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Theme: From the ministry of exhortation in view of the coming day

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Introduction

"Therefore, brethren, since we have boldness to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, in the new and living way, which He hath opened unto us through the veil, which is His flesh, and a great priest over the house of God-

so let us come with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled (and thus cleansed) from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of hope - for faithful is He who made the promise - and let us take heed one to another for the encouragement of love and good works,

Not neglecting to meet together, as is the custom with some, but encouraging one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. "

Both, healthy growth and aberrations, are found in the life of the individual believer (see Abraham's three times straying and the personal experiences of each believer) as well as in the history of the church of Jesus Christ (see the letters of the apostles and the history of the church). Therefore, the ministries within the church are necessary both for the individual member and for the whole organism.

The individual believer, in the unfolding of the new nature (of the Spirit) and in its struggle with the flesh, is a diminished reflection of the development that takes place within the church as a whole. When we were allowed to know the Lord and received justification, we found peace. The consciousness of the forgiveness of sins made us blissful. We thirsted for the pure and noiseless milk of the gospel, and in those "infancy" we desired to hear nothing else but again and again: repentance, faith, forgiveness of sins, and assurance of salvation, that is, the so-called "simple gospel" in the sense of evangelism. Whoever brought more than these basic elements, these first initial letters of the divine words, talked over our heads. It was just not possible for us to see beyond our horizon at that time, because with the natural mind the essential things of the divine-spiritual cannot be recognized. It requires a certain degree of spiritual maturity, which we could not have at that time. Like an infant in the cradle or a child in the first years of life

If a child has no idea about marriage, inheritance, property, the economy or other things of this life, we also had no insight into the deeper connections of the things of *that* life at that time. At that time we were just children and had not yet dismissed what is childish. *The mark of filiality is the certainty of the forgiveness of sins.* "I have written unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven. "

But then we were able to experience that the senses were trained through habit to distinguish between good and evil. With the bitter experiences of defeats alternated glorious experiences of victories. Thus we realized that while our flesh is incorrigible, the Spirit kills the business of the flesh and thus there is victory over sin and the evil one. *The mark of discipleship is overcoming evil.* The struggle, however, requires strength, and this can only be obtained through strong food. So it came about that in those days we desired to be led deeper into the Word. We wanted to know what it is about flesh and spirit, and how this struggle will end one day, both with us personally and in the whole cosmos.

Then we saw that all enemies will be taken away, the last being death, and that God will one day be all in all.

Many other questions about the unfolding of the kingdom of God, about the rapture of the church and the coming new earth and new heaven were related to this. We thirsted for instruction, and so we learned to appreciate the ministry of teaching, which we had earlier rejected as being over our heads. Yes, the same thing we had previously rejected now attracted us so strongly that we could not hear enough of it and sometimes became so heated during the back and forth of questions and answers, which, following the example of the early church, often lasted until after midnight, as we also read about the apostles.

And then it went even further. There came the questions about the last connections of all being, about the causes of all developments, yes, about the cause fan itself. All lines ran back over the beginnings of the creature far beyond to him who was there before one of the others became. *We recognized the one who is from the beginning. But the knowledge of Himself is the mark of fatherhood.* But it soon turned out that the knowledge of these things and the speaking of them were not enough. Realization is much more than knowledge or knowing. *It is the becoming one of two for the purpose of begetting new life.* Thus we saw that it is about the ultimate and deepest oneness with God, the total surrender and loving oneness with Himself in the Holy of Holies. If faith brought us into the forecourt and led us to justification, hope led us into the sanctuary and led us to sanctification, to purification. But love enters the Holy of Holies, and only it leads to perfection. That is why it is necessary to take care of each other and to encourage each other to love God, as our text says, by encouraging (exhorting) each other, and that all the more the more we see the day approaching.

Thus the *ministry of exhortation* is lifted above its development in the life of the individual and *is characterized as the ministry which has a special task in the pre-final times.*

This directs our attention to the fact that the unfolding of spiritual life in individual believers parallels the development of the church as a whole.

In the first centuries, the ministry of evangelism was in the foreground. Everywhere there were open doors, and the Good News began its worldwide triumph.

The Middle Ages with the Pre-Reformation, Reformation and Counter-Reformation are characterized by the predominance of doctrinal issues. There were heated doctrinal disputes not only in Rome and Wittenberg, but also within the denominations, e.g., over the Lord's Supper ("This is my body" or "This means my body").

Since the First World War and the events that followed it pushed the development of world history forward with avalanche-like force and speed, the congregation (the *ecclesia die una sancta*, the communion of saints) has also been involved in the final crisis from which it is to emerge cleansed and purified. It is true that the masses will fall away, but instead it will again be given the authority of the Spirit. If for centuries it had been deceived that the masses were never really Christians (because the *ecclesia* is an election, and according to the Lord's own words there are only a few who walk the narrow path in this present course of time), in the future everyone will have to examine whether the gospel is worth so much to him to give everything to it for his own sake. Then again essential decisions will be made, instead of a formal being counted, which is only based on the fact

that several ceremonies are performed on a person. *In the examination everything inauthentic does not stand.*

But all who are baptized into one body by one Spirit are led by that Spirit to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In order to bring the church closer to this goal and to perfect the saints, the *ministry of exhortation*, among other gifts of grace, has been given to the body church. It is breaking through more and more in the last decades, while doctrinal disputes are fading into the background. Now that evangelism is being deprived of its worldwide impact and one door after another is being closed, one realizes that it is more and more a matter of *strengthening the rest for the time of preservation*.

In such times of probation, pious chatter only seems ridiculous, and powerless forms disintegrate. But the spirit of the Lord remains alive and leads the members of the body of Christ to full maturity. He proclaims what is coming and directs our eyes to the returning Lord and His day. This outlook admonishes us to *leave less important things and to take hold of the essential instead*. Thus it can already be recognized as a delicious fruit of the purification time that all true believers *long for perfect unity in the love of the spirit*. And when this breaks through, the authority of the spirit will also return as it was initially. For according to the testimony of Scripture, the end will return to the beginning. --

The inner structure of the passage Hebrews 10:19-25 shows a wonderful harmony. It is divided into three main parts, each of which again contains three subparts:

1. The objective basis of our salvation, or: **What we have**
 - a) Frankness to enter the Holy of Holies through the blood of Jesus
 - b) a new and living way, which He has opened for us through the curtain, which is His flesh.
 - c) a great priest over the house of God
2. The subjective impact of the possibilities of salvation, or: **What we are to do**
 - a) Let us come with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled and thus cleansed from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.
 - b) Let us hold fast the confession of hope immovable (for faithful is He who made the promise)
 - c) Let us take care of one another for the stimulation of love and good works
3. The effective means, or: **How we can do it**
 - a) by not missing our coming together
 - b) but encourage (admonish) one another
 - c) and that 50 more the more you see the day approaching

The harmony of the structure becomes even more apparent if one observes the parallels between the individual sub-lines in the following outline:

1. What we have (a threefold foundation)
 - a) The Crucified (His Blood) = *Forecourt*
 - b) The Risen One (curtain of flesh) = *Sanctuary*
 - c) The Glorified One (priestly service to the Father) = *Blessed Sacrament*
2. What we should do (a threefold exhortation)
 - a) Full certainty of *faith* = *atrium*
 - b) The confession of *hope* = *sanctuary*
 - c) Incentive to *love* = *Holy of Holies*

3. How we can do it (a threefold means)
 - a) Assembly (external gathering) = *atrium*
 - b) Admonition (inner service) = *sanctuary*
 - c) Revelation (the spiritual vision of the coming day) = *Holy of Holies*

Supporting documents for the introduction:

Heb. 10, 19-25; Heb. 5, 12 f.; 1 Cor. 13, 11; 1 John 2, 12; Heb. 5, 14; Rom. 7, 18; 8, 1-4.13; Gal. 5, 16; 1 John 2, 13 f.; 1 Cor. 15, 25-28; Acts. 15, 7; 20, 7; 1 John 2, 13 f.; Rom. 5, 1; 1 John 3, 3; Heb. 10, 24 f.; 1 Cor. 12, 13; Rom. 8, 14; Eph. 4, 4-6; 1 Tim. 6, 12.19; Acts 4, 32; 5, 13;

1. what we have

a) *Therefore, brethren, since we have boldness to enter into the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus*

Once we were dead in trespasses and sins. Now we are made alive with Christ.

Once we were enemies and sinners. Now we are beloved children.

Once we walked in the way of this course of time, doing our own will and running after the dumb idols of this world. Now we walk on the eternal path in the knowledge of God's will and guided by His Spirit.

And all this because the Father has spoken to us in the Son, who, as a reflection of His glory and as an imprint of His being, carries us together with the whole universe toward the goal of our destiny, after He has effected the cleansing of sins and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus, who is with the Father in glory and bears our names on His breast, offering them to the Father continually, we look upon and rejoice in glorious joy that we are His comrades, His fellow partakers.

Since we now have a great High Priest, let us hold fast the confession and approach the throne of grace with frankness!

And now, for another 6 chapters (chs. 5-10), the Letter to the Hebrews describes the majesty of this High Priest and the glory of His ministry, and then, looking back at this wonderful person of the Son of God and His accomplished work and its effect for us, begins anew: "Therefore, since we have..." "Yes, now that we have all this, let us also make the godly, glorious, and blessed use of it, and enter with frankness into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies! --

Brothers are only those who are sons of the same Father, whether they are brothers according to the flesh, who are of *one blood*, *one family*, *one tribe*, or brothers in the Lord, who are of *one spirit*, *His spirit*. They are sons of God, and the "Son of Love," the "firstborn among many brethren," is not ashamed to call them *His brethren*. He, Christ, the Sanctifier, and all who are sanctified all come from *one*, God the Father. Christ, the Head, is the Duke of our blessedness, the Leader of our salvation, and we, as holy brethren (sanctified by Him), are comrades in the heavenly calling, co-living and co-partakers of *His promise* and *His calling*.

Brotherhood by spiritual birth is a *state*, not an office or profession. Paul was an apostle according to his office (apostle to the nations), a brother among brothers according to his status in Christ.

Those who were called out of the world and separated from the principles of this time (eon) are now "*holy brothers, comrades of the heavenly calling*". And to these brethren the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews addresses himself, in order to make known to them how precious and elevated their position is in comparison to everything that was somehow granted to Israel according to the flesh before. -

There is a worldly sanctuary, an image (after-image, shadow-image, counter-image) of the true one. The essential sanctuary is not of this world, not of the cosmos. It is not made with hands, i.e. not of this creation. The hut on earth was only a diminished after-image of the hut above, which is bigger and more perfect.

The original image could and can be recognized by the reduced after-image on earth, which, however, was manufactured in all parts exactly according to the pattern above. Therefore, whoever wants to search for what is above must orientate himself to what is on earth.

The tent of meeting had two parts: the sanctuary and the holy of holies. Both were separated by a curtain. The whole was surrounded by the forecourt, which was separated from the "outside" by a wall of carpet. Thus the whole dwelling was divided into three parts: Courtyard, Sanctuary and Holy of Holies.

All the people were allowed to enter the forecourt. There, at the brazen altar, the blood of the sacrificial animals was shed and the exemplary (not the real) cleansing from sins was performed. *Grace is given to all.* That is why all the souls eager for salvation, who were waiting for the Savior and for the time being experienced a letting go of their sins in the believing expectation of the Lamb of God to be sacrificed by God Himself, were allowed to enter this place.

The sanctuary was not open to everyone. Only the priests (from the tribe of Levi) were allowed to enter it when their service and profession required it. *Vocation is therefore not granted to all.* There are many, namely 22,000 Levites, who are allowed to enter. But the sum of the men of the people was 600 000. - But only a few were allowed to enter the holy of holies, namely Aaron and his sons after him. Thus, according to the three-part division of the structure of the tabernacle (tent) of meeting, there is also a threefold position of the members of the people. There were

Grace (to live) for all,
Calling (to service) for many,
Selection (for blessing message) for few.

Into the true sanctuary, which is not of this creation, Christ, the anointed and messenger of the Father, entered with His blood after His resurrection and ascension. He passed through all the heavens and went into the Holy of Holies to the Father, to live there from now on at the right hand of the Father in perfect communion with Him.

All those who are one with Him as partakers of His being and His divine nature should and may enter there. *The members of the body enjoy the same calling and election as the head.* They are partakers of *His* calling, comrades of the Christ, co-bodies and co-partakers of *His* promise, which the Father gave to Him and in Him also to us. Christ the true bearer and heir of the promise, we the co-heirs. Therefore, the Father has not only set Him above the universe, high above every name that is named, but He has also raised us, who were dead in trespasses and sins, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places. In the coming ages, the Father wants to pour out on us all the riches of His grace in goodness and gloriously carry out the original plan He had in mind for man, namely, to put everything under man's feet so that he may rule over the universe, judge the world and the angels, lead the whole creation to sonship, and be revealed in the same glory as Him and have fellowship with Himself forever.

Today we do not yet see everything subjected to man, but we already see the "Duke of our Bliss" crowned with glory and honor. And we are His brothers and may now, *as sons and heirs, approach with frankness the place which the Father gave Him and in Him also us.*

No servile fear can any longer inhibit our frankness; for His Spirit guides us and bears witness with our spirit that we are His children. And from the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, no power of the world can separate us any more. In true freedom of our sonship position, we cry out "Abba, Father!". For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but of sonship, and this is a spirit of power and love and sound mind.

When our eye of faith looks into the holy of holies above, we are not filled with terror, as it once was for those who in the Old Covenant approached the image of this room on earth, because they had to fear that they would be killed if they did not observe even one of the many regulations. After all, we see that the "firstborn of the brethren" is already there, awaiting us in holy longing of love. Shouldn't our heart rejoice when we behold the one to whom all our deepest longings are directed? - And could there still be something that stands between Him and us, after He shed His blood for us and cleansed us from all sin? - Or could there even be any doubt about God's love after He showed it while we were still enemies and sinners, and paid the most expensive purchase price for us that was ever paid in the whole universe, namely the Only Begotten, the Only Begotten, the Son of Love? No, we look with uncovered face into this glory, which is also our future part, and our hearts become wide in joy and adoration. *All creaturely inhibitions fall!* Our worshipping spirit comes closer and closer in blessed joy, comes very close, enters with relaxed joy and free courage into the very presence of God, where our Lord and Head is also, together with all the saints of the triumphant church.

Yes, we have frankness to enter the Holy of Holies!

And this frankness *in the presence of God Himself*, which is a sign of reconciliation that has truly taken place, of complete reconciliation and true sonship, is also revealed in our behavior toward the brethren and against the world.

In such frankness we join in the poet's song of worship:

In the Holy of Holies, let this be your inheritance,
to dwell in the secret of the Lord,
To look at him, until your whole being
Learn to reflect and proclaim Him!

In the Holy of Holies, bowing before Him,
you can - beholding His glory -
Become a living revelation
of His love inexhaustibility.

In the Holy of Holies streams towards you
the sweet fragrance of His nearness.
In the Holy of Holies the songs are born,
who are able to gladden His heart.

In the Holy of Holies is your anchor
an unshakable reason created.
Living with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament
gives resurrection power to your change.

("Rescue Cheer," Vol. 11106)

In the Beloved, the Son of Love, we have *redemption through His blood*, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

The whole universe was detached from God. But God reconciled it to Himself by dwelling in Christ in all His fullness and *making peace through the blood of the cross*, thus reconciling all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in the heavens.

Rarely does a person's love reach down to the outcast. God, however, does not want the outcast to remain outcast from Him. He wants that all come to the knowledge of the truth, because He is a "savior of all people". His love and

the power of His gifts is sufficient to convict even the unruly and make them His dwelling place. Therefore the Son also went to the captive spirits in prison, whose flesh had long since passed away, but whose spirits languished in the bonds of the dungeon, and preached repentance to those who, while they were still alive in the flesh, did not accept it. And He led captivity captive and made many prisoners.

Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness, neither for our sins nor for those of the whole cosmos, the whole world. But because the blood of earthly sacrificial lambs could not accomplish real cleansing, God sent His own, the only begotten Son, as *His Lamb*, the *Lamb of God*, and cleansed us through His sacrifice.

The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin.

He, the Son of Love, loved us and washed us from our sins *in His blood*.

The martyrs of the great tribulation make their garments bright (white) *in the blood of the Lamb* and overcome Satan and his accomplices *by the blood of the Lamb*.

The **New Covenant** is founded on this blood, and the body church from the nations knows no more intimate fellowship with the Head and with one another than participation in the Lord's Supper, for: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not *the fellowship of the blood of the Christ?*" Thus the blood fellowship with the Christ is the purest and deepest blood brotherhood there is. At the same time, it is the only consubstantial blood brotherhood, for while all other flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, this blood is forever before the face of God in the communion of saints, the triumphant church, and remains forever the basis of our redemption and sonship with God. It has the same power yesterday, today and forever, just as Christ Himself is the same yesterday, today and forever.

O Lamb of God, Your Precious Blood
still has the same power!
Pour out the fire of the spirit,
that creates new people!
It wells up for me this expensive blood,
I believe and believe!
It also makes my damage good,
because Christ died for me!

b) We have a new and living way, which He has inaugurated for us through the curtain, which is His flesh.

Throughout history, man has tried many different ways to reach God. These ways all had one thing in common:

They made demands on the creature, which it was not up to. One can never produce immortality from perishable being and never make spirit from flesh. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Their lowliness, frailty and corruption prevent them from standing before Him who is a holy and consuming fire. There is nothing lasting in them that could survive the eons. The creature soon exhausts itself in its achievements and is never able to form them to divine greatness. What it thinks for it is only delusion. All that it produces lacks the immortality of God and the supramundane glory associated with His being. Thus all attempts of the natural man remained only a groping search, whether they would like to feel and find Him (God).

But they did not bring certainty, and the invisible God was not recognized and seen, because He was not yet revealed in His image, the Son of love.

Everything created is under certain laws and orders that regulate its ways. And *all these ways end in death.*

The final test of whether the creature under spiritual orders and regulations and statutes is able to change its nature and reach the glory of the incorruptible God, Israel had to pass under the law.

It had been transmitted to him at Sinai by order of the holy angels. (Please note the following passages: Acts 7, 30.35.38.53; Gal. 3, 19; Deut. 33, 2; Hebr. 2, 2; Dan. 4, 17.) But it did not bring anything to perfection, but only increased the transgression. And by bringing knowledge of sin, it increased the guilt. Thus the law proved to be a way to death. Instead of giving me strength to live, it only made me know sin and thus completed the judgment on me. Its service to me was a service of death and damnation. But by bringing the flesh to the end of its capacity, it became at the same time a disciplinarian (pedagogue, boy leader, educator) towards Christ.

In Him the old way found its end and its fulfillment. Its end by bringing the righteous (who should live by the law) to the cross and killing him as its last effect; its fulfillment by satisfying all the demands of the law so completely that it can never again claim anything from anyone who is in Christ.

The old way has come to an end! God be praised! A yoke so heavy that no one could bear it except the One who was not created, but begotten of the Holy Spirit, of God, has been taken off our necks. Because the creature could not find a way from earth to heaven, God made a way from heaven to earth. On this path we can approach God, and we can do so without fear in complete frankness.

This way, the new way, is not a way of performance to improve the flesh, but a way of faith in the spirit.

The new way is not a thing at all, but a person. It is the one who said, "I am the way.

Whoever is united with this person through faith, whoever has become partaker of His spirit, has a share in the divine nature. In the power of an indissoluble life we are connected with Him, and nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Whoever became partaker of this spiritual birth from God, who experienced it in himself, has *personally experienced the greatest breakthrough of world history.* He has penetrated from death into life, from the transitoriness of the creature to the imperishable being of the God-nature itself. This is the breakthrough from appearance into essence, from the unreal into reality, from the creaturely into the divine.

The new way is a living way. Christ, the way, the truth (beingness, reality) and the life is a begotten, who carries the immortal life of the Father in himself. He does not only show a way, but He Himself carries the universe towards the goal of its destiny, thus He is in truth *a living way, which brings those who walk on it to the goal,* by taking them on the strong shoulders of His power and carrying them home to the Father's house. He justifies us, He sanctifies Himself for us, so that we may be sanctified in truth (reality, essentiality), and He also perfects us by creating in us all that is pleasing in His sight. Thus, He is in truth the beginner and the perfecter of faith.

To illustrate what a "living path" is, use the example of how an escalator works.

If you ride the subway and want to come back up from the underworld to daylight at a stop, you don't have to laboriously climb the stairs on foot, but simply stand on a step of the escalator and is gently carried up. This is as little effort for the old mother with the heavy suitcase as it is for the young man with the briefcase.

A beautiful image, and yet only an imperfect one. For the escalator is indeed *a moving path that carries those standing on it to their destination, but it is still far from being a living path.*

But Christ, who as the good shepherd takes the lost, sought and found sheep on His shoulders and carries it home, is in truth a living way. He carries the whole universe towards the goal of its destiny, and if He had failed to carry it even once in the course of the eons (ages), everything would have

fallen into the bottomless abyss, and if He had only held His breath for a moment, the whole creation would have run out of the breath of life and would have sunk into death and nothingness.

Yes, He is *the way*, the only essential way, the living way, the way of the Godhead and not the way of any creature. *Only in the fact that He is the living way is the guarantee that everything will reach its destination.* Here is absolute security for the Creator and the creature. God does not need to fear that His world plan could suffer shipwreck at some point. In Christ, the guarantor for the redemption of all God's promises, there is not "yes" and "no", but there is "yes" in Him. He is the guarantor for the unabridged fulfillment and the complete redemption of all God's promises and thus also the secure rock foundation for faith.

To be united with Him in the power of an indissoluble life is the sole basis for the certainty of really reaching the goal of destiny. He who is secure in Him has in truth a new and living way. --

This new and living way "He has opened to us through the curtain, which is His flesh". What does this mean to us?

Not everyone had free access to the earthly sanctuary (the replica or image of the true tabernacle of God in the heavens). Even the priests who served in the sanctuary, walked in the light of the golden lamp and ate holy (consecrated) bread, were forbidden to enter the Holy of Holies. Behind the curtain, which is expressly said to *make a separation* between the sanctuary and the holy of holies, only the high priest was allowed to enter, and even he not at any time, but according to the regulation given to him by the Lord. With fragrant incense (a picture of the perfect life of Jesus Christ, which was a fragrant fragrance to the Father and an everlasting occasion of His pleasure) and the blood of a sin offering (as a model of the sacrificial death of the Lord) he was allowed to approach without dying.

As long as the curtain hung in front of the place of meeting, it indicated that the glory of God could not be seen yet and the invisible one was still hidden. Truly, a hidden God!

But when the Son of Love came, when the Word became flesh, His glory could be seen, the glory of an only begotten of the Father, full of grace and being. In a perfect human life, He glorified the Father and then offered Himself as a sacrifice, ascending through the heavens with His blood and entering the presence of God.

Since the fall of Adam, the image of God had not been seen in purity. But now one came before God, of whom Adam was only a model, a shadow. Christ's perfect life had already here below the testimony of God that He was pleased with it. But God gave testimony to the perfect sacrifice of this *second* man, the *last* Adam, by raising Him from the dead. When the true man gave His life on the cross as a ransom for the fallen brothers and prepared to appear before the Father as the *firstling of the new humanity*, God tore the curtain that had since then denied the creature free access to Him. *Since then, there is once again a way for the creature to come before his Creator without fear of being consumed by the fire of His holiness.*

But the curtain, which prevents the creature from seeing the invisible world, is the flesh. With this cover, this veil, all nations are covered. But the Lord promised to remove it.

As long as this covering is on us, we are weighed down and groan, longing to receive better clothing than the body of lowliness. And with us, the whole creation groans, waiting for the full Sonship to be revealed to us: the redemption of our body.

Through the fall of the first man, who was created in the image of God, this image was defiled and could no longer be seen in purity by the angels and the rest of the creature. An essential part of God's blessedness is that He, the invisible One, is seen by the angels. A defiled image, however, could no longer give the angels a true knowledge of God and meant for God Himself a permanent insult to His honor and majesty. Therefore, God covered man with skins or skirts, i.e. with the narrow dwelling of this body of lowliness, which has weighed us down and made us groan ever since.

What man looked like before the fall becomes clear to us from the fact that we must be *renewed* into the image of Him who created us. As we once bore His image in purity, so we will bear it again in clarity after the renewal. The transformed body of lowliness is then again similar to His body of glory.

The apostles tell us about this body of glory, who were with Him on the holy mountain to be eyewitnesses of His glorious greatness there. There, where they were allowed to see His future glory, His face shone like the sun, and His garment shone like the light. In this light form He will reign in His kingdom. The lowly bodies of those who are allowed to reign with Him will be transformed into the same image. But by telling us that we have *to be renewed or made new again* for this purpose, the Scripture shows at the same time what we have lost through the Fall. *Before the fall man was an image of glory, after the fall an image of lowliness.* That image of light of the first Adam gave him the necessary dignity and authority over creatures to rule them. He was not yet darkened. His undarkened spirit possessed the ability to recognize the nature of the animals and to give them appropriate names. On the new earth this will be again so, as Angels even already in the thousand-year kingdom. There a small boy will graze the wild animals. None of them will dare to touch the ruling position of the renewed man.

What a loss through the fall! How deep, how unspeakably deep is the fall from the ruler of all things to the slave of sin! Death confirms daily this fact so bitter for man.

And yet, even in the judgment of the expulsion from the garden in Eden there is a wonderful wisdom and mercy of God. He did not let man walk around uncovered with the mark of guilt and shame, but covered the extinguished light figure and its dark depths of satanic aberration with a skin or fur skirt. The body of lowliness covers, like a hairy sack - oh, who could understand this symbol in its depth! - the disgraced glory of the image of God until the day when the sons of God, the firstfruits of the Spirit, are revealed. Then the whole creature beholds the redemption of our body, which will be represented in the glory of the Christ.

Then the curtain is also removed externally, through which we already approach the throne of grace in faith full of frankness.

But in order for the afterborn to be freed from the covering and revealed in glory, the firstborn of the brethren, the leader of our salvation, had to unleash us from the veil of flesh by being put to death in His flesh. For this purpose He came into the flesh. Never in all eons could we be freed from the flesh body of lowliness that we bear through the disobedience of the *first Adam, if the last Adam had not put on the same body of lowliness and by His obedience restored what the first lost.*

Without the coming of God into the flesh, the redemption of all flesh could not be accomplished.

Only on this new and living way, which He has initiated for us through His sacrifice, we receive the liberation from the fleshly body and its transformation into the spiritual body.

For God and faith, the curtain is torn. We look with unveiled face into the glory of the Lord and are thereby transformed into the same image. *This beholding of His glory is the secret of our power.* The torn curtain of the flesh will once be completely removed through rapture, transformation or resurrection. Then we will never again stand before God in the weakness of the present fleshly body, but forever in the power and glory of the spirit body. As sons of the Father, who are already partakers of His divine nature, we then stand before His face in consubstantiality with the Father and enjoy everlasting and complete fellowship with Him and His Son Jesus Christ.

c) We have a great priest over the house of God.

Over the millennia, many priests had passed through the earthly sanctuary. All of them had been taken from the people, and none of them had remained. They all walked on the old way of the law, and it led with inexorable necessity to death. They could neither save themselves nor the others who needed help and salvation.

But He, who became a high priest according to a much higher order, has perfected by a sacrifice forever those who are to be sanctified. Having seated Himself at the right hand of God, He uses Himself for the saints in a manner worthy of God. His priesthood is unchangeable, and He remains priest and guarantor of a better covenant for eternity, namely the covenant of promise, not of law. This great high priest, who as an apostle (messenger) of the Father set before us the hope of the promises invoked by the Father as *our confession*, we are to consider.

We have a great high priest, greater than all others who ever were, namely Jesus, the Son of God. He did not pass through the earthly sanctuary, but through the heavens. So let us hold fast the confession (of hope) and approach the throne of grace with frankness! There Jesus entered as a forerunner for us and at His entrance there He was welcomed by *God Himself* as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, i.e. as the everlasting guarantor and surety of an eternal salvation.

The Son of God is the High Priest for you and me forever through the Father's oath. *To Him alone* is entrusted the regulation of all relationships between God and us. *In matters with God, He alone is in charge.*

What could be said to a humbled and bruised heart more comforting than this: The only One who has all the Father's good pleasure resting upon Him, came down out of pure love for God and the Savior, gave His life as a ransom for you and us, wiped out all our guilt - both past and present and future - accomplished the work of redemption, received the confirmation and recognition of this deed by being raised from the dead, and then went to the Father Himself, to stand there forever as the faithful witness to His finished work, and to intercede unceasingly day and night with the Father on behalf of the redeemed, so that their weaknesses might be done away with, their needs satisfied, and they all finally come to Him themselves to enjoy communion with God in perfect union with Him! --

He is the great priest over the house of God. What kind of house is this?

God does not dwell in temples made by human hands. Yes, all the heavens (the heavens of the heavens) are not able to contain Him, because the created in its limitation of space and time cannot enclose the uncreated and eternal and infinite. *In the perishable, the essential has no abiding place.* His essence is spirit and light and love. His dwelling also corresponds to these three sides of His being.

The dwelling of God is therefore a *spiritual dwelling*. If anywhere, the word applies here, "It is the spirit that builds the body. "

It continues to be a *dwelling of light* as well as a *product of love*. Love, however, begets its life and essence. Therefore, God could only dwell *in a body*, not a created one, but a divinely begotten one. Thus He dwelt in all His fullness in the Son of Love. And then He also dwells in the spirit-begotten members of the body of Christ, the congregation, filling them more and more completely with His love until they are filled with the whole fullness of God.

This is His house. We are a spiritual house, a dwelling place of light, a dwelling place of God's love, which has already been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Over this house He is the great priest. His unchanging faithfulness and the whole power of His love are for this house. As sublime as the person and the dignity and glory of this great priest are, who far surpasses all high priests who have come from among men, so perfect is also His care, which He unceasingly exercises for us day and night. If already on earth, during His first visit to the earthly temple, He loved this place of God's glorification so much that He forgot His father and mother over it and remained alone in the sanctuary made with hands - how much more does He love the spiritual dwelling of His Father, the church (ecclesia) of God, which He bought for Him by His blood!

He owes it to His father not to neglect his house. Moses was only the builder of a tabernacle made with hands, and yet he was faithful as a servant in it. But Christ, through whom the Father called the whole universe into existence, is more than an obedient servant. He is the Son, and as the Son of

the Father, He watches over His dearly purchased property and bestows upon the spiritual house all the gifts and blessings that are necessary to transform it into a dwelling worthy of God.

He does not leave the care of the members of the body to a stranger. They receive their strength and life influxes directly from Him, the Head, and offer what they have received to each other through the joints and ties, thus bringing about the self-construction of the body.

In this way, the organism of the Christ body grows until it reaches full manhood.

In this body God dwells once bodily in all His fullness, as He dwells bodily in Christ, the Head.

One day the last living stone will be added to this spiritual house. Then the tabernacle of God will be finished with man, and He will come down to dwell in it forever, in the dwelling prepared through the ministry of the great priest who is faithful in all His house.

Praise be to Him, the Eternal Faithful, the Great Priest over the House of God, whose house we are!

Evidence for: 1.) What we have:

Eph. 2, 1-3; Hebr. 1, 1.3.4; Hebr. 3, 1.14; cf. Hebr. 4, 14-16 with 10, 19!; Joh. 1, 12.13; Col. 1, 13; Rom. 8, 29; Hebr. 2, 10; Hebr. 2, 10 f.; Hebr. 3, 1.14; Eph. 3, 6; 1, 18; 2 Petr. 3, 15; Gal. 1, 4; Hebr. 3, 1; Hebr. 9, 1.11.24; 8, 2.5; Ex. 25, 8.9; Rom. 8, 17; Eph. 1, 20-23, 2, 1.5.6; Eph. 2, 7; Heb. 2, 58; 1 Cor. 6, 2.3; Rom. 8, 18 ff; 1 John 3, 2; Heb. 2, 9; Eph. 3, 12; Heb. 6, 20; Rom. 8, 14-17. 31-39; Gal. 4, 4-7; Rom. 8, 15; 2 Tim. 1, 7; Heb. 12, 18-24; Acts 2, 29; 4, 13 et al; Col. 1, 19.20; 2 Sam. 14, 14; 1 Tim. 2, 4; 4, 10.11; Ps. 68, 18; Eph. 4, 8-10; Rom. 11, 32; 1 Pet. 3, 18-22; 4, 6; Eph. 4, 8-10; Ps. 107, 10-16; Heb. 9, 22; 1 John 2, 2; Heb. 10, 10. 17.18; 1 John 1, 7; Rev. 1, 5; Rev. 7, 14; 12, 10; Matth. 26, 28; Luk. 22, 20; 1. Cor. 11, 25; 1. Cor. 10, 16.17; Hebr. 12, 22-24; 1. Cor. 15, 50; Acts 17, 22-27; Hebr. 7, 11.19; 10, 1-4; Gal. 2, 16; 3, 19; Rom. 5, 20; 7, 10; 2 Cor. 3, 7 ff; Gal. 3, 24 ff; Rom. 10, 4; Acts 15, 10; Rom. 10, 4-13; Heb. 7, 19.25; Heb. 7, 16; Jn. 5, 24; Heb. 1, 3; Luk. 15, 5; Rom. 5, 9.18; Joh. 17, 19; Hebr. 13, 21; Hebr. 12, 2; 2. Cor. 1, 20; 3. Mo. 16, 2; Matth. 6, 6; 5. Mo. 29, 29; Is. 45, 15; Kol. 1, 15; Joh. 1, 18; Joh. 1, 14; Rom. 5, 14; 1. Cor. 15, 45 f.; Matth. 27, 51; Isa. 25, 7; 2. Cor. 5, 1-10; 2. Petr. 1, 14; Rom. 8, 19 ff.; Gen. 1, 27; 1 Tim. 3, 16; Phil. 3, 21; 2 Petr. 1, 16 ff; Col. 3, 10; Eph. 4, 18; Acts 26, 17 f.; Rom. 1, 23; Gen. 2, 19 f.; Rom. 8, 23; Col. 3, 4; 1 Tim. 3, 16; Jn. 1, 14; 2 Cor. 3, 18; 4, 1.16-18; 2 Petr. 1, 4; Heb. 7, 11-28; Heb. 3, 1-6; 6, 16-20; Heb. 4, 14-16; 6, 20; Heb. 5, 10; Jn. 4, 24; 1 Jn. 1, 5; 4, 8; Eph. 2, 19 ff; 1 Pet. 2, 4 f.; 1 Cor. 3, 16; 6, 16.17; 1 Tim. 6, 16; Heb. 3, 1-6;

2. what we should

a) Let us come with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled and thus cleansed from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The foundations of our salvation are not of this creation and therefore indestructible, unshakable. They are as indestructible as the immortal God Himself, in whom our essential new life with Christ is hidden, and as certain as the One in whom all God's promises are "Yes and Amen", the Son of Love.

This salvation is so great that no eye ever saw anything like it in glory, no ear ever heard such a message of glory before, and no human heart in its boldest dreams of longing would ever have dared to soar to such heights.

Who should despise such salvation and neglect the fullness of the possibilities of salvation that result from it?

As a warning, let us take the example of those who, through the goodness of God, experienced a "Passover", a sparing and a *rescue from* Egypt, the land of bondage. They should also experience a miraculous *salvation* through the desert and finally a *salvation* into the land of promise, to enjoy

the blessings of the Lord and to praise His great saving deeds, which happened to them on the whole way of their salvation from Egypt to Canaan.

Only very few made use of these glorious possibilities of salvation. All the rest did not respect the great hope before them and did not mix the word of promise with faith. God was not pleased with them. They did not have to return to Egypt, nor did they become slaves, but they were not allowed to enjoy the full blessings of the salvation intended for them, but were cast out into the wilderness, where they must now wait as unfinished ones until, after thousands of years, at the beginning of the kingdom of Christ (thousand-year kingdom), the spirit of prophecy comes upon them, revives them and brings them into the promised land, thus finally fulfilling the promises, the fulfillment of which they made impossible by their unbelief.

While Joshua and Caleb grasped the hope before them and fully realized the great possibilities of salvation of their time, thus becoming a testimony of God's faith and glorious goodness, those others are set right only after millennia and form a testimony of God's judgmental seriousness, but also of His faithfulness, confirming that His invoked promises and His gifts of grace and callings are *incalculable* and are realized even when the creature fails and is unfaithful. He remains faithful nevertheless, because He cannot deny Himself.

The unbelief of the creature, however, deprives it of the glorious advance possession and the delicious advance enjoyment of all the future goods. And even if the unfaithful believer does not lose his life, but is saved like a fire from the fire, his work goes up in flames as ungodly and unproven, and he himself remains for all time an uncrowned one; for the *crown is granted only to the preserved.*

So the firstfruits, the birthright, can be denied and sold for a dish of lentils or for the fleshpots of Egypt

Saved by grace - but not brought to fullness! What a sad fate! And this loss of probation can never be made up for. It does not exclude from citizenship, but from being entrusted with an office. Subjects in the kingdom of God and Christ Jesus are all saved ones; but as rulers over the districts of the earth and the cosmos the Lord sets only those who proved themselves in the fighting time of this present life.

Many believers go only as far as the forecourt and receive justification there at the altar of sacrifice. But they do not go further, but leave it enough with the forgiveness of sins. *They do not approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace for timely help.* Therefore, it is precisely to the saved, the beloved, that the word applies, that they *work out their salvation to the highest possibilities*, thinking with fear and trembling of the other possibility of falling short of the goals set by God and thus forfeiting an essential part of the glory that belongs only to the proven.

Paul had *assurance of salvation* already at the beginning of his life of faith, but *crown assurance* only at the end, after he had kept faith and completed the race.

One becomes a soldier by appointment (conscription), a superior by probation in service.

We cannot add anything to the gift of grace of salvation. The foundation that is laid in us is called Christ. But after this foundation is laid (as the objective side of our salvation), we are exhorted to exhaust all possibilities to work out our own (subjective) salvation, i.e. to build on the foundation of Christ all that is possible according to the offering of God.

Let us then approach with frankness!

Or what excuse are we going to give for not having done it?

There would be only two excuses, that God does not want us in His presence, or that there is no way and no help to get there.

The apostle knew these objections of unbelief and weak flesh. Therefore, after having first uttered the exhortation: "*Let us therefore approach with boldness*" (in Hebrews 4:16), he then speaks for

six chapters of the promises of God that have been invoked, as well as of the great priest who cleared the way into the presence of God and now ministers to us day and night in the holy of holies, *so that we may approach and be perfected* by beholding this glory. Having then set before us, as the "sum of what he has to say," the fact that we have such a High Priest, he now repeats his exhortation (from chap. 4:16) here in chapter 10:22: "*Let us therefore draw near!*" We now have everything that *entitles* us to come near to the presence of God and *makes* this coming near possible in His power. **So let us join them!** Everything is ready! After the obstacles have been removed, there is only one obstacle left. It does not lie outside of you, but in you and is called: *Lack of love*. For love believes everything and hopes everything and enters with longing where it can have communion with the Beloved.

Therefore, let us pray that He may make us overflowing in love, so that we may have knowledge and insight into everything, and also the frankness that will allow us to enter into the Holy of Holies. And just as she now has frankness in faith to enter into the presence of God, so she will also have frankness on the day of judgment, knowing that the believer will no longer enter into judgment. *This love is crowned! Therefore, let us step forward! --*

But *how* should we approach Him to have complete communion with Him in the Holy of Holies? It is no longer a question of our entering the forecourt in order to experience the order of our sin history, our old life, at the altar. *Everyone can enter there as he is*, and whoever comes to Him, He does not want to push out. *But here it is about more: the* holy brothers, the comrades of the heavenly calling, are to *enter completely into the presence of God, in order* to enjoy with Himself in perfect unity that communion of spirit which alone completely satisfies His spirit and our renewed spirit.

Now, what can God expect from the holy brothers, the comrades of the heavenly calling, when they approach Him? --

The first thing God looks for in His co-workers is an undivided heart, a heart that is concerned with the whole, with the essential, a *true* heart.

What does God mean by a *true* heart?

The expression "true" appears twice more in the letter. The first passage tells us that Christ "is a minister of the sanctuary and of the *true* tabernacle," that is, not of the perishable tabernacle on earth, but of the *real, substantial* tabernacle. - The second passage also speaks of this *true* (i.e. real, substantial) sanctuary, in contrast to the worldly one made with hands.

In all, the term "truly" (*aläthinos*) is found 27 times in the basic text of the New Testament, namely Luke 16:11; John 1:9; 4:23,37; 6:32; 7:28; 15:1; 17:3; 19:35; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 8:2; 9:24; 10:22; 1 John 2:8; 5:20,21; Revelation 3:14; 15:3; 16:2,9,11; 21:5; 22:6. John 2:8; 5:20, 21; Revelation 3:7, 14; 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 9, 11; 21:5; 22:6. Scripture understands by it that which is immortal, imperishable, that which alone abides in the midst of all that is perishable, that which alone is real, essential.

A true heart is therefore a heart that is concerned with the essential, the real, the imperishable, the lasting.

Already among the Gentiles there were those who, although they did not even know the law, nevertheless sought glory and *incorruption* with perseverance and proved this by their good works. These people, who in all their darkness even before the coming of the Lord, the light of the world, were concerned with the *essential, the imperishable, the lasting*, *will* receive eternal life on the day of the *essential, true judgment of God*. And these people, like those of Nineveh and like a queen of Ethiopia and many others, will appear as witnesses against those for whom the forms of godliness were enough to cover with them their illusory life with all its worldliness. - But to the people, who so often approached Him with their lips, but whose heart was far from Him, He let testify again and again that it depends on the sincerity, straightness and purity of the heart and *that He is not content*

with half decisions, but gives His full revelation only to the undivided hearts, which are completely for Him and seek Him, the Being, also really, truly.

The only two of those who went out of Egypt who reached the full salvation goal of the calling of *their time* were Joshua and Caleb. They were people of faith who approached their God with a true, undivided, whole heart and followed Him completely. That is why they were allowed to enter the land of promise even during their lifetime as a complete proof of the Lord's faithfulness. Before his death Joshua testifies: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . But I and my house will serve the Lord. " We learn the secret of his power in Exodus 33:11. After the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was erected, the presence of the Lord so completely captured his heart that he did *not leave the inside of the tent*. He remained at the source of power, namely in the presence of the Being, the Lord, and so he also experienced in his life the effects of this staying connected to the sanctuary and the glory of God: "Passing through the valley of tears, they make it a place of springs; yes, with blessings the early rain covers it. They go from strength to strength; they appear before God in Zion. " And further, "All my springs are in Thee. " The same was experienced by Caleb, who *completely followed the Lord his God*.

These two men were for the Lord with undivided hearts. *They came near with a true heart*. Joshua did not leave the inside of the tent, and Caleb followed the Lord completely. *They were concerned with the essential, the lasting, with the immortal God and His eternal purposes*. And whoever seeks Him with all his heart, the Lord can also be found by him.

Further, God expects those who approach Him to do so in *full assurance of faith*.

What is faith? And what does it do?

Our salvation is an act of grace on God's part, and an act of faith on our part. Faith, then, is the means or the organ by which we take hold of the grace offered. It is, in a sense, the hand of our spirit that reaches out and grasps the divine promise of grace.

Faith excludes any merit on our part. Whoever wants to be justified by works will not be rewarded by grace, but by debt.

Who could ever fulfill their debt to God in this way?

But he that worketh not (dealeth with works), but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Our justification is by faith, *that it may be grace*.

All activity of man for the purpose of becoming righteous before God is the attempt of the creature to create divine being within the creaturely sphere and to reach divine glory. But this is nothing else than the deification of man by his own power and therefore represents a boundless degradation and blasphemy of the majesty of God. God is so completely different that the creature can never reach Him by itself. "They all do not reach the glory of God. "

God is spirit and cannot be generated from the flesh.

But God is also love, and this love came into the flesh to free us from the flesh and lift us up to Himself so that we might be like Him.

From our side, there is no claim whatsoever for this downward inclination of love towards us. But love does not seek its own, but what is of the other. Therefore it went down "graciously", i.e. down, down. *This "going down in grace" of God is grace. Grace is therefore the loving inclination of God to His creature.*

The response of our spirit to this condescension of God's love is faith. It grasps the glory and immortality of God in the only place where they are intrinsically present in human history, namely in the Son of love.

Thus faith is the highest venture of the spirit, the boldest and most glorious deed that a creature is granted to do, namely the grasping of the essential, the real, the lasting, the imperishable. (Luther: "Faith is a bold and daring thing. ")

And with the fact that faith seizes, holds and realizes (realizes) in the spirit of man already now all what before was only longing of the noblest spirits among men, *it is the highest reality which exists in a human life at all.*

By reaching for the highest, which goes beyond all ideals of the noblest spirits as high as God's thoughts go beyond our thoughts, it is *highest idealism*; and by transferring this highest and most sublime reality of divine being and being into its own existence and thus realizing it in itself, it is at the same time *highest realism*.

Thus faith, by uniting the visible and the invisible in one body, is the true synthesis of the previously divergent. The first representation of this new relationship of life is the Son of Love, who was at the same time Son of Man and Son of God, true man and true God. In Him, God represented His own faith, *the faith of God*, by entering into the flesh Himself and thus reconciling the heavenly and the earthly in one body. And these two natures of the divine and the human now dwell in every truly born-again, spirit-begotten child of God as in a post-born brother of the firstborn of the brothers.

By taking hold of the good of hope set before us by God's love and realizing it in the spirit, faith is a materialization (realization) of what one hopes for. In this way, it brings the future into the present and thus does something that is divine, because with God alone, the present and the future are one. Since it already now takes possession of the essential, the lasting, which for the mass of people only appears in the new cosmos, and thus enjoys it in advance, *faith is the only owner of unshakable future goods and lasting values. It is therefore the most certain, most reliable and most secure thing in this world, the most certain knowledge, the highest certainty*, or, as Luther translated Hebrews 11:1: *a certain confidence*.

By taking hold of the promises in faith, we become partakers of the divine nature through them. Every promise we step on in faith, as Joshua stepped on the promise ground of Canaan in faith, is an occasion for God to fulfill His oath. Thus, He confirms His promises and redeems them with the full value as soon as we present (hold out) them to Him in faith. Every fulfilled promise is a strengthening for faith, so that it dares *more* from now on. He trusts God with ever greater things, and God gives and holds out ever greater things to him, because he honors Him by faith. *Man's faith is answered by God's faithfulness and awakens new, greater faith through still greater promises. So it goes by faith in faith.*

Whoever gets to know his God in this way trusts Him with everything, even the last and greatest things. And this is the fact that He does not want to withhold anything from His divine glory from us. We are to be perfect like Him, and when it will appear what we will be, we will be like Him.

Such a faith no longer looks to itself nor to the visible. In his flesh, the believer finds no guarantee for perfection in God's image. He finds the guarantee for this only in the one who vouches for us to the end, the one in whom all God's promises are Yes and Amen. To Him, the beginner and perfecter of faith, he now looks; *and just then, when the enemy has once again outwitted our weak flesh, we look all the more to the Advocate at the throne of grace, and thus, lying in the dust, gain strength for the confession of faith and hope: "And if I were many thousands of times more wretched than I am now, yet Thou, Lord, wouldest come with me to Thy goal! "*

That is where the enemy must give way. *"Our faith is the victory that overcomes the cosmos, the world.* "It transforms even the defeat of the flesh into a triumph of the spirit and thereby glorifies God even when we experienced defeat. The enemy, however, no longer has anything to oppose this faith, which boldly grasps the future, because its this-worldly values and the temporal pleasures of sin have been exposed as transience and sham and deceit, and in its place the abiding things in the spirit have been longed for and grasped and realized in faith.

Do we not want to step in faith towards the great, even the greatest and most precious promises, in order to become thereby partakers of all that is in the nature of God?

What we take hold of in faith is our special possession before the general inheritance.

The guarantor in the holy of holies waits for our approach. He does not want to withhold anything good from us. Everything is ready to be handed over to our faith. No one can prevent Him from pouring His goodness upon us. Everything He has given us since then is a deposit to bless us even more. He wants to give us constantly greater grace, wants to increase His grace in us and let all the riches of His grace overflow in goodness towards us. He wants to reveal and communicate Himself completely to us.

Yes, He *wants* it. It is His eternal purpose. This is security enough for the believer, who only counts on the faithfulness of God, to approach the throne of grace in *full assurance of faith*. --

However, not only should we approach with a true heart and in full assurance of faith, but also with our *hearts sprinkled and thus cleansed from an evil conscience*.

The joyful confidence with which we enter the presence of God in full assurance of faith rests not on the consciousness of any intrinsic value of our person, nor on any achievement on our part, that is, on our flesh wanting to be pious, but on the redemptive work of Christ. He redeemed us with His precious blood as a lamb without blemish or spot. The sprinkling of His blood cleansed us from all consciousness of guilt and thus freed us from an evil conscience.

The value of this unique sacrifice is based on its perfection. It meets all the requirements and demands of God's justice and holiness and majesty as well as the needs of the creature, which in its weakness and guilt and sin entanglement can only wait for God's act of mercy.

Mankind, aware of its inability to redeem itself, has always sought in sacrifice a means to reconcile the Godhead. The pagans did this "to the unknown God" in *ignorance of the heart*, whether they would like to seek and feel and find Him gropingly. - The Jews did it *knowingly*, because God had given them a law through the ministry of angels, which was first to prove the inability of the flesh to become righteous in its own strength, but then also to be in its sacrifices a silhouette and model upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ. These shadow-images could not make the heart-immortal perfect. They only caused an external (ceremonial) cleansing, through which it was possible for the cleansed ones to take their place again in the community of Israel and not to have to remain outside of this community. But they could not approach God Himself. As long as the front tabernacle still exists, the way into the holiest is not yet revealed.

But Christ went with His perfect sacrifice into the greater and more perfect tabernacle, which is not of this creation. He did not go there with foreign blood of goats and calves, but with His own, when He invented an eternal redemption for us. *And this blood speaks there before God for us. As long as this blood speaks, our conscience may be silent. And because this blood of the Son of God, who offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit, speaks forever, our conscience may remain silent forever. Christ has invented an eternal redemption, so that all who partake of it have eternal peace. Never again does their conscience need to accuse them before God. They are cleansed from the evil conscience.*

The blood of Christ, with which our heart, our inner being was sprinkled, is the only *essential means of atonement*. It fulfills all the conditions that must be imposed *from both sides* on a unique, perfect sacrifice. *The legal claims of the Father are fully satisfied, and the conscience of the believer is cleansed of all consciousness of guilt.*

The essence of this sacrifice is that, on the one hand, through the offering of this blood and life, man in his creaturely weakness receives covering of guilt, and on the other hand, through the eternal Spirit, the eternal God was reconciled by giving Him *substantial, full satisfaction (including restitution of all that was stolen)*, so that through this sacrifice an *eternal redemption* came about.

This side of the sacrifice, of which the Father and the Son were already aware before all sin, even before the foundation of the world, because at that time the resolution was already made in the eternal spirit that the Son should make the sacrifice (so that the sacrifice made on Golgotha in the flesh had its essential meaning for God already *before the foundation of the world*), made it possible at all that God overlooked the times of ignorance and waited in patience until after the shadow-

image sacrifices under the law now finally His own divine act of justification and reconciliation was accomplished, by which for Himself now once and for all everything is ordered what was to be - ordered.

Now also in the cosmos the complete abolition of sin with all its effects and consequences can take place because of this sacrifice through mercy and judgment. And when judgment is returned to justice and led out to victory, mercy will triumph over judgment.

Let us contrast the effects of Christ's sacrifice once again:

*The effects of the sacrifice of Christ according to the **divine** side:*

1. God has received full satisfaction for Himself and, at the same time, the all-surpassing price of reparation (restitution) for all the damage caused by sin and its consequences in the entire cosmos.
2. Now there are no more demands from God on the creature. He is reconciled and has made peace. To prove that Christ's work was perfect and fully met the divine requirements, He raised the Son from the dead.
3. He took the one mediator, the man Christ Jesus, up to Himself in His glory, thus indicating that He can now finally and forever have the fellowship with man for which He has always longed in His love.

*The effects of the sacrifice of Christ according to the **human** side:*

1. Our sin is atoned for and done away with. The promissory note was publicly nailed to the wood after payment was completed and thus declared to have been erased for the general knowledge of all those involved.
2. Because the history of sin has been settled publicly and legally for both sides, the creditor (God) and the debtor (man), there is no longer any legal dispute between them. Debts no longer exist that could be brought to our conscience's memory as unredeemed. Therefore, our conscience enjoys full peace.
3. The removal of the burden of conscience makes our heart rejoice in bliss. Full of joy, we approach the Blessed Sacrament in order to come with frankness before the face of God, who is now our Father.

Besides the true heart, the full assurance of faith, and the conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ, our Scripture word now mentions the *washing of the body with pure water* to indicate the way we are to approach.

In our walk down here in the dust of the earth we dirty our feet again and again, and even if we are clean before God forever through the complete washing in His blood, we still need the practical cleansing from the stains with which we often contaminate ourselves through the touch of the spiritually dead. Therefore, the water of cleansing must be sprinkled on us in essence, as it already happened shadowily in the model of the Old Covenant.

This *essential* cleansing or washing has nothing more to do with the various washings of the Old Covenant that were taken away and eliminated, nor with water baptisms that belong to the first initial letters of the divine words. Here it is about more than things of the *forecourt*. After all, we are to enter with frankness into the *Holy of Holies in order* to have fellowship with the living, consubstantial God Himself.

The water bath in which the Christ cleanses and sanctifies the church purchased by His blood is the water bath of the Word.

In this pure water of His word, which testifies of Him, His surrendered life is contained, like the young cow burned in a whole sacrifice in its ashes in the water of purification. As on this sacrificial animal never a yoke had come, so on Him as the only human being never lay the yoke of sin.

Therefore, His word also has the purifying effect on us, so that we can present our bodies as a living, holy sacrifice pleasing to God in a reasonable service. For this word contains not only the will of God in human form, but also the essential fulfillment and representation of this will in the entire life of the Son from the time when He was still in the form of God with the Father until His humiliation in the flesh and the death on the cross and His taking up in glory, where He, as the living and glorified One, uses Himself for saints in a Godly way (i.e. in a way worthy of God).

We must be sprinkled with this water, which is living in truth, in order to be pure. Our purification, sanctification, separation, consecration happens through the essential Word, the Word of truth, of reality. In particular, the promises for which He is Yes and Amen, that is, Guarantor, Surety and Filler, bring about that tremendous power of hope which enables us to the complete cleansing of the flesh and spirit in the likeness of His own Christ-purity. Obedience to the Beingness or to the Beingness purifies our souls.

Through this cleansing alone, despite all contact with the spiritually dead and despite all defilements in our daily lives, we still retain the ability to enter the Holy of Holies in a state of godly holiness, without an evil conscience or a defiled body hindering our frankness. He who redeemed us from all lawlessness is also the one who now purifies us as a people of property.

Wherever we immerse ourselves in the water bath of the Word, or wherever pure people sprinkle this essential water of purification upon us, we experience the sanctifying effect of this Word, which always consecrates us anew to seek God's face in the Holy of Holies and to approach it with frankness.

b) Let us hold fast the confession of hope immovably; for faithful is He who made the promise.

The church is the bearer of hope for all creation. With neck stretched out, all created things wait for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creature is subject to corruption without its will, but *in hope that* it too will be set free from the bondage of corruption and raised to the same glorious freedom as the sons of God also.

The hope of all creation, then, is to be set free from the bondage of corruption, namely, from the dominion of sin, death, and the devil, and to enter into the sonship of the sons of God with the glory of their freedom.

The immortal life of the Father was first in the Christ, in whom the whole fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. From Him, the Head, the members receive the same life.

In His resurrection it was revealed that this essential life cannot be held by death.

Now, at the revelation of the sons of God, the proof of the new life for the whole creation is to be given by making it known that this life was not only in the head, but is also in the members in the same way.

In view of the firstborn, the creature is not able to grasp hope for itself without further ado, because His resurrection could be regarded as a special personal advantage. With us, the members, however, every natural advantage falls away. We are in and of ourselves just as hopeless in death as any other creature. But He transplanted His life and being into us when He gave us His Spirit. This spirit of life is also a spirit of freedom. He therefore also works in us as the great liberator. The order of life, the law of life, which is His own, now also works in all members of the body. Since the Spirit of life is stronger than flesh and sin and death, He overcomes all this. The Christ in us is the same one who overcame victoriously and rose gloriously. Death could not hold Him. Now He draws all His members after Himself from death into life.

The hope of creation stands or falls on the fact that the life spirit of Christ works victoriously in us and brings us to the same resurrection as those who have been completely freed from all power of corruption and bondage to death, and makes us manifest with Himself in equal glory and sonship before all the world, so that in that day He may be glorified in all His saints and admired in all those

who have believed. Not admired *by* them - they did so during their lifetime - but *in* and *of* them, in that all the world will then see what He has made of those who were once nothing, and glorify and praise Him over it.

The Sons' Church, the assembly of the living God, in the present household of grace, is *the bearer of the essential life, the pillar and the foundation of the truth (essentiality), of the true being*. We are not the truth. *He is the truth!* But we are the pillar and the foundation of the truth as the bearer of His life. On us the whole creation looks. We are a spectacle (theatron) for the cosmos, both angels and men. *In us it proves finally whether the victory of the Son of Man, the last Adam, was only an individual victory or whether it is valid for all and benefits all.*

Because we are the bearers of the hope of all creation, we are exhorted: *Let us hold fast the confession of hope immovably!*

What a tremendous obligation lies on all those whom He has adopted as sons in the Son! The miracle of miracles has happened to us: We are a new creation. Christ was born in us and thus made our hearts Bethlehem's manger. God came to dwell in us, pouring out His Spirit in us and begetting new life in our spirit. Thus He came again into the flesh, and the angels worship over it, rejoicing over every sinner who repents. We carry within us the incorruption for which so many generations of men longed before the coming of Christ. The longed-for of all Gentiles, which will come for them only at the end of the ages, has already come for us essentially in the Spirit. We carry this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the honor and glory may not be ours but God's. *But we carry it! We are bearers of eternity, pillars of the essence, of the true being, foundations of truth, of the lasting reality of God in the midst of transitoriness. Yes, the firstfruits of the spirit are the prepayment of God on the waiting of the creation!*

And this creation is subjected to *hope*. Can it not expect from those who are firstfruits and prepayment that they, *as bearers of hope, now also hold immovably the confession of hope?*

The firstfruits are the bearers of life and the mediators of blessing, and they go into the Holy of Holies not only to have intimate contact with the source of life, with the living God, but also to carry the blessing they have received to those whose turn comes later. For "God is a Savior (sootary) of all men, *first of all of believers*". *In this living God we hope. He is the giver of our hope.*

Such hope purifies and redeems. The Scriptures clearly and unmistakably testify that *everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure. It does not say: he can or may or should purify himself, but: "he purifies himself even as He is pure"*, i.e. he does it simply as a consequence or effect of his hope.

An experience serves as an explanation of this solving, purifying, sanctifying effect of hope:

One brother had a wedding. It was in autumn. A brother living in the same house wanted to give the bride a special treat by presenting her with a bouquet of violets at the wedding table, which was rare at that time of year. At this, the little boy, who could hardly see the table, was to say a suitable verse of congratulations. Shortly before, in the parental apartment upstairs, he could do it quite well. In view of the many guests, however, he could not bring himself to say a word. Everyone looked at the little boy and waited for the little verse, but it did not come. The boy convulsively clutched the bouquet and remained silent.

This was not exactly pleasant for the parents (because which parents - even pious parents - don't like to parade their parenting skills?).

Usually, such an embarrassing situation is ended by reprimanding the little loser, taking the bouquet from him and sending the little fellow into the background. In this way, however, all the feelings of displeasure, all the shame, fear and distress that are weighing on the little person at this moment are left unresolved. Henceforth, every time the word "wedding" is heard, the unpleasant memory

with the whole complex of feelings of unwantedness rises up again in the boy and makes itself felt as a burden of inferiority.

In our case, however, the groom found the right solution, which was indeed a *solution*. He took a large grape from the fruit bowl in front of him and held it out to the little boy. Then the small, cramped hand loosened, put down the bouquet of violets and grabbed the grape.

What a beautiful image! - The grape is in the scripture a symbol (allegory) of the joy. For the joy before him, he gave the fragrances of Egypt (image of the gross sensual world) to it. That was solution! He *gave to it!* It was not necessary to take anything from him. The value in front of him seemed to him so great that he did not feel the giving as a loss. He gained by this solution and was enriched inwardly by it. The feelings of unwillingness were replaced by pleasure and joy.

This is the essence of every *real* solution, that it really *liberates*, so that after the solution there is the consciousness of having become free and of a real increase in value. *Such solution makes free!* And for freedom Christ has made us free.

Gospel means good news or message of joy. *Where there is no joy preached, there is no gospel preached.*

But under a sermon that makes demands instead of bringing joy, how can a man's heart become joyful and quiet and strong, and be enabled to purify itself from every defilement of the flesh and spirit?

Isn't it just the greatest scare tactic that the enemy always holds up to the unbelieving world when he claims: "Among the so-called pious, one is not allowed to rejoice at all. There you are not allowed to smoke, there you are not allowed to drink, there you are not allowed to dance..., in short, you are not allowed to do anything at all that brings joy to a person."

What a horrible distortion of the riches of the Christ and the fullness of glory given to us! And yet, again and again, preachers of the Gospel are tempted to preach morality instead of proclaiming the good of hope that lies before us. That is why there is so little true joy and consequently so little real practical sanctification, solution, liberation.

He who has no hope does not purify himself. How should one give away the little apparent values of this world and the temporal pleasures of sin, if he receives nothing at all in return? - He would have nothing at all! With empty hands and empty heart nobody can live in the long run. He needs something that makes his existence worth living. *But faith has the promise of this life and the life to come.* Everything is ours, present and future!

The joy ahead is unimaginably great and glorious beyond all human measure. *For believers, there is no loss anywhere*, even if they temporarily lose everything in the perishable goods of this world. Everything works for them to the good, and even dying is gain for them.

How such knowledge loosens hearts and hands and frees them for godly, spirit-worked service! "*He who has such hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*"

But the reason for all our hope is the *word of promise and the faithfulness of the Promiser*. Without promises, one can have a longing, but not a certain, clear hope.

The certainty of our hope is based on the knowledge of the nature of the One who swore His promises to confirm to us the immutability of His counsel. God is God, not some creature. Any failure or shortcoming is excluded with Him. It would be enough for us that in the course of time He has expressed the intentions of His will in many ways and promised His goodness and faithfulness to the children of men in thousands of promises. Who as a believer would still doubt the word of the Eternal Faithful? - And yet, in order to prove more effusively to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, He added an oath to the word of promise. Now we have a strong consolation through *two unchangeable things*.

Faithful is He who made the promises!

This eternal faithful one is to be trusted! He is to be respected as faithful. This gives strength to overcome all natural inhibitions, because through the promises we become partakers of the divine nature and are able to purify ourselves from every defilement of the flesh and the spirit.

Since we become partakers of the divine nature through the promises, the promises are the very nourishment of the believer who is concerned with perfection. They are the essential substance of the Gospel, the shining gold ground of the Good News.

Just as the spies carried the delicious fruits of the Promised Land out into the desert as a testimony to the blessings awaiting the waiting people, thereby reviving the longing and faith and hope of those who waited, so too today faith is nourished by the promises.

And how abundant is their number!

There are far more than 36,000, almost 37,000 promises in Scripture. If we wanted to prayerfully explore and faithfully receive just *one of* these promises every day, it would take us *more than 100 years* to receive them all just once, not to mention exploring the depths of their content!

Here are just a few promises that, according to 2 Peter 1:4, are among the greatest and most precious:

1. eternal life (1. Joh. 2, 25; Tit. 1, 2)
2. the Holy Spirit (Joh. 7, 39; Acts 1, 4)
3. the gospel (Rom. 1, 1.2)
4. the kingdom (Jam. 2, 5)
5. Crowns (wreaths of honor) (Jam. 1, 12; 2. Tim. 4, 8)
6. an inheritance (Gal. 3, 29; Hebr. 6, 17 and 9, 15)
7. His coming (2. Petr. 1, 16; 3, 4)
8. the rapture (1. Thess. 4, 13-18)
9. new heaven and new earth (2. Petr. 3, 13)
10. all things new (Rev. 21:5)
11. God dwelling among us (Rev 21:3)
12. no more death (Rev. 21, 4; 1. Cor. 15, 26)
13. all made alive in Christ (1 Cor. 15, 22)
14. No more curse (Rev. 22:3)
15. Christ the head of the universe (Eph. 1, 9-11; 1. Cor. 15, 27)
16. God all in all (1 Cor. 15:28)
17. complete knowledge (1. Cor. 13, 12)
18. filled to the fullness of God (Eph. 3, 19)
19. perfect as the Father in heaven (Matth. 5, 48)
20. Like Him (1. Joh. 3, 2)
21. Do greater works than the Son (John 14:12)

In the face of such tremendous promises, the believer can only worship. *And this is the fulfillment of God's longing.* He seeks worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in essence. The worshipper confirms that his faith entered the land of promise and lives there from the yield of the soil of promise. He moves as a child in that which is his Father's.

Amen, Amen, Loud Amen
has the mouth of the faithful God;
eternally He bears the name,

that in Him the truth ground.
What He says all comes true;
it must be yes and amen.

The promise can be forgiven;
does not come soon what He promises,
you have to flee doubt after all,
because His word He never breaks.
Is the right time only there,
so everything becomes louder Yes.

Has He kept it so
from the beginning of the world.
His truth will also prevail,
until the world falls into ashes,
because He, as He never did,
Can't deny yourself.

Well, my heart, you can trust Him!
What He has promised you,
you will also look fulfilled.
Does it also not come immediately to the act,
He also often saves it far out,
it becomes an amen after all.

Amen, Lord, You will fulfill,
what your faithful mouth promises.
That's what I'm silently expecting now,
until it is revealed in the light,
that you give the fulfillment;
amen, yes, as you live!

(Benjamin Schmolck, 1672-1737)

c) Let us take care of one another for the stimulation of love and good works.

The first descendant of fallen man, Kam, struck his brother dead. When the Lord asked, "Where is your brother Abel?" he answered, "I do not know; *am I my brother's keeper?* " –

The line began with this attitude: "*They all seek their own.* " Whether man is concerned with money or honor or power or office and dignity or lust or anything else is beside the point. Everything springs from the same root, selfishness. But what the own ego wants to gain for itself with pathologically conspicuous or also cleverly camouflaged addiction, it envies the other. That is why envy is the other side of avarice.

This wretchedness of the carnal mind is unfortunately not only found among worldly people, but is a very tenacious piece of the old man, to whom the renewed man has indeed died in faith, so that the old man no longer has any legal claim on us, but which, as long as we are still *underage* children of God, breaks through again and again until it is also practically killed by daily dying.

But God is love. This love does not seek its own, but what is of the other. It envies nothing; it does not impute evil; it believes everything, hopes everything, endures everything. Therefore, for the

sake of others, for the sake of the world, God gave the Son of love away from the Father's heart into the deepest humiliation, in order to seek what was lost, to loosen what was bound, to save what was dying, to bring the unruly to repentance and to bring back what was rejected.

Where this love of God is poured into human hearts through the Holy Spirit, it unfolds according to the life laws of the Spirit and the growth of God increases.

Love is the will to communion. It cannot remain alone. Its innermost being drives it to the others. She must share everything she has. It can withhold nothing from all that it possesses. She can never look for herself. She always thinks of the others.

While the first descendant of fallen man answered God's question dismissively: "Shall I be my brother's keeper? "The love of Christ urges His members to be the guardians of the brethren. Not in the sense of wanting to be masters of their faith, but as co-workers of their joy.

Where this love is present and effective, the law is fulfilled without thinking of the law. Only against this background do the admonitions of 1 Corinthians 10:24 and Philippians 2:4 make sense; for without love, no human being is capable of permanently and intrinsically seeking the welfare of others and subordinating his own welfare to theirs.

Love immerses itself so deeply in the existence and needs of the other that it alone attains the right, positive understanding of this existence and at the same time also finds ways and means to help satisfy the existing needs. She remembers the poor, the prisoners, the brothers. It rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep. She bears the weaknesses of the weak, does not want to please herself, but the neighbor whom she wants to edify. She does not violate the conscience of the brethren, but becomes like a weak person to the weak, yes, she becomes all things to all, in order to save some in all ways. Love, in a spirit of gentleness, puts right those who are in a hurry because it does not reckon evil. It is always concerned with encouraging others with its knowledge of the Gospel. For this reason, it even renounces indisputable rights, so as not to give an impulse that could harm the Gospel.

Thus, love is really the sum of the law, that is, of all the demands that have ever been made to ensure the welfare of the individual within a totality (community). But while these demands made demands without granting the power to fulfill them, love is the highest and purest power of the spirit, the fulfillment of the law and the bond of perfection.

This love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, is the sole source of all our life and strength. Therefore, we not only remain in this love ourselves, but also lead everyone who allows himself to be led to this eternal rock spring, from which all those drank who walked through this world believing as spiritual men.

Tersteegen sings of this source of life:

Praise be to the high name of Jesus,
in which the source of love springs,
from which all the little streams here came,
from which the same crowd drinks there!

He not only wants to immerse himself in this sea of love, but again and again it sounds through "My God, if only the sinner knew! His heart would soon have to love you. "

That is precisely something of the essence of love, that it cannot remain alone. It *wants to have community.* Yes, love is only possible in community. Whom should an individual love? - To whom should he share himself? - To whom should he give himself? - *Love requires community, needs community, longs for community, seeks community, finds community, forms community.* As it is the root of every life in general (because life is begetting love), so also the source of all true community

life and at the same time as the "bond of perfection" also the permanent safeguard of every community.

When we gather together, let us always keep in mind, with all faith and with all knowledge of teachers, that *without love* they are *nothing*. Even he who is concerned with the essential, the imperishable, always have in mind that *love is also the greatest of the three that remain*.

Therefore, we want to come to our meetings already with the will for fellowship, namely love. Already at home it is our request to the Lord to make us fervent in spirit and overflowing in love. Every contemplation of the Word has the ultimate purpose of glorifying the Lord and edifying the church.

No flame is kindled by cold light. Knowledge inflates, but love edifies. Not the I is in the foreground, but the You, where He is the source.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for *love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.* - But if anyone loves God, he is known by Him."

"Beloved, if God has thus loved us, we are also guilty of loving one another. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us."

To know God, to be born of God, to have passed from death to life, to abide in God and to be perfected in love, - all this is possible only through love for the brethren. By those who are born we prove whether we love Him who gave them birth.

Therefore, instead of the many commandments and regulations and statutes of the preparatory times of salvation, the Lord gave *a new commandment*: that we should love one another. This is the sum of all the commandments, through which they are all fulfilled.

Love as an outflow of God's essence is at the same time the only means to understand God in terms of essence. He does not reveal himself to anyone else. The lover reveals himself only to the beloved. *Without love, God cannot be known.* But where love becomes overflowing, it imparts *knowledge and insight into everything.* Therefore, the prerequisite of any deeper knowledge of God is love. The apostle prays for the saints and faithful only then that God may give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation *for the knowledge of Himself, after he has heard of their love for all the saints.*

May the Lord also give us, above all, the fervor of true spiritual love. Let it regulate our relationships with God and with one another.

By practicing this love of the spirit, we enjoy and operate the most precious possession of the world to come. He who loves has in his faith not an uncertain blank on the future, but the most real possession among the values that remain. The goods of the future world have become life possessions for him, and he rejoices in spirit that he may already now have and practice that which on the new earth forms the basis of the relationships of all creatures with one another: *love.*

Isn't this most glorious advance possession worth taking care of one another and inciting us to practice it?

This love works itself out in good works. It, as the basis of all God's activity, cannot be without proper activity in His own. What it sees the Father doing, it also does in us and through us. And as from Him, who is love, only good comes, because love is kind, so also our works, *if we act from love, are good.* And as we should incite one another to love, *so we are also urged to see the fruit of this love in good works.*

Love has a sacred desire to do good because it is good itself. It is rich in good works, generous, sharing, because it is concerned in *everything with the essence, with real life.*

Therefore, love does not demand good works from others, but practices them, and by setting itself up as an *example of good works*, in truth (beingness) it also stimulates the other lovers to the same fruit by igniting the others with its ardor. So it was with the Lord himself, so it was with Paul, and so it should be with us.

May the Lord grant that we may be stewards of God's many graces, driven by fervent love!

"So now, as we have opportunity, let us work good against all, but most of all against the household of faith! "

"In the needs of the saints take part! "

"Whosoever therefore knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. "

"Whatever good anyone will do, that he will receive from the Lord. "

Evidence for 2.) What we should.

Hebr. 4, 1.2; 1 Cor. 10, 1-12; Ezk. 37, 1-14; Num. 13-14; Rom. 11, 29-36; 2 Tim. 2, 13; 1 Cor. 3, 10 ff; Jas. 1, 12; 2. Tim. 2, 5; 4, 7-8; Rev. 2, 10; 1 Petr. 1, 7; Hebr. 4, 16; Phil. 2, 12; Hebr. 8, 1; 10, 14; Phil. 1, 9-11; 1 John 4, 17 ff. Joh. 5, 24; Hebr. 3, 1; 1. Cor. 3, 9; Col. 4, 11; 1. Thess. 3, 2; Hebr. 8, 2; Hebr. 9, 24; Rom. 2, 6-16; Deut. 32, 11 f.; Jos. 24, 15; Ps. 84, 6.7; Ps. 87, 7; Mo. 14, 24; Eph. 2, 8 ; Rom. 4, 1-8.16; Rom. 3, 23; Heb. 11, 1; Jos. 1, 3; 1 Jn. 5, 4; 2 Pet. 1, 4; Jas. 4, 6; 1 Pet. 1, 19.20; Acts 17, 22-28; Heb. 10, 1; Heb. 9, 6-10; Heb. 9, 11-26; 12, 24; Heb. 9, 14; 1 Pet. 1, 20; Eph. 3, 11; Matth. 12, 20; Jam. 2, 13; Joh. 13, 10; 4. Mo. 19, 9.13.20 f.; Hebr. 9, 10; 5, 12-14; 6, 1.2; Eph. 5, 26; Rom. 12, 1.2; Joh. 15, 3; Joh. 17, 7.; 17-19; 2. Cor. 1, 20; 2. Cor. 7, 1; 1. Joh. 3, 2 f.; 1 Pet. 1, 22 ff; Tit. 2, 14; Rom. 8, 19-23; 2 Cor. 3, 17; Rom. 8, 1-4; Rom. 8, 10.11; Col. 3, 4; 2 Thess. 1, 10; 1 Tim. 3, 15; 1 Cor. 4, 9; 2 Cor. 3, 3; Eph. 3, 10; 2 Cor. 5, 17; 2 Cor. 4, 7; 1 Tim. 4, 10 f.; Rom. 15, 13; Gal. 5, 1; 1 Tim. 4, 8; 1 Cor. 3, 22; Heb. 10, 34; Rom. 8, 29; Phil. 1, 21; 1 John 3, 2.3; Heb. 6, 13-20; 2 Petr. 1, 4; 2 Cor. 7, 1; 4 Mo. 13, 21-23; Joh. 4, 23; Phil. 2, 20 f.; 1 Cor. 3, 14; Col. 3, 3.5-15; 1 Cor. 13, 4-7; Rom. 5, 5; 2 Cor. 1, 24; Rom. 13, 8-10; Ps. 41, 1; Heb. 13, 3; Acts 2, 44 ff.; Rom. 12, 15; 15, 1 f.; 1 Cor. 8, 1.12 f.; 1. Cor. 9, 22; 10, 33; Gal. 6, 1; 2. Thess. 3, 9; Col. 3, 14; Col. 3, 14; 1. Cor. 13, 13; 1. Joh. 4, 7; 1. Cor. 8, 3; 1. Joh. 4, 11 f.; 1. Joh. 3 u. 4; 1. Joh. 5, 1; Joh. 13, 34; Rom. 13, 8-10; Phil. 1, 9-11; Eph. 1, 15-19; Col. 1, 4.9-11; 1 Petr. 4, 8; Jas. 1, 17; 1 Cor. 13, 4; 1 Tim. 6, 18.19; Tit. 2, 14; 1 Cor. 11, 1; 1 Thess. 1, 7; 1 Petr. 4, 8 ff.; Gal. 6, 10; Rom. 12, 13; Jas. 4, 17; Eph. 6, 8

3. how we are able to

a) By not missing our meeting, as is the custom of some.

Love is the will for community. Where it works, fellowship is formed forever. As natural love drives two people to become one flesh, so divine love drives the saints to be one spirit with the Lord and to keep the unity of the spirit among themselves in the bond of peace.

Love is growing. As it grows, so does the will for communion. Where this will is lacking, there is a lack of love.

The failure to meet in the assemblies of the saints is therefore a sign (symptom) of a morbid attitude of love toward the Lord and the brethren, a typical deficiency of spiritual life. Where this omission is already a custom or practice, the disease has already become chronic.

It is very important to realize and observe this, because all the exhortations of the preceding verses of our text in the Letter to the Hebrews can be realized only by *not neglecting our coming together*. The first of the three means by which we can express what we are to do is by remaining in the fellowship of the saints. (See the outline of the whole section at the beginning of the essay!)

The assembly of the living God is the revelation carrier of God in the present time. It is not the truth itself. It is the Lord, the Son of love. But since He went to the Father, the body church here on earth is the carrier of the essential life, *the pillar and the foundation of the truth. Christ in us, the hope of glory, is the permanent presence and revelation of God in the flesh.* We are a dwelling place of God in the spirit, His holy temple during this evil aeon (age).

To this Christ body belong all those whom God baptized into one body through one Spirit. They are imbued with a spirit, which, as the spirit of life from God, guides them and, according to His own nature and rule of life (order of life, law of life), brings the divine life to unfold in them.

In this Christ body, the life and being of God pulsates today in physical representation in the midst of the cosmos. This communion of saints, whom God Himself called and Himself baptized by His Spirit, is (in contrast to all existing Christian organizations) a *living organism*. Not the affiliation to a special partial confession of the many Christian denominations (denominations and denominations) characterizes the members of this body, but *every true believer*, who stands in essential life connection with God and was added to this body by God Himself by baptizing him with His spirit, is *a member of this body of Christ*.

Therefore, just as external membership in any denomination or organized church does not guarantee the reception of the Spirit of God and thus of the new life from God, neither does non-membership in any denomination say anything against participation in the body of Christ. God does not judge by church records, but by the possession of His Spirit. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

These all, impelled by one spirit, strive toward one another in holy love, in the Spirit-empowered will for communion. Their love is not hindered by the fences of denominations. For them, every partition of the fence has been swept away. They long with all their hearts for the representation of the *ecclesia*, the una sancta, the one holy church, the *communion of saints*. Wherever they have the opportunity for communion, the will for communion, love, breaks through. In every true child of God they love the Father and respect His presence in His child. Nothing external prevents them from this love for all the saints. They love with the same love with which they are loved by God and which He has poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit. They are all *one* in Christ. Language, ethnicity, customs, gender, status, profession, church affiliation or other human differences (which in themselves are not abolished in this life) do not prevent them in the least from worshipping God together in spirit and in essence (truth). Because God, who is spirit and love, dwells in them, they love in spirit and know no one according to the flesh.

This spirit community is the life bearer of God in the present time, and this community of love is the true church.

What believer, into whom God's love has been poured out through the Holy Spirit, could want to leave this one, holy, Christian church, the communion of saints? - Where else could he exercise the will to fellowship? - And outside the assembly of the living God, where would he still find the essential life of God, with whom alone he can unite in the same essence? - -

Denominational affiliation does not guarantee life; this is found only within the Body of Christ. The life of the Head pulsates in the members of His body.

How cold must a heart have become that is so indifferent to the communion of saints that it neglects to come together, indeed, that this neglect has already become a custom with him!

What use are the pathetic methods of many organizations to bring in the defaulters with pressure and violent measures? These are all just relapses into Old Testament legalism (quite apart from the fact that defaulting church members are usually not conscious believers).

Paul meets the erring ones tenderly like a nurse and orders them to be set right in a spirit of gentleness.

Love cannot be commanded. Where it is missing, the will for community is also missing. Therefore, the only way to restore the connection is to encourage each other to love.

In order to be able to do this, there must be the will to fellowship at least from one side. If your brother grows cold, it does not follow that you can now grow cold too, but the duty to love him all the more, as Paul did, and the father of the prodigal son likewise.

Life longs for life. Whoever does not feel the longing for fellowship with those who carry the life of God in themselves, let him examine whether he himself possesses life from God at all, or whether

he belongs to some Christian form or denomination only by tradition. But also the proclaimers of the Word, who do not bear witness to life with their message or do not awaken a longing for this life in their hearers, may examine themselves whether they are in truth life-bearers on whom life can be kindled, or whether only learned, studied orthodoxy formed a form of godliness in them, but without power, without the authority which is imparted only by the personal reception of the Spirit. Here, all ceremonies are of no use, but only the conscious decision of faith before the face of the living God, the complete surrender of one's own person to the Lord of life, who brought life and incorruptible being to light through His resurrection. He gives the believer the new life, the life of the spirit, the essential life. Whoever is in Christ is a new creation. Everything has become new.

There is only one way to eliminate pathological conditions in the church and to replace them with normal growth in everything towards the Head: Let us begin a life in the spirit, which drives love as the first fruit! Then the original beauty of the Sons' Church will shine forth anew, and all the precious exhortations will be obeyed and acted out for the salvation of all and for the glorification of God the Father and His Christ. Then also the world will know that we are His disciples because we have love among ourselves. The assembly (church), which wants to be the bearer of the apostles' teaching, can only do this if it *perseveres in fellowship*, in the breaking of bread and in prayers at the same time. Whoever removes even one of these four wheels on which the chariot of the congregation rides, causes the whole carriage to overturn. *Everything that the Lord has commanded must be preserved, not just one thing*, not just doctrine, no matter how orthodox it may appear to be in the letter.

b) But to encourage (exhort) one another.

The ministry of exhortation (encouragement) is an outflow of the nature of God. Scripture calls Himself the "God of exhortation (encouragement, encouragement, comfort)." An essential function of Scripture is to encourage. Yes, all the things that happened to the fathers are written down for our admonition. Thus, through the exhortation of Scripture, we can have comfort and hope.

The ministry of exhortation is to be exercised by everyone. "Encourage one another," says the Scripture, that is, one to another. Without this service, the saints cannot be perfected. It is one of the means that always incite us to grasp the promises. By grasping the promises, we become partakers of the divine nature. Therefore, whoever wishes to promote in his brother, in others, the development of the divine nature, must always encourage them to grasp the greatest and most precious promises.

Let's look at a practical example of an exhortation from Scripture!

In Corinth, the conditions among the believers were not pleasant. There were divisions and quarrels. But the most evil thing about these quarrels was that the quarreling members of the church did not bring their matter before the face of the Lord and settle it within the church, but ran before the secular judges and sued each other there. Thus the name of the Lord was blasphemed before the Gentiles.

The apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, now admonishes the Corinthians because of this grievance.

How does he start this? --

An exhortation has a meaning only if there is a possibility to fulfill it. For faith, however, there is only a possibility of fulfillment where there is a divine promise. The exhortation must be linked to this if it is not to have a negative effect, i.e. one that is devastating and drives people to despair, but a positive one, i.e. one that points to the possibility of compliance and fulfillment, i.e. one that encourages.

Paul proceeds in this way. He directs the Corinthians' attention to the exceedingly precious and glorious promise that they shall one day judge the world, the whole cosmos, with all the saints.

How can they be so small in the present in the face of such future tasks? - They make each other defendants before those over whom they are to be judges later on, and make those who will be defendants later on judges over themselves. Does this correspond to the destiny of the saints to be a spectacle for the cosmos in the present time - both angels and people - and to be judges of the cosmos later on? - No! Ashamedly they must realize how much they acted against their God-given calling.

How could they forget such glory purposes of God, which He has set with them, above their own petty things? --

Paul thus first directs the gaze of the one to be admonished upward to the great promises and God's goals, and thus, with the budding joy over the dignity assigned to him and with the shame over his littleness, prepares the ground on which the seed of genuine *spiritual* admonition can really sprout and bear fruit.

This is positive exhortation. *It gives first* and lays with the divinely invoked promise, the promise, the unshakable foundation of the construction.

Whoever acts differently and only makes demands without first remembering the promises is preaching the law and is thus Old Testament-Jewish oriented, even if he may call himself evangelical or free church or otherwise according to his outward affiliation. *Every demand without a preceding promise is law.* And much more law is preached than even believers accept. Almost most of what is passed off as gospel is a mixture of law and gospel, and often enough it is pure law.

He who is led by the Spirit cannot offer any other food to the children of promise than the promises of God. The promises are the food that God gave to His children. They form the very food of every believer who grows the growth of God.

Therefore, every ministry of exhortation is ultimately and profoundly a return to the promises of God. The practical effect of this is the *cleansing of the flesh and spirit from every defilement.*

The spirit in which this service must be done can be seen from the way Paul exhorts. It is the spirit of Jesus Christ. The *ministry of exhortation is an exhortation in Christ Jesus*, connected with the consolation of love, supported by the fellowship of the Spirit, springing from inner compassion and intimate mercy.

Only he who exhorts in this way encourages rightly. Everything else is flesh, even if it is pious, religious flesh, which wants to force the other to perform through high-set demands in the form of rules, orders, statutes, commandments or even the false, mindless use of Bible words.

Among the thousands of exhortations, there are two that are so important to the apostles that they *put them before everything else*. One of them refers to our position with the saints or with each other, the other to our position with the world and its authorities.

The latter reads: *"I now exhort above all things that* supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings, and for all who are in majesty, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and worthy earnestness. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of our Savior-God, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. "

The only question to be asked here is: *Do you give thanks daily before all things for all people and for those who are in majesty?* As long as you cannot give thanks for all people, you need not be surprised that the love for the world that moved the Father to give the only begotten Son has not yet awakened in your heart.

But the relationships of the saints with one another are regulated by love, of which Peter writes in his first epistle, *"Above all, have fervent love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. "* Scripture has a rich number of exhortations for all relationships in life, whether for our relationship to the Lord or to the church, for spouses and children, for masters and servants, for overseers and servants, for captives and freemen, for the Lord's supper and baptism, for the life of prayer and the study of Scripture, for the expectation of the returning Lord and the attitude toward His approaching

day, for our struggle with the powers in the heavens and spiritual armor, for our participation in the gospel and care for the poor, sick, and widows of the church, for the study of prophecy and the practical application of our knowledge-in short, for the present life and the life to come.

Is it even possible to overlook such an important area of Scripture? --

An essential cause of the all too common unhealthy life of faith is that the ministry of exhortation is not practiced and the exhortation is forgotten. *And this, unfortunately, must be said precisely to the sons who*, for the sake of this neglect, do not lose their lives but *squander their birthright*.

c) *And the more you see the day approaching, the more so.*

The ministry of exhortation is of very special importance in those times when the church has to go through severe trials. There the hearts easily become despondent, the souls weary, the knees shaky, and the hands lax and weak. More easily than usual the enemy finds entrance to the people in weakened bodies and weary souls. Therefore, in such times, especially in the approaching end times, the ministry of exhortation is needed, if unhealthy and morbid conditions are not to become rampant in the congregation.

Therefore, the more we recognize by the signs of the times that the day of the Lord is approaching, the more we should come together and admonish one another, continually directing our eyes to the great promises that lie ahead.

The Scriptures often speak of the coming day, describing it as a day of mighty events when even the heavens will be shaken and the elements will be dissolved in fire. It is a day of judgment on all that is high, but also a day of glorious revelation for the sons of God and all the saints.

In 20 places of Scripture it is directly called "*the day of the Lord*" (Isa. 13, 6.9; Ezek. 13, 5; at 1, 15; 2, 1.11.31; 3, 14; Amos 5, 18.20; Obadiah 15; Zeph. 1, 7.14; Mal. 4, 5; 1 Thess. 5, 2; 2 Thess. 2, 2; 2 Petr. 3, 10; Rev. 1, 10).

A whole book of the Scriptures speaks of the Day of the Lord. John was in the spirit on that day. Everything he saw he wrote in a book and sent it to the seven churches that were in Asia. The words of the prophecy of this book are *not sealed; the time is near*.

The more that day approaches, the more we should come together and admonish one another.

It is therefore necessary to know this day and the signs that precede it (Matth. 24, 3-51; 25, 1-46; 1.Thess. 5, 1-11; 2.Thess. 2, 1-12; 2. Petr. 3, 3-18). These scriptural passages of the signs of the coming day, in addition to the 20 passages of the "Day of the Lord" as well as the whole book of Revelation show us how important the events connected with it are to the Holy Spirit, since He grants the prophecy about it such a space in the Scriptures. The prophetic word, the word of prophecy, spoken by holy men who were driven by the Holy Spirit, is the lamp that shines in the dark place of the present world during the present course of time and gives us an insight into the deepest connections of the world history and the outcome of the present eon (age).

With what bliss, therefore, should we read and hear the words of the prophecy concerning the Day of the Lord!

Is that how it is with us? --

Abraham was allowed to see that day in the spirit, like a John, and he rejoiced. Do we also rejoice?

--

If not, then we need not be surprised that our life of faith is not healthy, for *looking to the coming day is one of the three means that enable us to work out the great possibilities of salvation offered to us in Christ to the fullest end.* (See the outline at the beginning of this essay.) We are able to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live prudently, righteously and godly in the present course of time only if we await the blissful hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. *Only those who wait sanctify themselves! Only people with the full hope of the Scriptures purify themselves completely, just as He is pure.* Before them lies the whole coming glory of the

Christ, in which they participate, and at His revelation He brings to His own all the grace that is still lacking in their perfection. For the decisive factor for the attainment of the victory prize is not the rich endowment of the individual member, but the love with which he waits for his Lord.

Do we love this appearance of the Lord? - -

If so, then this must soon have an effect in our lives, in more ways than one. We will read and listen to the words of prophecy that speak of the coming of the Lord and His revelation in glory with blissful eagerness. The blissful hope will enable and drive us to purify our own lives. Our hearts will become firm in patience and overflow with gentleness toward all people. We will become prudent and sober to prayer and put on the weapons of light. We will be drawn to our brothers in the Lord in holy fervor. We will not neglect our coming together, *but will encourage (exhort) one another, and all the more as we see the day approaching.* -

Evidence to 3.) As we are able:

1 Tim. 3, 15; Eph. 2, 19 ff; 1 Cor. 3, 16 f.; 1 Cor. 12, 13; Rom. 8, 14. 1-4; 1 John 5, 12; Eph. 2, 14; Gal. 3, 28; 2 Cor. 5, 16; 2. Cor. 12, 15; Luk. 15, 20; 2. Cor. 5, 17; Acts 2, 42; Rom. 15, 5; and 4; Rom. 15, 14; 1. Thess. 4, 18; 2. Petr. 1, 4; 1. Cor. 6; 2. Cor. 7, 1; 1 John 3, 2 f.; Phil. 2, 1; 1 Tim. 2, 14; 1 Petr. 4, 8; Heb. 12, 5; Heb. 12, 4-11. 12-17; Rev. 1, 10 f.; 22, 8-10; 2. Petr. 1, 19 ff; Rev. 1, 3; Joh. 8, 56; Tit. 2, 12.13; 1. Petr. 1, 13; 2. Tim. 4, 8; Jam. 5, 8; Phil. 4, 5; 1. Petr. 4, 7; Rom. 13, 11 ff.