, as well as collusion between employer and employee in obtaining financial benefits that are not due — all these are forms of a "false balance".

God not only rejects them, but calls them an abomination — something deeply offensive to His holy and just nature. "**A false balance is abomination to the LORD**: But a just weight is his delight." (Proverbs 11:1)

The character of God is defined by justice, holiness and truth. He not only does justice, but loves justice and hates robbery. Isaiah 61:8 expresses this contrast with solemn clarity: "For I the LORD **love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering...**"

This hatred is not an emotional reaction, but a manifestation of His holy nature. God cannot be indifferent to evil, because evil is a direct offence against His character. Robbery — whether of goods, rights or dignity — is a form of active injustice, a violation of the moral order established by God.

Scripture warns unequivocally in Ezekiel 18:10-13 that the one who robs shall die: "**If he beget a son that is a robber, ... shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die**; his blood shall be upon him." This sentence is not arbitrary, but just.

Achan's gain: an accursed treasure. A telling example from Scripture is the sin of Achan, who hid stolen things in his tent — a garment, silver and gold. Though the people of Israel had just experienced a great victory at Jericho, God withdrew from among them because of this sin. "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also **stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.**" (Joshua 7:11)

The sin had to be uncovered, confessed and put away for God to resume His work with them. God cannot dwell where sin reigns. This episode is a solemn warning: without a radical dealing with sin, there can be no real fellowship with God. Though Achan hid the stolen things from the eyes of men, they were not hidden from the eyes of God. What was buried in his tent cried out to heaven.

God, who is righteous, does not tolerate hidden sin. Achan was not just a man who went wrong, but a symbol of iniquity stubbornly held on to. The sentence of death came not only for the deed, but for the refusal to bring it to the light. God required that sin to be brought out, judged and put away, so that His presence might return to the people. Death is the wages of sin, as the apostle Paul also says: "**For the wages of sin is death**" (Romans 6:23)

Robbery, as a form of iniquity, is not merely a violation of human rights, but an abomination in God's eyes. It draws down divine judgment, because it undermines the justice, the dignity and the order established by the Creator.

Stealing taxes shuts out the life from God, because righteousness cannot dwell together with robbery. The two are incompatible — just as light cannot coexist with

darkness. The new life from God presupposes a deep transformation, a separation from the works of darkness and a sincere cleaving to justice.

Where robbery is practised, there is no life from God, but death — because iniquity reigns there, not righteousness.

This divine hatred of robbery and iniquity is not a simple moral disapproval, but a spiritual condemnation. It shows that God cannot be associated with injustice, and that those who live in dishonesty separate themselves from His character. Gain obtained unjustly is not merely a problem of ethics, but a direct offence against the holiness of God.

Before men it may look like success, but before God it is folly: a life built on injustice cannot have a blessing — it is a choice devoid of wisdom, which ignores the spiritual and moral consequences. For the one who does these things it is a snare that leads to death. Scripture warns: "As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; **so he that getteth riches, and not by right**, shall leave them in the midst of his days, **and at his end shall be a fool.**" (Jeremiah 17:11)

If someone, even in conditions of poverty, works without legal papers and avoids paying taxes, he directly and explicitly breaks the law of Christ. The Lord Jesus taught us to be ready to give to the one who asks of us, not to hide; not to resist the one who wants to go to law with us to take what we have, but to offer him even more than he asks. He says in Luke 6:29–30: "and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. **Give to every man that asketh of thee**; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again."

This principle expresses an attitude of transparency and submission to justice, not of avoidance or concealment. **Working "off the books" and refusing to contribute** to the common good by not paying taxes contradicts the spirit of the Gospel and the righteous character of Christ.

We can easily observe that these commandments in Luke 6 were given in an extremely difficult historical context: the Jews lived under Roman occupation, and Roman soldiers had the legal authority to demand goods, taxes or even forced labour from the local population.

The Lord Jesus did not tell the disciples to revolt, but taught them to respond with a submissive heart in keeping with His commandments. This attitude of voluntary submission and renunciation of rights reflects the values of those who are in the Kingdom of God.

Along the same line of thought, we find His commandment: **"Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's..."** (Matthew 22:21). The apostle Paul strengthens this principle when he says: "**Render therefore to all their dues:** tribute to whom tribute is due..." (Romans 13:7). This commandment is not an exception, but a logical continuation of the principle of not resisting the one who takes by force, but of living in submission to our Teacher.

The payment of tribute, in the historical context, expressed submission to an authority that was often unjust, but ordained by God. By contrast, today's taxes no longer have the character of tribute, but are a responsible contribution to the common good, coming back to us in the form of infrastructure, medical services and other public services.

Undeclared work, lived as a way of life, is not merely an occasional mistake, but a continual sin — a deliberate choice to live in dishonesty and in disobedience to the authorities. It reflects a heart that has not been searched by the Holy Spirit and that has not understood the call to a life of integrity.

To claim that you live daily with the righteous God as Father, while you keep this sin in your life, is a flagrant lie. God does not make His dwelling where iniquity reigns. He is holy, and His presence cannot be invoked as a simple declaration, but must be confirmed by a clean life.

After being born of God, the Holy Spirit is given as a continual presence in the life of the believer. The Lord Jesus said: "and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20) This promise holds for those who live in obedience and purity. The Holy Spirit does not stand indifferent to sin, but works actively for our cleansing and sanctification.

A practical example: a man who has been born again and commits a dishonest act – such as using, through carelessness, the company car for personal purposes without the employer's consent – will be rebuked in his conscience.

Though the act may seem minor or justifiable, the Holy Spirit convinces him that it is a form of injustice. This rebuke is not simple human guilt, but the work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts the soul of sin. He not only rebukes, but also urges toward repentance and the putting right of the wrong – by acknowledging the deed and paying fairly for the service used. The Spirit does not accept compromise, but leads the man toward the light, toward the truth and toward cleansing.

Therefore, refusing to pay taxes is not merely a legal deviation, but a form of rejecting the commandments of Christ in Luke 6:29-Matthew 22:21. This rejection of the Word – which is **the seed of God** (Luke 8:11) from which the new life ought to begin – shows that the birth from God, which takes place only if we receive it with joy, has not taken place. (John 1:12) Scripture shows us that the Holy Spirit is given to make this **seed** germinate in the heart of man. But the work of the Spirit does not happen automatically; it presupposes an open and obedient heart.

Where there is no obedience to the commandments of Christ — including in apparently "small" matters, such as paying taxes — it is a sign that the Spirit is not at work causing a new life to sprout. Not because He has no power, but because **the seed** finds trodden-down ground, where it cannot sprout, a hardened heart that rejects it.

To understand better the gravity of this sin — ignored by most — we will

deal with the subject at length.

In Romania, the relationship between the citizen and the state rests on **a social contract**, founded on the principle of solidarity. This contract involves rights and obligations on both sides. The state has the responsibility to provide public services — education, health, infrastructure, social protection — and the citizen has the obligation to contribute to supporting them, in proportion to his income. This contribution is made by paying taxes, regulated by law. Citizens who earn income — from wages, self-employment, rents, investments or other sources — are obliged to contribute to the state budget. Income tax applies to income earned from any source, and the tax rate is 10%.

The aim is not only to collect funds, but to redistribute resources fairly, taking more from those who earn much and giving more to those who earn little, so that no one is left without support. So education is free for all children, hospital care is accessible to all, and roads, parks and street lighting are equally available — to the poor man and to the rich.

If we look at things from the perspective of the social contract, hiding income is a form of deceiving one's partner — that is, the state, which acts as an instrument for organizing and protecting society. In this sense, the benefits received from the state (education, health, infrastructure, etc.) are paid for out of the contributions of the honest, and to profit from them without contributing is a form of indirect theft.

A practical illustration. To understand the sin of hiding income, we will use **an example**: let us suppose that, for years on end, I have ignored my obligation to the state, hiding my income and avoiding paying the tax I owe. The state — without knowing that it is being deceived — has constantly provided me with public services: my children went to school free of charge, received free medical care, received child allowances and scholarships. I have had asphalt roads, sewerage, gas and electricity.

All these services were supported out of funds collected from citizens, including from the tax that others paid honestly, while I chose not to contribute.

If I have three children at school, and the standard yearly cost of educating one child, according to the official allocation in the public budget, is about 10,000 lei, then the state bears in total about 30,000 lei a year for their education alone. This sum covers teachers' salaries, school maintenance costs, utilities and other basic educational services, and is financed entirely from public funds.

To this is added the free medical care provided to children. Besides education and health, I also receive monthly child allowances — 290 lei for each child — which means about 10,400 lei a year for the three children.

If I have a monthly income of 5,000 lei, the income tax is about 6,000 lei a year. So even if I paid the tax honestly, the state would still give me benefits of over 38,400 lei more than my contribution. It is an abomination for me to hide my

income so as not to pay the 6,000 lei, while the state — which I consider "heathen" — gives me 44,400 lei paid out of the contributions of the honest people who pay VAT, duties and taxes.

A lesson from the lives of Abraham and Judas. Imagine the biblical scene in which Abraham, the patriarch of faith, loses his wife, Sarah. The inhabitants of the land offer him a burial place — a cave — free of charge, as a sign of respect. But Abraham refuses to receive it without payment. Why? Because he did not want to take advantage, not even when something was offered to him for free. He wanted to remain clean and to live in justice, both before God and before men.

Now imagine the opposite: someone receives help from the state — subsidies, funds, allowances, social support, free medical services — which he accepts as though they were rightfully due to him, and on top of that he chooses to deceive the one who does him so much good. He hides his income, works "off the books" or takes advantage of the system without contributing. It is as if someone offered to help him with money to build a house, and he, instead of giving thanks, stole money from his wallet.

Abraham did not want anything for free, even when he could have taken advantage. We, faced with the help given by the state — that is, out of everyone's contribution — are called to choose the same way: honesty. Let us not steal from the common granary, from the bread of others, from the effort of those who have contributed honestly, but let us too be among those who contribute with joy. Only then can we truly receive the child allowance and the free medical care — not as profiteers, but as honest citizens, who give first and then receive what is due to them.

This picture becomes all the more disturbing when I compare it with my own choice: I have benefited from what was not due to me, and I have even stolen from and deceived the one who provided for me, hiding the truth. The reason? **I loved unclean wages**, as Scripture says in Hosea 9:1.

I applied for subsidies, funds, social aid, for firewood, for heating — and I took them with both hands wide open, as though they were due to me, without asking myself whether I was truly entitled. But when the time comes to give what I owe, my hands seem sewn into my pockets.

I hide, I declare a lower income, I avoid responsibility. My heart is trained in greed, as Scripture says: **"an heart they have exercised with covetous practices"** (2 Peter 2:14). I have not only taken advantage, but I have also hidden the truth, driven by selfish desires and an insatiable lust for gain.

Abraham, on the other hand, hungering after righteousness, lived in the integrity given by God, choosing not to covet anything that was his neighbour's, not even a thread, keeping himself clean before the Just One. Though he did not have the commandment written explicitly on the tables — "**Thou shalt not covet**

... any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17) — as we have it today, he had it imprinted on his heart by God.

When the king of Sodom offered him the riches as spoils of war, he refused categorically, saying: "that I will not take from **a thread** even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine" (Genesis 14:23). He did not want to profit from the labour of others, being moved by the justice of God. For him, being just as God is just mattered more than any material gain.

He chose the light of righteousness, being led by faith and justice. I was moved by selfish desires, he by a clean conscience before God. Faced with the same temptation, he chose to remain clean; I chose to soil myself.

The works of my faith do not resemble those of Abraham, the father of the faithful, but those of Judas, who stole from the common purse, of whom it is written: "**because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein**" (John 12:6). Judas, driven by the love of money, chose iniquity. He stole from their small granary — a purse out of which the expenses of the disciples who went about with the Lord Jesus were covered. He took for himself what was not due to him, hiding under the mask of service.

Between the two stretches a moral and spiritual distance as great as from heaven to earth. Abraham's integrity was the fruit of faith, while Judas's greed was the expression of a heart estranged from God. The one builds up, the other destroys.

So if I want to be an heir of the Kingdom of God, I must have the faith of Abraham — not the greed of Judas. As it is written: "…**to that also which is of the faith of Abraham**" (Romans 4:16). The inheritance of the Kingdom is not for those who only bear a religious name, but for those who live the faith of Abraham — a faith that shows itself through righteousness.

Not paying taxes is an abomination before God. It is a deed that reflects the character of Judas — moved by greed and followed by a false spiritual security. My likeness to Judas, and not to Abraham, shows that I do not thirst after righteousness. It is a serious warning sign: my deeds betray a false faith, devoid of the fruits of obedience and integrity.

Scripture warns us about the way God regards this attitude, even when it is masked by social or economic arguments. In Isaiah 57:17, God says: "**For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him:** I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." This greed is not merely a moral problem, but a rebellion against order and justice.

When someone refuses to contribute, even with the little he owes in proportion to his modest income, he steals from the common granary. He benefits from services paid for by others, without bringing anything in return. It is a form of hidden injustice, in which collective solidarity is exploited without taking part in it. Even a small contribution has value, because it expresses responsibility, honesty and respect for the common good.

If in Judas's case greed is plainly seen in the stealing from a small granary, our deed is no less serious just because the granary we take from is bigger. **The fact that what I take**

seems "not to show" does not change the nature of the deed. The greed is the same, and theft remains theft, whatever its size. God does not judge by the size of the granary, but by the integrity of the heart.

Such a man is a deceiver and a thief, like Judas, who stole from his brethren. Therefore he does not deserve to enjoy the benefits of the system, but deserves to be condemned, because he chose to deceive and to take advantage, not to contribute.

That is why the state has laws that condemn tax evasion — not only because it breaks the social contract, but also because it breaks the norms of moral ethics that lie at the base of a just society. Tax evasion is not merely an economic offence, but a form of injustice toward the community, a betrayal of the solidarity that sustains the common good.

Undeclared work is legally defined as tax evasion and fraud, since it involves receiving or giving money in secret, without paying the legal obligations to the state, and it is regulated by:

- Law no. 241/2005 on preventing and combating tax evasion, article 9, which says: Hiding income, omitting to record it in legal documents... are **offences punished with imprisonment from 2 to 8 years.**
- The Labour Code – Law no. 53/2003, Article 260, para. (1), letter e), which says: Employing a person without a written individual employment contract, before the start of the activity, is an offence and is punished with imprisonment from 1 to 2 years or a criminal fine.

6. The Advantages of Ill-Gotten Gain – Sweet at the Beginning, Bitter at the End

One of the apparent advantages of the sin of dishonest gain is the illusion of financial efficiency: the possibility of getting more things done with less money — money which, often, is not enough. But this "advantage" comes with a moral and legal price. To obtain such gains, we are often forced to work with people who avoid paying taxes and do not issue tax documents. In this way we not only break the law, but become accomplices in tax evasion and partakers in stealing from the public good — like Judas, who stole from the common purse.

By accepting these practices, we support a culture of darkness, in which lying, theft and irresponsibility are promoted. We join those who choose to live in dishonesty, and our deeds place us not only outside the law, but also in the greed of Judas.

Scripture describes this illusion of dishonest gain very clearly: "**Stolen waters are sweet, And bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; And that her guests are in the depths of hell.**" (Proverbs 9:17-18)

This passage shows that the sin of greed may seem attractive and advantageous at the beginning — "sweet" and "pleasant" — but in reality it leads to spiritual death and ruin. Gain obtained through iniquity is not blessed, but cursed. What looks like a convenient solution is a trap that destroys the soul.

It is the sin of Judas — the greed for money blinded him, leading him in the end to selling the Lord Jesus and to a tragic death. The end of Judas is a solemn warning: dishonest gain not only ruins the conscience, but can lead to eternal loss.

Building your house off the books – a testimony against you. A telling example is the building of a house. Let us suppose that the total value of the expenses is €75,000. About half of this sum (€37,500) is the labour, which is paid "off the books", without taxes and without tax documents.

If this labour were declared for tax, the following taxes would have to be paid: VAT (21%): €7,875; social contributions and taxes (approx. 45%): €16,875; Total taxes: €24,750. Therefore, if the work were done honestly, the real cost of the building would rise from €75,000 to €99,750, that is, an increase of 33%. This example shows how much is "saved" by avoiding taxes – but also how great the moral compromise is.

By accepting these practices, we become accomplices in tax evasion and join those who steal from what belongs to the community. In God's eyes, this is a form of theft and of ill-gotten gain.

Scripture warns with a terrifying seriousness about those who pursue dishonest gain to build their house and protect their family. **"Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong."** (Jeremiah 22:13)

The house raised by injustice will not be a refuge, but a monument of iniquity. Nothing remains hidden before God — neither well-contrived plans, nor labour without taxes, nor materials bought without an invoice, nor beams fitted with unclean gain in mind. Divine justice penetrates into the most hidden details of life. Even the wood, the stone, the beam — all become witnesses of the injustice. Iniquity cannot be covered with plaster, hidden between the walls or buried under the roof. It will cry out. It will testify. It will condemn on the day of judgment.

Scripture speaks clearly on this matter: "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high!" "Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul." **For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.**" (Habakkuk 2:9-11)

Just as it says in James 5:4, where the hire kept back from the labourers cries out against those who defrauded them, and their cries enter into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth, so too the money obtained by hiding income is not silent. It cries out! It is a living testimony of the sin, a proof that rises up against the one who acquired it unjustly.

It is a dangerous illusion — a fatal delusion — to believe that security can be built on crooked foundations. The man who builds his future on iniquity is only preparing his own collapse. What looks like a well-built house, a "nest on high" sheltered from danger, is in reality a fortress of shame and a proof of sin.

The same situation is found in many other areas: painting the house, repairs to

heating, electrical or plumbing installations, the rent on a flat, car repairs, farm work (ploughing, sowing, reaping), buying and cutting firewood, drilling a well, etc. All these are often done without an invoice, to avoid paying VAT and other taxes. They can be done without papers, if we love the wages of unrighteousness.

For example, if someone buys firewood worth 3,000 lei without an invoice, he avoids paying the 21% VAT, that is, 630 lei – a considerable sum for those with low incomes. But this apparent "gain" is an iniquity that is condemned by God.

Scripture warns us about who we are when we join with thieves to share unjust gain. "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, And castest my words behind thee. **When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him**" (Psalm 50:16–18)

This joining is not merely a social or legal mistake, but a spiritual choice that leads to death. "**Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul**" (Proverbs 29:24)

These verses leave no room for interpretation: when, for some advantage or other, we agree to work with people who avoid paying taxes, we become accomplices in theft and place ourselves on the side of those who despise the law and the truth. It is not merely an economic choice, but a spiritual positioning – a choice between light and darkness.

To live in the light means to reject every form of dishonesty, even when it is hard and we can no longer do what we had planned. True faith is seen in everyday choices – including in the way we relate to money, taxes and work.

To claim that God is with you while you live in dishonesty is a denial of His holiness. God cannot be manipulated by words or appearances. He searches the heart and knows the deeds. True fellowship with Him presupposes a clean life, a cleansed conscience and a walk in the light. Only then does the promise "I will be with you" become a blessed reality and not a dangerous illusion.

7. Restitution — a Step toward Genuine Repentance

Before stepping into the Kingdom of God, genuine repentance involves more than regret and the confession of sin — it also involves putting right the injustice. If you have stolen, deceived or taken advantage of others, the sincere return to God begins with giving back what does not belong to you. God cannot declare righteous someone who keeps what he obtained by injustice and enjoys the fruits of transgression. He does not overlook unresolved injustice.

Though the Lord Jesus paid the penalty for the sin of theft, this does not cancel the personal responsibility to put right the wrong that was done. Restitution remains a moral and spiritual obligation. True repentance does not stop at words, but proves itself by concrete deeds of amendment. Scripture warns: "**Woe to him that coveteth**

an evil covetousness to his house" (Habakkuk 2:9).

This attempt to build security on injustice is an illusion, and God condemns it unequivocally.

To understand better the obligation of restitution as an act of justice, we can look at a concrete example — one that human justice treats with extreme seriousness and fairness. A citizen caught in tax evasion is not only convicted of a criminal offence, but is obliged to return the whole sum evaded, together with the related penalties and interest, for the period in which the state was deprived of that money.

Justice is not content with a simple conviction — it requires that the damage be made good. If restitution were not obligatory, many would be tempted to steal large sums, accept a sentence of a few years, and then live in peace with what they had stolen. That would be a flagrant injustice toward the honest, who choose to live rightly, without taking advantage of others.

Restitution is a precondition for the new life to begin. The new birth is not only an inner change, but a transformation that is seen in deeds.

As Scripture says: "**if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed,** walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; **he shall surely live, he shall not die.** None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live." — Ezekiel 33:15-16

Here we see clearly that the new life – a symbol of the new birth – is conditional on compensating the one who was wronged. It is not enough to claim that you have changed; you must prove this change by restitution, even when direct compensation is no longer possible.

In the Kingdom of God, justice is not optional, but is an essential expression of righteousness. If someone has stolen, deceived or taken advantage of others, he cannot consider those things his own. No one has the right to keep what was obtained by injustice — whether it is money, goods or positions. Divine justice is not content with the simple acknowledgment of the wrong; it also requires that it be put right.

To have a clear understanding, we will take two practical examples: Let us suppose that, from the age of 50 until reaching retirement age, I avoided paying income tax, working "off the books". All this time I paid the pension contribution directly, out of my own pocket, as though I had no income, only so as to receive a pension in old age. In these years, my children and I benefited from child allowances, free schooling, medical care and other public services, all supported out of the contributions of those who honestly paid duties and taxes.

A few days ago I retired, and yesterday I turned to God. The state does not know that I lied to it and deceived it until 3-4 days ago, and I, having meanwhile

become a so-called believer, consider that I can receive the pension without paying back the tax due on the income I hid, on the grounds that the institution does not know what I did. If the state knew the real situation, it would restore justice, taking measures to recover the damage.

The same principle of justice applies in another case as well: for several years I drew a sickness pension obtained by deceit. On reaching retirement age, I begin to receive the old-age pension.

The state — the institution which, without knowing that I deceived it, pays me my pension every month with respect, correctness and without delay. It is a disturbing picture: I, who stole for years, receive money every month from the one I deceived, and he goes on behaving irreproachably, without knowing that he is the victim of an injustice.

So the question is: can I live with this lie and at the same time be born of the righteous God?

The answer of Scripture is categorical: **no.** Genuine repentance does not mean only regret, but also putting right the injustice. To keep what you obtained by deceit, even if you have become religious, means to live in sin. The fact that the one you wronged does not know does not cancel your guilt. God sees what is hidden and requires justice, not justifications.

It is a moral abomination for me to receive this money serenely, without making good the damage. It is as if I sat at table with the one I robbed, **and he offered me his bread**, without knowing that I had taken it from him in secret.

To go on receiving the pension without confessing and without making restitution means to live in a lie, to enjoy the fruits of a deceit, while the one who was wronged remains in ignorance and in goodwill.

Scripture says in Proverbs 28:13: "**He that covereth his sins shall not prosper**: But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." To hide sin means to keep it active. God does not grant mercy to the one who only regrets in secret, but to the one who sincerely confesses and separates himself from sin.

In both cases — whether I worked "off the books" and avoided paying the tax, or whether I obtained the sickness pension by deceit — true repentance involves not only acknowledging the wrong, but also making good the damage. If I have stolen what is not due to me, I must give back all that I stole. Only in this way can I live in truth and righteousness before God.

Scripture says in Psalm 37:21: "**The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again**". Though the verse refers to borrowing, the principle extends all the more to theft, which is a much more serious deed. Borrowing involves an agreement, a trust that is given — even if it is later betrayed.

Theft, on the other hand, is a hidden act, without consent, a direct violation of another's right. If **Scripture calls "wicked"** the one who does not repay a loan,

how much more is the one condemned who steals on purpose and refuses to give back.

Injustice consists not only in the wrongful taking, but also in the refusal to give back. To keep what is not due to you, even if you have become a believer, places you in the category of those whom Scripture calls "wicked". God judges not only the initial deed, but also the attitude toward putting it right. The refusal to give back what you stole is not an end of the sin, but an active continuation of it.

These two verses, put together, form a clear picture: repentance without restitution is an illusion, and hidden sin goes on producing separation from Christ.

His Kingdom is built on truth, justice and purity, not on religious justifications or on a convenient forgetting of the past.

Whether it is money, goods or positions — such as materials taken from the workplace, firewood obtained dishonestly, a pension obtained illicitly, duties and taxes obtained unjustly, or a diploma obtained by cheating — what was acquired unjustly cannot be considered legitimate. To keep such things in one's life means to live in a continual offence against the holiness of God.

God asks sternly: "**Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked**, and the scant measure that is abominable?" (Micah 6:10). This rhetorical question brings to light a grave reality: in the house of the wicked there are things obtained by deceit, and God does not overlook them.

Stealing taxes, for example, means keeping in the house money that is not due to you — treasures of wickedness, used as though they were legitimate gain. It is a form of extortion from the state, done "in the dark", in secret. But God sees and will call to account. He asks: "**Can I still tolerate these things in your house?**" — and the implied answer, as in the case of Achan, is a categorical "no".

Even if everything seems well hidden — false contracts, payments "off the books", undeclared income, a sickness pension obtained by a lie — the things acquired in this way become witnesses of the injustice. The house, the car, the bank account — all "cry out" against the one who acquired them by deceit, like the beam in Habakkuk 2:11.

So it is not only the wages of unpaid labour, as it is written in James 5:4 — "**Behold, the hire of the labourers ... which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth**" — but any gain obtained by deceit has a voice before God. Injustice cannot be hidden; it rises up as a testimony against the one who committed it, calling down divine judgment on the deed that was done.

True repentance involves not only the confession of sin, but also the removal of every injustice kept in one's life. Micah 6:10 is a solemn warning: we cannot have fellowship with God and at the same time keep in our houses treasures obtained through iniquity. Genuine repentance means giving them up, giving them back, living in the light and aligning ourselves with the righteousness of God.

What was stolen cannot be kept under the pretext of grace. Grace does not cover hidden sin, but uncovers it in order to cleanse it. Only the one who rejects such illicit gains and does not accept them in his life is the one who will dwell in the presence of God, as Scripture affirms: "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; **he that despiseth the gain of oppressions**, ... He shall dwell on high" (Isaiah 33:15)

The commandment of restitution — "he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof" (Numbers 5:6). In the Kingdom of God there is no tolerance for dishonest gain. Forgiveness does not come without restitution, and if direct compensation is no longer possible, the stolen thing must be given to the Lord. Divine justice does not allow the keeping of goods obtained by deceit, whatever the circumstances.

The Bible is categorical: restitution is obligatory, even when it is indirect. It is an essential condition of forgiveness and salvation. Anyone who has wronged another must put right the wrong he has done. Where the injured person can no longer be compensated – as happens, for example, with stolen taxes – Scripture offers a clear solution: the compensation must be brought before the Lord.

It is written: "Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty; then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and **he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof**, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, **and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD**, even to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him." (Numbers 5:6)

These verses show plainly that there are no excuses for keeping what was taken unjustly. Even when direct restitution is no longer possible, God requires that compensation be made by offering the goods or their value to Him. In this way the principle of justice is kept, and repentance becomes complete.

Restitution is an essential proof of repentance and of the new birth. If you can no longer make restitution directly to the person you wronged, you must give to the Lord – because justice and holiness cannot be ignored. God does not accept an incomplete repentance. He requires reparation, sincerity and responsibility.

There is no blessing on what is stained by injustice. The righteousness of the Kingdom of God does not tolerate compromises. Treasure gained by lying, including by undeclared work or the avoidance of taxes, is a vanity tossed to and fro — it does not last, it does not build up, and it leads to death.

True blessing comes only when we live in truth, justice and purity, aligned with the standard of the Kingdom of God. Scripture is very clear on this matter: "**The getting of treasures by a lying tongue Is a vanity tossed to and fro of them**

that seek death." (Proverbs 21:6)

This verse brings out a deep truth: any gain obtained by deceit is devoid of real value and keeps man in spiritual death. The "lying tongue" symbolizes every form of manipulation, falsification, cheating and deceit — whether in speech, in documents or in behaviour.

In some cases there is nothing left to give back, because the goods obtained unjustly have been consumed. Yet Scripture does not ignore this reality, but offers a just solution: "**if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.**" (Exodus 22:3)

This commandment expresses a divine principle: genuine repentance does not exclude putting right the wrong that was done. The new birth cannot take place where man refuses to separate himself from shameful deeds and to put right the wrong he has done — an offence against the holiness of Christ. Repentance does not mean only regret, but also the fulfilling of justice.

Just as the state, when it recovers a loss and has nothing to take it from, applies a percentage to the wages of the guilty person so as still to allow him to live, so too the one who has stolen must desire from his heart a fair solution for restitution, even if he no longer has the means to give back.

The one who hungers after righteousness will not look for excuses to avoid putting right the injustice, but will gladly receive any solution offered by the one who was wronged — whether it is work, compensation in instalments or another form of restitution — as an opportunity to fulfil the justice of God.

His sincere desire to live in the light will make him accept with humility and gratitude any way by which he can put right the wrong he has done, knowing that righteousness is not measured only in words, but in deeds that bring restoration.

This can be done through counsel and guidance from the body of Christ — the Church — which was left for the growth of the saints and for the fulfilling of justice.

God requires that, together with the turning of the heart, there should also be the restoring of the things that were damaged, because nothing unjust can exist in His Kingdom.

This can be seen in David, who, although he was forgiven for his sin, had to bear the consequences. When the prophet Nathan spoke to him about the man who had taken his neighbour's lamb, David pronounced the verdict: "**and he shall restore the lamb fourfold**" (2 Samuel 12:6). This judgment, pronounced by his own conscience, came back upon him, showing that forgiveness does not cancel the need for justice.

God cannot dwell together with sin. His presence is a place of holiness, truth and justice. To remain in sin — without repentance and without restitution — means to choose separation from God.

Zacchaeus and the law of restitution: the repentance that leads to life. Genuine repentance shows itself in concrete deeds, and one of them is restitution. A true change of heart does not stop at words or intentions, but is seen in actions that put right the injustice that was done.

Zacchaeus, when he met the Lord Jesus, understood this principle at once. He said: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and **if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.**" (Luke 19:8)

This decision was not imposed by the Lord Jesus, but sprang from a heart which, when it was searched, responded with repentance. Zacchaeus did not look for justifications, but chose to put right what he had done wrong. This is what true repentance looks like: it acknowledges the guilt, puts right the wrong and brings light where there had been darkness.

He fulfilled the verse in Ezekiel 33:15 – "if the wicked restore the pledge, **give again that he had robbed**, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die." This verse underlines an essential principle of the righteousness of God: genuine repentance is not only an inner change, but also involves concrete deeds of justice. God does not give life to the one who only regrets his sin, but to the one who puts right the wrong he has done. Restitution is a condition of forgiveness and of life.

Like Zacchaeus, who understood that he could not keep what he had obtained unjustly, and gave back fourfold what he had taken by false accusation, so the wicked man too, if he wants to live, must give back what he took unjustly. This is the proof of a real repentance and of a life aligned with the standard of the Kingdom of God. After the decision Zacchaeus made, the Lord Jesus confirmed: "This day is salvation come to this house."

This is the proof of a transformed heart. Restitution is not only a legal obligation, but an expression of justice — a sincere desire to put right the wrong that was done.

God hates robbery because it is a direct attack on justice, on one's neighbour and on the divine order. The one who robs and does not make restitution cannot dwell in the presence of God, because he refuses to align himself with His holy character.

Genuine repentance does not mean only regret or tears, but restitution, reparation and transformation. Only a heart that loves justice and hates iniquity can be a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.

8. With God on the Lips, with Judas in the Heart: Deceiving the Conscience

The sin of dishonest gain, often justified by human excuses, has spread today

like a pandemic among those who claim to be with God. It is present in homes, in churches, in ministries and in consciences that have been taught to tolerate iniquity under the mask of grace. People deceive themselves, believing that they can keep what they have stolen, what they have hidden, what they have taken unjustly – and still enjoy the blessing of God.

Many religious people today live in the sin of Judas, yet claim that God is with them. They deceive themselves, confusing religious activity with the divine presence. But God cannot be manipulated by rituals, songs or spiritual appearances. He searches the heart and requires truth. When someone steals — whether through tax evasion or by other means — and then considers himself in order before God, Scripture directly rebukes this self-deception.

In Jeremiah 7:9-10 we read: "**Will ye steal,** ... and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, **We are delivered** to do all these abominations?"

This delusion is so serious today that many believe they can enjoy the manifestations of the Holy Spirit – such as speaking in tongues, prophecy or other spiritual gifts – and still live in sin. But the Holy Spirit is not present where life is duplicitous. He does not dwell where sin is tolerated, hidden or justified. To claim that you have spiritual gifts while you live in iniquity is an offence against the righteousness of God and a deceiving of your own conscience.

The same delusion is lived not only by those who sin openly — such as those who steal — but also by those who accept them in their midst without rebuke or separation. Scripture shows us clearly, in the case of Achan, that the whole congregation was affected by the hidden sin of a single man. God said: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant ... and have also **stolen**, and dissembled also, and **they have put it even among their own stuff**..." (Joshua 7:11). Though Achan was the one who sinned, God counted the whole people guilty. God was not with Israel until the sin was uncovered and put away.

So it is not only the sinner who is separated from God, but also the community that tolerates sin in its midst. To live in sin or to allow it in silence means to separate yourself from the presence of God. You cannot deceive yourself into believing that God dwells in you while you keep what He hates.

Scripture warns clearly: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity**." (Matthew 7:22-23)

The words "**I never knew you**" show unequivocally that the Holy Spirit was never present in the lives of those who lived in iniquity. Therefore the gifts they displayed were not genuine, but counterfeit — coming from another source, foreign to God.

Where sin is kept, the gifts are not the work of the Holy Spirit, but a spiritual deception — a dangerous imitation produced by the fallen angels who transform themselves into angels of light. This delusion is serious, because it offers a false spiritual security, while the heart remains far from God. Scripture warns: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14)

This reality must be regarded with the utmost seriousness. Not every religious manifestation is proof of the presence of God. The true work of the Holy Spirit is done in holiness, in purity and in truth.

God does not validate an unclean life, and the Holy Spirit does not dwell in a temple of iniquity. That is why the word of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah remains relevant. If your life does not reflect His righteousness, it is not enough to say: "The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD!" God says: "**Amend your ways and your doings,** and I will cause you to dwell in this place." (Jeremiah 7:3)

Scripture warns clearly: "**Be not deceived; God is not mocked**: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

True worship is not measured by physical presence in a holy place, but by purity of heart and obedience to the commandments of God. Only those who live in justice and truth are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and recognized as His.

9. The True Jesus — Despised and Not Esteemed

The Lord Jesus hated iniquity and lived without sin. He made no compromise with injustice. He not only preached the truth, but lived it in every detail — without concealment, without deceit, without compromise.

He was light in the midst of darkness, clean in a dirty world, just in a corrupt society. It is no wonder that the Lord Jesus' commandment about non-resistance and the paying of tribute stirred up hatred against Him. He was despised precisely because He exposed sin and required a righteousness that goes beyond appearances, reaching the heart and the deeds of man.

And today things are no different. Genuine righteousness, which condemns theft, lying and injustice, continues to provoke rejection and even hatred.

Many reject the real Jesus and embrace "another Jesus" — an imaginary one, who allows them to steal taxes, to lie and to live in injustice, without rebuke. But this "Jesus" is not the Saviour of the Scriptures, but a comfortable illusion that does not save.

Today many declare themselves born of God, but live in contradiction with this claim. Some steal taxes or accept the stealing of taxes, support injustice and compromises, yet still consider themselves part of His people.

But an unjust life does not prove that one is born of

God. Disregarding the commandments of Christ shows a heart that has not been transformed by the divine righteousness. Scripture is clear: not religious works, but living in righteousness confirms that one belongs to God. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: **whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God**" (1 John 3:10)

The true birth from God is preceded by a sincere hunger and thirst after righteousness — a deep desire that is reflected in deeds: in honesty, in truth, in the renunciation of sin and in obedience to His commandments. Any form of faith that does not produce a life lived in the righteousness of God is a great delusion.

It is a painful reality: Many say that they love Him, but when it comes to obedience, to living out His commandments, they choose darkness. They choose comfort, they choose religion, they choose appearance — but they do not choose the Word.

The Lord Jesus is despised because of His Word, which does not accept compromise. The Lord says that you cannot love Him and at the same time despise His commandments. "**He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings**" (John 14:24)

This is not merely a matter of morality, but a clear spiritual proof of the state of the heart. Disregarding His commandments — including those concerning honesty, justice, paying taxes, self-denial and submission to authority — is not merely a problem of behaviour, but a proof that the heart does not love the Lord.

In fact, many despise the true Jesus. Not out of ignorance, but out of conscious resistance. They hate Him because He commands them to live in purity, to give up income obtained unjustly, to submit, not to justify themselves.

Even if they say that they love Him, sing to Him, pray and preach, the reality is that they hate Him — just as Scripture says: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John 3:20)

They despise Him because He reaches into their "pocket", because His presence threatens to diminish their gain and uncovers the greed of Judas hidden in their heart. They disregard Him by their deeds, living as though He had no right over their lives.

The righteousness required by Christ, valued at the price of death. This hatred of man toward the light was also used by Satan as the final weapon to put the Lord Jesus to death. He knows that men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19), that they hate the light because it uncovers their evil deeds, and that the truth awakens resistance in the heart of those who live in sin.

This is seen clearly in Matthew 22:15–22, where Satan's well-laid plan is described. He inspired the religious leaders with an apparently legitimate question, with the aim of stirring up the hatred of the crowd not only against His teaching, but also against Christ Himself.

Though the question seems to come from men, the initiative is not purely human. Behind this trick question stands Satan, the author of the plan to discredit and eliminate Christ.

The question about paying tribute to Cæsar was a double-edged challenge. The Jewish people detested the Roman regime not only for political reasons, but also because of the oppressive tax burden imposed by the occupation — a burden similar to the compulsory delivery quotas imposed by the Soviet regime in Romania after the Second World War.

Satan exploited this tension, knowing that a simple approval of paying tribute could kindle the hatred of the crowd. Knowing His teaching about not resisting the one who takes what is yours by force — "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also" (Matthew 5:40) — Satan wanted to catch Him in a trap that would allow Him to be condemned.

Knowing that His answer could not disagree with His own teaching, Satan, through this question, succeeded in stirring up the hatred of the Jewish people. When the Lord Jesus said that tribute should be given to Cæsar, He was perceived as a traitor to the Jewish cause.

This produced the hatred of the crowd, because His commandments struck directly at their desire to avoid paying tribute, at their pride, ambitions and expectations — but above all at their pocket, touching their income and financial comfort.

He obtained what he was after: the hatred of the people and, through a lie, an apparently legitimate political accusation, meant to justify the condemnation of the Lord Jesus. The lie spoken by the religious leaders was that the Lord had said not to give tribute to Cæsar, presenting Him in this way as an instigator against the Roman authority. Though He had clearly stated: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's", this distortion of His words was used to accuse Him of sedition and to force a condemnation from Pilate.

And today the situation has not changed. The hatred that the people showed then toward this teaching of Christ is present today too. The one who despises this teaching and refuses to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's in fact hates Christ, because His message strikes exactly where he loves: in unjust gain. The teaching of the Lord Jesus is radical, because it unmasks the one who loves the wages of unrighteousness. It requires a life lived in justice, in submission to the authorities, not in the hiding of income. It is a call to respect the civil order, even when the authorities are not perfect.

Even when something unjust is asked of us, the Lord Jesus teaches us: "but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil" (Matthew 5:39) — an invitation to give up seeking justice for oneself and to live a life in which righteousness and peace matter more than claiming one's own rights. This teaching does not offer an easy

way, but a narrow one, which passes through self-denial and the cross.

Today many love another Jesus — not the true Jesus. They love Him for the healings He performs, for the Paradise He offers, for the multiplied loaves and because He solves their problems. They accept Him as long as He does not disturb their unjust gain.

But they reject Him when He asks them for integrity, obedience, renunciation and submission. The reaction of the crowd in His time is the same today: from admiration to hatred. Many listened to Him with amazement, but were deeply disappointed when they understood that:

- The Lord Jesus will not lead a political revolution against Rome.
- He asks them to submit to an unjust regime.
- **He "betrays" them by asking them to pay tribute to Cæsar.**

In the eyes of the crowd, such a Messiah was a great disappointment. That is why their hatred grew, culminating in the cry: "Crucify Him!" Isaiah describes exactly this reaction: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: ... he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isaiah 53:3) This hatred of the genuine Jesus is not only a historical reality, but a constant trait of the human heart.

The Lord Jesus was despised because He did not correspond to human expectations. He was hated not for any wrong, but for His holiness, for the purity of His heart and because He exposed the sin of men and called them to a life of submission — even in the face of injustice. He Himself says in John 7:7: "The world cannot hate you; **but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.**" The truth spoken by Christ was disturbing, because His light brought to light the darkness in men's hearts.

The same contempt persists today. Many admire the Lord Jesus for His sacrifice offered for our sin, but despise His commandments — especially when these affect their material interests.

It is easier to love a "Jesus" who asks next to nothing than to follow the crucified Christ, who asks everything. When the truth touches personal gain, many prefer to close their ears and turn their eyes away.

The true Jesus, as He is revealed in Scripture, is not a mere symbol of unconditional love, but the Lord and Master who calls to repentance, to submission, to the cross and to a holy life. He did not seek popularity, but spoke the truth, even at the price of hatred and of the cross. Scripture is very clear on this matter: "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19)

By contrast, the false Jesus promoted in many religious organizations is a comfortable projection: a Jesus who does not condemn sin, does not require holiness, does not speak about judgment, but only about salvation by grace,

acceptance and blessing. He is a Jesus who loves unconditionally, and who does not disturb, does not challenge, does not require restitution.

This falsified image is loved because: It does not require real repentance, but only an emotional affiliation. It does not confront sin, but ignores or redefines it. It does not speak about the cross, but about grace. It does not call to submission, but to spiritual independence.

But the choice to keep what does not belong to us is a direct offence against the holiness of God. The Lord Jesus does not accept a partial repentance, but requires a complete separation from iniquity, a complete turning away from the works of darkness.

A true encounter with Christ produces a radical change — as in the case of Zacchaeus, who did not look for justifications, but chose to put right what he had done wrong. This is what genuine repentance looks like: it acknowledges the guilt, puts right the wrong and brings light where there had been darkness.

The Lord Jesus is hated because He calls us to live in all that is right. He does not let Himself be manipulated by religious appearances, but penetrates deep into the heart and requires truth. And the truth requires self-denial, renunciation and restitution. He does not come to comfort us in sin, but to set us free from it. He calls us to give back the things that were stolen and hidden. For many, giving up what they have acquired unjustly over a lifetime seems almost impossible — a burden too heavy.

The false Jesus is loved because he does not rebuke the conscience and does not require the restitution of stolen goods. He does not insist on putting sin right. That is why many justify keeping things obtained unjustly by a wrong interpretation of grace — considering that "the times of this ignorance God winked at" (Acts 17:30).

But this verse does not support keeping what was stolen; it proclaims the universal call to repentance: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent"

So grace does not cancel justice, but fulfils it through repentance and reparation.

This reparation is not an act of bravery, nor a personal merit to be praised, but a proof of sincere repentance. It is a repentance of shameful things, of deeds that were a direct offence against the holiness of God. It is not something to be proud of, but something that must be done with humility, with tears and with the acknowledgment of the gravity of sin.

He calls us to give up the sin of Achan — the things stolen and stubbornly kept, under the justification that "it is too hard to give them back". But it is precisely this difficulty that is the test of genuine repentance. The refusal to give up what does not belong to us shows that the heart has not truly broken away from iniquity. God

does not look for justifications, but for complete obedience.

True repentance does not look for excuses, but looks for light. It does not negotiate with sin, but condemns it and puts it away. It is not a boast of the courage to make restitution, but a painful acknowledgment that we have lived in darkness — in hidden sin, in iniquity. An acknowledgment that we have lived in a culture of stealing from the state, inherited from communism, when people stole from the collective farm, from the factory, everything from potatoes, apples and grapes to nails. True repentance means leaving for good the shameful deeds that are an offence against God.

10. When the Church Closes Its Eyes to Ill-Gotten Gain

If you have lived for years in this sin — justifying undeclared work or the avoidance of taxes — and the church you belong to has not only failed to rebuke you, but has tolerated or even closed its eyes to this practice, then it is a grave sign that it too is in a state of straying and spiritual death.

Such a church does not reflect the righteousness that characterizes the Kingdom of God, but has lowered the standard of holiness to the level of human conventions. The church was not given to validate sin, but to form righteous characters, aligned with the truth of God. Its purpose is to bring man to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, the Righteous One, not to offer him comfort in iniquity.

The true church does not lower the standard, but raises it — calling every soul to transformation, purity and responsibility. It is not content with religious appearances, but pursues perfection in Christ, who is the supreme model of righteousness. Scripture says that God's servants have the duty to watch for the souls entrusted to them (Hebrews 13:17), and this watching also involves not tolerating sin.

When the church no longer rebukes sin, but tolerates it, it betrays the divine mandate and becomes an accomplice in the straying of souls. When a community of believers tacitly accepts evident sins, such as tax fraud, it is a partaker in them. The lack of reaction is not neutrality, but silent approval.

Such a church, which does not have the courage to speak the truth, which does not rebuke sin and does not call to repentance, is a church without life. Even if it has religious activities, the songs resound and the sermons are preached, if the Holy Spirit is not working holiness and transformation, that church is dead. And those who belong to such a congregation are dead members — physically present, but separated from the life that comes from Christ.

This state is like that of the people of Israel in Joshua chapter 7, when God withdrew His presence from among them because of the hidden sin of Achan.

Though they were called to conquer the promised land, they were defeated by a weak enemy, and God said: "neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." (Joshua 7:12).

This was not only a discipline, but a clear withdrawal of the divine presence. God was no longer there — He no longer fought for them, no longer blessed their work — until the sin was uncovered, confessed and put away. This verse underlines that the presence of God cannot coexist with sin that is tolerated or hidden. He not only withdraws, but warns that He will not be with the people any more until the sin is completely put away.

The true church of Christ is alive, pure and watches with holy discernment over sin, however accepted it may be in society. It does not conform to the world, but conforms to the Word. If the church you belong to does not do this, if it tolerates sin and does not live in the light, do not put off the decision. God is calling you today to come out, to separate yourself, to choose purity and to align yourself with the standard of His righteousness. Listen to His voice and step onto the path of holiness — He promises that He will receive you.

Scripture is clear on this matter. The apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18: "Wherefore Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch not the unclean thing; And I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, And ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

This call is not one to isolation, but to holy separation. It is not an invitation to judgment, but to purity and loyalty to God. When a community refuses to repent and persists in tolerating sin, the one who hungers after righteousness is called to separate himself, not out of pride, but out of obedience.

Scripture warns us not to join with those who live in these sins: "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, And castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him..." (Psalm 50:16-18). To remain in such a setting — without testimony and without struggle — means to become part of a body without life, and without the presence of God.

Separation from injustice is sometimes painful, but it is the only way to true fellowship with God. He promises that He will receive those who choose holiness, even at the price of breaking with what is familiar. The true church is made up of those who choose to live in the light, even when the darkness is in the majority.

11. A Call to Discipleship – the Road to Likeness to Christ

At Christ's call to live in righteousness, the one who lets himself be searched by the Holy Spirit will have a deep desire for change. This desire is not superficial, but shows itself as a hunger and thirst after righteousness — the sign of an awakened

heart, which longs for a pure life, pleasing to God.

This sincere thirst opens the way to the new birth, the moment when man is restored in his relationship with God and receives a new identity: a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. But discipleship is not only an initial stage, but a continual journey of spiritual formation, in which the believer is called to grow "till we all come ... unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

This transformation is not only a change of behaviour, but a radical separation from everything that separates us from God — including from the fruit of the sin of Judas and of Achan: the hidden things, stubbornly kept by many, under the burden of restitution.

As His disciples, we are called to live as He lived — without hidden treasures, without compromises, without gain obtained unjustly. To live in the light means to be transparent, just and clean before men and before God. The Kingdom of God is not built on concealment, but on truth, justice and holiness.

This transformed life shows itself in a real discipleship, in which the Kingdom of God becomes the supreme priority, and His righteousness – your pattern of life, as Scripture teaches us: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..." (Matthew 6:33)

It is a life lived as Christ lived, in truth, with integrity and submission to the requirements of the righteousness of God — a call to give up every compromise and to walk daily on the narrow way of justice. (Matthew 7:14)

Living out the values of the Kingdom of God is not easy, but it is full of meaning and beauty. It is a difficult road, but a blessed one.

A Personal Appeal

God is calling you to enrol in the school of His discipleship. Do not put off this step. Answer His call with faith and resolve. Pray to the Lord to give you a living church, which does not tolerate sin — a place where you will be spiritually fed, corrected and encouraged to grow in justice as Scripture requires: "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22). Only there will you be able to grow "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

If there is no living church near you and you need support or guidance, we are available to help you — you can contact us to receive the help you need to begin a truly new life in Christ.

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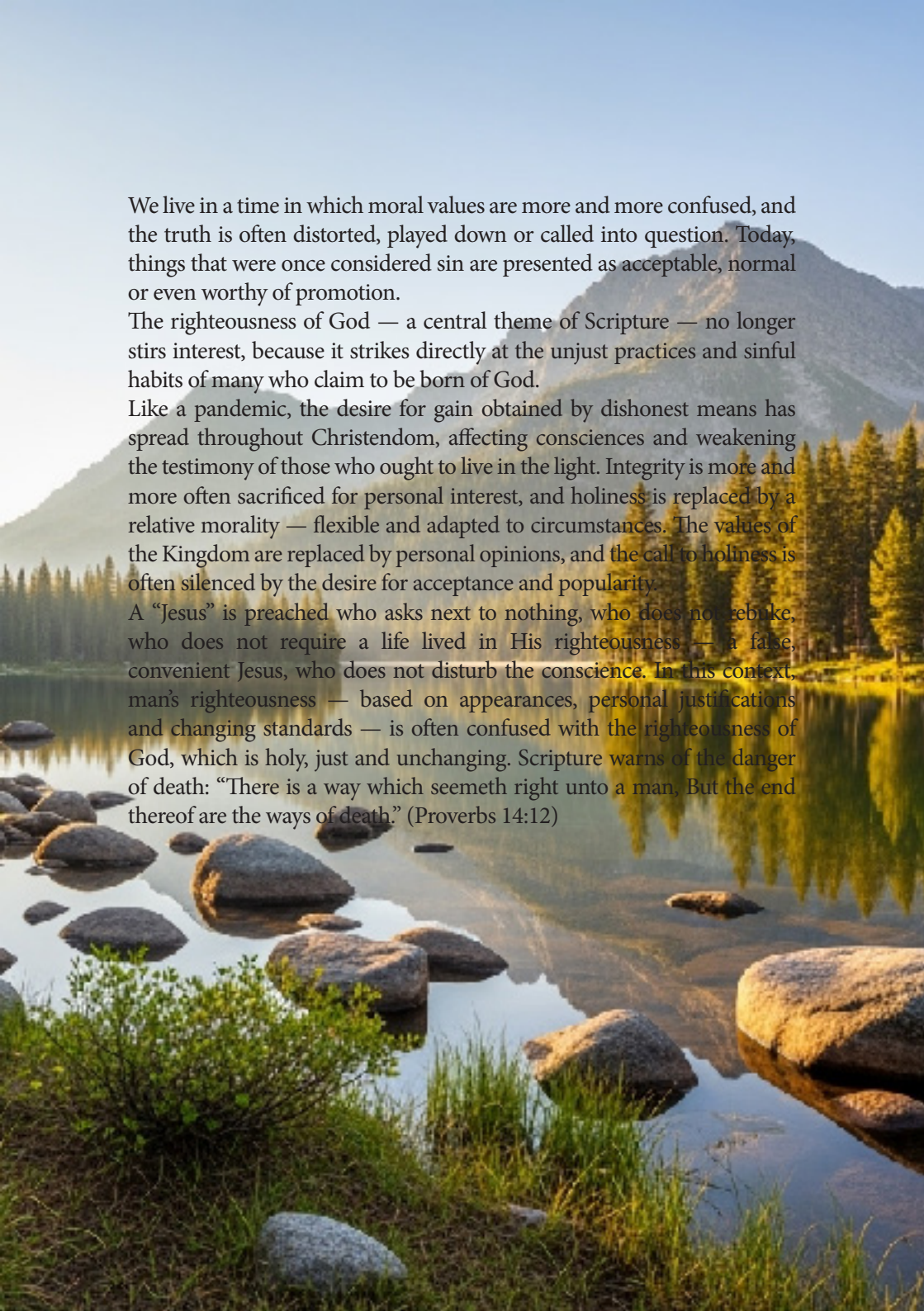
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We live in a time in which moral values are more and more confused, and the truth is often distorted, played down or called into question. Today, things that were once considered sin are presented as acceptable, normal or even worthy of promotion.

The righteousness of God — a central theme of Scripture — no longer stirs interest, because it strikes directly at the unjust practices and sinful habits of many who claim to be born of God.

Like a pandemic, the desire for gain obtained by dishonest means has spread throughout Christendom, affecting consciences and weakening the testimony of those who ought to live in the light. Integrity is more and more often sacrificed for personal interest, and holiness is replaced by a relative morality — flexible and adapted to circumstances. The values of the Kingdom are replaced by personal opinions, and the call to holiness is often silenced by the desire for acceptance and popularity.

A "Jesus" is preached who asks next to nothing, who does not rebuke, who does not require a life lived in His righteousness — a false, convenient Jesus, who does not disturb the conscience. In this context, man's righteousness — based on appearances, personal justifications and changing standards — is often confused with the righteousness of God, which is holy, just and unchanging. Scripture warns of the danger of death: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12)