



52 light points

Every week for a whole year

- Volume 2 -

Unchecked translation by DeepL from German into English

**"Your word is the lamp to my foot
And a light on my path."**

Ps. 119, 105

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Introductory words

Hope

Hope is God's reason
in the transient of the times.
Hope is the covenant of faith
with the God of eternity.
Hope remains firm as an anchor,
when the whole world lets us.

Hope is the light of the soul,
that it never becomes discouraged,
When it lacks strength
in the struggle and the complaint.
Hope lights up for us,
we continue the race.

Hope gives courage to the heart,
to face everything difficult
and even in the suffering embers
to stride joyfully after the goal.
Hope lessens all haste
and lightens every burden.

Hope, the power of eternity,
that holds us when all is shaking!
Hope, comfort of bliss,
which in the deepest sorrow still gives thanks,
because it sees the last exit,
that pulls the soul upward.

Hope is gladly aware
of the highest favor with Him, the One.
Hope brings about a holy desire,
to purify ourselves from every inclination,
that we already at this time
be holy as He is.

Hope stands in that world
eternally in the highest honors,
because it pleases love
to multiply life endlessly.
Believing our spirit understands:
God is the God of hope.

Karl Geyer

Christ's limbs

Filled with the power of infinite life,
Thus the church stands in the midst of the world.
The arch enemy of truth oppresses her in vain,
Because Christ, her head, protects and sustains her.
All may pass away, but we remain,
Because God gave us to the Son by grace,
To raise us, His members, to Him.

Carried by the peace that Christ acquired,
When He accomplished salvation on the cross,
This is how the saints go on pilgrimage, dead to sin,
To the eternal morning through tribulation and night.
They praise and give thanks despite fetters and barriers
And obediently walk the thorniest paths
And regard affliction and tribulation as grace.

Enveloped in mercy, very close to the heart
The father of love, they gladly endure
In daily dying the various pains
As members and brothers of the Head and Lord.
You want to supplement according to the limits,
The divine wisdom for them has given,
The sufferings of the Christ in death and life.

Glowing with joy, they are aware of the delights
Of the eternal homeland are known to them in spirit.
How soon the earthly hardships are melted away,
In endless whooping on the golden beach.
Then the Son will unite through His own
The vastness of the universe and in the end lays it
Reconciled and transfigured into the hands of our God.

Adolf Heller

Called to freedom!

"The freedom of a child of God is not a beautiful addition, a precious ornament only, a piece of jewelry that could be taken off if necessary or not always needed to be worn. Rather, it belongs to the essence of sonship. It is by it that the true sons entitled to inherit are recognized. As it is written: 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'¹ It is the privilege of the believer not only to remain conscious of this royal calling, but also to carry it out in everyday life before God and men. If we walk as servants, having received the Spirit of sonship, we deny the Lord who bought us and made us free.

It will soon be felt and seen whether we know ourselves in truth as free sons in the house of our God, who are not in servile fear of punishment, not out of compulsion and with groaning, not under pressure of conscience and in

We will be able to see whether we are still bound by human rules and regulations or whether we can reject them and not let anyone put a yoke on us. It will be well known whether we are still bound by human statutes and regulations or whether we can reject them and not let anyone put a yoke of bondage on us: you must not touch this, enjoy that, do that; you must observe such rules, such institutions, or you will still lack!"

"Many of us have labored for years and decades to ennoble our flesh, to elevate it, to perfect it morally, with the help of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, that is, by transforming the gospel into a new moral doctrine. This is how it is understood and presented in the vast majority of church bodies: Prescriptions for a holy life!

In many circles it is considered the final result of all Christianity that it makes us "better people", that humanity is ennobled and elevated by it. Certainly, this is the effect of God's saving grace. However, the Scriptures do not know anything about a man in Christ being a "better man".

"better man," but that he is a 'new creation'¹!"

"The true freedom of the child of God, then, lies not in the trajectory of conscientious, punctual observance of the law, but in the complete renunciation of law-work in every shape and form. But this is only the negative side of the matter. The positive side is that a man of God comes more and more completely under the regiment of the Spirit of Christ given to him. And this will be attainable only to the extent that we let this Spirit introduce us to the whole Word of divine revelation and make it our spirit and life from Him. Thus Christ, of whom all Scripture bears witness, will take form in us."

From E. F. Ströter: Der Galaterbrief, 2nd edition 1923, currently out of print.

The heavenly ones (Joh. 3, 12.) [A.Heller].

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can this be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Thou art the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and we testify that which we have seen; and yet ye receive not our testimony. 12 If ye believe not when I tell you of earthly things, how shall ye believe when I shall tell you of heavenly things? 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, save he that came down out of heaven, the Son of man which is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Joh. 3, 9-16

Author: Adolf Heller - after his article of the same name at GuH

We hardly know about the thoughts and plans of God with the earth and the people, how much more strange and unknown must be to us the ways and aims of the "Father of spirits" with the heavens and their inhabitants! We fully understand the reproach the Lord made to the Pharisee Nicodemus: "If I have told you the earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you the heavenly things?" (John 3:12)

If the Scriptures testify nothing about the heavenly, then it would be vain folly and presumption to want to say something about it. But God's word speaks often and clearly about those beings and worlds which are still completely closed to our natural senses. Nevertheless, they are much more real and substantial than what we see in this body of flesh and blood with our eyes, hear with our ears, touch with our hands or measure and weigh with our cumbersome instruments.

Whoever does not stop at his own needs in selfish desire, but wants to listen in and look into God's thoughts and plans and strives to be shaped into the Father's way and nature, will also take part with holy-divine desire and longing in what God has revealed about the superworld invisible to our held senses.

Therefore, the testimonies of the Scriptures about "the heavenly ones" are not incidental and meaningless to us. To the great universe of God belong not only the earth and the earthly, but at least as well the heavens and the heavenly. Yes, these worlds and beings are outwardly much more mighty and powerful than the small earth and its inhabitants. The Scriptures speak of a number of orders of heavenly spirit beings. It calls 1. seraphim or fiery ones.

- Cherubim or Strong.
- Thrones or court benches.
- Rulers or Majesties.
- Powers or executors.

- Forces or Dynamics.
- Principalities or Primal Powers.
- Glories or Shining.
- Elder, more precisely: elder.
- Saint or set apart.
- Guardians or supervisors.
- Archangels or chief messengers.

We want to hear from the heavenly (more precisely: super heavenly) some of what God says about it. Let us read Eph. 1, 3. 20; 2, 6; 3, 10; 6, 12! Most of our translations add something that is not in the original text; they talk about heavenly "goods", heavenly "places", heavenly "regions", etc. But it only says: the heavens. But it only says: the heavenly (respectively super heavenly). Let us testify about it basically some truths.

The earthly priesthood together with its cultic institutions was an image and shadow of the heavenly ones. This is what Hebr. 8, 5 says. Just as I can recognize a great building by its small ground plan, it is the same with the heavenly beings and worlds and their earthly projections. And the same, yes, a far greater difference, as it exists between a magnificent building and its simple ground plan, gapes between the heavenly worlds and their small, weak, earthly after-images.

Very clearly Paul teaches, "There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But another is the glory of the heavenly and another of the earthly." (1 Cor. 15, 40.) Now and then heavenly bodies are described to us. Let us think, for instance, of Dan. 10:5, 6: "Behold, there was a man clothed in linen, and his loins were girded with gold of Uphaz; and his body was like a chrysolite, and his face like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like the sight of bright brass, and the voice of his words was like the voice of a multitude." These are certainly not children with little wings and dimples in the cheeks, as they are represented by an art alienated from the world of God!

Perhaps we can most clearly see the difference between earthly and heavenly bodies in the Lord himself. Concerning his earthly body life, the prophet says: "He had no form and no splendor; and when we saw him, he had no appearance that we desired him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with afflictions, and like one from whom one hides his face; he was despised, and we esteemed him nothing." (Isa. 53, 2b. 3.)

But how does John, his favorite disciple, who had so often lain at his breast and kept intimate company with him, see him in his heavenly body? He sees him "clothed in a garment reaching down to his feet, and girded at the breasts with a golden girdle; his

head and his hair white as white wool, like snow, and his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet like shining copper, as if they were glowing in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of many waters; and he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. 1, 13—18). The consequence of this sight was that John fell down as if dead at the feet of the Risen Lord. From this comparison we clearly see the difference between earthly and heavenly bodies.

The redemptive work of the cross is not only for the earthly, the created from the adama, the red earth, the earth beings, but also for the heavenly, the ember beings. Paul teaches unequivocally that not only mankind but "the universe" is reconciled (Col. 1:20), and the Letter to the Hebrews testifies that the earthly images of heavenly beings are purified by the blood of goats and bulls, but the heavenly beings themselves are purified by better sacrifices, namely by the blood of Christ (9:23).

Only from this point of view we are able to believe that one day everything that has breath will praise the Lord, that "all His angels" and "all His hosts" will praise him (Ps. 103, 20-23). The holy seer on Patmos also testifies that "every creature that is in the heavens" will burst into the shout of exultation of Rev. 5:13.

This is completely in line with Phil. 2, 10, where Paul teaches with great determination and unimpeachable clarity in the name and on behalf of the exalted, glorified Christ that every knee of the heavenly also bows in worship and every tongue - thus also that of the heavenly! - praisingly confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.

About the relation in which the church of the body of Christ stands to these heavenly ones, Paul says a fivefold. Each time he uses the expression "en tois epouraniois" = in the heavenly ones or in the midst of the super heavenly ones. In all these testimonies there is nothing about goods or blessings, places or regions, but it simply says heavenly ones. It is necessary to pay attention to this, otherwise one empties and evaporates the word of God. One should not believe how often this is done even by faithful children of God with the best of intentions and opinions, especially when they are zealous for learned dogmas which, however, they have neither the time nor the strength nor the opportunity to verify against the Scriptures. The expression "en tois epouraniois" occurs only in Paul, and only in Ephesians. What he includes belongs to the things that fall under the word of Jesus in Joh. 16, 12. 13 a: "I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now. But when that one, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth." Would it not be folly to contrast explanations and information that a father gives to his underage child with such expositions that he makes to his adult son of full age? But this is what those do who claim that one must put the words of Jesus above those of the apostle Paul. They do not understand or do not want to understand that through the Apostle to the Gentiles the Glorified One speaks, the same Lord who in his humiliation spoke to the disciples from Israel.

Now, what is the further, goal of His revelations that which He revealed in the flesh when He was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," or that which He taught as the Empowered and Glorified One to the nations through His specially called and equipped Apostle? These things are too clear and unambiguous on the one hand, and too sacred and precious on the other, to be disputed. Whoever cannot or will not accept our testimony, let it lie, but do not disparage those who will and can do nothing but testify to the God-given light.

he revealed in the flesh when he was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," or that which he taught as the Empowered and Transfigured One to the nations through his specially called and equipped apostle? These things are too clear and unambiguous on the one hand, and too sacred and precious on the other, to be disputed. Whoever cannot or will not accept our testimony, let it lie, but do not disparage those who will and can do nothing else but testify to the God-given light.

Let us return to those five scriptural connections we hinted at above. They are:

1. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the midst of the heavenly ones (1,3).
2. God set the Christ at his right hand in the midst of the heavenly ones (i, 20).
3. God has raised us up and placed us in the midst of the heavenly ones (2:6).
4. Through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the principalities and powers in the midst of the heavenly ones (3:10).
5. Our struggle is against the spiritual powers of wickedness in the midst of the heavenly ones (6:12).

When we prayerfully think through these five testimonies, we see wonderful interrelationships between the Lord and the heavenly ones, the Lord and us, and the heavenly ones and us. Without these insights we can neither understand our faith struggle in the present nor our position in Christ and our tasks in the coming eternities. Only when we learn to see the church in its relationship to its Lord and Head and to the invisible worlds and know something about its position in the overall plan of God, then those heavenly beings are no longer insubstantial, distant and foreign to us, but we learn to go our way to perfection under their pressure, believing and persevering, in order to be their judges and saviors one day (1 Cor. 6:3; Eph. 1:23; 2 Cor. 1:20).

Let us be people who believe the Lord not only when He says earthly things, but also when He testifies to heavenly things. Let us believe that through the Spirit of God we may know all that is given to us by God (1 Cor. 2:12), and that we may be led not only into a small fraction, perhaps concerning Israel only, but into our very own expectation, yes, into "all truth" (John 16:13)!

Abide in Me and I in you! (Joh. 15,4) [H. Schumacher].

"Abide in Me, and I in you! Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me."

John 15:4

Author: Heinz Schumacher, from his eponymous publication in GuH

This is the last of three essays on themes from Jesus' farewell discourses. In issue 1/1977 appeared: "The Father himself loves you!" and in issue 2/1977: "A new commandment I give you".

The Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John are rich in "key words", words that occur repeatedly - in some places even frequently - and thereby bring a truth, a concept, a theme in the same or similar formulations memorably before the eyes. Such leading words, which the apostle John likes to use, are for example: Word, Light, Life, Truth, Darkness, Lie, Love, Hate, Father, Son, and many others. - One little word of only 2 letters that plays a major role in John 14-17 (that is, in Jesus' farewell discourses and the miraculous High Priestly Prayer that follows) is the little word "in." Small as it is outwardly, its inward meaning and significance is great. In these chapters, but also in the 1st Epistle of John, it often appears in connection with another key word of John, namely with "abide". Then there is talk of "abiding in" someone or something.

Some important statements from John 14-17, in which the little word "in" allows deep glimpses into the relationship of the Father to the Son, but also into the relationship of the Father to us or of the Son to us or of the Spirit to us and into the relationship of the children of God to each other, are introduced here. (We understand these words of Jesus in such a way that they apply not only to the disciples from Israel addressed here by the Lord first, but also to us. That the wonderful relationship "He in us and we in Him" applies not only to His Israelite disciples, but also to the believers from the nations, was revealed to the apostle Paul as a mystery of the divine counsel of love. He speaks of this relationship not only in Colossians 1, 27 and Gal. 2, 20, but moreover in a multitude of places. A few days before His suffering and death, the Lord reveals this secret, later revealed by Paul to the believers from the nations, in the closest circle of His intimates on the soil of Israel. Now, however, let this unique relationship be illuminated for once from John 14-17).

Job... 14,10: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?...
The

Father, who abides in Me, He does the works."

John 14:11: "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me!"

John 14:17: "He (the Spirit of truth, of being) abides with you and will be in you."

John 14:20: "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

John 15:4: "Abide in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me."

Joh. 15, 5: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me (separated, set apart, cut off from Me) ye can do nothing." Jn. 15:7: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you will, and it will be done for you."

John 15:9: "Abide in My love!"

Joh. 15, 10: "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Jn. 17:21: "That they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you.

Thee, that they also may be one in Us."

John 17:22: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one."

John 17:23: "I in them and you in Me."

Joh. 17,26: "I have made known to them Your name and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them and I in them. The simple little word "in" expresses in these contexts a divine-spiritual mystery that ultimately does not reveal itself to the inquiring head, but only to the loving and obedient heart. It expresses life communion, life connection, consubstantiality, unity and oneness. In the parable of the vine in John 15:4, the same word must actually be translated as "on" instead of "in" (for the branch does not remain in the vine, but on the vine) - but precisely this parable makes clear what is at stake: an organic life connection. Whoever does not open himself to this or closes himself off again, whoever lives and acts "without Jesus", outside of Him, separated from Him, "can do nothing" (15:5), cannot bring about anything useful and genuine and lasting in God's eyes; indeed, he meets the fate pronounced in 15:6: put out, withered, burning in the fire. (One can think here of parts of Israel, which took the way of hardening and of the judgments of fire were led, but also to 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

With You, Jesus, I will remain, always in Your service; nothing shall drive me away from You, I will walk in Your ways. You are the life of my life, the impulse and strength of my soul, as the vine sends forth strength and lifeblood to its branches.

It is said in the listed passages that

- Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Him;
- the Holy Spirit will be in us;

- Father's love will be in us;
- we are in the Lord and the Lord is in us; we are admonished,
- to abide in Jesus;
- to remain in His love;
- His words should remain in us.

Yes, the glory of God that the Son gives us is to cause us to be one, as Father and Son are one!

It becomes clear in these passages that abiding in Jesus always means at the same time: His words abide in us - we abide in His love - we keep His commandments and thereby express concretely that we abide in His love. According to 1 John 3:23, "keeping His commandments" is nothing other than: Trusting Jesus and loving His own.

A twofold wonderful interrelation of the living, organic, divine spiritual life is presented by the above-mentioned passages: Jesus is (and remains) in the Father and the Father in Him - we are to remain in Jesus and Jesus in us (and thus His Word and His love).

The first of these relationships takes place in the Godhead itself, free from sin and corruption.

The second, on the other hand, concerns the Godhead and humanity, and refers to Jesus, the sinless, pure, incorruptible One, and us, who were enemies and sinners, rebels by nature, rebellious, enslaved to sin and death. It is the wonder of all wonders that even of such (having been saved and justified and cleansed and sanctified) it can be said: He in us and we in Him

- The Spirit of truth abides in us - the Father and the Son come and make our inner being their abiding dwelling place (John 14:23).

Where this is experienced, consequences arise, consequences that are described in the words of Jesus:

a) We bear fruit. The Lord speaks in Joh. 15, 1-5 of fruit - more fruit - much fruit and in v. 16 of lasting fruit. The

5th verse does not say: "He who abides in Me and I in him shall bear fruit, must bear fruit", but: "he bears much fruit". There is no abiding in Jesus without fruit! We can think of the ninefold fruit of the Holy Spirit of Galatians 5:22, or fruit of the lips, or fruit in the form of people to whose salvation, sanctification, growth we may contribute through our ministry. Our concern need not be what our fruit looks like - the Lord works that - our concern should only be to abide in Him.

- We learn to pray with hearing. But the promise of John 15:7 is not a license to fulfill all possible desires of our own; this promise is given to those who abide

in Him and in whom His words abide! If our will has come into agreement with His word, then we may ask - just according to His word - "what we want".

- Probably the greatest thing in this context is the promise of John 17, 21 and 23: The oneness of the believers in Jesus - of those who are and remain in Him - shall reach the kind and quality: "just as We (Father and Son) are one". This is truly possible only on the ground of being in Christ, on the ground of a new nature, the new man. (Paul also envisages this goal in Ephesians 4:13.) On the ground of the old nature, even of the piously trained old nature, where sympathy and antipathy, opinionated disputes, etc. still prevail, it can never be achieved. Why is it that this "oneness as WE are one" is often only little to be felt even among promoted Christians? Have we misunderstood and misused the knowledge as head knowledge? Have we consoled ourselves with the fact that John 14-17 applies to Israel and is not meant for us? Have we forgotten the quiet, silent "abiding in Him", which is not meant for success and sensation, because of the noise and hustle and bustle of our troubled times? Probably no true child of God will want to live consciously "without Jesus", separated from Him. Probably every reader of these lines will have the inner desire to remain in Jesus. But do we do it consciously, praying, attentively, persistently? That would mean to have time for the Lord every day and to stay inwardly connected with Him even in the everyday noise and stress. Otherwise, there is the danger of doing many things "without Him", planning, thinking, talking, trying - and that, according to Jesus, is "nothing" (15:5).

It is good for us that the Lord does not immediately cut us off, run us off, throw us away, hand us over to the fire, if our inner attention slackens even a little, if our abiding leaves something to be desired. His faithfulness is greater than ours, His abiding in us more constant than ours. We are not the beginners and finishers of faith, but HE is! Nevertheless, we should (in faith and trust, not out of fear) listen anew to Jesus' admonition and take it seriously:

"Abide in Me and I in you!"

"Abide in My love!"

If we remain in Jesus, then - and only then - much fruit, listening prayer, oneness with Father and Son and with other children of God (in the harmony of the same love that exists between Father and Son) can be found in us.

When is the Rapture to be expected? (1. Thess. 4, 13-18) [E.F. Ströter].

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you will not be sad like the others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, God also will guide those who have fallen asleep with him through Jesus. 15 For this we say to you in a word from the Lord: we who are alive and remain until the Lord's return will not precede those who have fallen asleep; 16 for the Lord himself, when the command goes forth and the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God sound, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After this, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord, in the air, and so we will be with the Lord always. 18 Comfort one another, therefore, with these words.

1 Thess. 4, 13-18

Author: Prof. E.F. Ströter, excerpts from his [article of the same name](#)

There is no question of chronological calculations here, for the simple reason that the church is not an earthly body like Israel, but a heavenly body. It is in no way subject to the laws of time and space. Her place is above, where Christ is her Lord and Head, high above sun, moon and stars, by which the courses of time of this world are governed and according to which they are calculated and ordered. Where we encounter numbers and calculations in Scripture, we are always dealing with Israel, never with the church. If one had considered this, then one would have spared much vain calendar making.

Biblical chronology is the most accurate and reliable under all circumstances. But all previous attempts to calculate this present eon correctly have failed. This is not by chance, but unmistakably divine intention. The clock, according to which God measured earlier, when He still reckoned with Israel, stands still. As soon as God will re-establish the relations broken off with His people, Israel can be reckoned again.

The life of the church is and must be quite independent of the closeness or remoteness of the calendar of the great acts of God in which it stands. The believers of today truly do not have less of the cross and resurrection of Christ, because it has been 1900 years since Jesus died and rose again. Nor, conversely, were the churches of apostolic times at a disadvantage against us in regard to the future of the Lord, because we live chronologically 1900 years closer to this still-future act of God than they do. Rather, as we can painfully perceive, today's congregation still has a long way to go to regain what those of that time had, in inner strength and joy of hope, in the drive for sanctification and patience in suffering. Here it becomes clear that in this matter completely different points of view come into play than chronological ones. Thus, the question whether the church, the body of Christ, is called to go through the great anti-christian tribulation period before it is raptured, will have to be answered primarily on inner grounds, i.e. by considering its nature, its position and task in the divine plan

and household. In other words, this question is not a calendar question, for the correct solution of which one would need great scientific or theological skill in the exact calculation of the biblical dates.

We would like to submit the following considerations to the waiting congregation for serious and careful consideration, and we ask the Lord to bless this feeble effort to bring clarity to a question that troubles many minds!

1. Of fundamental importance is the realization that the church is a body quite distinct from Israel, having a quite different origin, calling and position in the divine household. Most of the ambiguity comes from not distinguishing clearly enough, but still interpreting things said with reference to Israel to the church.
2. Of equal importance is the recognition that, according to the repeated testimony of the apostle Paul (read carefully Rom.16:25, 26; Eph.3:1-9; Col.1:24-27), the church was a "mystery" hidden in God, which was neither the subject of Old Testament prophecy, nor the subject of Jesus' teaching and preaching, nor the subject of the apostolic preaching of the Twelve to the circumcision. From this follows quite naturally what we have already stated above, that the church was not included in the framework of either Old Testament or New Testament chronology. Neither Daniel nor Jesus in His last discourses (Mth.24; Lk.21) nor the seer John reckon with the church. All the numerical data contained in these prophets have to do only with Israel. The church forms an incalculable intercalation or parenthesis, both as regards its beginning and its end and its exit from this world. It is a venerable, but therefore no less questionable error to think that the church, in the sense of the Pauline proclamation, had its beginning on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Nobody is able to calculate from the biblical reports when the "secret" of his administration was made known to the apostle Paul by revelation. This much is quite clear, when Peter was sent to the house of Cornelius, it was not yet known to the Twelve. Just as incalculable is the conclusion, the completion of this mystery, that is, the exit of the church through resurrection, transformation and rapture. That her beginning stood in a certain inner connection with Israel's national blindness is unmistakable and is indicated by Paul himself (Rom.11,11.15). Similarly, its outcome will probably be very directly related to the Lord's resumption of official relations with Israel. But an exact time for the one or for the other simply cannot be fixed, as far as our knowledge reaches. We do not see this as a defect or disadvantage, but respect this intended uncertainty and unpredictability as corresponding to the whole wonderful character of the Body of Christ.
3. It is a remarkable fact that Paul does not deal with numbers or chronological dates even once in all his letters to the churches. This would be quite incomprehensible, if it would somehow depend on correct calculation of the end for the church to understand its position in the divine household. But it is quite

understandable, even self-evident, if our assumption is correct that the church has nothing to do with the calendar at all.

4. In the very frequent references of the apostle Paul to the imminent coming of the Lord not only exact chronological data are missing, from which one could calculate something, but he also does not mention a single historical event, which would have to precede the descent of the Lord into the air to the meeting with His church and from whose arrival one could measure the approximate nearness of the rapture. The objection raised here by many, that this happens in a very definite way (2.Thess.2,2.3), becomes invalid as soon as one reads this passage as it wants to be read, i.e. according to its wording and meaning and in its context. The ordinary translation is guilty of this error. Verse 1 makes it clear that it is about the future (coming) of our Lord Jesus Christ and about "our being gathered to Him" (according to 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Verse 2 shows that even then there were people who frightened and worried the believers, as if their sufferings and tribulations were those of the great and terrible "day of the Lord" that had already dawned. About this the apostle calms them very effectively with the reference (v.3) to the fact that this "day" of the divine revelation of wrath must, however, be preceded by the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin. So it is not to be thought that they had forfeited the rapture (before this "day of the Lord") and are now the object of the divine revelation of wrath. However, as long as one cannot or does not like to distinguish between the delicious event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 at the arrival and meeting of the Lord from heaven with His own in the sky and His majestic appearance and revelation with all His saints at the opening of the great "Day of the Lord" to give punishment with flames of fire to those who do not acknowledge God and are not obedient to the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:7.8), as long as one will not get out of the confusion and darkness. Just read carefully what is unanimously said in the writings of the prophets about the dark and terrible character of the "Day of the Lord" (Isa.13,6-13; 34,1-10; Jer.30,7; Ez.7; 30,2.3; Joel 2,1-11.31; Zeph.1,14-18; 2,2.3; Mal.3,19.23). It is almost incomprehensible how one could ever confuse the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 ff., the joyful meeting of the Lord with His congregation then formed like Him, with the horrible and terrifying "day of the Lord's wrath" spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2. Dogmatic fetters are very tight and difficult to break. About this future "day of the Lord", the judicial revelation of His wrath, Paul had already clearly instructed the brethren in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 that the same would not seize them at all like a thief, since they are children of light and of the day; for God has not destined us (the believing church) for wrath, but for the possession of salvation (in its consummation) through our Lord Jesus Christ (v.9). Just as clearly he pronounces: But you who are now oppressed, rest with us at the revelation of our

Lord Jesus Christ from heaven together with the angels of His power, when He will give punishment with flames of fire (2 Thess. 1:7, 8). We think that there cannot be a sharper and more definite distinction between us (the believers) and those who will be affected by the horrors of that "Day of the Lord".

5. All this has its deep foundation in the further fact that the church as a body, that is, as the executing body of the Head, is called to the "fellowship of Jesus Christ," to "His own kingship and glory" (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Thess. 2:12). This calling is distinguished far too little. One flattens all this. One only talks about "becoming blessed" and "coming to heaven" and so on. But the real goals of our heavenly calling remain unrecognized by many. We do not take God at His word. One feels even modest and is simply unbelieving. Paul says clearly enough, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" And again, "Do you not know that we angels will judge?" (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). Now it is quite natural, on the one hand, that the congregation called to such dignity and service cannot possibly sit in the dock again on that day, nor be the subject of the divine judgment of punishment; on the other hand, that a court of justice must be properly constituted before it can be opened and exercise its functions. It is therefore a compelling inner necessity, which arises quite naturally from the biblical findings and the position of the congregation in Christ, that this congregation should be assembled a certain time - incalculable to itself - before the "revelation" of the Lord with it for the execution of judgment on the (retarded) disobedient world of nations and Christendom, to its Lord, who will then assign precisely to each member of His body its post and its task for that "day".
6. One believed to be allowed to make the reproach of suffering shyness to this view. Again, this is based on a lack of proper discernment. The "sufferings which are in Christ" and which are and must be absolutely proper to the church as His body according to Romans 8:17, are of a very special kind. The sufferings of Christ, in which we are allowed to participate, no matter how the church may fare on earth, were neither inflicted nor involuntary or forced upon Him. What Christ suffered, He suffered voluntarily. He took upon Himself what He could have left without sinning. He would then still have been a perfect, spotless man, but alone. Only by voluntarily suffering death He became the fruitful author of blessedness for many (John 12:24). Now, the "fellowship of His sufferings" does not consist in atoning for what one has caused oneself (as Israel has to do); nor does it consist in having to go through much hardship in life at all. Rather, it is when one learns to voluntarily take upon oneself the suffering and misery of others through no fault of one's own, to stand priestly with them, and to bear as He bore. It is a misconception to think that the church of Christ must first be prepared for the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ through God's judgments of punishment and wrath. This is true of the innumerable multitude of those who had garments,

but defiled them with the world, and then, purified by the fire of the "great tribulation", will make their garments bright in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). But these are neither crown bearers nor co-rulers with Christ; but servants in His temple. To confuse them with the church is again not acceptable. Otherwise it would be impossible to understand that John should not have recognized this multitude at first sight. The members of the body of Christ have the high privilege of being like-minded to their exalted head also in that they voluntarily bear before the Lord the sorrow and suffering that surrounds them, which they themselves are not responsible for, the sorrow of the world, the damage to the church, the sins of the brethren, and are thus formed in His image.

However, this is not a compulsory procedure or a criminal trial, which would have to be carried out on them.

Now it is obvious at first sight to every attentive reader of the last book of the Bible that the tribulations and visitations of the antichristian times unmistakably belong to the framework of what John saw of the "great and terrible day of the Lord" and the revelation of His wrath from heaven. It is therefore quite impossible for us to think of the church, the body of Christ, us on earth when, for example, Revelation 13 will find its fulfillment. Christianity and Christianity will probably still exist then. But the church has long since been completed and has taken its place on His throne as His fullness.

If, according to the Scriptures, Enoch was "caught up in the Rapture through faith, so that he did not see death," then it will not be any different with the church of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, it is a great joy to see again and again how the children of God, no matter where they live, as an effect of the one Spirit who lives and is powerful in all, reach out for the possibilities that the firm prophetic word holds out to the church with regard to the complete overcoming of all death even in our mortal bodies.

We are firmly convinced that on this line the question: When is the Rapture to be expected? will be led towards its solution. This cannot be done humanly, but thank God it cannot be hindered either. The Lord goes on unmistakably with those who have an open ear and who are not sluggish to believe everything that is written. There is no greater task for us today than the one that the Master set for the disciples and that the apostle inculcated in the churches:

Watch and be ready!

Blessings in the midst of the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3) [A. Heller].

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly ones in Christ, 4 as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love. 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons to himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of the glory of his grace, with which he has pardoned us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished on us in all wisdom and understanding. 9 He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to that which he has purposed in him according to his good pleasure, 10 to be accomplished in the fullness of time: to gather together all things under one head in the Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth 11 - in him, in whom we also have obtained an inheritance, who were predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 that we might serve to the praise of his glory, who beforehand hoped in the Christ. 13 In him you also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation - in him you also, when you believed, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

Eph. 1, 3-14

Author: Adolf Heller - excerpts from his article "Suchet was droben ist" (Seek what is above)

When the apostle Paul exhorts us to seek and look for the things that are above, he is undoubtedly thinking of the salvation goods and glories that have been given to us, the church of the body of Christ, by God. However important and delicious the things and things we have considered since then may be, they do not constitute our actual lot or inheritance in the first place. Therefore, we want to consider some more things that are essential to us, the church of the present time, in the actual sense.

In Eph. 1, 3 the inspired apostle gives thanks that **blessings** are given to us in heavenly **places or in the midst of the heavenly worlds**. Whether we understand the expression "en tois epouraniois" used here as a determination of place or as a determination of kind, - in any case our blessings consist in heavenly goods, as Luther translates, and are also, locally seen, bound to the heavenly worlds. From verse 4 on, a series of blessings "in the midst of the super-heavenly ones" is enumerated to us:

1. **election in Christ** before the foundation of the world.
2. **predestination to sonship** through Jesus Christ for God Himself.
3. **redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ**.
4. **being released from** transgressions.
5. **overflowing grace** in wisdom and insight.

6. **knowledge of the secret will of God** for the administration of the fullness of time.
7. **predetermination according to the intention.**
8. **sealing with the Holy Spirit** of promise.
9. **indwelling of the Holy Spirit** as a pledge of the future inheritance.

These are all very great and wonderful blessings, of the full extent and glory of which not only the natural man, but also the little child in Christ has little idea or knowledge. Yet we are gifted with all these blessings, even if we are hardly aware of this fact.

Regarding our **election in Him**, we **may** know: There are blessings and counsels that were determined "from the foundation of the world" (Matth. 13, 35; 25, 34; Hebr. 4, 3; 9, 26; Rev. 13, 8; 17, 8), and those that were already determined "before the foundation of the world" (Joh. 17, 24; Eph. 1, 4; 1 Petri 1, 20). The former are Israel, but the latter are the Christ of God, twice the head and once His members (Eph. 1, 4).

Sonship or sonship for God Himself is the second of the blessings of Eph. 1, 3-14. There are also sons of God with regard to the whole creation; they are angels and angelic princes (Job 1, 6; 2, 1; 38, 7 etc.). God's firstborn son with regard to the nations is Israel (Ex 4:22); but with regard to the Father Himself, the Lord as the Head and the congregation of His Body, thus His members, stand in the original sonship of procreation.

Redemption is release for a ransom and, according to the testimony of Scripture, refers not only to the punishment for our sins and the resulting justification (Romans 3:24), but also to the change of ownership (Eph. 1:7, 14) as well as the deliverance from all human weaknesses and frailties of our physical life (Col. 1:14; Romans 8:23).

While redemption is based on Christ's once-for-all act on the cross, the reason for our **practical release from** sin depends on the extent to which we allow the work of the Holy Spirit to take place in our hearts and lives. The redemption is the same for all; but the redemption, the real freedom from transgressions and "deceptions", as the word used here can be most vividly translated, is very different among believers. Who would not be able to tell many delicious, but also sad things from his own life and from his ministry?

The **overflowing grace** given to us does **not manifest** itself in the **present time primarily in miracles, manifestations of power and strength of a visible kind, but rather in divine wisdom and insight**. This sophia and phronesis, this wisdom of God and heart, is much more important today than all the gifts, no matter how eye-catching they may be.

Verses 9 and 10 name a high goal of the divine sophia, a **secret of His will**: to uplift the universe in the Christ, i.e. to form it like the head of Christ. These are mighty and wonderful things, which bring deep and rich joys to the one to whom they are made accessible, but at the same time they bring many tensions and sufferings. Essential

graces and glories must always be accompanied by corresponding burdens and sufferings, so that they do not become a danger to us. We are happy if we have grasped this in the obedience of faith and adoringly hold on to it!

The next blessing in the midst of the heavenly ones we read in the following verse 11. There the **line of purpose for** the congregation of the body of Christ and the **line of counsel for the** whole remaining universe are placed side by side. It is so important that we once learn to understand that nothing happens without and against God's will in the whole worldwide universe, but that there is a **counsel of** His will, a **purpose of His** will and a **pleasure of** His will. Only in the distinction of these three spheres of God's will so many agonizing riddles of our own life, of the world of nations and of the whole creation are solved for us.

Also the **sealing** with the Holy Spirit is a delicious spiritual blessing, which is not understood by many, although the Scriptures speak so clearly of various sealings (confirmations or fortifications), which we may consider as an example and image of our being sealed. Let us read John 6:27; 1 Corinthians 9:2; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30 and 2 Timothy 2:19 thoroughly and prayerfully! There we become aware and alive whether we are sealed or not, by whom the sealing happens and in what the authenticity of the being sealed has an effect.

According to the 14th verse of this string of pearls of blessings, if we may say so, which are given to us "in the midst of the heavenly ones," the **Holy Spirit of promise dwelling in us is at the** same time a down payment or deposit of our future inheritance or lot, that is, of what we are ultimately and actually destined and set for. All these goods of salvation are "above, where Christ is". We want to think about them and occupy ourselves with them. For by this alone we are loosed from the world and the flesh and sin, and become partakers of the nature and character of God. No wonder that the enemy tries to keep us from this by ungodly or pious means!

Principalities and powers as spectators

What is further above concerning the church of the body of Christ? Eph. 3:10 testifies that the multicolored **wisdom of God** will be **made known to the principalities and powers in the** heavenly regions through the church. So, if we may say so in all humility, our disciples are above, to whom we present the manifold wisdom of God.

Of great importance in this context is the inconspicuous little word "**now**". Yesterday and today and tomorrow you and I are an **object of vision of those radiant powers of light**, the mere sight of which would dazzle and stun us. How little we are aware in our temptations and hardships, in our struggles of conscience and victories of faith, that not only our God and Father, not only our Lord and Head, but also **elemental powers and executing forces** are our witnesses and spectators.

Christ was made by God for **wisdom**, righteousness, **sanctification** and **redemption** (1 Cor. 1:30). The heavenly worlds are still at the first lesson: learning the **wisdom of God**. But since Christ will become "all in all," not only we, but also the other intelligent beings of the heavenly realm must pass through the various God-ordained stages. The church knows something of the righteousness of God, yes, it should and will itself become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, as is testified to us in 2 Cor. 5:21. Also in sanctification or being sanctified she stands according to God's plan and will, as 1 Thess. 4:3 shows. And for the fourth piece, redemption, it waits, as is written in Romans 8:23: "We groan in ourselves, expecting the adoption as sons, the redemption of the body." So we see that knowing Christ as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, we stand in the third piece and groaningly long for the fourth.

Quite different are the principalities and powers of the heavenly regions! They are still at lesson 1 and learn the wisdom of God at us. This living certainty, which should fill us much more, also belongs to the sensing and searching for what is above. Let us not forget that in the first place not our environment, but the invisible superworld takes part in us, the outwardly unknown or despised community, and learns the wisdom of God.

The bourgeoisie of the municipality

What else is in the heavens? Phil. 3:20 tells us: "**Our citizenship is in the heavens**, from whence we also expect the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, who will transform our lowly body into conformity with His glorious body, according to the effective power with which He is able to subdue even the universe.

Our politeuma, i.e. our political activity - Luther translates: our walk - is in the heavens. The area in which we believers have real influence is not down here on earth, but up there. Not as if we were fatherless fellows who do not want to fulfill our God-given duties! On the contrary! Someone who knows that one day he will have to give an account for everything he does will undoubtedly be much more faithful and

conscientious than someone who convinces himself that everything will be over after death!

But the renewal and final pacification of this long-suffering world we do not expect from men and earthly measures, but from our returning Lord and Head. And this Christ is now above in the heavens, enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty. **Our expectations are tied to Him alone.** He is the guarantor and executor of all God's promises and of every longing that any creature has ever cherished.

And because we know that we are one with our transfigured Lord, that we are as closely and essentially connected with Him as the head is with His members, that is why our citizenship is in the heavens, where the Christ is. In Him and through Him we have also come to the main position compared to every principality and every power (Col. 2, 10). This is a tremendous exaltation in Christ, of which the natural man knows nothing and whose greatness and dignity a child in faith hardly dares to grasp. And yet God's unmistakable certificate testifies to this divine truth!

Even if we here on earth are considered fools and fools for the sake of Christ, are regarded as sweepings and considered as sheep for slaughter, who in the deepest depths are no different from their Lord and Head, - in the plan and purpose of God we are already citizens of heaven of that upper world of light and there we take the place of honor in Christ. - -

The hopeful good stored up in the heavens

Col. 1, 5 speaks of the **good of hope that is** stored up for us in the heavens. Everything we need for our inheritance is stored up there. Everything we need in terms of dignity, power and authority is stored there. There, in the heavenly storerooms and arsenals, lies already - metaphorically speaking - the golden, shimmering, supernatural strength-giving armor, with and in which we will overcome even the last enemy.

The hope of our profession fills us with deep and holy joy, because the necessary blessings and graces, in the strength of which we will fulfill our future judgment and rescue tasks, are already ready and do not have to be laboriously earned and acquired by us. The goods of hope that are stored for us in the heavens fill our hearts with joy and make us persevere in faith in the struggle against flesh and blood, against the dark forces of the underworld, against the envy and hatred of evil men and false brothers.

2 Tim 4:8 refers to one of these high hopes. There Paul writes: "Henceforth there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me to reward me in that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that love His appearing." **Crown assurance** is far more than **salvation assurance**. Salvation is possessed by all who believe. The crown or the crown of victory, however, is by no means given to all indiscriminately. Salvation is given by the Lord in His capacity as a

gracious Beneficent. The crown, however, He gives according to our scriptural word as a "righteous judge". This is something that must be taken into account!

What is the standard by which the crown is awarded? **Not performance, but love is the decisive factor!** "All who love His appearing (or coming again)" shall receive the victory wreath. Even James, the man of the law, who runs entirely on the line of doing, says in his beatitude in the 12th verse of the first chapter of his letter that the Lord has promised the crown of life to those who love Him. To love, however, belongs neither wisdom nor power, not goods nor gifts, but a heart completely devoted to his God. And this can be attained even by the poorest and weakest.

Above is our hope; above are crowns ready for those who love the returning Lord. Are we looking for what is above? Do we seek what is stored for us in the heavens? Or do we chase after the petty things of appearance and shadow, which are here below on the dark, curse-laden earth, and yet are never able to satisfy and fill our love-loving hearts? - -

Truth and Love in the Community [M. Mössinger].

4 Love is longsuffering and kind, love does not envy, love does not boast, it does not puff itself up; 5 it is not indecent, it does not seek its own, it does not allow itself to be embittered, it does not impute evil; 6 it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but it rejoices in the truth; 7 it endures all things, it believes all things, it hopes all things, it endures all things.

1 Cor. 13, 6

6 in chastity, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in unfeigned love;

2 Cor. 6, 6

14 That we should no longer be babes, tossed to and fro, and driven about with every wind of doctrine by the deceitful play of men, by the craftiness with which they deceive; 15 but, being truly in love, grow up in all things unto him who is the head, the Christ.

Eph. 4, 15

Author: Pastor Manfred Mössinger, based on his article of the same name in GuH

(After a word service on the Langensteinbacherhöhe)

A brief introduction will begin by pointing out how we often get the wrong idea about Christ and His church and about the communion of saints.

Ideal conceptions

Man is by nature in search of the lost paradise. He takes certain ideals - shaped by origin, environment and upbringing - into his heart and strives and chases after them. He strives for the ideal profession, the ideal husband or wife, and wants to raise ideal children. He strives for the ideal living conditions, the ideal party, the ideal standard of living, the ideal social order, the ideal retirement place, and perhaps even the ideal death - quickly and painlessly. - Even in the pious realm, some people, despite being born again, approach a church, community or house group with very specific ideal ideas. The reason for this is often the flesh - it did not come to an inner rupture completed to the last depths. One looks for the ideal fellowship of the saints and is disappointed when these dreams are not fulfilled.

I must say at this point that neither the Lord nor the Bible provides us with such ideals. On the contrary, in a true conversion, the Lord knocks our ideals out of our hands. The word "ideal" (pattern of perfection, wishful image) is related to "idol" (idol, idolatrous image, idolatry)! The Lord takes from us our ideals and idols formed in our favor and shaped by hereditary matter, environment, flesh and sin and puts before us a completely different image. According to Romans 8, this is the image of the Son of God into which we are being molded. He puts an end to our ideals and idols by intervening

in all areas of our life and existence in a shaping and forming way. He must also take away our pious ideals and idols.

Ideal communities and communities do not exist

If someone would ask where God has His ideal saints and churches and communities, the answer would have to be: they do not exist! There are no "dear brothers" even according to the New Testament - the basic text knows only "beloved brothers". When we realize this, we no longer begin our services with "dear brothers, dear sisters", but perhaps say: "beloved brothers (beloved sisters) in the Lord". This is much more sober, this is biblical-new Testament.

Those who pursue ideals fall into rapture and disappointment

Whoever nevertheless pursues ideals, strives for them and chases after them, undoubtedly gets into rapture and disappointment even in the pious realm. For me, this is a very decisive characteristic in the question of what is fanaticism: If someone seeks to achieve an ideal by all means, also with new types and structures of community, then he gets into fanaticism, because he accentuates the healthy, sober, clear image of Christ wrongly, shifts, turns around and projects his own ideals and idols into the Christ "Christ" in the sense of "Christ community", head and members). Then unbelief is right with its reproach: You Christians create your God in your own image! Then we are doing image service - a hidden, secret, dangerous image service, by projecting our own pious ideals into the image of Christ and no longer know what He really looks like.

There are undoubtedly communities that are closer to the New Testament than others. There are circles and communities that are spiritual or even feminine; others are masculine; they are governed by the head; still others are legal.

Occasionally people come and say, "At last we have found what we were looking for!" This can then cause a lot of distress. For example, when Paul writes to Timothy, "Drink a little wine for the sake of your sick stomach," you may get the answer from certain pious people: He did not believe enough, otherwise Paul would have healed him! - But there is also a spiritual line among intellectuals. In some circles, people only speak in a highly intellectual way in order to satisfy the high striving for intelligence. Also this can be soulful and rapturous. - I do not want to be misunderstood here. I am not concerned with judging or condemning, It is about seeing the healthy center of the word of Jesus Christ. For this we need weapons on the right and "weapons on the left.

Ideals are illusions in this fallen world in which we live, even in the pious realm. The most blessed hours - even if they hurt us so much - are the hours when the Lord disappoints us, destroys the exchanges of our carnal being, frees us from illusions and leads us into the clarity of the New Testament vision. Think back once in your own life! Where has the Lord tied you in knots, really rooted you in Him? - Exactly there,

where once again an ideal image was broken and the Lord suddenly stood there - Himself!

Love and truth

A community of saints is recognized primarily by the two spiritual fruits of love and "truth. Love and truth hardly come together in the human realm; that is why the whole world is full of lies. Because the devil is a "father of lies" (John 8:44) and cannot stand the truth, the world is also full of lies. There are economic lies, politeness lies, convention lies, political lies - even church political lies. Paul says: Because people have not accepted the love of truth, God sends them powerful errors (2 Thess. 2, 10. 11). This means judgment!

Love and truth do not come together in this world. However, I would like to talk about believers now. It is often difficult for us, too, to hold on to the truth in love. We get out of balance to the right or to the left. Often there is a lack of truth. We are very sweet and kind to each other and don't say anything to each other that could cause trouble. We wear masks, we smear and flatter, but we no longer tell each other the truth. - Brothers, if we can no longer tell each other the coarsest truths without running away, then our faith is not worth much. Let us not then speak of the communion of saints! We must be able to say things to each other that make us wind and sore. If we cannot bear this, there is no communion of saints, but only a spiritual and carnal kind of communion. - But love must not be lacking in this. Often we tell each other the truth without love, and then we destroy, we bruise, and we chop up, and we fix the alter. We humiliate him, embarrass him, expose him. But only One may expose: the One who Himself was merely hanging on the stake of shame. When He exposes, He simultaneously clothes us with His righteousness.

Love without truth is lie; truth without love is brutality, is killing law. The not-truth is a difficult chapter, from which a lot of misery comes, also in Christian circles: after-talking, talking behind the scenes and yet being friendly; a lot of smoldering, latent things arise, which stand in the room and are never spoken. And in order not to attract attention, one must go to the Lord's Supper together, have prayer fellowship together! You know, brothers, what trials we are often put to. And - hand on heart! - Haven't we all fallen down and failed in these situations? Have we at one time or another curtsied, or let our old man run riot and really told someone off from above and finished him off? - We know this, and it is a great distress to us.

Unfeigned love

Paul speaks of unadulterated, uncolored, unfeigned love. I would like to summarize what he means by this in three expressions: unadulterated clarity, undisguised unambiguity and unreserved wholeness.

The opposite would be the feigned, the apparent, the deceptive, the calculating, even the tendentious love.

Love and truth! It is not about a truth, which I want to say to the change. Decisive is never what I think about the change, but what the Lord thinks. Only if I tell the change what the Lord has told me, then I tell him the truth of God. This last reality, in which I place myself with the change before God, is authoritative. Here every human complaisance falls, here it is also not about human love or friendship, but only the love (agapē) of God is valid.

Truth and love have been united in unique fullness only by the Lord. John 1:17 says: "The law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Our Lord is an example and model of love, truth and fellowship for us in every case.

Here are some examples from the earthly life of our Lord Jesus:

Jesus is on the sea and sleeps in the boat. The disciples get into distress at sea and don't know what to do. They wake Him up with the reproach: "Do you ask nothing about it, that we perish here and now die a wet death?" Jesus asks, "Where is your faith?"-this was a hard truth. But then love acts: he stands up and puts a stop to the storm.

Or a much more difficult test: One day Jesus tells His disciples that they are now going up to Jerusalem and that He will be handed over there and die. Peter takes Jesus aside and tells Him privately, "You must not do that - just don't let it happen to you!" Jesus replies, "Get behind me, Satan!" That was harsh! Imagine that for a moment! - And where was the love? It becomes visible where the Lord later says to him, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not cease!"

We also know the story of John 4, where the sinner stands before Jesus. She can talk theologically wonderfully. She wants to start a discussion about how and where to pray. But Jesus sees through this woman's mask and says, "Get your husband!" At that moment, heaven and hell hold their breath. If she is not honest now, Jesus passes. There is another gasp, and then Jesus says, "Five husbands you have had, and the one you have now is not your husband." That was the whole truth. Now everything is revealed. But then Jesus in His love shows her who He is. "It is I who am talking to you!" And the woman knows: Here is the One who has come to take away sin and bring the fullness of the Spirit into this world. She is saved!

On the cross of Jesus Christ, truth and love were revealed

At the stake of shame, at the cross of Jesus Christ, truth and love were totally revealed. Here, the disciples' weakness and poverty, their darkness and lack of understanding, were shockingly revealed. At this stake, the whole truth about man was revealed. As naked and bare as Jesus hung on the cross (He really wore nothing, the chaste covering was added by the painters), so naked and bare was the sin of the world revealed. - And yet, at the same time, this was the hour of the most glorious revelation of God's love. "He cast on Him the sin of us all" - us to salvation! Jesus' suffering and death are at the same time the innermost model for the community of

brothers. Where the word of the crucified, of the desecrated Christ is proclaimed and lived, there it goes into dying, and there community comes into being. In this community it is possible to unhook it, because truth is revealed. Here at the stake of shame, the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of man are brought together. All the sin of mankind is swallowed up here in the victory of Christ.

Where can we be true with each other and stand in love? Only in this place, where the power of the Crucified is raised up among us. Where one no longer has to pretend to change. Why do I no longer have to? Because the righteousness acquired through Jesus is so wonderful and so glorious that we no longer need to wear the mask of a particularly good life before one another. We no longer have to justify ourselves. We no longer have to prove to the one who is changing that we are even a little better than him, that we are right. We are righteous in Him. On this ground, fellowship begins. Here is freedom for truth and freedom for love.

Prophet and priest

It was once said to Moses, "God will raise up a prophet like you."

This has come in Jesus Christ. But it is also written that Christ is a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. So prophet and priest are united in Jesus.

This is exactly what must also come together in our practical church life: Prophetic witness and priestly ministry.

The prophet tells the truth unvarnished, he announces the reality of God - it was already like that in the Old Testament. The priest puts himself under the sin of change. Who only wants to do priestly service and says: "You just have to wear that, you just have to be quiet", runs the risk of betraying the truth of Jesus Christ. But he who does only prophetic service, denouncing sins, leaves behind a battlefield of wounded, if he does not at the same time proclaim the healing brought by the one who was both priest and prophet at the stake of shame, revealing and carrying, loving, healing and restoring.

The prophet reveals the reality, the priest sacrifices himself and carries it. This is what we need so much today: People who raise holy hands, who "stand before the Lord", who step into the crack.

Finally, a few practical, pastoral things:

1. There **is a time for talking and silence, and there** is also a time for telling the truth. I do not want to be misunderstood in the way that one always has to tell the truth to everyone's face immediately. Whether I have to pour vinegar into a wound immediately so that it burns properly, or whether I have to give the comforting oil of the Holy Spirit - we can only decide that properly in a final death and life communion with Jesus Christ. Some things need time to mature. Many things require patience. Only when an ulcer is ripe, one may cut. The time

must be ripe. "When the time was fulfilled..."! - Jesus himself once told the disciples: "You cannot bear it yet" (Joh. 16, 12). This is also part of the theme: truth and love. At the beginning of the conference, Dr. Maier-Gerber pointed us to Ephesians 2:9-10: that we are created by God for good works, which He prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Sometimes we really have to wait until the Lord gives the open door, the hour and possibility to speak the word of truth prophetically and also to step into the crack as a priest.

2. We come back to the beginning: **Can we bear the truth?** Do we live in the community in such a way that we can be told the truth? Now think about the circle or house group in which you are standing and ask yourself: Can something be said to me? Can they pull the mask off my face? Can I be asked, "Brother, how is your marriage? How is it with your child rearing, with your business? Do we immediately take a defensive position and say: "That's none of your business!" - Our secret sins have an effect in the church. They may remain hidden from people for a long time, but basically they enter our circle or congregation as a bond and judgment. There is no fellowship of the saints without us telling each other the truth and thus hurting each other in the flesh, and without us being priests to each other to the last. If we cannot tell each other the coarsest truths and we endure that, we do not yet have the communion of saints; and if we cannot yet stand up for each other as priests to the point of dying, we do not yet have it either. If we do not cover up as priests what the Lord has previously uncovered, and we would rather bite off our tongues than say anything bad about the one we are changing, we do not have the communion of saints.

At the stake of shame of Jesus Christ we are emptied, unveiled, but also clothed with the righteousness of God. Only when we are honest with one another under the stake of shame of the Son of God does the communion of saints in truth and love come into being.

Two Salvation Bodies - Two Goals (Rom. 11, 32) [G. Herbst].

25 For I would not, my brethren, that this mystery should be unknown unto you, lest ye should think yourselves wise: Israel is partly hardened until the full number of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "Out of Zion will come the Redeemer, and will turn away ungodliness from Jacob, 27 and this is my covenant with them, when I will take away their sins." 28 With regard to the gospel, indeed, they are enemies for your sake, but with regard to election, beloved for the sake of the fathers. 29 For God's gifts of grace and calling cannot grieve him. 30 For just as you also once did not believe God, but now have received mercy because of their unbelief, 31 so now they also have not believed because of the mercy shown to you, so that they also may receive mercy. 32 For God hath shut up all together in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all. 33 O what depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and how inscrutable his ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? 35 Or who hath given him aught before, that it might be recompensed unto him? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Romans 11, 32

Author: Gerhard Herbst, Berlin - based on his article of the same name in GuH

If we want to bring God's plan of salvation with mankind to a short form and express it with a single sentence, we find this short form in Rom. 11, 32: "For God has shut up all together in unbelief, that He might pardon all." In this one sentence, God's intention with mankind is expressed from the foundation of the world to the conclusion of the eons.

We learn three basic things from this sentence:

1. It is God who has locked all people into unbelief, and it is God alone who pardons them.
2. There is not a single person exempt from unbelief and not a single person exempt from pardon.
3. God's justice requires that if He includes them all in unbelief, He is also responsible for pardoning them all.

However, this sentence still leaves open the question of when and how this is to happen. Here 1 Cor. 15, 21-24 gives us an answer, also in a short version:

"For since death came through a man, so also through a man came the resurrection of the dead. For as in the Adam all die, even so in the Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: the firstfruits Christ, then those who are of the Christ at His coming, then the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God and Father..."

From this sentence, again, we learn three essential things:

1. God saves all people.
2. God does not save all people at once, but in certain orders one after another.
3. God first saves a selection or firstfruits, the masses follow later. From the expulsion of Adam from the Garden of Eden, God lets mankind go its own way for 2000 years, culminating in the Tower of Babel. The first eleven chapters of the Bible deal with this time. Then God singles out one man, Abram, whom He chooses to make history with him and his descendants, while God lets the rest of mankind continue to go their own ways. From chapter 12 on, Scripture deals only with the elect.

Gen 12:1: "And Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land which I will shew thee. And I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee; and I will make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and he that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed."

With this Abram, God makes His first covenant. Of this we read Gen. 15, 18: "On that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your seed I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.'" (The "river of Egypt" is also called "brook of Egypt" in the two parallel passages Jos. 15, 4 and Ezk. 47, 19. This stream flows into the Mediterranean Sea at El Arish, a city of highest political relevance).

Details about God's covenant with Abram can be found in Gen. 17. verse 4: "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall become the father of a multitude of nations. Henceforth thy name shall be called Abraham" (שֵׁר = father of a multitude). Verse 7: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you, after their generations, for an aeonian covenant. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land of thy strangerhood, all the land of Canaan, for an eonian possession; and I will be their God." Verse 10: "This is My covenant which you shall keep: Let every male among you be circumcised."

Verse 19: "Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac, and I will establish My covenant with him for an eonian covenant."

Verse 20: "And for Ishmael's sake I have heard you: Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him very, very much. Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac."

The Arabs are not under the curse at all. God blesses them greatly, makes them very numerous, but the land of Canaan He gives to Israel, and His covenant He makes with Israel.

For 2000 years God makes history with this people. Israel is the first salvation body. (This is not a biblical expression, but it cannot be described any better).

For 2000 years Israel waits for their Messiah, but when He appears they reject Him: "We do not want this one to rule over us! Let His blood be upon us and upon our children! (Matth. 27,25).

God sets them aside on it. The prophet Isaiah had already predicted this. Isaiah 6:10 we read, "Make the heart of this people fat, make their ears heavy, and hide their eyes, that they may not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their heart, nor repent and be healed. And I said, How long, Lord? And He said, Until the cities be desolate, without inhabitant." Jesus repeats this announcement of judgment in Matth. 23, 37. 38: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to her. How often have I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you have not wanted! Behold, your house is left desolate for you." This became a reality in the year 70 and has not changed until today. After 2000 years of history with Israel, God sets this people aside and chooses a new salvation body, the ecclesia, the called-out church, the body of Christ.

Eph. 1:22, 23: "God has given Him (the Christ) as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the consummation of Him who fills all in all."

For the nations Christ is the judge, for Israel He is the king, for the church He is the head. There is an essential difference whether a man falls down as a subject before the throne of the king, or whether he, organically connected with his head, sits on the throne as a ruler. Therefore, it is foolish to say that Israel and the church are the same, there is no difference.

However, there is a significant link between the two healing bodies. Of it we read in Rom. 11, 11: "Through their fall salvation has come to the nations." If Israel had not fallen, there would still be no hope for us, the nations, in this age.

So now the time of the church from the nations also lasts almost 2000 years. Surely it is no coincidence, but wisely planned by God, that the time from Adam to the election of Abraham lasted 2000 years (= 2 days of God, Ps. 90, 4), the time of Israel 2000 years and the time of the church also now already almost 2000 years. That are 6 God days, which are followed by the 7th day, according to the 7 creation days the day of rest, the thousand year kingdom of rest for His people.

Have the nations achieved their goal in these 6000 years? No!

Has Israel achieved its goal in its 2000 years? No!

Has the church achieved its goal in the expiring 2000 years? No!

The achievement of the goal is still pending for all. But will everyone reach the goal at once, and do they all have the same goal? Both questions must be answered with no.

But now we recognize a wonderful divine principle: The first shall be last and the last shall be first. This is not a human saying, but this is what the Lord says in Luk 13, 30: "There are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last." This contradicts

our human logic. We say: he who comes first, grinds first. With God it is different. The last will be the first to reach the goal. Why God does it this way, we do not know. He is sovereign. This divine principle of reversal is not only found here. The pyramid-like structure of the entire Holy Scriptures as well as the individual books also corresponds to it. The first thought in the Epistle to the Romans, for example, corresponds to the last, the second to the penultimate, and so on, until both meet at the top of the pyramid. The climax of the Letter to the Romans is formed by verses 38 and 39 of the 8th chapter.

The nations ran for 2000 years before God chose Israel as the carrier of salvation. Israel ran 2000 years before God began His work with the church. Her 2000 years are nearing completion.

The next event we have to expect is the rapture of the church. It will be the first to reach its goal: the revelation before the judgment stage and the presentation before the Father. Only when this has happened will Israel be saved. It says Rom. 11:25: "Israel is hardened in part until the fullness of the nations shall have come in, and so all Israel will be saved." When God will have poured out His Spirit on His people Israel and they will have experienced their rebirth in one day, then they will go as missionaries into all the world and carry out the mission command of Jesus from Matth. 28, 19: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. Then all nations will be saved. Thus first will be last and last first.

Why do we speak of two salvation bodies when, according to divine order, there are three groups of people?

Well: there are only two salvation bearers, blessing bearers: the church and Israel. They are chosen by God to bring the good news to the nations. The nations are not blessing bearers, but blessing recipients.

What goals has God set for the two bodies of salvation, "Israel" and the "Body of Christ"? Do they both have the same goal, as some claim, or do the promises and goals differ from one another? To anticipate in one sentence: the goals of the two bodies of salvation diverge from each other by a mile, in the truest sense of the word.

First, let us look at what God promised His people Israel that they have not yet obtained:

The goal of Israel

1. Deut. 28:2-13: "All these blessings will come upon you if you obey the voice of Jehovah your God. Blessed will you be in the city and in the field. Blessed will be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land and the fruit of your cattle. Blessed will be your basket and your baking trough. - Jehovah will give up your enemies who rise up against you, beaten before you. In one way shall they go out against thee, and in seven ways shall they flee before thee. Jehovah will

bless thee in thy storehouses, and in all the business of thine hand. Jehovah will confirm you as a holy nation to himself, and all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of Jehovah. And Jehovah will give you abundance of the fruit of your body, of your cattle, and of your land. And He will make you a head and not a tail, and you will only go up and up and not down, if you obey the commandments of Jehovah your God." The people of Israel are promised blessings for the field, the livestock, the fruit of the body, the work, and protection from the enemies. They are to become the first people of the earth.

2. Joel 2:18-19: "Then Jehovah is zealous for His land, and He has compassion on His people. And He says to His people, Behold, I send you the grain and the must and the oil, that you may be filled with them. And I will make you no more a mockery among the nations." Verse 28: "And afterward it shall come to pass that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."
Chap. 3:1: "For, behold, in those days and at that time, when I shall turn the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, then will I gather all nations together, and bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat. And there I will judge with them My people and My inheritance Israel, which they have scattered among the nations, and My land they have divided." Again, blessings are promised for grain, must and oil. After the outpouring of the Spirit, the sons of Israel will prophesy, old men will have dreams, young men will see visions.
3. Ezek. 37:21-28: "Behold, I will take the children of Israel out of the nations whither they have gone, and I will gather them from round about, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them a nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel... And My servant David will be king over them.

And they will dwell in the land,

which I have given to Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers dwelt. And they and their children and their children's children shall dwell therein for the eon. And I will make a covenant of peace" (the second) "with them, an everlasting covenant it will be with them. And I will establish them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst. And the nations will know that I am Jehovah who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary will be in their midst."

David will be king over Israel, God will make a second covenant with His people, a covenant of peace. The temple will be in their midst. Before these blessings come upon the people of Israel, the Lord will repay their iniquity twofold. Jer. 16:16-18: "Behold, I will send to many fishers to fish for them, and afterward I will send to many hunters to hunt for them. For My eyes are upon all their ways. And before that I will repay their iniquity and their sin twofold." By this scriptural statement the great

difference between the two bodies of salvation can be seen in a very special way: Is there any similar announcement for the members of the body of Christ that God will repay their unrighteousness and sin twofold? We are washed clean by His blood. He took our unrighteousness upon Himself on Calvary, and He tore the certificate of guilt!

Now let us consider three more New Testament promises of Israel's goal:

Luk 22, 28: "But it is you who have persevered with Me in My temptations, and I decree for you, as My Father decreed for Me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Here, the Lord decrees a kingdom to His disciples. This undoubtedly refers to the kingdom of heaven, which the Lord explains to His disciples, especially in the Gospel of Matthew, by means of numerous parables. The Kingdom of Heaven is not called so because it is located in heaven, but because it will be established on this earth from heaven by the returning Christ. It is the so-called 1000-year kingdom, the millennium. (A comprehensive biblical investigation of this so important, in Christian circles however widely unknown concept contains the book of Heinz Schumacher "Das tausend-jährige Königreich Christi auf Erden" published by Paulus-Verlag).

In this kingdom the 12 disciples of Jesus shall sit on 12 thrones and judge the 12 tribes of Israel. Nowhere can the church from the nations be placed in this promise. And yet there are attempts of this kind. From a second New Testament target promise for Israel we see that God saves also on the ground of Israel first a selection, which is then sent out to proclaim the good news to the whole people. Rev. 7:2-4: "And the angel which had the seal of the living God cried with a loud voice unto the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of those sealed: 144,000 sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel 12,000." 144,000 firstfruits from Israel will be sealed so that they will not be harmed by the judgments of the great tribulation period. They will experience the visible return of Christ in the land of Israel.

There is a third promise for Israel in the New Testament, namely for those who died in the course of the millennia before the return of Christ: the first resurrection. This is not to be confused with the resurrection from the dead for the church (1. Thess. 4, 13-17), which will be before that.

Rev. 20:5-6: "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1000 years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will reign with Him 1000 years."

This was only a small selection from many written testimonies.

I summarize the statements about the goal of Israel in keywords: Twofold retribution of iniquity and sin, gathering of scattered Israel from all nations by fishermen and

hunters, salvation of a selection of 144,000, visible return of Christ on the Mount of Olives, establishment of the 1,000-year reign of Christ in Jerusalem, resurrection of the dead from Israel, judgment on the nations because of the treatment of Israel, Israel the first nation of the earth, 12 apostles on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. Blessings for fields, livestock, bodily fruit, protection from enemies, increase in age, peace and safety, restraint of sin, missionary work for whole nations, prophecies, dreams, visions and the temple in Jerusalem: all together wonderful earthly promises for Israel!

Now someone might think: Oh, I'd like to be there too! This wish may be understandable. But let us first hear what the goal of the church, the body of Christ, is according to the Scriptures. I openly confess that, in spite of everything, I do not want to exchange.

Babylon - its resurrection and its fall (Is. 51, 13) [A. Heller].

13 You who dwell by many waters and have many treasures, your end has come, the measure of your spoil !

Jeremiah 51:13

Author: Adolf Heller, after his article of the same name in GuH

The two focal points around which the ellipse of earthly events will revolve in the near end time will be Jerusalem and Babylon. Both are still in ruins, the former to a lesser extent, the latter almost completely. Who knows, however, in what unimaginably near future both cities will rise again in power! Let us take a look into Babylon's past and, in obedience to faith, take to heart what God's holy documents tell us about her future.

For the first time we find the name Babel (Greek Babylon) in Genesis 10:10. Bab-ili means gate of God, but also means confusion. Its deity, Merodach or Marduk, was considered the world creator and world ruler. The temple Esagil dedicated to him was famous in the whole cultural world of that time, and the temple tower Etemenanki belonging to it, the tower God's word tells about in Genesis 11, was a mighty marvel. Its superstructure was made of baked bricks with a bright blue glaze. When Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt this destroyed giant structure, he wrote, "To set Etemenanki's top on, that it might vie with the heavens, I laid hands on it." The director of the excavations made there by the German Oriental Society says of this most formidable of all structures, "The colossal massif of the tower amid the proud priestly palaces, the vast storehouses, the innumerable lodges for strangers-white walls, bronze gates, looming fortress walls all around with towering portals and a forest of a thousand towers-it must have been an overwhelming sight of grandeur, power and abundance!" (According to the Calwer Bibellexikon.)

These excavations confirm what Herodotus already reported about the city of Babel and the magnificent buildings of Nebuchadnezzar. The city perimeter was at least 18 km. The exposed remains of the masonry are 17-22 m thick and allow us to better understand the final sentence of Jer. 51:44, which reads, "Babylon's walls have also fallen!" The burned out pools or lakes that Jer. 51, 32 speaks of had been artificially created all around to protect the city.

The history of the world tells us that the city, according to God's threats, completely disintegrated over time. Let us only think of Is. 13, 19: "Babel, the adornment of kingdoms, the pride of the arrogance of the Chaldeans, will be like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah by God," Or let us let the figuratively so haunting message of Is. 21, 9 affect us: "Behold! There came a train of men, horsemen by couples...And he lifted up and said, Fallen, fallen is Babylon, and all the carved images of its idols it has dashed to the ground!"

Not only in the construction of the giant tower, but also in their reconstruction and decoration, Babel was a symbol that appealed to pride. Let us just read Dan. 4, 29b. 30: "Nebuchadnezzar walked about on the royal palace at Babylon and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for a royal dwelling by the strength of my power and in honor of my glory?"

Gradually, the last remnants of this splendor faded away, and already more than 100 years before Christ, agriculture was practiced in most of the former city space; later, where "The Adornment of the Whole Earth" lay, was only overgrown hunting ground, and today only ruined hills indicate the place where the once most famous city in the world lay.

The director of the German excavations of Babylon closes the description of the field of ruins of former glory with the words from Jer. 50, 39: "Desert beasts and wild dogs shall dwell in it, and ostriches shall live in it; and it shall not be inhabited in the eon, nor be a settlement from generation to generation." This has been literally fulfilled to this day. Only at the end of this aeon, this age of salvation, after a certain number of generations (how many, we do not know) Babylon will rise again. Until then, however, it will remain barren and desolate. To give us an idea of Babylon's former position of power, it is only necessary to point out that Babylonia's culture, legal system and literature spread over the whole northern Orient, i.e. the cultural world of that time, and that the Babylonian language was the only leading world language for a long time.

This Babylon will rise again in the near end times. Just as Jerusalem, despite all its faults and sins, was and is the holy city of God and will soon be in its full glory, so will Babylon become what God's Word says so clearly and unequivocally about it: "Behold, I will come upon thee, saith the Lord, thou mountain of destruction, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and will roll thee down from the rock, and will make thee a burnt mountain" (Jer. 51:25). Let us also read Rev. 18:23b. 24: "Your merchants were the great men of the earth; for by your sorcery all nations were deceived. And in her (i.e., in Babylon) was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all them that were slain upon the earth."

We begin to understand many divine truths only in the light of their opposite. Thus it becomes clear to us what Babylon symbolizes in its deepest essence in the eyes of God, when he calls it the "mountain of destruction", which is opposed by the "holy mountain Zion". As Jerusalem is a symbol of God's reign, so Babylon is an image of satanic power and hostility to God. To gain a picture of Babylon's splendor, sin and end, let us contrast a series of parallels from the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah on the one hand and Revelation on the other. Since the Revelation is a distinctly eschatological book, i.e. describing the end time, thus at least from the 4th chapter on future things are reported, we will be allowed to recognize that also the time-historical representations of the prophets of the OT deeply aim at the end time. According to the law of complexio, i.e. the synopsis of parallel, even if temporally and often spatially

separated events, we see in the prophets past, present and future events, so to speak, superimposed, so that history and prophecy merge into one, so to speak. When juxtaposing prophetic testimonies about Babylon, as we find them both in the prophets and in the New Testament book of Revelation, this becomes quite clear and evident to us.

Jer. 51, 13 = Rev. 17, 1.

Babylon oppressed and enslaved Israel, God's treasure people, and was therefore destroyed by the Medes. Let us read the whole of chapter 51 of the prophet Jeremiah to gain a picture of the situation and insight into God's holy thoughts and ways! The 13th verse reads, "You who dwell by many waters, rich in treasures, your end has come, the measure of your spoil." Let us compare with this Rev. 17:1: "Come hither, and I will show thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth by many waters!" There should hardly be a difference of opinion among the experts of the prophetic word about the fact that the seven bowls of wrath, which are mentioned here in the context, are still future., From Rev. 16, 17-19, 5 we see that it is about Babylon, the headquarters of Satan, in contrast to Jerusalem, the city of God.

In Jer. 51, 13 God says a fourfold of Babylon:

1. Babylon dwells "by many waters."
2. it is "rich in treasures";
3. "the measure of his robbery" is full;
4. his "end has come".

Exactly the same testimonies we find in Rev. 17, Let us read to point 1 the 15th verse: "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Babylon will one day have access to all the oceans of the world and will make canals and rivers subservient to its commerce. In the deepest sense, this word, prophetically speaking, is about the sea of nations that will be dominated by the world capital of the end times.

The woman, i.e. the mass apostate, lawless Israel, which neither knows nor believes the promises given to it, is seen by the seer "clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stones and pearls". Israel will become rich very quickly and will have the treasures of the earth in their hands, or at least they will rule and administer them. For what will be fulfilled, promised many times, once on the line of blessing, has its foreshadowing in the line of curse of the presence

But "the measure of his robbery" will become full. The rulers of the end times will hate the harlot (Rev. 17, 16 a)-An anti-Semitism will break through as it has never been. The envy of the dispossessed, organized masses will invade and plunder rich Palestine and Mesopotamia. And since the headquarters of the unfaithful people of Israel will be Babylon, the hatred of the nations will be directed there. Whether the

beast is "the destroyer from the north" or is led by him, whether the harlot is decidedly western, where the „ten horns" belong, whether it is, world-politically seen, about the clash of two extreme world views, - we do not want to talk about that in our context, especially since God does not give clear details about these things either. We only want to state that Babylon will become rich through robbery, but its measure will be full and overflow one day (cf. Jer. 29:10!).

This brings us to our fourth point: its end will come unawares. The ten horns and the beast, the rulers of the world states of the end times, will make the harlot desolate and naked and will eat her flesh and burn her with fire (Rev. 17:16b). Of this horrible destruction Jer. 50, 41-46 reports; "Behold, a people is coming from the north, and a great nation and many kings are rising from the uttermost part of the earth. They are cruel and without mercy...armed against you, daughter of Babylon...Therefore hear the counsel of the Lord which he has decreed against Babylon...At the cry, Babylon is conquered, the earth trembles, and a shout is heard among the nations."

In addition to this, we read in Jer. 6:22-26: "Thus says the Lord, behold, a people is coming from the land of the north, and a great nation is rising from the uttermost part of the earth - We have heard the tidings of him, our hands have gone limp, fear has seized us, like the pangs of childbearing...Terror all around!...For suddenly the destroyer will come upon us."

Jer. 51, 7 = Rev. 17, 4.

Our Jeremiah word says: "Babylon was a golden cup in the hand of the Lord, which intoxicated the whole earth; of her wine the nations drank, therefore the nations were enraged," This completely coincides with Rev. 17:4-6, where we read: "The woman...had a golden cup in her hand, full of abomination and filthiness of her fornication, and on her forehead a name written: Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I marveled when I saw her, with great wonder."

Who this woman is, the last verse of our chapter tells us again clearly: "The woman whom you saw is the great city, which has the kingship over the kings of the earth. This great city, from which the earth will be ruled in the end times, is neither Rome nor Moscow, neither Berlin nor Paris, neither New-York nor London, but Babylon. The fact that the other world cities and the economic systems and religious systems of this earth have a Babylonian character does not exclude but includes the adherence to the literal understanding of the word Babylon. For every word of God is sevenfold purified (Ps. 12, 6), has besides historical, literal, also a personal meaning, opens a prophetic vision and has a symbolic meaning. Whoever is not able to see this, the Bible will remain a contradictory, boring book, which he only reaches for dutifully, but of whose wonders and glories he sees and enjoys only little.

The whole earth is intoxicated by the abominations of the impurity of the fornication of this godless woman, who is drunk with the blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus. Her intoxication is not only a bloody-demonic-sadistic one, but without a doubt has religious tinge. Certainly many of those possessed by the spirit of this woman will believe they are doing God and their church a service by participating in the persecution and destruction of believers. On a small scale this has always happened, and it happens in a thousandfold variations also today, that one thinks to serve God in all seriousness when one persecutes and tries to silence the true children of God and servants of Christ Jesus. It is said that during the burning of the reformer Hus, an old mother dragged a bundle of brushwood to the stake in order to help, out of love for her Savior, that this evil enemy of God and the Holy Church be eliminated. Did she not want the best at the bottom of her heart? Thus, without a doubt, especially in the end times, when the church of the body of Christ and the spirit of God are taken away from the earth, many people will be unconscious co-workers and henchmen of Satan out of a natural religiosity, which is always a soul-spiritual mixture without spiritual content. Among them will probably also be the "many" of whom the Lord says in Matth. 7, 22. 23 in such a shockingly serious way: "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord! have we not prophesied by your name, and by your name cast out demons, and by your name done many miraculous works?' And then I will confess to them: I never knew you; depart from me, evildoers!" With a contemptuous gesture of the hand and the cheap remark that this does not concern us but the Jews, this word is not dismissed; for everything that is written is also written for our personal admonition, and woe to us if, while living in the flesh, we can no longer humble ourselves and want to be told! How much religious knowledge and achievement will one day prove to be chaff, which will burn in the fire of judgment!

Many things, even before Babylon has risen again, bear Babylonian characteristics, even if they look so pious and noble on the outside. Of course, only those who are partakers of the solid food of divine truths of purpose and fullness are able to distinguish between good and evil, the genuine and the imitation. That is why the enemy has such a great interest in keeping the believers in immaturity by allowing only the basics of faith, "the milk of the word of righteousness" or "the word of the beginning of Christ" to be valid and by suspecting and reviling any continuation into the truths of perfection. Let us carefully read Hebr. 3, 12-6, 3 and 1 Cor.

3, 1—3!

Isa. 47, 5. 7 = Rev. 13, 7.

The arrogance that once blinded the inhabitants of Babylon will be repeated in the end times. Then the threat of Isa 47, 5. 7 will apply to an even greater extent: "Sit dumb and go into darkness, daughter of the Chaldeans (Babylon), for you shall no longer be called mistress of the kingdoms. Thou saidst, For ever will I be mistress! so that thou didst not take this to heart, didst not consider the end of it." The history of

the world shows the astonishing fact that the nations learn nothing from their defeats and breakages on the one hand, and from the mistakes and follies of their arrogance on the other. This will also become evident in the Israel of the end times.

Babel, "the mistress of kingdoms", will get into such a frenzy of power that she will no longer think about the consequences and the end of her prideful way. This "voluptuous one who dwells in safety" (Isa. 47, 8a) will have to endure the serious word of judgment of Rev. 18, 7: "As much as she has glorified herself and practiced voluptuousness, so much torment and sorrow give her." A fundamental double law of the Spirit is at work here: all "perseverance in good works" and all seeking of "glory and honor and incorruption" in this dishonorable, stained and corruptible world leads to eternal life (Rom. 2:7). But he who glorifies himself and practices opulence (Rev. 18:7a) and neither glorifies God nor gives thanks to Him, falls into folly and darkness (Rom. 1:21) and reaps "anguish and sorrow" according to precisely defined divine standards (Rev. 18:7a). Whoever usurps his good in this life on earth and in the body and tries to savor it completely causes himself torment (Luke 16:25) and is a fool with God (Rom. 1:22; Luk. 12:15-21). But he who for the sake of essential goods possesses and enjoys,

Whoever becomes a fool for the sake of Christ (1 Cor. 4:10) is in truth wise in God.

The Babylonian world being, which glorifies itself and considers every form of opulence as the highest gain of life, is foolishness and gives birth to "tribulation and fear", "anger and judgment" (Rom. 2, 8. 9). Is there not already in the child the addiction to always be right, always to push through one's own will, to possess as much as possible of everything in a pathological gigantomania and to extract the greatest possible pleasure from everything? Are we adults, we pious people, different at the bottom of our hearts? Babylon is in us, the whoredom of the world often still holds us captive, even when we miraculously think how far we are, how incomparably and selflessly we serve our God. We will be happy if we recognize this and let ourselves be healed of it! The Babylon of the end times, which will rise again who knows how quickly, will reveal the full extent of human wickedness and enmity against God. Not sins of temperament and weakness are the most abominable in the sight of God, but arrogance and presumption, which acknowledges itself alone and makes itself the measure of all things. God deliver us from this poison of Satan, which is much stronger in all of us.

works than we know and want to be true! - Jer. 51, 25. 48 = Rev. 18, 8.

Scripture refers to Babel as a "mountain of destruction that ruins the whole earth (or: all the world!)." Behind this seemingly hyperbolic, Oriental imagery lie tremendous truths. If God really means what he says, then a hellish influence emanates from Babylon, which "has plunged the whole earth into ruin" (Kautzsch Bible). This was once so to a certain extent, but will be so to the full extent in the end times. Whoever knows something of the mighty and wonderful symbolism of the Word of God sees in the "mountain of destruction" an image of Satan, who is also called the destroyer and

in truth destroys the whole earth, even the whole cosmos (Is. 54, 16; 1. Cor. 10, 10). From the mountain of destruction comes only disaster; salvation, however, comes from Mount Zion, where God anointed His King, the Christ, i.e. made Him the Messiah (Ps. 2, 6). The lost and the exiled will one day worship the Lord of hosts on this holy mountain in Jerusalem (Isa. 27, 13; Zech. 8, 3).

So we see that the two mountains, the holy one of Zion and the ruinous one of Babylon, are deeply representative of God, respectively Christ and his great adversary, Satan. That is why not only saints, apostles and prophets, but also heaven is asked to rejoice over the fall of Babylon (Rev. 18:20; cf. Jer. 51:48).

Also of essential importance is that the judgment or judicial decision (*krima*) is made by heaven, the saints, the apostles and the prophets, but executed by God through "the desolators from the north" (Jer. 51:48b). The instruments of judgment that God used at that time were Medes and peoples of Armenia (Jer. 51:27-29). That in the end times the concept of the north is significantly expanded is understood by everyone who has understood something of the law of interweaving and spreading out of corresponding events in biblical accounts. Only one incidental fact should be pointed out in passing: Askenas, which like other peoples also provides a troop contingent against Babel, is already for centuries in the Jewish linguistic usage a designation for Germany. Thus in the Middle Ages the Jews living in Germany were called "Askenazim", and Germany was called "Erez Askenas" = land of the Askenas. We do not want to discuss in detail which political perspectives result from this for our *völkisch* future. As heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ, we have much more important and essential things to do than to politicize.

Jer. 51, 6. 45; 50, 8 = Rev. 18, 4. 5.

Since Babylon, the mountain of destruction, is to be destroyed, the saints who still dwell in it are urged to leave the godless city. Let us place such prophetic testimonies here next to corresponding words from Revelation: "Flee out of Babylon, save every man his life, be not destroyed because of its iniquity | For it is the time of the Lord's vengeance; what it has done he repays...Draw out of it, my people, and save every man his life from the fierceness of the Lord's wrath!...Flee out of Babylon, and go forth from the land of the Chaldeans" (Jer. 51:6, 45; 50:8) Those who are intertwined with the world perish in, with and by it. That is why the principle of separation is so extremely important. As long as Israel lived apart from the nations, it was faithful and blessed. However, as soon as it came into mingling with the Gentile nations, it became entangled in their idolatry and fell into judgment. We find this again and again throughout its history.

That is why Israel is admonished again and again to keep itself pure and unmixed in the midst of the nations and to escape from all ties that have been entered into. Let us look up Isa. 48, 20: "Flee from Babylon, flee from Chaldea with shouting; proclaim, let this be heard, bring it out to the ends of the earth! Say: The Lord has redeemed his

servant Jacob!" Or we read Zech. 2, 7: "Hui! Escape, Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon!" Exactly the same is written in Rev. 18:4, 5, where a voice from heaven calls out to the faithful remnant of Israel in view of the apostate Jews dwelling in Babylon: "Come out of her, my people, lest you be made acquainted with her sins and lest you receive of her plagues. For their sins are heaped up to heaven, and God has remembered their iniquities. "There will one day be a divine separation between the believing Jews in Jerusalem who are expecting their Messiah and the world Jews in Babylon who have been completely detached from the Law and prophecy. For the city of God will be built and completed; but the world city of destruction, the great whore, which owes its outstanding world position to the beast and the Antichrist, will perish miserably.

What Israel was to do outwardly and, at least in its law-abiding part, will do one day, is now taking place inwardly with us, the selection from the nations that will form the body of Christ. For Israel's history in the flesh is an image of us and a reminder to us, as we read in 1 Cor. 10:11. But our separation from the world is not external, but internal. The apostle Paul instructs us in 1 Cor. 5, 9, 10 and 2 Cor. 6, 14-17: "I have written to you not to associate with fornicators; but I do not mean fornicators of this world, or covetous men, or robbers, or idolaters; otherwise you would have to go out of the world... Do not be in an unequal yoke with unbelievers... For you are the temple of the living God, who said: I will dwell and walk in them, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from among them and separate yourselves" is written, so that we do not fall into the same mistake that already doomed Lot and the people of Israel: "Repay her as she has repaid, and double her according to her works in the cup which she has mixed, mix it twice.

It is a peculiar law that we see again and again, both in God's holy legal systems and among the nations, that any retribution of vengeance seems to go beyond its purpose. In the case of restitutions of grace, we put up with it, as we find it, for instance, in Job. Let us compare Job I, 3 with 42, 10-12! The fact that we get something lost replaced twice, certainly appeals to us. But that we should also suffer twofold punishment is very difficult for us to understand. And yet the revenge of a worldly victor over his defeated opponent is mostly horrible and senseless and only causes that instead of a fruitful peace for all parts only fuel for new warlike conflicts is accumulated. As terrible and, measured by the standards of human reason, absurd as this is, we find it again and again in this world blinded by Satan.

Nations go beyond divine standards in their hatred and thirst for vengeance. The result is that such nations themselves come under accelerated judgment. God's Word gives us a number of proofs of this as well.

Let us read, for example, the accusation against the king of Babylon: "You will lift up this sentence against the king of Babylon and say: How has the oppressor ceased, how has the extortion ceased! The Lord has broken the rod of the lawless, the ruler's rod,

which smote nations in fury with blows without ceasing, subdued nations in wrath with persecution without restraint!" (Is. 14, 4-6.) God does not allow people and nations to endlessly suffer through "toil, turmoil, and imposed harsh

service" (verse 3) are tormented. Or let us read the reproaches the Lord brings against Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom and Ammon: "Thus says Jehovah: "Because of three iniquities and because of four I will not reverse it (i.e. the judgment) not undone,: because they have threshed Gilead with a threshing sledge of iron ... because they have carried away captives in full numbers to deliver them to Edom, so will I send fire ... because it has choked its mercy, and because its wrath continually devours, and it keeps its fury forever ... because they have slit open the pregnant women ..." (Amos I, 3-13.) What cruel things these are! How once God judges when one nation does not show mercy to the other and even puts a heavy yoke on old people (Is. 47, 6)!

This is how the nations are, without distinction (Rom. 3, 22b. 23)! Their nature, whether brown or red or black in disguise, is animal-like. They bore the mark of Satan, the prince and god of this world. And so they will remain until the Lord comes and creates a new one. Happy is he who may know that by God's grace he is taken out of the nations and may have his life and being in Christ! He can love, even if one hates him; he repays envy and slander with good deeds, and where one curses him, he blesses. What a wonderful privilege, in this world of selfishness and wickedness, to carry and radiate God's very being! - —

Babylon was very often Israel's chastening rod. In the end times it will be like that again, only with the difference that the unbelieving part of the people of the election will be the head of the world and will persecute and slaughter its own believing brothers according to the flesh for the sake of the word of God. Babylon stands against Jerusalem, the world against God, Satan against Christ.

But judgment is coming swiftly. We already saw that "a people from the north, a great nation and many kings are invading from the uttermost part of the earth". The farthest end of the earth to the north of Jerusalem is Siberia, is Russia. It carries out, deeply seen, the counsels of God (Jer. 50, 45a), however, without knowing this, let alone wanting it. That Israel does not fare much better in this "deliverance" than Babylon, we see from Jer. 6, 22 -26. The people "without mercy" arm themselves "against the daughter of Zion" and come as "desolators" over her.

We do not want to forget that words of prophecy always have several fulfillments: temporal-historical in the narrower cultural area and eschatological in the broadest scope. That they have beyond that personal and symbolic meaning is only to be noted in passing. - —

We saw that Babylon, the city of rebellion against God, of worldly lust and violence, disappeared from the face of the earth, but will rise again in the last days. Then, having become a dwelling place of demons (Rev. 18:2), *it will be destroyed in one day*

(Rev. 18:8). The weeping and mourning of the merchants and sailors who watch her burn (Rev. 18:9-19) is not out of selfless compassion, but because the sources of their wealth and enjoyment of life are destroyed.

Let us keep in mind that Babylon, which is now still in ruins, will be rebuilt in the end times and will become outrageously rich and powerful. As Jerusalem will be the city of God, so Babylon will be the headquarters of the

World of mammon, sin and godlessness in every form will become. As in Jerusalem the believing Israel waits for the Messiah, so in Babylon the rich world Jews will have the threads of politics, economy, finances, trade and traffic, in short the nerve cords of all people's life on earth in their hands, will incur the hatred of the whole world and perish from it. The returning Christ will become the ruler of the whole earth and will exercise from Jerusalem a reign of blessing that will satisfy and fulfill the longings of all nations. - —

God grant that we, freed from all and every Babylonian worldly creature of greed and hunger for power, may go on pilgrimage as strangers to our heavenly home, seeking with all our hearts and looking for what is above, where the Christ is, seated at the right hand of the Father of glory, longing for union with the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who brings all things into fullness (Eph. 1:23).

Advanced night - What does it mean? (Rom. 13, 12) [K. Layer].

The night is far advanced, and the day is near. Let us now cast off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light!"

Rom.13,12

Author: Karl Layer, from his article of the same name at GuH

Obviously Jochen Klepper (1903-1942) was inspired by this word to write his beautiful Advent song "Die Nacht ist vorgedrungen". Whether this word also helped Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805-1880) to coin the following sentence: "Before the end of the world comes, there is nothing to do with the world"?

Well, that sounds peculiarly pessimistic and immediately causes contradiction with all do-gooders. But we are dealing with the term "night" after all. Does that mean letting everything run its course without doing anything? Certainly not. But it does mean soberly assessing the world situation. Of course, we have to ask how Blumhardt arrives at such a statement. I will answer briefly: through the prophetic word of the Bible. To this we also count the word from Romans 13:12:

"The night has advanced, but the day is near."

To clarify the "night", we take another word of Jesus: "... the night is coming, when no one can work." Joh.9,4

When we read the prophetic word of the Bible, we see a culmination at the end

1. the Bible announces an intensification of the state of darkness.

This can be seen in two terms:

The first term is called: **legalism = false piety**

1 Tim 4:1-5:

1 But the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith and turn to misleading spirits and doctrines of demons **2** through the hypocrisy of liars who are branded in their own consciences. **3** They forbid marrying and eating foods that God has created, so that they may be used with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. **4** For everything God has created is good, and nothing is reprehensible if it is received with thanksgiving; **5** for it is sanctified by God's word and prayer.

The second term is called: **lawlessness = moral decay**

2 Tim. 3,1-5:

1 But this you should know, that in the last days there will be evil times. **2** For men will be lovers of themselves, greedy of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, **3** unloving, unforgiving, slanderous, unrestrained, violent, enemies of good, **4** traitors, careless, puffed up; loving pleasure

more than God; **5** having the outward appearance of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Turn away from such!

We should be thankful that the Bible does this announcement service for us. It prompted one believing contemporary to say, "Take heart, brethren, it doesn't get any better!"

We are experiencing an increase in the signs of the end times. Are we experiencing an accumulation of catastrophes only because the media are present almost everywhere? When I once pointed out the increase in earthquakes to a colleague, he responded dismissively, "Oh, come on, that's because there are more seismographs today." I said: "Then the prophetic word of the Bible has also foreseen this!" To not want to perceive the increase of the signs of the end time is negligent. They are warning signs of God! Their increase also means an accumulation of the dangers of seduction. How often does the attentive reader of the Bible hear in the prophetic speeches of Jesus the warning word: "Watch out that no one deceives you!"

The end point of this night development is a world ruled by Satan. Revelation 13 announces a political, economic, religious unity. This will become reality! Who is then the driver with the today's "Fusionitis", if one means to be able to solve the problems only by mergers? There we speak unconcernedly of the spirit of the age, as if this were harmless. Who is this "spirit that works in the children of unbelief" (Eph. 2:2)? It is the spirit from below controlled by Satan!

2. we live on the border between advanced night and approaching day.

Advanced means: The night will soon be over! The little word "soon" is interesting. Can this be true, after Paul has written this sentence already 2000 years ago? For us, "soon" means tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, next week! Again and again one wanted to ascribe to Paul and the first Christians a disappointed near expectation to which they had succumbed. But waiting and expecting has always been part of being a living Christian. Perhaps the basic meaning of "soon" will help us to better understand. Soon means suddenly, quickly, surprisingly. It does not concern our fluctuating sense of time, long or short.

Perhaps the fact that a border always has two extensions also helps us. On the one hand, it is kilometers long. But it can also be only one step with which one crosses a border. Long - that would be the 2000 years. Short - that is then the moment. With us Christians this is indeed so; because we live in the enemy country. Waiting for the day without being awake therefore does not succeed. We stay awake best when we buy out the time for the Lord Jesus, that is, when we serve Him.

I read a shocking but true word: "He who does not serve Christ is employed by the devil." Is that what we want? Because we certainly don't want that, I want to give some positive service instructions:

We can and we should:

- shine as enlightened = shine as lights in the night
- save as saved = don't just let the others go
- to love as a lover = to bring love into the world
- to bless as blessed = to bring others into God's realm of blessing.

These general basic rules must be put into practice. We have the opportunity to do this every day.

3. the conclusion of the night time and the dawn of the day are imminent.

That is a bold statement on the subject of "soon". Now we say "immediately". Our text word says "near" for this. Why can we say this without being accused of self-deception or alarmism?

Let's always keep in mind that our perception of time is relative and therefore not reliable: In old age a year is short, in childhood very long. Therefore, we tie the three terms "near", "soon", "immediately" to a fixed point and - this is the end-time sign Israel.

The end-time sign "Israel" has been present worldwide since 1948. Actually, this one sign is sufficient. In order to be able to evaluate it as an end-time sign, an overall view of the prophetic word is needed. One only needs to take seriously the many promises in the Old Testament for the gathering and restoration of Israel to come to this assertion. Anyone who studies the history leading up to the creation of the state of Israel cannot help but be amazed at the succession of miracles. All the more so as far as its preservation until today is concerned. The spiritual renewal is promised - but is still pending.

We soberly reckon with a passage of time. The final goal of our salvation is closer today than yesterday. We do not have to fall into end-time hysteria or calculation games. Unfortunately, this has happened again and again and has made the prophetic word of the Bible untrustworthy to many. Sobriety is the order of the day because pious seduction is the danger of the day! I read about a sect in Uganda that is going to death because Jesus' return is near. This is pure rapture and absolutely not worthy of imitation. This does no honor to the Lord Jesus.

4. those who belong to Christ await His day.

"That was His day," we sometimes say when an athlete rises to top form at the moment of his commitment. If we wait for the "day of Jesus Christ", then this is His day! There He will show what He has accomplished as world redeemer and what kind of power development is at His command. This day is of course not to be equated with a 24-hour day, also not with a weekday - although His intervention in the present course of time happens.

This can be a moment (see 1.Cor.15,52; old translation: "in a twinkling") or cover 1000 years (Rev.20,4), when we think of His reign in the coming Kingdom of God. He will always show what He can do!

With the term "day" we find two expressions in the Bible that refer to the revelation of Christ's power:

The day of Jesus Christ - Especially in Paul's letters this expression is used in connection with the church of Jesus Christ. Classic is the phrase "the day will make it clear" of 1 Corinthians 3:13. It is about the resurrection of the "dead in Christ" and the body transformation of the "living in Christ" (also called rapture). Jesus comes to His own and unites Himself with them. Here it is about the rising of the morning star, which still shines at dawn, before the full day dawns with the sunrise. This dawn has come near.

The other wording is:

The Day of the Lord - This is the expression used by the Old Testament prophets when they announce the Day of Judgment and Salvation for Israel. It is the rising of the sun over the darkness of the world.

Isaiah says it clearly. "The glory of the Lord rises upon you. "Isa.60,1

Israel is explicitly addressed. Now Jesus comes with His own, that is, with His church to Israel, whose election by God was never cancelled. Now the Messiah King visibly appears for the establishment of the kingdom for Israel, which becomes the center of the kingdom of God. The statehood of Israel in 1948 is only the preparatory prelude for this.

Close

As we revisit the **four guiding principles**, let's conclude by asking ourselves, "Can we count on it firmly?"

Answer: It is God's word that is given to us as a certain word of hope. There is also a pagan "word of hope." It comes from the Greek philosopher Plato, who died in 347 BC. He said, "Let us wait for one, whether a god or a godly man, who will teach us our religious duties and take the darkness from our eyes." Waiting for anyone?

Thank God, no! We are waiting for the One who has come and will come again, whose day of His visible assumption of power has come near: Jesus Christ!

How far is it in the night? (Is. 21, 11-12) [H. Stoye].

"From Seir they call out to me, 'Watchman, how far is it in the night? Watchman, how far in the night? The watchman says: The morning comes and also the night. If you want to ask, ask! Come here again!'"

Isa.21,11-12

Author: Holger Stoye, from his article "How far is it in the night? Our location in the course of the end times (Is. 21, 11-12)" at GuH / his sermon in 2020

The guardian service of the community and for the community

Guardian service

This is a strange text that we are reading. We find ourselves here in the middle of the night in a guarded city - probably it is Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, where Isaiah worked as a prophet. On the wall or on the watchtower stands a guard. It is the prophet
Isaiah.

Prophets are often compared in the Bible to watchmen who guard the city at night. The prophet Isaiah, too, had been given such a spiritual watchman's duty by God. God gave him not only an eye for the people of God (Israel), but also for the world of nations
around
Israel.

In Isaiah 21:11, 12, the prophetic message that Isaiah received from God is clothed in the form of question and answer. From the mountain Seir in the land of Edom, where the descendants of Esau lived, Isaiah receives the desperate question:

"Watchman, how far is it in the night? Watchman, how far in the night?"

The night stands for the judgment of God. The repetition of the question shows the fearful urgency. The questioner wishes nothing more than that it may be already quite late in this night of the judgment and this soon be over. Just as a sick person in restless night can hardly wait for the dawn, the questioner longs for the end of the divine night of judgment and the dawn of the divine morning of salvation. This text has especially appealed to me these days. For like the caller from Edom, we too are in this night of the Corona crisis.

We long for their end. We can hardly stand it. We look at the statistics every day to see if the danger won't soon be over and we can get back to normal. We ask the virologists and the politicians: How far is it at night? But no one knows for sure.

But we as Christians are moved these days by a much more fundamental question, "What is the night?" That is:

- Where are we in God's plan of salvation?
- How can we classify the events of these days biblically?
- Have the courts of the apocalypse now begun?

- Are the four apocalyptic horsemen from Revelation 6 already on their way?
- Is the time of the Antichrist coming now?

Times of crisis are always times of emotional upheaval, of fear, of excitement, of over-heated speculation. The pious are no exception. What a flood of alarm messages has reached us these days via the social media. Therefore, it is good if we soberly consult the Word of God:

"How far is it at night?"

First of all, the Bible tells us quite fundamentally that this world has been living spiritually in the night for millennia since the Fall and separation from God. A world without God is a world in the night. So we have been living in the night not just since the Corona Crisis.

It is against this background that the strange answer of Isaiah in verse 12 is to be understood: "The morning is coming and also the night." That is, the joy of the morning will be short-lived at first. Even if the morning dawns, it will be immediately swallowed up by the night again.

This mysterious word was fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus: With the coming of Jesus as the light of the world, the morning dawned for this world. But this morning of the coming of the Messiah did not last long. Through the rejection of Jesus, the barely dawned morning was immediately swallowed up again by the night. As Jesus hangs on the cross, a great solar eclipse comes over the land in broad daylight. With this, God shows in a symbolic way what is happening here: It becomes night again on this earth.

John 3:19 "But this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their works were evil."

Only at His return in power and glory will the night in this world be finally defeated. God's lasting morning of salvation will dawn with the returning Christ. Until then, every morning on this earth will always be swallowed up by night.

We do not know whether this also applies to the easing of the Corona crisis. But we know for sure that every morning of hope in this world will always be swallowed up by night. So it was after the Second World War. So it was after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It will be the same after the Corona crisis. We must prepare ourselves inwardly for this. The end-time birth pangs will not stop, but will increase in intensity and come at ever shorter intervals. What we are experiencing these days is only a prelude - only a first contraction.

A guard must not sleep. He must watch what is happening awake. He must look far and see the enemy before he is right outside the city. But a watchman must not blow the alarm at every bat either. Otherwise he won't be taken seriously when the enemy really comes.

That's why it's important to stay sober and listen more to the Bible than to the many will-o'-the-wisps on the Internet and (social) media. In this storm, it is again important to look to the Lord and not to the waves. The Word of God is the eye in the storm for us - the place of calm and security. Let us therefore not be infected by the general (also pious) hysteria.

Therefore, let us look into the prophetic word of the Bible to determine our location in salvation history and get an answer to the question of how far it is in the night.

The view of the prophetic word

According to my view we are not yet in the time of the apocalyptic horsemen of Revelation 6 and therefore not yet in the time of the events as they are then described to us from Revelation 6 on.

I would like to justify this briefly in key words. It is your right and even your duty to check what I have said against the Scriptures. As it is said of the Christians in Berea: "But these were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all readiness, and examined the scriptures daily, whether it was so (Acts 17:11)."

I would like to mention four points why I think we are still ahead of Revelation 6:

1. **The final historical meaning of Revelation** I understand the book of Revelation final historical. That means that everything that Revelation 4 - 19 describes takes place in the context of the 70th week of years according to Daniel 9:27 - that is in the last 7 years before the return of the Lord in power and glory. So everything that Revelation 4 - 19 describes is crowded into the short period of the last 7 years. It will happen according to Revelation 1:1 "with speed" (Greek *tachos*). The high speed of the processes is the main characteristic of the events of the Last Days. This is exactly what we are already noticing in these days. The development of the Last Days is picking up speed. The events are overturning. The reconstruction of our constitutional state and the suspension of essential basic rights do not need years, but only days - and a small virus.
2. **The Outline of Revelation** We find the outline of Revelation in the Lord's personal writing command to John from Revelation 1:19:

"Write now what you have seen,"

= Rev.1; Christ as the risen and glorified Lord, and

"what is"

= Rev.2 - 3; the church, here specifically: the seven epistles to the seven churches of Asia Minor, which are representative of the churches of all times and all places and represent the time of the church.

"and what will happen after this. "

= the events from Rev.4, "after this", that is after the time of the congregation, after its Rapture!

If we keep to this outline of Revelation given by the Lord Himself, we realize that we are living today in the time of the church - that is, in the time of Revelation 2 - 3.

We are not waiting for the Antichrist, but for the rapture of the church. According to my view, this takes place at the transition to Revelation 4 and is symbolically represented by the apostle John in Revelation 4:1.

Rev.4:1 "After these things I looked, and, behold, a door opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard, as of a trumpet talking with me, said, Come up hither. And I will show you what must happen after this ."

3. the beginning of the 70th week of the year

The 70th week of years begins with the peace covenant of the Antichrist with Israel according to Daniel 9:27.

Dan.9:27 "And strong will he make a covenant for the many , for a week ; and halfway through the week he will cause sacrifices and grain offerings to cease ."

The last 7 years will be initiated by a peace covenant of the Antichrist with Israel. This peace covenant does not exist yet, so the 70th week of years has not started yet either. But then the events from Revelation 6 on have not started yet either.

4. the two riders on a white horse

Rev.6:2 "And I looked, and, behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon it sat had a bow; and a crown of victory was given to him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer."

Rev.19:11 "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him is called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war in righteousness."

Two riders on a white horse. With the first one the apocalyptic courts of the revelation begin, with the second one they end.

Who are these two riders on a white horse?

I see in the first apocalyptic horseman of Revelation 6:2 the Antichrist (= the instead of Christ). This is the counterpart, i.e. the seductive imitation and anticipation of the rider on the white horse of whom Revelation 19:11 reports, the Christ at His Second Coming in power and glory.

The apocalyptic processes (and with it also the 70th week of years) begin therefore in agreement with Daniel 9,27 with the triumphal procession of the Antichrist (Rev.6,2). Since this triumphal procession of the Antichrist has not yet taken place, the time of the apocalyptic horsemen as a whole has not yet begun either.

Conclusion

Today we still live in the time of Revelation 2 - 3, not in Revelation 6 ff. This also clarifies many follow-up questions that are related to Revelation 6 - 19.

But even if we are not yet living in the time of the apocalyptic horsemen, I am convinced that we have come a significant step closer to this time, especially through the aftermath of these days.

By the way a small punch line: The first horseman (= Antichrist) has a crown on the head (literally victory wreath; Greek *stephanos*, Latin *corona*). With it I do not want to say that this victory wreath of the Antichrist is the Corona virus. But in my opinion, the virus is very much a precursor for the anti-Christian global structures which the Antichrist will make use of and which will make his rule possible in the first place.

So let's keep it very sober:

The current events are not the actual final history, but the preparation for it. We are experiencing these days that it does not take years of development to transform our state into an anti-Christian dictatorship, but only a small virus - and within a few days or weeks our state is already transformed in essential parts into a dictatorship. I think that we will be led into a global "depression" - similar to the Weimar Republic before Hitler came to power - from which the rule of the Antichrist will then rise.

We have come a significant step closer to this scenario, especially through the aftermath of these days. These "corona structures" are the model for the coming, anti-Christian initiation of rule. We must see this clearly. But just as clearly we must state: What is happening today is only the test run, the model - only a first woe.

The meaning of the watchman call

So what follows from this watchman call of the prophet Isaiah for us and our watchman ministry in these days? Take a stand.

Hab.2:1 "Upon my post will I tread, and upon the rampart will I stand, and will peep to see what He will speak unto me, and what answer I shall receive to my complaint."

The prophet Habakkuk sets an example for us. He does not allow himself to be distracted by anything, but he steps onto his post, onto an elevated place of the wall, in order to fulfill his watchman service as a prophet of God from there. So we too want to stand on the solid wall of the Word of God - on the tower of the prophetic Word - and look out for the returning Lord. At the same time, however, we also want to keep a watchful eye on the events of our day as God's watchmen. Just as the Lord told us in His end-time speech:

Mth.24:42 "Watch therefore! For you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

Staying awake is the basic requirement for a watchman. In this sense, we as a church are all called to the watchman ministry, even though some of us here certainly have a special assignment from God as watchmen for the church. The Bible says that we

are entering a time of great deception and a time of apostasy. So we are not expecting a great world revival, but a great world deception and a great apostasy. We must realize this clearly so that we will not be deceived.

2 Thess. 2:3 "Let no one deceive you in any way, for that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of sin, the son of perdition, is revealed."

Seduction and apostasy also break into the congregation. Therefore, watchmen are also needed in the congregation to recognize these dangers at an early stage and to warn against them. Here, especially the leaders of the individual congregations are responsible before God. Of the watchmen of Israel, the leaders of Israel, Isaiah must say:

Isa.56,10 "His watchmen are blind, they all recognize nothing. They are all dumb dogs that cannot bark. They dream, they lie there, they love slumber."

But it can also be the other way around. The watchmen see the danger, but the people of God do not believe them:

Jer.6:17 "I have appointed watchmen over you who call out: 'Pay attention to the sound of the horn! But they say, We will not heed it.'"

We see how serious the responsibility of this ministry is in Ezekiel.

–Placement of Ezekiel in the watchman service

Ezk.3,17 "Son of man, I have given you to be a watchman for the house of Israel. And if you hear a word from My mouth, you shall warn them from Me!"

–Responsibility of the guardian service

Ezek.33,3 "When he sees the sword coming on the land, he blows the horn and warns the people,

V.4 Then if any man hear the sound of the horn, but be not warned, and the sword come and take him away: his blood shall be upon his head.

V.5 He has heard the sound of the horn, but has not taken warning; his blood will remain on him. But if he has been warned, he has saved his soul.

V.6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming, and he blows not the horn, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes away a soul from them: then that one shall be taken away for his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the hand of the watchman."

Ezekiel 33:3-6 mentions two constellations:

1. If the guard warns of the danger and you do not listen to him, then he is free from his responsibility.
2. But if the watchman does not toot his horn, then he is responsible before God for the consequences of his failure to warn.

The core of the watchman's ministry is therefore the early recognition of danger through the word of God and the clear warning of this danger. How this warning is received is then no longer his responsibility.

Biblical Guardian Service

But the biblical watchman ministry involves even more. In His end-time speech, the Lord says:

Lk.21:36 "**Watch** therefore and **pray at** all times that you may be able to escape from all this that is about to happen and stand before the Son of Man!"

So our watchman ministry is also a prayer ministry.

So we read already in Isaiah 62.6.

Isa.62,6 "On your walls, Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen. All day and all night they will not be silent for a moment. You who remember the LORD, do not give yourselves rest."

Both are mutually dependent: He who is awake prays, and he who prays stays awake. So our prayer life is a gauge of our state of wakefulness or sleep - a thermometer of our spiritual "body temperature." We are to "remind" the Lord of His promises, not allowing ourselves to rest. We are to be in constant ministry of intercession. So the watchman ministry is essentially also a prayer ministry.

But the watchman ministry is also a ministry of encouragement.

Isa.52,8 "Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voice; they all rejoice. For eye to eye they see the LORD returning to Zion."

The proclamation of the coming Lord as a joyful message of jubilation is also part of the watchman's service. The watchman not only sees the danger, he sees the coming Lord and welcomes him rejoicing already from afar.

We are not waiting for the coming catastrophes and not for the Antichrist. We are waiting for the coming of our Lord. As German President Gustav Heinemann said in 1950: "Let us answer the world when it wants to make us fearful: Your masters are going - but our Lord is coming!"

We started with the question: How far is it in the night? I would like to close with the answer that the apostle Paul gives us to this very question in Romans 13:12:

"The night is far advanced, and the day is near.
Let us now cast off the works of darkness
and put on the weapons of light!"
Amen!

The question of will (1. Tim. 2, 4) [K. Geyer].

1 I exhort therefore that, before all things, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered for all men, 2 for kings, and for all who are in high places, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and respectability; 3 for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Tim. 2, 4

9 He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to that which he has purposed in him according to his good pleasure, 10 to be accomplished in the fullness of time: to gather together all things under one head in the Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth 11 - in him, in whom we also have obtained an inheritance, who were predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 that we might serve to the praise of his glory, who beforehand hoped in the Christ.

Eph. 1, 10

Author: Karl Geyer, excerpted from his book "Ewiges Gericht und Allversöhnung," published by Paulus-Verlag.

Believers are largely in agreement about the goal of God's will. No one can deny that God wants "all men to be saved and all to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:4; Eph 1:10). Nor can anyone deny that it is the purpose of God's secret will to bring all things under one head in Christ. However, there are differences of opinion as to how this goal is to be achieved. While it is sufficient for one side that God wills something - because what he wills, he does according to the testimony of the Scriptures - the other side declares that God respects the will of the creature so much that he cannot save the creature if he does not want to.

What is the relationship between God's will and man's will? What happens when Scripture says: "God wills that all men be saved," but on the other hand also says: "You have not willed" (Matth. 23, 37)?

It would be just as foolish to claim that the will of the creature does not play any role for God as to claim that it depends only on the decision of the creature. Both are wrong. The philosophical way of thinking of the religious man is to be recognized clearly here, who either takes God to the starting point of the philosophy and in this direction one-sidedly thinks further, or takes man as starting point and draws from him his one-sided conclusions. The first way of thinking excludes any moral action of man, the second makes the moral behavior of man the basis of the relations between God and him and makes the action of God dependent on the action of man.

But God has arranged it in his unfathomable wisdom in such a way that neither he himself must limit his will in favor of the creature, nor the will of the creature is

eliminated. Both come to their full right. God gives the creature the opportunity to reveal itself in its nature, and also it has every possibility for itself to bring the perfect plan of its God-wisdom to the execution.

Some examples from Scripture may illustrate this for us.

In Exodus 3:16-17, God announces his will for the people of Israel. He says there, "I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hewites and the Jebusites, into a land flowing with milk and honey."

Now how did this revealed will of God go?

The people grumbled against God in the desert, although he had so gloriously saved and brought them up. The children of Israel lamented, "Would that we had died in Egypt ... would that we had died in this wilderness!" (Exodus 16:1 ff).

What does God do in response to such expressions of their will?

He answers them according to their defiant unbelief and lets it happen to them as they said. They may be right with their will. He lets them all die in the desert except for two who had not joined the people's wish.

Moses, the servant of God, wants to avert this disaster and reproaches the Lord: "If you let them die in the wilderness, the nations around will say, 'He was not able to bring them into the land'" (Exodus 14:15, 16).

Also this word God lets come true and lets the nations around be right with their revilings. Because of their (the children of Israel's) unbelief he really was not able to bring them into the land, just as it is also written about the Lord: "He was not able to do many miracles there because of their unbelief" (Matth. 13, 58).

Before that, Moses sends out the twelve scouts to the Promised Land. They are all full of praise for the treasures of the land. Ten, however, declare: "We are not able to enter" (Numbers 13:31). They may also be right. It also happens to them according to their faith. They confessed that they could not enter. So he allowed them to enter and let them die by a plague (Numbers 13 and 14).

But two of the twelve scouts confessed, "If Yahweh is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us." This faith also came true, and the two men, Joshua and Caleb, were proved right. They were brought into the land by him, while all the others died.

Now they were all right once in turn: the unbelieving spies, the believing spies, the grumbling people and the pagan peoples around. It happens to all of them according to their faith, and their will is fulfilled first.

But where is the will of God, which was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as unchangeable by an oath?

God can wait. The fulfiller of all God's promises, the Son (2. Cor. 1, 19. 20), can also. He is the Father of the Aons, who has an abundance of times at his disposal.

What he has set out to do, and what he wants to have, must finally come to its end and goal.

And so he waits one course of time after the other until also for this promise, which according to Hebr. 11, 13 and 39. 40 is not yet fulfilled, the time of fulfillment has come. This will happen when the body through which He brings forth all the promises to the praise of the Father is finished, namely His body, the plenum, the fullness of the Christ, through which He brings the all in all to fulfillment (2 Cor. 1, 20)). The last verse of the Old Testament closes with this outlook. So all Israel will be saved (Rom. 9-11). What he promised them, he also carries out. His gifts of grace and callings are incalculable! (Rom. 11, 29). (S. a. verse 15.) -Yes, wonderfully great and glorious are the judgments of God! They reveal the depth of the riches of his wisdom and knowledge. Without co-consultants he has determined the final goal of his two ways, the way of grace and the way of judgment. Therefore, no one is able to hinder him even from the final achievement of the goal. "His work no one can hinder!" Therefore, glory be to Him throughout all ages! (Rom. 11, 29-36).

Man may be right within the limits of his circumstances, but God keeps right. "The right of the Lord keeps the victory" (Ps. 118, 15. 16).

We see something similar with Joseph and his brothers. They do not respect the revealed will of God, who wants "brothers to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1), but reveal the bad disposition of their carnal heart by selling their brother to Egypt. God also allows this evil plot of the brothers to succeed; but he has a secret intention in it. By acting against His revealed will and thereby making their foolish heart known, they fulfill God's secret saving intentions with themselves and with their environment. Joseph does not gloss over the brothers' evil intent; but he even takes away the credit for their bad deed by making it known to them that they were not the ones who sent him to Egypt, but God (Genesis 45:4, 5 and chapter 50:19-21). ("You think you are pushing, and you are pushed.")

Also here the will of the creature is fulfilled first. It gets the opportunity to reveal the carnal disposition of its heart. It may want; but its will does not exist, but the will of God remains.

Let us still consider the most gruesome act in the history of the world, the murder of God on Golgotha, where the creature that had received life from the hand of its Creator murdered its Creator. "He came into His own, but His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). But by enforcing their evil will and putting Him to death, they fulfilled the secret saving purpose of God with themselves and with the whole world (Acts 2:23 and 4:25-28). By raging and planning vain things against him in contempt of his

revealed will, they fulfilled his secret will of love, which in its part goes sky-high beyond the revealed will and finally also brings it to fulfillment.

God reveals at first only partial goals, by the creature opposes these, it fulfills the much further set goals which are not revealed yet. Thus the creature brings a responsibility for its acting on itself by its bad attitude and must atone in the court for the bad motives. However, after it has served the guilt, God can still justify it, because in the end it fulfilled the secret will of God with its actions.

Thus, in all world events both are fulfilled: the will of God and the will of the creature. The creature may be right at first; God, however, is right in every case. That is why after that much abused word: "You did not will" there is the continuation: "... until you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" The same people who did not "know in this their time what was for their peace" will once again learn to pronounce after severe judgments: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matth. 23, 29-39).

It is at all wrong to oppose the will of God and the will of the creature as equivalent to each other. They are not at all beside or opposite, but superordinate, respectively subordinate. The will of the creature is always subordinated to the divine will. Even Satan is not able to do anything of himself (Job 1, 6-12 and 2, 1-7). Much less another creature. Nothing at all happens in the whole wide universe without the will of God. Not even a hair falls from our head without His will (Amos 3, 6b; Isa. 45, 7; Luk. 21, 18).

The will of God and the will of the creature are heavenly different in their quality. The will of God is absolute in its freedom, the will of the creature only relative. God can determine himself beginning and goal, method and outcome in all his actions. The creature can neither determine how it wants to be born, nor at which time, from which parents and under which conditions. It is limited in its whole existence by the borders which are set to it concerning its abilities and its relations. How can one speak of a free will with a creature? - It has only a conditionally free (relative) will. It is composed of the will of the flesh, which it receives through the inheritance of the blood from its ancestors, then the self-will, which is given to every human being as a special distinguishing feature from other human beings, and thirdly the will of Satan, to whom man is subjugated since the Fall. Therefore, we are not free by nature, but slaves of sin and sold under sin. It is a direct absurdity to speak of free will in the case of a slave. Compare Eph. 2, 3; Rom. 8, 7. 8; 3, 9-19; Gal. 3, 22; Tit. 3, 3; 1. Petr. 4, 3; Gal. 5, 19-21; 2. Petr. 3, 3; 2. Tim. 2, 26; Rom. 6, 16-22 and others.

We have been freed from the slavery of sin and have become slaves of God and Christ Jesus, and now the growing into the state of true freedom begins. For "for freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1). Formerly, however, we were unfree.

It is strange how, in the face of such clear judgments of the Lord that we are slaves, imprisoned under the will of the flesh, the self-will and the will of Satan, the very believers often defend with so much energy the false dogma of the freedom of the human will. It is enough just to consider the bondages that are passed on to the next generations through the sins of the fathers. Today, even the unbelieving world confirms the truth of the scriptural doctrine of original sin through the results of psychoanalysis. However, it is not acceptable to teach the bondage of original sin and the freedom of the human will at the same time.

Mostly there is also a confusion here, in that one does not actually want to teach full freedom of will, but only to emphasize the fact that those people to whom God has granted an enlightenment through the Holy Spirit have freedom of choice to continue to remain as slaves of Satan and sin in their old nature, or to use the grace offered by God as the only opportunity to get out of the slavery of the slave master in the present time and to become free for God.

God has two methods of saving man: Grace and judgment. The one who does not accept the offered grace comes to judgment. However, this does not change the fact that God does achieve his goal. Just as he brings into the kingdom those Israelites whom he has cast into the wilderness because of their unbelief, once it is established, so that in the end his will proves to be the lasting one, he also achieves his goal with all other people and beings, whether they allow themselves to be saved from the difficult ways of judgment by accepting grace, or whether he makes it "right" with them through "judgments".

If I order my children to fill the wooden box in the kitchen or to fetch water from the well, they can do this immediately with willing submission. Then they may receive praise from their mother, sometimes even a reward in the form of chocolate or the like. If, however, they prefer to play and disappear into the street instead of fetching wood, I do not go bankrupt with my educational intentions. I call them in, don't make many words, prescribe them a recipe against disobedience, and - the wooden box is filled in a few minutes. But this time there is no praise and no reward. The unruly being has been judged by censure and punishment, so that this may make them realize their own heart and its poor motives. In any case, my fatherly will will be carried out, regardless of whether they submit voluntarily or not. They can only determine the method by which I treat them by their different attitude towards my father's will. The goal of my will, however, will be achieved whether they want to obey or not.

God acts in the same way. "When his judgments strike the earth, the inhabitants of the earth learn justice" (Is. 26, 9). That is why he does not show mercy to the lawless, so that they learn justice (Is 26:9-11). Even if they do not want to, the lawless, they will see his zeal and will be ashamed when the fire consumes them and destroys everything on which they put their carnal hope. The "human heart is a defiant and despondent thing" (Jer. 17:9). As long as it can, it refuses to give up its self-will. They

do not repent, even in the beginning of God's judgments, until His wrath is completed and His fury is poured out on them completely. Only when every hope of the flesh is destroyed does it give in, and defiance turns to despondency. Then man learns justice.

God's will, however, remains even in this case and is led out. But what a grace it is to be allowed to recognize already in the present time the hopelessness of all rebellion against God and to subordinate the erring will of man to the purposeful will of God, who in the Son carries the whole universe towards the goal of its destiny! - -

Where this change takes place in a human heart, a string is again properly tuned to the keynote of the harmony of the spheres, to the love that is from God. In the beginning of creation this sounded in wonderful unity and purity (Job 38, 4-7), until one exalted himself and involved many creatures in his fall. Since then the groaning of the whole dying creature sounds as a terrible dissonance through the world space, until at the end of all ways of God he himself will be all in all. Then there will be no more suffering and no more crying. Everything that has breath will then praise the Lord, and the disharmonies resolved into harmony will then resound as a mighty symphony through space, as all tongues confess to the glory of God the Father: "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

Bitter water becomes sweet (Ex. 15, 22-25, 1. Cor. 10, 1-12) [A. Heller].

22 After this Moses caused Israel to depart from the Red Sea, that they might go to the wilderness of Sur: and they wandered in the wilderness three days, and found no water. 23 Then they came to Mara; but they could not drink the water of Mara, for it was very bitter. Therefore they called it Mara. 24 Then the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? 25 But he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a wood; that he threw into the water, and the water became sweet. There he gave them law and justice, and there he tested them;

Exodus 15:22-25

1 But I do not want you, my brothers, to disregard the fact that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea. 2 They were also all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and they all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink; 4 for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them. Now the rock was Christ. 5 But with the majority of them God was not well pleased; for they were cast down in the wilderness. 6 Now these things have happened as an example to us, so that we may not lust after evil as they did. 7 Neither become idolaters, as some of them did, as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to enjoy themselves." 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed fornication, and in one day 23,000 fell. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted him and were killed by serpents. 10 Neither murmur, as also some of them murmured, and were slain by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things that befell those are examples, and they were written down for a warning to us, upon

whom the end of the ages is come. 12 Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing, let him see that he does not fall. 13 So far only human temptation has affected you. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability, but at the same time with the temptation he will also provide the exit, so that you can endure it.

1 Cor. 10, 1-12

Author: Adolf Heller, excerpts from his article of the same name "[God's miracles in the desert](#)" We recommend the lecture by H. Stoye "[65100 - H.Stoye - Durch die Wueste - von Mara nach Elim 2017-06-25.mp3](#)".

All that Israel experienced in the flesh is a warning example, an admonishing speech of God to us. In some form or another, we experience and suffer the same hardships and temptations, even if only in spirit and soul. It is of fundamental importance for our practical life of faith that the apostle Paul shows the Corinthians, that is, nations like us, the history of Israel in the light of these inner connections in 1 Cor. 10:1-11. "All these things," that is, not just one or the other, are examples (types) and are to serve us for encouragement or admonition. They are to keep us from corrupting, evil desire. For even for the believer there is the possibility of becoming an idolater, committing fornication, and murmuring against God's leading.

In order to save us from the errors and aberrations we can encounter, the apostle directs our attention to God's miracles that Israel experienced in the wilderness. They are miracles of grace and judgment. They reveal, on the one hand, the ingratitude, apostasy and total inability of the people to do anything good, and on the other hand, the holiness and faithfulness of God, who reveals His long suffering and patience again and again.

In reflecting on these events, let us not only look back at what happened, but also try to understand what all these things have to say to us in our current struggles, hardships and temptations. In addition to this retrospection into the historical and insight into the personal, we also want to mention the prophetic significance of the miracles of the desert. For every word of God, every figure and every event aim at the future and reveal to faith what will be. For "that which has been is that which will be; and that which has happened is that which will happen. And there is nothing at all new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, Behold, this is new - long ago was it in the ages that were before us" (Eccl. 1:9,10).

In Exodus 15:22-25 we read, "Moses caused Israel to depart from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Sur; and they wandered three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And they came to Mara; but they could not drink the water of Mara, for it was bitter. Therefore they gave it the name Mara (bitterness). And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried

unto the LORD, and the LORD pointed him a wood; and he cast it into the water, and the water became sweet."

After the glorious mercy of God at the Reed Sea, Israel sang the song of Moses. This song is sublime and wonderful. It contains neither lament nor petition, but consists only of thanksgiving and adoration. It will even be sung at the sea of glass in connection with the song of the Lamb (Rev. 15:3). Its content is the praise of the works and ways of God.

Now, however, after the salvation from Egypt it does not go immediately into the promised country, in it milk and honey flows, - no, God leads the people into the big and terrible desert, into the waterless plateau Sur (in German: Mauer or Mahner). This was an incomprehensible guidance for the people. For they had been promised a glorious land full of fruits and blessings, a rich garden of God! And now this disappointment!

Don't we feel the same way in life? After high points of wonderful blessing and refreshment, salvation and help, our way leads into hot, stony deserts, where no water of refreshment gushes. Just as Israel had to taste the bitter water of the curse at that time, so many disappointments, tensions, and sufferings are also prescribed for us. Of course, we see afterwards how salutary and necessary all these painful, bitter things were! But when we are in the midst of them, they almost tear our hearts apart with unnameable pain.

What did Israel do? It grumbled! Do we do it differently? Hardly; otherwise Paul would not have had to write to the Corinthians, "Neither murmur, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

The grumbling of believers is a much worse sin, dishonors the Father of love and faithfulness much more than any words and deeds of the world that God does not know. The grumbling spirit dampens the Holy Spirit and opens the door to the corrupter.

The basic partial goal that the church of the present time should now achieve is not a special achievement in this or that area, is not absolute moral perfection and untouchable holiness of our lowliness, but is summarized in the apostolic words: "Give thanks in everything, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

What is triggered in our hearts when we come to Mara, when bitterness and disappointment enter our lives? Giving thanks or grumbling? God certainly does not ask us to rejoice over every sorrow. For He knows us much better than we know ourselves, and knows that we are flesh. But we may and can make all our concerns, even the dark and painful ones, known before Him with thanksgiving. We need not let the dark, paralyzing grumbling and worrying spirit overwhelm us, as Paul writes in Phil. 4:6: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known before God."

Moses cried out to God in his distress. Then he was shown a piece of wood to throw into the water. The man of God did so, and lo! - the water became sweet.

Do you know this wood, this staff, which turns the undrinkable bitter water of the curse into the delicious fresh water of the blessing? Is this wood - "cursed is he who hangs on the wood!" - not a symbol of the cross? Is it not - "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me" - an image of faith? Let us learn, as often as we come to a mara on our pilgrimage, to throw the cross into it in faith! For "all these things" are examples for us and were written for our encouragement. So we are not dealing here with an arbitrary one-time event without deeper meaning, but with a divine plan and ground plan for our personal life of faith.

Everything, no matter how difficult and painful, which we take in view of the cross and in faith, turns into blessing and benefit. We will be happy if we do not only believe this to be true in theory, but can also experience it in practice! Then, not only do we no longer have to grumble and complain at every opportunity, but we may rather go through all difficulties with thanksgiving and adoration.

But not only in our personal lives is the wood able to change the bitter water of the curse into fresh water of blessing, also with regard to all nations and the whole creature this will become apparent in God's time and hour. Christ, by virtue of His cross, will one day renew the whole creation. For Golgotha means the fundamental elimination of guilt and curse and is the turning point of world events. That is why also the cultural peoples, who are unconsciously their own prophets in many parts, calculate their time events before and after Christ or speak clearly of a "turn of time"!

God could have given Israel fresh water immediately or turned the bitter water into fresh water by an act of divine grace. But he does not do so, but lets the wood be thrown into it. Wood is also a frequently used image of humanity in the Scriptures. Just think of words like: "I see people like trees", "If this happens to the green wood, what will happen to the dry wood" and so on. Through the incarnation of the Son of God, all curses are transformed into blessings. Therefore the poet sings adoringly:

"His rays, full and free,
Make creation new, too!"

Are there still prophets today? (1. Cor. 14, 1) [K. Merz].

1 Strive for love, but also strive diligently for the works of the Spirit; but most of all, prophesy.

1 Cor. 14, 1

Author: Karl Merz, based on his article of the same name in GuH.

This is the question that is asked time and again. The answer is then usually: no. Thus, "The Herald of His Coming" headlines the first article in the new year with the words: "Today we have scribes, but no seers." Who would deny that there is much truth in such an assertion? But we cannot readily agree with the author in the unfortunately often sensationalized paper.

Let us first ask what the Scriptures mean by a "prophet." Perhaps we may simply say that it is a person through whom God speaks directly. It does not matter at first whether it is the past, present or future that is revealed, illuminated or addressed. All of these possibilities occur in Scripture. Thus we owe the first chapters of our Bible to retrospective prophecy. For no man was present at the creation of the world; it therefore had to be revealed later. Or let us think of the Samaritan woman to whom the Lord says, "Five husbands you have had, and he whom you now have is not your husband." The woman breaks out in amazement at this, saying, "Lord, I see that You are a prophet." There we were talking about the Samaritan woman's past and present. Or let us think of the speaking of the Old Testament prophets, who in many cases illuminated the past, present and future of individuals as well as entire peoples through their speaking. The prophets were (and are) often in contrast to the priests. While the one spoke directly from God, the other did - in the best case - such indirectly. If we want to bring it to a simple formula, then we may perhaps say with that Bavarian churchman: "The prophecy is both a foretelling and a prediction.

Paul writes in 1 Cor. 14:1, "Be zealous for spiritual gifts, but most of all, prophesy." It should be mentioned in passing that divination and prophecy are one and the same. Weissagung is the German, prophecy the Greek expression.

The word cited by Paul is more about the "foreshadowing". We want to stop a little bit at that. The situation in Corinth was this: There comes into the assembly an unbeliever or "layman," let us say a stranger. It is given to one or more brothers to speak of a guilt and sin that burdens the stranger, in this case: the still unconverted. This is done in such a way that this man (or woman) gets the idea that he (she) is meant. - I think of Heinrich Dallmayer. There he addresses a "Marie" in a meeting; he calls her by name. He says to her, "You have not come here today for nothing." In fact, this Marie had come to the meeting in an unusual way. Or there Fritz Binde has to do with a Miss who pretends not to be able to believe. She thinks she is not destined to believe. Then the Lord reveals to His servant how things really were with the damsel. Binde said, "No; but you seem to have destined yourself to adultery." Alarmed, she

admitted that she was living in an adulterous relationship with a married man. Or Samuel Zeller wanted to make clear in a devotional what to do if you embezzled something. "Suppose a blacksmith were sitting in our congregation; he comes from here and there and has stolen nails. What must he do?" Afterwards, a man who was a blacksmith by trade, who came from the place mentioned, and who had stolen nails, came forward in the consultation. - From Markus Hauser we read that the Lord sometimes showed him who would come to the consultation hour and how it was about them.

We know that even in our days there are circles that seem to have something similar. For instance, they say, "Among us is an adulterer." Or, "Among us is a thief." In a larger gathering, then, someone will always be found to whom this applies. However, such "revelations" often come not from the Spirit, but from the flesh. They not infrequently spring from a calculating deliberation that wants to make an impression, and they are not infrequently unchaste. We do not mean such prophecy. But we do think that the one in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 is needed in our circles. In any case, I have always been grateful when someone asked me at the end of a meeting, "Did you mean me?"

But today we are less concerned with predicting than with foreseeing.

Are we also lacking in this? We ask again: What does Scripture mean by such prophesying? In Rev. 19:10 we read about it: "But the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." This can hardly be understood as if everyone who has the testimony of Jesus, that is, is a possession of Jesus, also has the gift of prophecy. We understand it this way: Among those who have the testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy is also found, - not, with everyone, but here with one and there with one. The Bible of the Jubilee says aptly: "The spirit of prophecy consists not only in the gift of prophesying, but also in the gift of understanding prophecy. This spirit testifies to believers not only that they are children of God, but also that they will be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

I am happy to quote what our brother Kahn wrote to me at the beginning of this year: "I feel that today's prophetic proclamation is in great danger of being degraded and distorted. The false dramatic playing up of daily events pushes the prophetic view onto a false track."

We give two examples from our days. A brother writes to us that Goldwater will be the last world ruler. This happened before the election of the American president. But because it was not quite certain that Goldwater would be elected, that brother said, "And if he doesn't become president this time, then the next time." Or what are we to say when Walter Schäble in his booklet "The Believing Church in the Last Days" speaks of Hitler coming again, that is, not a man of his kind, but himself. Schäble considers him to be the eighth in Rev. 17. Don't these brothers realize how daring such claims are? By such (and similar) prophecies we make the prophetic word many times untrustworthy.

I think it is quite possible that the Lord also reveals details in between. We also have examples of this in the Bible and in history. On the whole, however, we will have to agree with brother Kahn that it is first necessary to recognize and emphasize the basic lines of the salvation event.

In this respect, however, I believe that we have made good progress in the course of the last decades. I will mention three things here.

An age ago it was considered a foregone conclusion in believing circles that we would have to go through the great tribulation, in the meantime the Lord has given increased light. On the one hand, the experts of the prophetic word consider that the great tribulation does not concern the Christians, but the Jews. One thinks here of Jer. 30, 7, where it speaks of a tribulation for Jacob. The same thought is found in Dan. 12, 1. Or look at Matth. 24. The sad picture that the Lord paints there has Jewish colors. What we have to reckon with is not a last great persecution of Christians, but a last severe persecution of the Jews. From there also another answer to the question of salvation from the great tribulation arises. When it breaks out, the members of the body of Jesus Christ will no longer be on earth. - So in the past, it was thought that "we" would still have to go through the great tribulation. Later, the great tribulation was moved to the middle of the last week of the year, and today there are more and more voices saying that we will be raptured before that. I think this is a step forward in the understanding of the prophetic word.

Furthermore, we include the distinction of two salvation bodies, namely Israel on the one hand and the body church on the other hand. We are surprised again and again that the conventional theology distinguishes an Old and a New Testament, but that it does not want to know anything about the change. Eph. 3 cannot be understood differently. For already the Old Testament prophets spoke about the fact that also the other peoples, i.e. the non-Jews, will be included in the salvation event. When Paul says that it was first revealed to him, it must be something new. His thought is this: So that the continuation of the plan of salvation would not stand still after the provisional rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, God had formed a new salvation body, precisely that of the Body of Jesus Christ. I know that most of the "interested" people do not want to know anything about this until today. Nevertheless, I consider it again as a progress in the understanding of the prophetic word that it may be talked about.

At last I call the thought of the all reconciliation. Also there I do not give myself to any deception. I know that again and again there is an attack against this truth. But it becomes clearer and clearer that the enemy is behind it, who understandably does not want to admit that "God will one day be all in all". Instead, even among believers, many still think they are arguing for the truth when they fight against the all-sufficiency reconciliation. In reality, they are doing the devil's business. Of course, the All Atonement must be understood correctly. It also knows hell punishments; but it has no room for endless hell punishments. Incidentally, it was very valuable for me to read

now also from the sober Pastor Michaelis, the chairman of the Gnadau Association at that time, that he does not exclude such a possibility (that of the All Reconciliation). (Th. Brandt shares this in his "Encounters on the Way").

Let us continue to hold up the lamp of the prophetic word and only take care that new oil always flows to us. Perhaps in this context we may also refer to this year's "Prophetic Week" in Seeshaupt. It will take place from October 9-16.

What Christ's return exhorts us to do (Col. 3:1-3) [A. Heller].

1 If therefore ye have been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting on the right hand of God. 2 Seek the things that are above, not the things that are on earth; 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with the Christ in God. 4 When the Christ, our life, shall be revealed, then shall ye also be revealed with him in glory.

Col. 3, 1-4

Author: Adolf Heller, transcript of a service in Berlin on 17. 1. 63

Dear friends, my brothers and sisters, saints and beloved of God!

There is a whole series of certainties in Scripture that the Holy Spirit wants to give us: the certainty of sin, the certainty of salvation, the certainty of the resurrection, the certainty of the Rapture, and other certainties. But every certainty that God gives is at the same time connected with holy, moral obligations that arise from it. Unfortunately, many people forget this. There is no truth in Scripture that did not require its realization in our lives. God is a holy God. For us, this results in the obligation to become holy like Him. God's promises represent obligations. A man was asked one day, "Why do you always fight against God's word?" And his answer was, "Because the Bible fights against me." God's word is sharper than a two-edged sword.

So tonight we want to talk about, "What are the holy, moral obligations that flow from the certainty of the Rapture?" About 300 times we read in the Scriptures about the return of Christ. This important truth makes a number of demands on us, imposes tremendous obligations on us. If we do not pay attention to it, these truths will become judgment for us.

1. the return of Christ reminds us to repent.

When Scripture speaks of repentance, it certainly means us as well, not just the people of Israel. To repent means to change one's mind, to think about something else, to detach our desires, appetites and cravings from something and to direct them to something else. The sharpest call to repentance is not for Israel and the Gentiles, but for us, the members of the Body of Christ. It is written in Col. 3, 1-3: "If then you have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Look for the things that are above, not for the things that are on earth; for you have died, and your life is hidden with the Christ in God. When the Christ, our life, shall be revealed, then shall ye also be revealed with Him in glory."

Our desires, longings and desires should be detached from this earth already here on earth. Our heart should be directed towards divine things. The hope of the Rapture encourages us to send our heart "into that place where it eternally desires to be. This is also what Stockmayer meant when he said: "Only the raptured will be raptured,"

Let us tear ourselves away from the pleasures and possessions of this earth and give our hearts completely to the Lord!

2. the return of Christ reminds us to be sober.

We read in 1 Thess. 5:2-6: "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. When they say, Peace and safety! then sudden destruction comes upon them, like birth pangs upon the pregnant woman, and they will not escape. - But ye, brethren, be not in darkness, that the day should seize you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Let us not therefore sleep as the rest do, but watch and be sober."

We live in an age of intoxication. The entertainment industry and advertising are geared to this intoxication. The worst is the religious intoxication. One deludes oneself about something that is not really so. One can also get intoxicated by high spiritual insights. Or one lets oneself be intoxicated by feelings. At a time when the world is becoming more and more intoxicated, we are asked to be sober and vigilant.

3. the return of Christ exhorts us to mutual encouragement.

In 1 Thess. 4:18 we are told to comfort and encourage one another with the fact that the Lord is coming again soon. Let us do this service to one another. We are in a bleak time of anxiety, gloom and sleeplessness. Many of God's children are also suffering from this. To these brothers and sisters we are to send consolation and encouragement.

The Second Coming of Christ reminds us to purify ourselves.

In the well-known word 1 John 3:1-3 it says: "...We know that when He shall be revealed, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

This practical purification is neglected by many. Purification is the putting away of what is wrong and unclean. This purification is linked to the powerful message that the Lord is coming again. We know that He is coming soon. Where this message is vividly proclaimed and grasped, it brings about purification in us.

5. the return of Christ brings about sanctification.

While purification is the putting away of the negative, sanctification has to do with the positive. After we put away everything, we receive His peace, His joy, His power. The one who purifies himself and gives himself undividedly to the Lord receives the power of God. He becomes a joyful witness from whose body rivers of living water flow. The message of the Rapture encourages us to purification and sanctification.

6. the return of Christ causes us to become faithful witnesses of Jesus.

Paul once wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1-2), "I earnestly testify before God and Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and at His appearing and His kingdom:

Preach the word, stand upon it in season and out of season; convict, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Witness ministry is the fruit of a living proclamation of Christ's return. Those who truly grasp the message of the Rapture cannot remain mute. This glorious expectation incites us to witness to Him in a way that is pleasing to Him.

7. the return of Christ saves us from judging our brothers and sisters.

In 1 Cor. 4:5 there is the exhortation, "Judge not before the time..." When the time comes, the saints are to judge the world and even angels. But not before the time! First the Lord must come and judge us before His judgment seat, where everything worthless burns in the fire of His day. After that we will judge with Him.

Before the judgment seat, each of us will become his praise. Everyone among us, even the most miserable, is the most valuable in some piece. Everyone will receive praise, but not in all pieces. We should therefore beware of judging before the time of the Lord's return. "Judge not, lest ye be judged," says the Scripture (Matt. 7:1). Here on this earth we are to judge ourselves, not change them. Uncharitable criticism and secret talk about brothers and sisters is the reason that we often radiate so little of the glory of Christ. The standards by which we judge others are the same standards by which we too are judged. Therefore, we do not want to change them, but judge ourselves.

8. the return of Christ exhorts us to love

We read in 1 Thess. 3:12-13: "But let the Lord make you perfect and overflowing in love toward one another and toward all (just as we are toward you), that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. " There is a holy exuberance. Paul was a sober man, but he was overflowing in love. Who has a firm, joyful, fearless heart? Who has learned to love. It is a serious truth to know that the Lord is coming soon. All those who lovingly long for His coming will be crowned one day (2 Tim. 4:8),

9. the return of Christ reminds us that as members of the body of Christ we are to receive a reward.

God does not reward us for something we have done or earned, but for what we have allowed Him to give us. If we let Him give us His peace, His purity, His joy, His power here on earth, we will receive reward. Wages, praise, glory and crowns are given at the judgment seat! (1 Cor, 3, 14; 4, 5; 9, 24, 25.)

The Second Coming of Christ reminds us to reckon with the coming of the Lord.

The fig tree, Israel, has already budded. Many things indicate that we are living in the last hour. Therefore, we know that the Lord is near. We want to count on His soon coming and adjust our lives to it.

The Mystery of the Transformation of the Saints (1 Cor. 15:51-57) [E.F. Ströter].

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, suddenly, in a moment, at the time of the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible will put on incorruption and this mortal will put on immortality, then the word that is written will be fulfilled: Death is swallowed up in victory! Death, where is your sting? Death, where is your victory? But the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

1 Cor. 15, 51-57

Author: Prof. E.F. Ströter, excerpted from his writing "The Prince of Life Must Once Inherit Everything".

A wonderful secret! A great triumph! How deeply shameful that in Christendom, even among the true believers, both have been so little appreciated, so little and poorly utilized! What rich sources of purest joy and uplifting assurance, of indomitable strength and never-failing consolation, "We shall not all fall asleep," lie in them. For centuries it has been written thus in black and white on the leaves of truth, and is as fully and unabbreviatedly true today as it was 1900 years ago; but a thoughtless Christendom sings with edifying emotion, "All men must die." Nothing is considered more certain in Christendom than death. Hardly any revealed truth has lost its influence on the thoughts and actions of most Christians as completely as this, that we will not all fall asleep, that thus for every generation of believers there is the possibility of not taking their exit from this life through the cemetery and through the horror of death, and that we therefore quite soberly do not have to deal with death.

- which is questionable - but we have to reckon with the appearance of our glorious Lord from heaven. Instead, one has allowed oneself to be convinced that under all circumstances the revelation and the reign of terror of the man of sin must first break in before the taking away of the congregation is to be thought of. The appearance of the Antichrist has been placed before the return of our Lord and Head, thus depriving the coming of the Lord of the characteristic of immediacy and complete unpredictability, which is of great importance for the practical position of the believers in this question.

"But we will all be transformed." Such is the second point of this wonderful mystery. For the divine mystery is both the preservation of a whole generation of believers from the mortal humanity of all classes, races, groups and estates, tongues and colors from the otherwise inevitable death and burial, and this almost still more incomprehensible transformation, or - as our apostle calls it in 2 Corinthians 5:4 - the being clothed, so that the mortal may be swallowed up by life. In the whole realm of our experience there is no process that offers us a satisfactory comparison. In the lower

creation, however, there is something from which one or the other hint to an approximate understanding could arise. We mean the wonderful transformation that takes place again and again in the disgusting, voracious caterpillar, which first spins its own web, in which it then becomes a chrysalis, which hangs motionless on the wall or ceiling with a few threads, but which then, under the invigorating influence of the sun's heat, bursts its narrow brown dwelling and swings through the air in dazzling splendor as a colorful butterfly. But also this comparison lags at more than one point. Only one thing we can see clearly, and that is the fact that the transformation cannot be a complete discarding or leaving of the present corporeality, but just a transformation, but not a complete elimination or annihilation, as it is often taught and believed.

With this wonderful, incomprehensibly powerful and far-reaching event, the fulfillment of that precious promise then comes into effect: "Death is swallowed up in victory." Already in the body of the crucified this victory became actual; for already then the God of glory raised us up together with Him and transferred us into the heavenly realm (Eph. 2, 6); but now it becomes apparent only on a large scale how very realistic and real this was meant. Now, as if in one fell swoop, a great, mighty body, the whole believing congregation of all time, in immortal, incorruptible corporeity, conformed to the body of His glory, stands at His unhindered disposal, to accomplish as His own fullness, the full measure of His divine greatness and majesty, all that has been spoken by the mouth of holy prophets of God from the beginning.

There we understand approximately the unprecedented triumph saying: "Death, where is your sting? Kingdom of the dead, where is your victory?" Long, weary millennia, filled with lamentation, woe and heartache, all mankind has sighed under the rule of the king of terrors, oppressed by fear of death all their lives. Now there is not only one firstborn who may say: "Behold, I was dead, and am alive for ever and ever", no, now there stands a great, glorious multitude of once quite wretched, enslaved children of sin and death, clothed with the same body glory, filled with the same imperishable fullness of life as their glorious head, their royal predecessor and host. They are the members of His body, the organs without flaw and blemish, without error and limitation, without sin and germ of death, are fully entitled co-victors over darkness, death and corruption in every form. Now it can finally become spring after the horribly long winter days of gruesome death reign for the whole human world. For it is His firstfruits from all peoples, tongues and languages, whom He can present before the face of His Father without having to be ashamed of them, without stains or wrinkles or anything like that.

Now the whole world full of sins can find salvation and redemption in Him.

There is no coincidence and no permission! (Ps. 119, 91, Rom. 11, 32) [K. Merz].

89 Forever, O Lord, your word stands firm in the heavens; 90 your faithfulness endures from generation to generation. You founded the earth, and it stands; 91 According to your provisions they still stand today; for everything must serve you!

Ps. 119, 89-91

32 For God has shut up all together in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all. 33 O what depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and how inscrutable his ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? 35 Or who has given him anything before, that it might be recompensed to him? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen

Romans 11, 32

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all else will be added to you."

Matth. 6, 33

so that at the name of Jesus every knee of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth may bow, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Phil. 2, 10-11

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above your ability".

1 Cor. 10, 13

Author: Karl Merz, from the article of the same name at GuH

There is no chance in God's government. Everything is premeditated and regulated. With regard to the events in the universe, we speak of natural laws. Here, however, we have to consider a double point. Firstly, we know up to now only those laws which have appeared up to now. This does not exclude that there are still others which we do not know only yet. If such then become obvious, we speak of miracles. With this, however, nothing else is said than that such a mode of action of God is new to us. God has more possibilities at his disposal than we know or even suspect.

Second, we can disrupt and disobey God's ordinances through clumsy or freewheeling actions. This is the point at which we stand in the present time. "Iniquity (better: lawlessness) will abound," says the Lord Jesus in view of the end of our age. We will have to bear the consequences of this. It will end in catastrophe. We hold fast: There is no **coincidence**.

But there is also no **admission**. Years ago we read the book by Karl Heim: "Jesus the Lord". In it, this theologian, who is also known as a natural scientist, proves that Jesus is **Lord** according to Phil. 2,11, namely over all who are in heaven and on earth and

under the earth. As such He has to command everything, but also to answer for everything. The Bible brings an almost overwhelming abundance of examples to prove this fact. We mention a few of them:

In Genesis 45:8, Joseph says to his brothers, "**You** did not send me here, God did." Yet his brothers had sold him into Egypt.

Similarly, we read in Job 1:21, "**The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away.**" On the face of it, it would not have been at all incorrect to say, "The Lord gave, Satan hath taken away." In Is. 45, 6ff. the words are written: "I am the Lord and no one else who makes light and creates darkness, who gives peace and creates disaster. I am the Lord who does all these things." Further still we are reminded of the word in Amos 3, 6: "Is there also a calamity in the city, which the Lord does not do (not merely: permits)?"

When David was on the run, he had to experience the following: One of Saul's relatives, named Shimei, cast stones at David and cursed him. He called David a bloodhound and a hopeless man. This was an insult to his majesty the likes of which could hardly be imagined. After all, David was still the rightful king. There it is quite understandable that one of David's entourage wanted to "tear off the head" of that Shimei. But David refused Abishai - that was the man's name - with the words: "You children of Zeruiah, what have I to do with you? Let him curse; for the LORD hath commanded Him, saying, Curse David."

In God's government, not only is there no chance, but there is also no permission. Psalm 119:91 says of God, "All things must serve You." This includes evil and the wicked. This is what Emanuel Geibel meant when he said in his "Prayer for September 1848":

Yes, that blindly and unconsciously **even the devils have to serve** Your grace and holy conclusions, when they do according to their desire".

God does not create evil, but He **uses** it. These things play a not insignificant role in God's "department of education.

Shimei was not wrong in his accusation insofar as, for example, the blood of Uriah was shed on David's order. In any case, David saw the Lord behind Shimei.

I have long since gotten out of the habit of talking about "admission. If we do it anyway, then we block our way to God. We then get stuck with intermediate powers and middle causes. Pastor Humburg once said in Königsfeld, "We are dealing **1. always** and **2. everywhere** and **3. only** with God." This word has served me well then and often since. When I see things in this way, when I look God in the eye, as it were, He can talk to me best and He comes to His right and goal with me most quickly.

There is only one divine will in the government of the universe as in the leadership of the individual.

Afterword by H. Schumacher: For some, what has been said may be a "hard speech". Maybe some think: Doesn't the step speak now and then of "allowing God" in the sense of "letting it happen" e.g. in Ps. 121, 3 ("He will not **allow** your foot to stagger") and in 1 Cor. 10, 13: "God is faithful, who will not **allow you to be** tempted beyond your ability" (Elbf. trans.)? (Strictly speaking, it speaks of not allowing.) - I think we should not lay down a law here ("You must never speak of allowing God") - but I quite agree with Br. Merz that the word actually says too little. Even where God does not act Himself and even where He does not like something at all, it is **always** subject to **His** will - if not the will of pleasure, then the will of counsel (cf. Eph. 1,5.11).

Coincidence?

Nothing on earth is meaningless;
It is planned by God before eternity And
wants to
lead
to eternal goals, beautiful and great, The
long-suffering, poor creation.
There is not a chance in the world,
Not near nor far;
The Father, who holds His universe in His hands,
Directs every little rod and the course of the stars.

Every event has purpose and goal.
The father has measured out everything to us.
His will forms the beings struggle and game, and
has not forgotten even the smallest thing.
By own malice the enemy goes to ruin.
What he plans against us, he will encounter.
The word from God's mouth is unmistakable,
That He will protect and bless His own.

His salvation is for the evil and the good,
which ultimately overcomes all beings.
Even the enemy's poisonous arrow of fire
only
works what
God proclaims beforehand.
The ruler of all worlds serves the universe;
Who before the creation already foresees the goal,
Knows for certain that always and everywhere His
plan will be gloriously fulfilled.

A. H.

Further reading:

[Seek what is above \(kahal.de\)](http://kahal.de)

[Divine or Human Wisdom \(kahal.de\)](http://kahal.de)

[Of the secret and revealed will of God \(kahal.de\)](http://kahal.de)

[115100 - K.Layer - What is faith about, 11.2002.mp3](#)

98900 - K.Layer - What is the superiority of God, 02.2005, GuGW.mp3

11600 - A.Muhl - God does not impute evil.mp3

50400 - A.Heller - Origin, Purpose and Aim of Evil (1967).mp3

God turns curse into blessing (Deut. 23:6) [A. Muhl].

But the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam; but the LORD your God turned a curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you.

Deut. 23:6

They may curse - but you bless

Ps. 109, 28

Author: Arthur Muhl, after a word service in Arosa. Also available as MP3 (<https://data.kahal.de/mp3/27400 - A.Muhl - God turns curse into blessing.mp3>)

Dear brothers and sisters, we were allowed to point out in these days that in Christ not only all the hard words of the Law and dark passages of God's Word become promises, but even the curses of God.

We will now talk about these curses, and I hope that after this contemplation we will be able to agree overwhelmed in our hearts when I say: God has given it to us to see and hear things which no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and which have not entered into any man's heart. But God has revealed it to us through His Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9, 10).

When God turns curses into blessings, He does not do it in such a way as to

We can simply put the curse aside, make it disappear and put the blessing in place of the curse. We would already be more than satisfied with that. But God is able to take the curse as it is and transform it into blessing by fulfilling the curse Himself in Christ, placing Himself under the curse and allowing the full power and authority of the curse to be discharged upon His head and to take full effect in His heart. God transforms the curse into a blessing.

A curse of God is a hanged man

In Gal. 3, 13 we read a word that we find similar already in Deut. 21, 23: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on the wood!" In and of itself, this seems to be one of the most unmerciful words in the Bible, and we might think: Is it not enough that this one already hangs on the wood because of his sin, does he, because he hangs on the wood, also have to endure a special curse?

Now we read of Christ that He not only took the curse upon Himself, but He became a curse for us, and in doing so, He ransomed us from the curse of the law. Thus we see how one of the hardest words of the Old Testament is transformed before our eyes and in our hearts the moment we see Jesus hanging on the wood: The curse becomes a blessing, even becomes the basis of our redemption and of all God's redemption. "Whoever beholds Jesus on the cross in faith will be saved at that very hour!"

God's curse in paradise

We know where the first curses of God were pronounced: in Paradise against the serpent, against the woman and against the man. I will pick out just one piece from the curse on Adam, It reads, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat your bread."

Did Christ also take this curse word upon Himself? Do we ever see the Lord Jesus "in the sweat of His face"? We know that in the Garden of Gethsemane His sweat fell to the ground like drops of blood. And in John 4:34 He tells us what His bread, His food is: to do the will of the Father. So the Lord was ready, in the sweat of His face, with a shaken soul, to eat His bread, to do the will of the Father.

We can already guess how wonderfully the Lord took all these curses upon Himself and let them run riot in and on Himself, fulfilling them and thereby transforming them into wonderful divine blessings and into the basis of salvation.

Cursed is he who will build Jericho again

We turn to Joshua 6:26 and read, "And Joshua sware in that day, saying, Cursed be the man before Jehovah that shall arise and build this city Jericho. With his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and with his youngest shall he set up its gates."

Joshua, dear brothers and sisters, is a wonderful man of God. His name is called Jesus in Greek. Now we hear here from this Joshua a curse, which is even confirmed with an oath. That means: What is pronounced here, what is laid down here in the form of an oath and formulated precisely, this is not shaken, this must be fulfilled, it remains so. There is no discussion about that at all. Now the city of Jericho had been destroyed, and Joshua's curse is directed against the one who is under the command to want to rebuild this Jericho. And now comes the exact wording of this curse (literally translated, cf. Elbf. footnote): "At the price of his firstborn he will lay its foundation, and at the price of his youngest he will set up its gates."

Let us now pay attention to the fact that the formula of this curse is not written in the case of possibility, but contains an exact prophetic prediction: It will happen like this.

Now the Scriptures do not leave us in the dark about what follows. It tells us in 1. Con. 16, 34 the following: "In his days H i e l the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho. At the price of Abiram his firstborn he laid her foundation, and at the price of Segub his youngest he set up her gates, according to the word of Jehovah which He had spoken by Joshua the son of Nun."

So had it been God's intention that there should never be another Jericho? No! How then could Elisha ever have blessed the still poisonous springs of Jericho and turned them into healing waters? How then could Jesus have entered Jericho one day?

Now a wonderful name is mentioned here in 1. Con. 16, 34: In those days H i e l rebuilt Jericho. Hiel means "God lives" or "God of life". So we can read: In those days the living God rebuilt Jericho. Does this living God have a firstborn? Did He lay a

foundation at the cost of that firstborn? Yes, He gave away His firstborn and put it under curse to rebuild "Jericho," that is, to restore a creation that had fallen under the curse of corruption. For Jericho is derived from the word "moon" and means "moon city" or "bulwark of the moon", an image therefore for the bulwark of the ruler of darkness. It once had the name: the palm city. Just as Jericho was once an image of love and peace (palm tree!) and became the image of the bulwark of darkness (moon!), so also the whole creation of God, once a work of God's love, has come under the curse of transitoriness. What was the case with Jericho in the small, has happened with the creation in the big. And now God cannot simply rebuild what He has put under a curse, as Paul also says in Gal. 2:18: "If I rebuild what I have broken off, I present myself as a transgressor." There is a legal situation here, and God cannot simply, because He is the Almighty, say, "I put creation under the curse, but now I repent, and I'll build it up again tomorrow." Then He would present Himself as a transgressor. In order for Himself not to become a transgressor, He must be willing to pay the price set by the formulation of the curse, and we know He did that when He gave His firstborn Son as the foundation, thus paying the price first mentioned. Only now is He in the legal position to rebuild what has been destroyed, what has fallen under the curse.

Let us think of that Hiel, the man who rebuilt the city at that time: First he had to clear away the ruined walls and piles of rubble. While he is at work with his firstborn son, a boulder falls and buries his son. This boulder is so heavy that he has no choice but to simply leave his firstborn son there. Now the city is built on top of it.

Now the priests and Levites come by there and say, "Stop, what are you doing? Jericho must not be rebuilt!" Then Hiel answers them: "Gentlemen, read what is written! Already my firstborn son lies buried down there. Please, gentlemen, I have paid this price, and now no one, neither earth nor heaven, can stop me from continuing to build."

After the legal position of reconstruction is secured from the moment God was willing to pay this price, no one can stop Him from continuing to build.

But now comes the second. There is still talk of a second prize. When I was embarrassed and asked God for wisdom in this regard, a biblical house, a biblical family, suddenly stood before me: the house of Jacob. There is a firstborn, and there is a youngest. The firstborn, in the sight of God and in the spirit, is not Turnip, but Joseph. And the youngest is Benjamin. Now Joseph in the OT represents Christ in a wonderful way as the firstborn among many brothers, the firstborn of those who have fallen asleep and of the whole creation. If this firstborn now represents the Son of Man, then this youngest must also represent a man who was especially loaded with blessings from God and divinely equipped, a bearer of the word of God, a finisher of the word of God even, i.e. a gate-hanger of Jericho, because the gate-hanging and the handing over of the key mean the completion of a thing.

Now as Joseph and Benjamin are the two main and central figures among all sons of Jacob, so Christ and Paul are the two so specially commissioned sons of God. Christ the Abiram (i.e. "whose father is on high"!), the firstborn of Hiel, with whom the foundation was laid; Paul the Segub = "the superior one", the gate-hanger, who is allowed to complete the word of God (Col. 1, 25), i.e. to hang up the gates of the completion of the formerly cursed creation.

Intermediate testimony of Adolf Heller: Because Paul is the apostle of the church, we can also find the whole church of the body of Christ represented in Segub. You may know, my brothers, to whom the Father has given all judgment: to the Son (Joh. 5, 22. 23). The gate is indeed the place and the symbol of judgment. The judgments all took place in the gate. But according to 1 Cor. 6, 2. 3, to whom is it given to judge the world and the angels? To the church. The Father hands over the judgments to the Son, and the Son hands them over to His body, the church.

When the first son died, Hiel knew exactly that I had only sacrificed half. The youngest will also get his turn. And he dared to do it for this high purchase price. This is again an example that Christ and His church, His body, are one. (As far as A. Heller.) 4. Joshua's Curse on the Gibeonites

Now we turn our attention to a "riffraff" of which Joshua 9 gives us news. I will report it briefly and then pick out a few words. We have already heard that all Canaan was unmercifully given over to the curse of corruption. And now Joshua, the warrior of God, comes near with Israel, with the battle lines of the living God. Jericho has already fallen and Ai has also fallen. The people of Gibeon, one of the highly fortified cities of Canaan, heard all this. What did these accursed Canaanites do in response? They believed the news they heard and sent a delegation to Gilgal, to the camp to Joshua. Now the Gibeonites had heard that Joshua, the man of God, had taken Jericho and Ai and other cities with cunning. Then they said to themselves, "If a man of God takes a city by stealth to destroy it, then we Canaanites, who are cursed anyway, ungodly by nature, may well dare to go to Joshua in our turn by stealth to save ourselves. Therefore, what do these deputies look like? They are not high councilors in uniform, but they come along in worn rags, torn shoes, with moldy bread and worn-out wineskins. Thus they wanted to pretend to the Israelites that they came from a distant country, from a journey of perhaps 500 km, were exhausted and at the end of their strength and belongings.

In this guise, the "ragamuffin" comes to Joshua, the model on Jesus, in the camp at Gilgal, the Hebrew keyword for the New Testament Golgotha, and asks for a covenant.

Whoever comes to the Lord Jesus to Golgotha as a "rascal" in the hope of being pardoned, has the prospect of being saved and escaping the righteous judgment that should actually be executed on him. Were we not all such when we first came to the Lord at Calvary?

The Gibeonites acted out what we are, and what they too actually were in God's eyes. There, when they brazenly and boldly lied to Joshua, without knowing it or wanting to, they told the truth for the first time and showed themselves as they are before God. - Didn't we all act in our own way when we first came to Jesus?

But now voices are raised in the camp of Israel asking, "Have you really come from so far away, or are you from this land of Canaan? What do the Gibeonites do in response? The leader stands before Joshua and says, "We are your servants. It is not for them to decide about us, but for you." Brothers and sisters, what can we learn from this! When our sins accuse us or the accuser stands up against us, what do we have to do? We immediately turn to Jesus.

Joshua makes a covenant with them, and the princes of the congregation swear to them to keep them alive. Then they set out again, and on the third day all Israel realizes that they have been deceived and that the people with whom they made a covenant are living among them.

Then Joshua has these men come before him and says to them, "Why have you deceived us? ... Cursed are you!" And now imagine the Gibeonites! They had had hope of salvation, but now when Joshua curses them, they think, Now it's all over. But now comes the miraculous. Now we see into the heart of Joshua. He does not judge without listening to them. And they tell Joshua how wonderfully God saved Israel from Egypt and what miracles He worked in the desert. And then they say: We heard all these things, and feared Jehovah your God, and did this thing. Thus they confessed before the visible and invisible world: We have believed your God more than you yourselves!

Didn't Rahab do the same? She told the scouts the same thing. "We have heard what your God has done for you." Therefore, she was not killed with the unbelievers, but was stamped a heroine of the faith. And so these cursed Gibeonites are also cursed for their actions and yet saved for the sake of their faith. They are, as it were, begotten into life by Joshua with a curse.

Let us imagine the situation: When the Gibeonites for the second time before

When Joshua is standing there, he hears a murmuring of the children of Israel all around, because they are full of anger and indignation against these Gentiles who have played this trick on them. When he notices how this is festering and smoldering and grumbling around him and how they would like to tear the Gibeonites apart, he cries out loudly, "Cursed are you!"

Now there is silence all around. Now the hard hearts of the Israelites are satisfied. But as the curse continues, "Do not cease to be servants, hewers of wood and drawers of water." So, in the curse he secured their life and service to the house of God. Therefore verse 26 says, "So he did unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel; and they slew them not." By what did Joshua save the Gibeonites,

who were under the curse, from the hand of the Israelites? By a curse! Do we understand from this context one of the motives of our wonderful God why He curses? He curses in order to save.

But now the question arises: Joshua, did you act according to your own heart and discretion? What does God in heaven say about this? And now it becomes even more miraculous (Joshua 10): At the moment when the Gibeonites are in this covenant relationship with Joshua, they incur the enmity of their former tribesmen and are immediately attacked by the rest of the Canaanites. So they send to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and ask him for help. What does Joshua do? Immediately that same night he arms Israel and goes up all night to Gibeon. And in the morning, when the sun rises, the battle begins between the hosts of Israel and the hosts of the rest of the Canaanites. And in between, secure in peace, sit the Gibeonites.

And now the sun - representing Christ - rises higher and higher, it becomes noon, and the sun already wants to incline to the decline.

Then Joshua knows: If this battle continues as it has until now, then the sun is inclined to set, and our victory has not yet been won.

Then Joshua said to the LORD in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon! - And it stood still about a whole day." According to the biblical account, the sun stood still only once, but not because of Jerusalem and not because of Berlin and not because of New York, but because of the "ragamuffin people," because of Joshua's pardons. Because of these people the sun stood still about one day and the moon in the valley Ajalon. (by the way a shadow image for the millennial kingdom: The sun, Christ, rules 1 day, while the moon, Satan, the same time "in the valley" lies imprisoned).

A few more remarks about Gibeon, which was cursed and yet wonderfully gifted and protected by God: Where did the tabernacle stand later? The Tent of Revelation stood on the high ground at Gibeon. Where did God meet Solomon in a dream that night? At Gibeon. With the former "riffraff". With the pardoned ones of Jesus Christ the tent of the revelation stands. There one asks God for wisdom, and He also gives it to us.

Later, when David asked God, after three years of famine, why this trouble came upon Israel, the prophet told him (2 Sam. 21): "It is because of Saul, and because of the house of blood, because he slew the G i b e o n i t e s ." It was a stumbling block to Saul in his covetousness and zeal that these Gentiles had then been gifted by Joshua and were to have this position in Israel at the house of God. And then he determined in his heart to exterminate all the Gibeonites. But what did God do? He exterminated Saul and his house. God is merciless in one thing, namely in those who do not exercise mercy or who, where He has exercised mercy, bring judgment and want to know better.

Now David calls representatives of the Gibeonites to him. What does the king say to these Gibeonites? "What shall I do for you, and wherewith shall I make atonement,

that ye may bless the inheritance of Jehovah? " (2 Sam. 21:3.) Who is greater, he who blesses or he who is blessed? He who blesses (Heb 7:7). The inheritance of Jehovah, the people of Israel, is wonderful in God's eyes, but even greater here in God's and in David's eyes is the former "ragamuffin" of Gibeon. These formerly cursed, but now pardoned, are alone in God's sight able to bless the inheritance of God.

God turns curse into blessing! How unfathomable are His judgments and His ways inscrutable! Amen.

Further

Reading:

God turns curse into blessing (illustrated by Joshua's curse on the Gibeonites))
(kahal.com)

<https://data.kahal.de/mp3/27400 - A.Muhl - God turns curse into blessing.mp3>

All of us (1 Cor. 15:51, Rom. 8:32) [A. Heller].

3 among whom also we all at one time led our lives in the lusts of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and of the thoughts; and we were by nature children of wrath, as were the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 hath quickened even us, who were dead in trespasses, with Christ - by grace ye are saved!

Eph. 2, 3

13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether we were Jews or Greeks, whether we were bond or free, and we were all made to drink into one Spirit.

1 Cor. 12, 13

18 But we all, beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, that is, by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Cor. 3, 18

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: though we shall not all sleep, yet shall we all be changed, 52 suddenly, in a moment, at the time of the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Cor. 15, 51

10 For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive that which he has wrought through the body, whether good or bad.

2 Cor. 5, 10

10 But thou, why judgest thou thy brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;

Rom. 14, 10

13 Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect maturity of manhood, to the measure of the full stature of the Christ.

Eph. 4, 13

31 Now what shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare even his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also give us all things?

Rom. 8, 32

Author: Adolf Heller, Postscript of a word service in Berlin by Adolf Heller, published in GuH,

Also available as MP3 lecture: <https://data.kahal.de/mp3/02700 - A.Heller - Wir alle.mp3>

My friends and brothers, you saints and beloved of God!

May the Lord reveal Himself to us tonight in such a way that we can behold Him with the eyes of faith and be grasped and filled and overflowing with what He is and how He is. God grant us not only a fleeting encounter, but grant us to let ourselves be grasped by Him to the very last, deepest and most secret of our subconscious and unconscious. This is my deepest wish. And may what we have just heard in the song of the singers come true: "Eternity, shine brightly into time"! God grant that in these minutes!

This evening I would like to give a testimony of two little words that the apostle Paul used several times and in which he unites himself with his letter recipients and connects with it statements that show the last and deepest of our being lost and the way of our salvation. These little words are called: "all of us". These two words are food for the spirit and an anchor for the soul in the contexts we want to consider. Through them we are all united. May they be indelibly imprinted on us by the Holy Spirit!

We will now look at eight testimonies in which the little words "we all" appear in Paul's letters.

1. we were all lost

According to Eph. 2:3, "we also once all had our traffic in the lusts of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature the children of wrath, as were the rest." - There are no inherently noble, free people. We all were - or are to this hour - children of wrath; we lived - or still live - in the thoughts and lusts of the flesh; we did, or still do, the will of the natural flesh insofar as we are not yet in Christ Jesus. Whoever recognizes this fact once, trembles and breaks. We have been saved only because we are lost by nature. The apostle includes all in this statement - also himself, all in Ephesus, all in Corinth and in all churches. We all belong to it as well. Those who have not yet died into it cannot yet understand salvation. By recognizing this fact, we became ready for salvation for God.

2. we have all been baptized in one Spirit into one body

In 1 Cor. 12:13 we read, "For in one Spirit also were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all made to drink into one Spirit."

Whoever is saved in the time until Christ comes again is a member of the Body of Christ, whether he knows it or not, whether he desires it or rejects it/To the devout Ephesians the apostle Paul says, "We are all sinners by nature." And to the riven church at Corinth he cries out, "We are all members of the body of Christ." This second "we all" means nothing less than that also, we all belong to the one body of Christ, who have been saved by means of faith. Do those also belong who reject it, who defile this dignity? They too. If a royal child plays with gypsy children and defiles himself, not thinking of the dignity of the Father and of the inheritance he is to receive one day, he still remains a royal child. Thus we are and remain all members of the body of Christ. This is a blessed fact. We form with the Christ the "fullness Christ of God" to whom the most unheard-of promises are given.

I ask all who have not yet accepted the Lord Jesus: open yourselves to the work of the Spirit of God, open yourselves to the Word that invites you! Let it take hold of you! Then the Spirit of God will also build you into the body of Christ!

Paul emphasizes here that we all form the body of Christ. Not only the advanced ones belong to it. It includes all who recognized their lostness and let themselves be saved, all who love the truth more than the lie.

3. all of us, looking at the Lord, are transformed

Paul writes in 2 Cor. 3:18: "But we all, beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, are being transformed in the same image from glory to glory, as through the Lord, the Spirit." At the moment when we let ourselves be taken by Christ, when we give our sin and shame, our longing and fear to this Lord, when we take refuge in Him, at that moment the Lord begins in us, through His Holy Spirit, an inner transformation, a transformation that we ourselves often do not even notice. But others notice it, not only people, but also angels and demons. By beholding the glory of the Lord, we are transformed. Everything we look at - be it good or evil - has a transforming effect on our inner man. By looking at the glory of the Lord with our faces uncovered, we are transformed, all of us. As you gaze upon the Lord in the Word, in prayer, in communion with the brethren, you are transformed. To the extent that you look at the world, the nature of the world shapes you. That is why we are to blame if we rise sometime gloomy or little glorious instead of being radiant and beautiful! We will all have an inherent clarity, different as the clarity of the sun, the moon and the stars. In pedagogy, "to look at" means to take in something with all the senses and organs. A banana, for example, is looked at, painted, smelled, eaten. Therefore, looking at the Lord also includes eating the Lord's meal. By looking at him we are all to be

transformed, not only the Corinthians, not only this or that congregation. What we look at works on us as a radiant power and shapes our being.

4. we will all be transformed outwardly as well

In 1 Cor. 15:51 we read, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: though we shall not all sleep, yet we shall all be changed in a moment. . .".

Already today, looking at the Lord, we are transformed inwardly. Thus we heard. By looking at him, the Fall came. And when David looked at Bathsheba, this history of sin began in his life. But when we look at the Lord, we are transformed into His image. This is how sanctification takes place, and this is also how perfection into His image takes place: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3r 2). We see Him then not as we have imagined Him, but as He really is.

Today already, the inner vision transforms us through faith, through the Word, through prayer, in the fellowship with brothers, through the breaking of bread, through the confession of sins, through the laying on of hands. Then, when the Lord comes, the outward transformation also happens. And the outward transformation will correspond exactly to the degree of our inner transformation.

The return of the Lord is closer than we suspect. The Lord is near. Soon He will come. Then not all will have fallen asleep, but all will be transformed. The degree of radiance, the fullness of light, which we will then radiate in the universe, corresponds exactly to the degree of transformation which we are now experiencing inwardly, which we are allowing to take effect in us. We ourselves participate in the radiance of our resurrection body by letting the Lord shine into us and clear out everything dark.

5. we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ

We read in 2 Cor. 5:10: "For we must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what he has done in the body, according to which he has acted, whether good or evil." The Apostle Paul does not say: only the imperfect, or only the noble will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. No: all of us! All who were a possession of the Lord Jesus will be raptured once, even if imperfections and evil were still found in their lives - as believers. But there, before the judgment seat, everything will be uncovered that was not uncovered here on earth. But what we have uncovered here on earth in terms of sin and guilt will no longer be brought up there. We can be sure of this. God will never remember these sins again, and we will not remember them either. Not all the sins of the believers will be rolled up there, but only those in our lives that we have not put under the discipline of the Spirit of God, that we have covered up. What we cover up here will be uncovered there, but what we uncover here will remain covered up for time and eternity and will not come up again. Whoever has done good after being saved will receive praise, reward or the crown. Each one will then receive his due praise (1 Cor. 4:5).

6. we will all be brought before the judgment seat of God

"But you, what are you judging your brother? Or even you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all be brought before the judgment seat of God." (Rom. 14:10.) After we have undergone the final cleansing before the judgment seat of Christ, we are spotless and blameless. We will then be presented to the Father Himself and placed before the judgment seat of God. Then the Christ (head and members) will stand before God the Father without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27).

7. we shall all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God

"... until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the full growth of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4, 13.) For the edification and perfection of the saints a number of ministries are given. After all, we are not yet perfected. For this purpose God has given shepherds, teachers, evangelists, prophets and apostles. We need these ministries for our preparation and completion. But one day we will all attain to the knowledge of the Son of God. To know in Scripture means to beget life. Just as the Son of God begets new life, we will also beget new life in completion.

We do not want to despise any ministry that is happening today for the edification and completion of the body of Christ, including the evangelist ministry. All of the above ministries are necessary.

8. to all of us the Father gives the Son - and with Him everything!

According to Romans 8:32, God "did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all." This is followed by the bold question, "How will He (God) not also with Him (the Son) give us all things?" - Here, too, we are all addressed and meant. Two things are spoken of: a) Christ has been given for us, b) With Christ the Father will present us with everything - literally: the All.

The taking away of our sins was accomplished by the Lord Jesus alone. But to reach His completion, His fullness, He needs us, His addition. Because the universe is completed through us. Therefore, God gives us the All with Christ. - How little we still see and understand of the glories of the Bible. But He is faithful. Praise be to the Lord! Amen.

Salvation through the serpent of brass (Deut. 21:4-9, Jn. 3:14-15) [A. Heller].

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3, 14-15

4 So they departed from Mount Hor on the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of the Edomites. But the people grew impatient on the way. 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses, saying, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is neither bread nor water here, and our souls are disgusted with this wretched food! 6 Then the Lord sent seraph serpents among the people; and they bit the people, so that much people died in Israel. 7 Then they came to Moses and said: We have sinned in that we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Ask the Lord to take away the serpents from us. And Moses asked for the people. 8 And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a seraph, and fasten it to a standard of the field; and it shall come to pass, that whosoever is bitten, and looketh on it, shall live. 9 So Moses made a serpent of brass, and fastened it to the standard; and it came to pass, that if a serpent bit any man, and he looked upon the serpent of brass, he lived.

Genesis 21:4-9

1 But I do not want you, my brothers, to disregard the fact that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea. 2 They were also all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and they all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink; 4 for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them. Now the rock was Christ. 5 But with the majority of them God was not well pleased; for they were cast down in the wilderness. 6 Now these things have happened as an example to us, so that we may not lust after evil as they did. 7 Neither become idolaters, as some of them did, as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to enjoy themselves." 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed fornication, and in one day 23,000 fell. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted him and were killed by serpents. 10 Neither murmur, as also some of them murmured, and were slain by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things which befell those are examples, and they were written down for a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages is come. 12 Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing, let him see that he does not fall!

1 Cor. 10, 1-11

Author: Adolf Heller, excerpted from his article "God's Miracles in the Desert".
[God's miracles in the desert \(kahal.de\)](http://kahal.de)

In spite of many graces and love, preservation and help, Israel grumbled again and again.

Thus Genesis 21:9 tells us, "And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, when a serpent had bitten any man, and he looked up to the serpent of brass, he lived."

We also want to pick out only a few essential features from this story and see what the brazen serpent and its later history has to tell us.

Saraphs, burning or fiery serpents, were sent by God as punishment for mistrust and grumbling.

Are not these burning, pain-causing serpents an apt image of our consciences and minds when we are not in grateful obedience before God? Have we not often experienced that our heart is full of fear and anxiety, full of piercing doubts and burning shame, as long as our relationship with the Lord is not in order? Must not even a Goethe, that lap child of happiness and success, confess in a letter to the Countess von Stolberg about a time full of joy and pleasures: "In all this it was to me like a rat that has eaten poison; it runs into all holes, slurps up all moisture, devours everything edible that comes in its way, and its interior glows with unquenchable fire?" --

Moses again becomes the mediator of salvation. Quickly a winding groove is dug in the desert sand; ore is melted and poured into the moistened sand to cool. In the meantime, a long wood was prepared, the bronze snake was attached to it and the pole with the symbol of sin was rammed into the ground.

Not the one who struggled against the fiery serpents, not the one who, forgetting his own need, helped others, but the one who, believing, looked at the lifted up serpent, became healthy all at once. The Lord Himself testified that this event foreshadowed Golgotha with the words: "As Moses lifted up a serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15).

What a simple and important lesson the serpent of brass gives! It is not our efforts and accomplishments, but the faithful, trusting look at the Lord lifted up to the cross that is able to heal the burning wounds of the fiery serpents most completely and immediately. It is not in what we are and do that our crying conscience is silenced, but in what the Lord is and what He has done.

Not a device from the sanctuary or holy of holies was exalted, but a serpent. The Christ made sin and not the model of the holy Son of Man Jesus means the basis of our salvation. How much this simple truth is still buried and distorted today, even in the most pious circles! Again and again, justification is made dependent on some meritorious work of the creature instead of on the all-sufficient saving act of Christ. Neither repentance nor confession, restitution nor forbearance and service, but the cross alone is the supporting foundation of our salvation. Looking at the bronze serpent, looking at the crucified Christ, conveys salvation to us.

Man tends to get attached to visible signs and forget the essence, the spiritual content of a thing or truth. We find this also when we follow the story of the brazen serpent. Namely, the children of Israel took the nechustan (copper plate, copper serpent) with them and later offered sacrifices to it. Instead of the living God, they worshipped dead metal.

King Hezekiah (in German: meine Stärke ist der Herr), the son of Alias, carried out a thorough reform soon after the beginning of his reign. It brought an internal purification and unification, the abolition of the "high places", the sites of nature worship and superstition. In the process, he also destroyed the Nechustan. Perhaps the Israelites had thought of the Egyptian serpent god Serapis or imitated the multiple serpent cult of other peoples when they worshipped the bronze serpent, - in any case they had forgotten the living God and the miracle of His ways of salvation and had fallen into an external idolatry.

Are we not in the same danger? Do we not also place God-given means in the center and thus displace the Lord Himself? Does not the intimate contact with God often fade away in our lives because of all external things, which in and of themselves are neither wrong nor evil? How many advocate this or that "doctrine" with great zeal and acumen, sacrificing time and energy, money and goods for trivialities?

And what about the community of love and unity of life with and in Christ? How many rest on real or imagined salvation experiences they made years or decades ago, and have slipped from the state of being awakened or even grasped and filled with God's Spirit into a dead ceremonial of inner or outer church kind! The word: "Wake up, you who sleep"! Paul did not call out to Gentiles who were far from Christ, but to members of the Christian churches.

What is the name of the Nechustan to whom we sacrifice? Let us smite it, that a new thing may arise, and that Christ alone may truly become all things to us! Let us not forget that all these things are written for our admonition!

God is for us!

(Romans 8:31)

God is for us! Who could harm us?
More than a father to his own son,
He
pours out
to us the full measure of His grace, and
gives us the light and reward of His love.
And when trust gives way to me and joy:
God is for me!

God is for me! He is never alien and hostile to us,
even if it often seems so;
His heart is always inclined to us and friendly
, And always only for the best He means it.
When sometimes happiness and splendor abruptly faded, -God
is for me!

God is for us, that we want to grasp firmly,
Even if the soul cries in bitter pain.
He can and will never let us go, And
guides us faithfully, whatever happens.
Though deep fear sometimes crept upon me, God
is for me!

Has God given us His Son in vain,
In vain bestowed on us the Holy Spirit?
How could He not
consecrate
His own life to us,
To draw us all to Himself?
He remains faithful, never forsaking any; -He
loves me, too!

On a grander
scale than we ever comprehended,
He has but seen the best for us,
Like a diamond cut for us,
That we stand before Him in brightest splendor.
O grasp it: He wants me all for Himself;
That's how He loves me!

A. H.

The spirit of peace and joy (Ps. 51, 12) [A. Köberle].

1 To the precentor. A psalm of David.

2 When Nathan the prophet came to him, because he had gone in to Bathsheba:

3 O God, be gracious to me according to your goodness; blot out my transgressions according to your great mercy.

4 Wash me completely from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin;

5 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

6 Against thee only have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thine eyes, that thou mightest be right when thou speakest, and pure when thou judgest.

7 Behold, in iniquity was I born, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

8 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inmost parts: so let me know wisdom in secret.

9 Defile me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

10 Let me hear joy and gladness, that the bones may rejoice which thou hast broken.

11 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

12 Create for me, O God, a clean heart, and give me anew a steadfast spirit within me.

13 Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.

14 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and strengthen me with a willing spirit.

Ps. 51, 1-14

Author: Prof. A. Köberle, after his article of the same name in GuH

Pentecost is the feast of the Holy Spirit. Some people have honestly admitted that they can associate a vivid image with the reference to God and Christ, but that they cannot really understand the testimony of the Christian church about the Holy Spirit. And yet it can be said very well what the Holy Spirit is. He is the personally continuing life power of Christ, who wants to give us all anew time and again.

The Holy Spirit is called the "Comforter" in Jesus' farewell discourses. In the original text of the New Testament, the word means lawyer, defender, advocate, who wants to give us his legal assistance when we are in hopeless trouble. It is precisely this service that the Spirit of God wants to do for us. He comforts us and stands by us when we are in despair over a failed life, he strengthens us with power from on high when we want to despair.

Holy Spirit is not there where we are swept into a rapturous religious fever. But everywhere it becomes Pentecost where we hear the pastoral voice of Christ: "My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." We always want to create salvation from the outside in, and yet it can only come from the inside out. The Spirit of Christ must touch our hearts. Where this miracle of grace occurs, a peace enters us that is higher than all reason.

But if we have peace with God, then we may also live in peace with ourselves and with the people around us.

When the peace of God enters our hearts through the sealing of His Spirit, then completely new possibilities of joy arise. For the most part, we can hardly change anything about the external conditions of existence. But we may ask God, as it says in the words of the 51st Psalm, "Create in me, O God, a clean heart, and give me a new and certain spirit; comfort me again with Thy help, and with a joyful spirit equip me!"

The sevenfold joy (1. Joh. 1,4) [K. Schäfer].

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and which our hands have touched of the word of life 2 - and the life has appeared, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and appeared to us - 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full.

1. john 1, 1-4

The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Nehemiah, 8, 10

Author: Kurt Schäfer, from his article of the same name at GuH

Some believers think: It's all well and good with joy, but it's not really that important. It is similar to the icing on a cake, which would also be good without icing. That's how some people imagine joy to be: As Christians, we are supposed to rejoice, but there are more important things than joy.

I would like to remind you that in Galatians 5:22, the apostle Paul mentions joy in second place among the ninefold fruit of the Holy Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, chastity." Just as the Holy Spirit works love in believers, He also wants to work joy.

It is not a matter of pulling ourselves together and saying, "If we are to rejoice as believers, and joy is so important in the Christian life, then I must make an effort to rejoice. We would have to look a little more joyful. The well-known Nietzsche word is bandied about: "The Christians would have to look more redeemed if I were to believe in their Redeemer." Modified a little: "Christians would have to look more joyful ..." Then we strain and strain to get some joy on our faces. I guess it can't be like that!

The joy that is meant there is a fruit of the spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit must create it, and he does. Our part in this is that we make room and clear away what holds joy down, thorns and thistles and all kinds of garbage. We want to put away what can hold down joy in the life of a Christian. There are heavy-blooded children of God who have a hard time with the fact that there are light-blooded children of God who always have such cheerfulness and who are so outgoing. They have access to all people, but everything is so difficult for them. Not all cheerfulness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. If you have received an optimistic attitude toward life from your father or mother, thank God for it. You will have an easier time in life. But that is not yet a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Fruit of the Spirit is something the Lord wants to work in every believer. That is why we want to point out a sevenfold joy from the Scriptures.

1. the joy of salvation

"The jailer rejoiced with his whole house that he had become a believer in God" (Acts 16:34).

This prison officer had had the most difficult and at the same time the most beautiful night of his life. This earthquake night had become so difficult for him that he wanted to take his own life because he feared that the prisoners had escaped. And yet it turned out to be the most beautiful night, ending with a feast. In the life of the jailer, the joy of salvation had dawned, the joy that he had become a believer in God.

This "believing in God" does not mean that he believes from now on that there is a God. That is not yet a reason to rejoice in salvation. In James 2:19 there is the word: "You believe that only one is God? You do right in this; the devils also believe it and tremble."

Jesus had previously been proclaimed to this prison officer as the hand of God stretched out to us human beings. Certainly, Paul made the cross and resurrection clear to him in brief. Paul and Silas testified, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou and thy house shall be saved." The man had grasped this and had thus found access to God through Jesus. He had experienced, "He who has the Son has also the Father." Thus he had become a believer in God as this wonderful Father. No wonder that he now rejoiced with his whole house.

So the joy of salvation arises where one finds faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ as his Savior and thereby also to the Father. But the joy of salvation is not only something for new converts. Because it is based on the great deeds of God, salvation joy is also a matter for those who have long been in the faith. Isaiah 61:10 says, "I rejoice in the Lord, and my soul is glad in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation and clothed me with the robe of righteousness." So, joy in salvation is based on the great deeds of God and not on our emotional experiences.

We see this also in the eunuch from Ethiopia. Philip had preached the gospel of Jesus to him. The eunuch had come to faith and had been baptized. Then the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip up. How gladly the eunuch from Ethiopia would have had this brother still with him! Nevertheless it says: "But he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). He knew: My joy and my peace, my confidence and my hope ultimately do not rest on this Philip, but on the great deeds of God, which He has done in Jesus Christ once and for all.

The joy of salvation is so real and clear because it rests on the certainty of salvation. The Lord Jesus says in Luke 10:20, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven!" With this, something decisive has happened: Names are written in heaven. Paul says in Philippians 3:20, "Our citizenship is in heaven." So believers are people who have a double residence. They live here on one side and have long been citizens in the other world of God on the other side. Hebrews 12:22 says, "You have come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." This is not primarily a funeral text, but the

apostle writes this to the living: You are at home in the city of the living God. That is where you are enrolled. Most of what we are interested in is there: our great God and Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, the myriads of angels; also most of the children of God are already there. The crown of righteousness is also laid back there. In a hymn it says, "And enter I into heaven by His blood, then shall I no stranger be there."

2. the joy of words

"You received the word in great tribulation with joy in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:6).

The joy of the word comes from hearing the gospel and receiving it in faith. The apostle Paul reminds the Thessalonians: "Do you remember how it was when the gospel was preached among you? You heard it and received it with great joy. Do we remember how the word came into our lives? Was it in a church service or at a tent crusade, under the testimony of a fellow worker, or on a Gospel Radio program? Do you remember what it was like when you first grasped and believed, "The blood of Jesus Christ makes me clean from all sin"? When the word entered our lives: "I have called you by your name, you are Mine!", joy arose in us, word joy about the Gospel that was given to us.

But word joy is not just at the beginning, when the gospel first hits us, but continues as we get deeper into our Bible. Do you remember what it was like when you first really started getting into the Word? Maybe you bought a new Bible translation and started underlining out of sheer word joy. You have discovered what is written there. You have experienced: "When the Lord meets me in His Word, when I see the great deeds of grace, how He blessed the people of the possession, how He loved them, pardoned them ever and ever, then my heart rejoices to You, great Ruler: How great Thou art, how great Thou art!" Word joy also comes when we are allowed to see how this word runs. Psalm 119:14 says, "I rejoice in the way of Thy testimonies as in all riches."

While it is largely quite quiet in our circles, elsewhere the word is running mightily. There are churches in the Third World that are growing every year by ten, twenty or thirty percent and even more. Their only concern is that they are bursting at the seams and don't have enough people to teach and carry on. When we see the course of the Gospel like this, word joy arises.

This also happens when God's Word comforts us in the darkness. What the prophet Jeremiah went through! How much he needed comfort! The chief priest Pashhur beat him, threw him into prison and put his feet in the stocks. But Jeremiah confesses: "Your word was my food as often as I received it, and Your word is my heart's joy and comfort" (Jer. 15:16). Similarly, Psalm 119:92 says, "If Your law had not been my comfort, I would have perished in my misery." What we have in the word, we notice very deeply just when everything else disappears from us. Like Jeremiah, we can experience the joy of the Word in this special way.

3. the joy of sharing

"He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom who stands by and listens to him rejoices greatly at the voice of the bridegroom. This joy of mine is now fulfilled.

He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29, 30).

His disciples told John the Baptist about Jesus' ministry: "Everyone comes to Him." He does mighty things, everyone runs after Him, and you? You are written off. This is a painful thing when others are favored past us. Here we notice that the joy of sharing is a very rare thing.

John says, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." The bride is Israel, the bridegroom is the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Because He has come, the doors are now opening and there is a great offer of salvation for Israel. So I can only rejoice when everyone comes to Him. "He must increase, but I must decrease." That is true greatness. So we are not surprised that the Lord Jesus said: "Among all those born of women, there has not appeared one greater than John the Baptist" (Mth.11,11).

Normally, we react very, very differently. When others are preferred to us, it is a bitter matter for us. How quickly we are hurt, irritated and angry! Such a reaction we see with Ahithophel in 2 Samuel 17. Ahithophel was the counselor of King David. When Absalom rebelled against his father and David had to flee, Ahitofel quickly changed his allegiance and became the apostate's counselor. It was said of Ahitofel, "In those days, when Ahitofel gave advice, it was like asking God for something; so much did all Ahitofel's advice apply to David and to Absalom" (2 Sam. 16:23).

Ahithophel makes the suggestion, "I will choose twelve thousand men and set out and chase after David this night and will attack him while he is faint and despondent." This speech pleased Absalom well and all the elders in Israel.

But Absalom now also asks Hushai, David's friend. Absalom could not know that he had been smuggled in to nullify Ahithophel's advice. Hushai advises the opposite. "Then Absalom and everyone in Israel said:

The counsel of Hushai the Arkite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. So the LORD sent to prevent the wise counsel of Ahithophel, that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom."

Certainly it was the first and only time that Ahithophel's advice was rejected and the advice of another was preferred. "But when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not carried out, he saddled his ass, and arose, and went home to his own city, and set up his house, and hanged himself, and died" (2 Sam. 17:23). This is the reaction of the natural man when another is preferred.

Paul speaks of fellow rejoicing in the church of Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:26: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and if one member is honored,

all the members rejoice with it." Fellow-suffering is not so rare. It even exists in the world, but co-joying? That is an expression of fellowship with one another.

Have you ever thought about the fact that it is not difficult for us to share joy on the family level? When things are going well in the family, when someone gets to go on a nice trip, or when one of the children passes his or her high school graduation, everyone rejoices with them. That's quite normal, you don't have to make an effort.

Now the apostle Paul says, "We are one big family in the church of Jesus Christ. "When one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." This is an expression of the fellowship that the Lord works in His church. Those who have Christ's Spirit are drawn to one another by the Spirit of God.

God's Spirit dwells within us. The same Spirit draws us together. In this fellowship with one another grows such heartfelt co-joy. However, this fellow-joy also includes the knowledge of the richness that is given to us.

Do you remember the elder brother of the prodigal son? He did not rejoice at his brother's homecoming, but became angry and would not go in. Then his father went out and asked him. But he says, "Behold, so many years have I served thee, and have never yet transgressed thy commandment, and thou hast never given me a goat to be merry with my friends." But the father tells him, "All that is mine is thine." Has he not yet realized that he is the heir? Now he comes and wants to have a goat.

Here we notice: Part of rejoicing is knowing how rich we are in our Lord Jesus Christ. When we know that everything is given to us in Him, then we can rejoice with Him from the heart.

4. the community joy

"What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And this we write, that our joy may be complete" (1 John 1:2, 3).

How does this communal joy come about? Through the preaching of the apostles, who were eye and ear witnesses. Towards the end of the first century, when the old apostle John wrote his letters, there were already influences in the communities that went in a very specific philosophical direction. There were people who pretended that they had a particularly deep knowledge, that they had a much broader insight into the mysteries of God than the rest of the Christian people. This movement of gnosis ("knowledge") had devastating effects.

Here the apostle John says: You are standing on a completely different ground, not on the windy ground of gnosis. We, the apostles, are eye and ear witnesses. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard.

After Judas had fallen out, a twelfth apostle had to be elected. Peter said at that time: "Therefore one of these men, who have been with us all the time that the Lord Jesus

went in and out among us-from the baptism of John until the day He was taken from us-must become a witness with us of His resurrection" (Acts 1:21, 22).

The church of Jesus stands on the ground of the apostles, the eye and ear witnesses. Also today, those who have received life from God may pass on this life. This is how the living community and this joy of community come about.

Our fellowship is twofold. John says, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." That points us upward. But John also points out, "We have fellowship with one another" (v.7), you with us and with one another. So it is a vertical and a horizontal fellowship. Both belong together. This is also where joy comes from. But fellowship is not without problems. We still become guilty of one another. This disturbs the community and therefore also the community joy. The worst thing, however, is not that we sometimes become guilty of one another, but that we hold it against one another. The worst thing is that some believers have a tendency to preserve the sins of their brothers and sisters as if in a preserving jar. Some have a whole shelf at home. It has everything on it that they have already experienced.

When I was very young in the service and still had little experience, I ventured a bit too far in the eyes of an older brother. What I said at that time was probably right, but not how I said it. Anyway, I heard that the older brother was extremely upset with me. Therefore, I checked in with him to talk to him. He said to me, "After all, I could be your father. You were still in diapers when I had already been in the church for twenty-five years. What you said, I swallowed. You know, this is all nothing. What I've experienced in the decades in this community, you can't imagine at all." Then he reaches into his vest pocket and pulls out a piece of paper.

On it he wrote everything that had been done to him in all the years in the community, either actually or only supposedly evil. Of these, I was now the last. All he had to do was take out the piece of paper. Some believers have such alarm jars in which everything is preserved. How terrible that is! Why don't you put an end to these jars, to this carrying on, to this keeping of the old evil stories! It breaks down the community and prevents community joy. Instead, let's throw it all into an idol's tomb. When Jacob came to terms with his God, he dug a large grave and threw all the idols into it (Genesis 35:4). Then community grows again and also community joy.

5. the joy of hearing

"Verily, verily, I say unto you: If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be complete" (John 16:23, 24).

This word reminds us of the Sermon on the Mount, where it says in a very similar way, "Ask and it will be given to you." So there is answer to prayer. Already in Psalm 65:3 it says: "You hear prayer; therefore all flesh comes to You."

Already in the Old Testament the great distinction between idols and the living God is emphasized again and again: "Our God is in heaven; He can create whatever He wants. But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths and do not speak, they have eyes and do not see, they have ears and do not hear, they have noses and do not smell, they have hands and do not grasp, they have feet and do not walk, no sound comes from their throats. Those who make such idols are like them, all who hope in them. But Israel hope in the Lord! He is their help and shield" (Ps.115:9).

Every believer knows about answers to prayer. This gives joy of hearing. When we have presented our request to the Lord and He hears us, what joy that is! The Lord wants to strengthen us and tell us: "Child, I am here! You can count on Me. I will not leave you nor miss you in the future."

But it does not always go like this. Sometimes we ask and receive nothing. Then this spontaneous joy of hearing is also missing. It can be serious things that affect the whole life. Requests that we do not receive can be difficult and become a challenge for us. There are certain helps.

1 John 5:14 says, "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." Prayer is not a blank check. Our praying is limited "if we ask anything according to His will".

There is a movement in Christianity today that says, "It is not right for children of God to add to their petitions: 'Lord, if it is Your will.' That paralyzes the confidence of faith, that plunges into doubt and nullifies the whole prayer. We know it is His will, and that is how we get it, that is how we pray." Dear brothers and sisters, that would presuppose that we always know exactly what His will is.

But we often do not know that. "As much as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Is.55:9). Even though we are on the level of the new covenant and have God's Holy Spirit, we are still not God's secret councils who know from the beginning: This is God's will.

Let us think of 2 Corinthians 12, where the apostle Paul speaks of his thorn in the flesh. This was a distressful thing for him. There was a Satanic angel beating him with fists. This deeply distressed the apostle with regard to his ministry. He explicitly says that he prayed to the Lord three times that this thorn in the flesh would depart from him. True, he had to keep this distress and this burden. And yet he was heard, because the Lord answered him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power comes to perfection in weakness."

If we pay attention to how the apostle Paul processed this, we discover: The Lord answered this prayer of His apostle in such a way that more came out for the Lord and for Paul than the way Paul had asked. When the apostle realized this, he said, "Therefore I will boast most gladly of my weakness, that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore I am of good cheer in weakness, in abuses, in afflictions, in

persecutions, and in fears for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." A very unique way Paul deals with this challenge here. We sense here something of joy of hearing.

6. the joy of suffering

"I am filled with consolation. I am exuberant in joy in all our tribulations" (2 Cor. 7:4).

I can only speak about this very carefully and cautiously. There is joy that all God's children know:

Joy of salvation, joy of the Word, joy of God's gifts, joy of exaltation. There are other joys, which are not known by everyone. Already the joy of sharing is rare; so also here the joy of suffering. And yet it is testified to in a number of places in the New Testament, and not a few experience it today. This joy of suffering is about very different kinds of suffering.

The sufferings in temptations

"My dear brethren, consider it pure joy when you fall into many temptations" (Jas.1:2). Temptations can be a heavy suffering. Where should joy come from? In temptation faith grows, in faith patience endures (Jam.1,3.4), just as storms cause a deeper rooting of trees. The object of joy is not the challenge itself, but what God makes of it and brings about in it.

The sufferings in tribulations

"Now I rejoice in my suffering which I suffer for you, and make restitution in my flesh for the lack of afflictions..." (Col.1:24). These were not general hardships, but everything related to the apostle's present situation, his life in prison in Rome. What was joy there? It was not senseless suffering for Paul: "I make up in my flesh what is still lacking in tribulation in Christ, for His body, which is the church." As with the Son of God as the Head, God has also allotted a certain measure of suffering to the Body of Christ - these are God's holy ways, into which we now hardly see. Paul, too, only hints at it. But full of joy he knows: All uncaused suffering has meaning with God.

The sufferings in weakness

"We rejoice when we are weak" (2 Cor. 13:9). This weakness makes us completely dependent on the Lord. But this is the best condition for power: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2.Cor.12,10). The greatest miracles of God have happened in hopeless situations.

The suffering in persecution

"You endured the robbery of your goods with joy" (Heb.10:34). This was also Paul's experience in the prison in Philippi. So did Peter and the other apostles: "They went away from the council rejoicing that they had been worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake" (Acts 5:41).

Why there joy? "Blessed are you when you are reviled above the name of Christ; for the Spirit, who is the Spirit of glory and of God, rests upon you" (1 Peter 4:14). Those reviled experience the special presence of God in the Holy Spirit. It is said of Stephen before the high council, "They saw his face as the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). The deprived may rejoice because they "have a better and lasting possession in heaven" (Heb.10:34).

We do not need to search for suffering. It already finds us by itself, as far as it is intended for us by the Lord. But when it comes, we can count on God's special consolations in the midst of suffering, so that it may even come to joy, to the joy of suffering: "In all this we overcome far more for the sake of Him who loved us" (Rom.8,37).

7. the joy of completion

"The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with shouting; everlasting joy shall be upon their head; gladness and joy shall take hold of them, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa.35:10).

The joy of completion is a double joy: it is the joy of the goal and the joy of the goal.

The joy of the goal

"Be joyful in hope!" (Rom.12:12). So this is anticipation. It is covered by the Word of God. We do not rejoice in the blue. We do not fantasize about heaven because it is too uncomfortable for us on earth. We can rejoice in hope because that hope rests on God's Word. That there are many dwellings beyond the grave is not something we imagine. The Lord told us that in John 14:2. This is like a covered check, signed by the Lord Himself.

It gives us strength. Even of our Lord we read: "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross" (Heb.12:2). Hope from which no strength comes is either an empty hope without reality or a mere mental knowledge that does not grasp our heart. One of the main reasons why God speaks to His children about things to come is that they receive power: "I hold that this time's suffering is not worthy of the glory that is to be revealed in us" (Rom.8,18). For Paul, this was a deep conviction that marked his life: "Bonds and tribulations await me there. But I do not count my life dear, that I may run my race with joy" (Acts 20:24). We want to ask that our hope comes from the head to the heart.

The joy of the goal

This joy comes first: "When therefore Jesus Christ is revealed, whom you have not seen and yet love ... you will rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious, and will bring away the goal of your faith, which is the blessedness of your souls" (1 Peter 1:7-9).

So this is a joy of a completely different quality that we don't know here yet. Why not? What is different there?

It makes you look. Until then it was said, "Whom you have not seen." But now the promise is fulfilled, "We shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Not as He was once seen on earth, as thousands have seen Him. Nor as the disciples and Mary Magdalene saw Him after His resurrection - at that time He could still be mistaken for the gardener. Also not simply like Paul before Damascus and John on Patmos - that was a dimmed seeing in a vision - both would not have endured more. The one immediately became blind, the other "as dead". But there we are made fit for the inheritance of the saints in the light and have the new spiritual body. Now we are able to see Him with unveiled face (2.Cor.3,18).

It leaves us silent. Some people have somewhat simple-minded ideas about what they will say. But this is not a garden party. It goes beyond all imaginations. There is no comparison with anything here. That is why this joy is "inexpressible". In truth, all words are lost on us.

It corresponds to the Lord, it is "glorious". Glory is the essence of God: not only light without shadow, but also complete harmony. Twice Paul speaks of the "blessed God." The joy of the redeemed at the goal is a "glorified" joy, it corresponds to the Lord and His glory. This includes that it does not end: "I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:22) - rejoice as God rejoices!

Should it then be raving if we set before us in faith what the Lord tells us about it? We will need it on our wanderings:

"He who sees this in his mind does not stop at the road, gladly leaves the child's play, hurries to the goal."

From Karl Geyer:

Joy is:

- the soul's desire for the real, the true, the essential,
- in goodness, in faithfulness and truth, in the unclouded light of eternity.
- the unison of a being with its origin,
- the correspondence of the becoming with the being,
- the harmony of the temporal with the eternal.
- The overflowing bliss of the one who has attained immortality in God, who is now certain that no one and nothing can separate him from communion with God and from the enjoyment of His love.

Of the last things (Job 29:24) [G. Heinz-Mohr].

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and which our hands have touched of the word of life 2 - and the life has appeared, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and appeared to us - 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full. 5 And this is the message which we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and yet walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; 7 but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:1-8

14 But we urge you, brothers, warn the disorderly, comfort the fainthearted, care for the weak, be long-suffering toward everyone. 15 See to it that no one gives evil for evil, but always do what is right, both for one another and for everyone.

16 Rejoice always.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In everything be thankful, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

19 Do not put a damper on the Spirit.

20 Do not despise prophecy.

21 Examine everything; keep what is good.

22 Keep away from evil in every form.

1 Thess. 5, 14-22

22 My word was not contradicted, and my speech dripped on them. 23 They waited for me as for a rain, and opened their mouths as for a late rain. 24 I smiled upon them when they had no confidence, and the light of my countenance they could not dim. 25 I chose the way for them, and sat at their head, enthroned as a king in the midst of his multitude, as one who comforts the sorrowful.

Job 29:22-25

6 And Sarah said, God hath prepared a laughter for me; he that shall hear it shall laugh with me.

Genesis 21, 6

Author: Gerd Heinz-Mohr, from his out-of-print booklet "Sermon, ob der Christ etwas zu lachen habe", 4th ed. 1965

Why is sadness a major sin? It reveals that there is something deeply wrong between me and God. It is tired despondency of heart, hopelessness, yes, worse, rejection of hope. It does not trust God 'to keep what he promises. It does not trust Christ to be the same 'yesterday, today and forever, the 'first and the last. It does not want to be redeemed to freedom and joy.

For an existence on earth that does not reckon with Christ risen for us, the old saying applies: "I come, I know not whence; I go, I know not whither. I am surprised that I am joyful." Our joy is based on knowing where we are at home, and knowing the One who takes us home. We know why we are joyful. Joyful, courageous and patient.

This confident serenity corresponds to the "dialect of the process of faith. It overlooks nothing of the earthly things to be carried embarrassingly and takes quite seriously what determines this eon with guilt and apostasy, the existence in opposites, the fragility, suffering and transitoriness. But it risks to see beyond. It affirms the future of God. Therefore, in the midst of the world, it is a sign of the overcoming of the world and shines all the brighter against the dark background of forlornness and fear. Only from this risk of faith arises the serenity and thus the wide breath even in the face of death.

One of the old desert monks was dying. Mournfully, crying, the brothers stood around his camp. Then he opened his eyes and laughed several times in succession. Affected, the brothers asked, "Speak, father, why do you laugh while we weep?" Then he answered, "I laughed because you fear death; I laughed because I go from great labor to eternal rest." With these words he closed his eyes and died. Only a heart that is at home has a truly good laugh. "Laughs at the dark gulf of the earth, laughs at death and the hells . . ."

The question of whether a Christian has something to laugh about is ultimately decided by the right conception of death. "The Christian's laughter is truly about the last things, his last things and the last things of the world. The Christian's mirth is - we already pointed out - an eschatological virtue. It is not conceivable without time, but also not without eternity, which embraces time. Faith will be suspended in looking; hope will be fulfilled and will end when God will wipe away all tears from our eyes and death will be no more, nor suffering, nor crying, nor pain will be any more.

3 And I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tent of God with men! And he shall dwell with them; and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be

with them, their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain: for the former things are passed away.

Rev. 21, 3-4.

But God's good laughter will remain, and then our mouth will finally be full of laughter and our tongue full of praise. This can and should already begin here, a happy, praising agreement with the holy order of God. Whoever looks at the ruins of a world empire, as they are so vividly revealed in Rome, for example, learns what transience is and what realistic insight speaks from the words spoken at the solemn entry of each new pope into St. Peter's: *Sic transit gloria mundi!* Thus passes the glory of the world! But who then descends into the incalculable corridors of the catacombs and wanders past the tomb niches and crypts, reading "and looking at what is written and painted there, learns what the future is. This is countered by another Gloria: "Gloria in excelsis Deo! Glory to God in the highest!" What an atmosphere of certainty and cheerfulness: the inscription characterizing the simple Christian tomb without more, "In peace!"; the symbols of the Garden of Paradise, the Tree of Life; the stag at the spring; the images of birds as the 'parable of saved souls; the fish whose Greek name envelops Jesus' name and meaning; the Good Shepherd; Jonah emerging from the whale; the raising of Lazarus; and above all: The Joyful Supper, whose extremely frequent illustration highlights at the same time the meaning of Christ's Supper, the joy of communion at the love feasts of the first Christians, and the anticipation of the Supper in the Kingdom of God. So many parables, so much eschatological joy.

"Clothe yourself, then, with joyfulness!" Our laughter is our yes to humanity, to creatureliness; our yes to the experience of the great joy, of God's incarnation for us; our amen to the coming of the kingdom, where peace and joy laugh, to the eternal God: praise. Jesus' word is unequivocal: "These things I speak to you, that my joy may abide in you, and that your joy may be full." We, who accept our salvation, throw away all sorrow.

The French King Henry IV, once on a journey to Northern Italy, freed a hermit monk who had fallen into the hands of the soldiery, and told him to make a wish. To this the monk replied, "So I wish that you be joyful every day!" The same wish should conclude this speech: Joyfulness of heart every day! To be able to say on each day: This is the day the Lord is making; let us rejoice and be glad in it! And know, today already daily knowledge, that we may laugh also at the end, at the best - gladness of heart at the time of which the last book of the Bible speaks: "Almighty God has taken the kingdom. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory!"

Be joyful in hope, stand firm in *tribulation*, *persevere in prayer!*

Romans 12:12

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice. 5 *Let your meekness be known to all people! The Lord is near!* 6 *Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known before God.* 7 *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* 8 *For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are pleasant, whatsoever things are virtue, or whatsoever things are praiseworthy, be mindful of these things.* 9 *Whatever you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.*

Phil. 4, 4-8

The times of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21) [K. Geyer].

"... whom (Jesus Christ) indeed heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things, of which God hath spoken from of old by the mouth of His prophets" .

Acts 3:21

"For God hath shut up all together in unbelief, that He might pardon all" .

Rom. 11,32

"For judgment will be without mercy against him who has not exercised mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." "He will not break a bent reed or snuff out a smoldering wick until He leads the judgment out to victory".

Matth. 12,20.21

God has always talked about restoring all things. The universe is not only created from Him, but also to Him. All things are designed from the beginning to return to Him. And what has been is what will be again.

Eccl. 1:9, 10

Author: Karl Geyer, excerpted from his book Lebenswurzeln der Gemeinde, Volume I.

The end returns to the beginning. Everything is put again in the right place. Only then everything stands no longer in _the arrangement, but in the fulfillment. And this fullness is reached by two means: grace and judgment. As we can see in Israel, the selection reaches its goal through grace, but the mass is saved through judgment, which is why the people as a whole await the Lord on the path of His judgments. In this way, by grace and by judgment, all Israel will be saved.

The salvation of Israel is a pledge for the salvation of all. The Holy Spirit explicitly testifies through the mouth of Paul in Rom. 11:16: "But if the firstfruits are holy, so is the mass!" Israel is the firstfruits of God from the nations of this earth (Ex. 4:22-23), just as the body church is the firstfruits that bear the Spirit. Therefore, when the thousand-year kingdom in which Israel has the leadership of the nations is over, and when the world of nations is destroyed in the judgment of fire, God creates a new heaven and a new earth. How long this creation will last, we do not know. We do know, however, that many creatures must remain in the lake of fire for eons. About the duration of these judgments nothing is told to us further than that they last from aeon to aeon, thus at least from one aeon to the other. Thus, the sin that is not forgiven but has to be atoned for, the blasphemy of the spirit, is said to be forgiven neither in this aeon nor in the coming one (Matth. 12,32). There the word aeon is in the singular. In contrast, it is said of grace that God will pour it out on us in goodness in the coming eons (plural!) (Eph. 2,7). Grace is just more effusive than sin. That there are differences in judgment is shown by the word of the Lord alone: "It will be more

tolerable for Sodom in that day than for that city" (Matth. 10,15, 11,24; Luk. 10,12). Since Sodom and Gomorrah are an example of the judgment, in that they suffer the aeonian fire ([ud. 7), but according to Ezk. 16:44-63 they come out of the judgment, are justified, are comforted, are restored to their former state and to their inheritance, we see that there is a restoration from the eternal (better: aeonian) fire.

The universe is created to Him, and He is the bringer again from the dead and the restorer of all things, who has talked about this restoration from the Aeon on. It is His aim with everything! And from it nothing and nobody can dissuade Him. "What He has purposed and what He wants to have, that must come at last. to His purpose and goal!"

If all Israel is saved as the firstfruits, and if Sodom and Gomorrah are released from the aeonian fire chastisement and restored, then we also understand that the other nations that had to go through perdition will be restored, and as nations. For on the new earth, when the heavenly Jerusalem has come down, the kings of the earth bring their glory to the city of God (Rev. 21:24), and the nations bring their honor and glory to it (Rev. 21:26).

There will be no more condemnation and no more curse (Rev 22:3). But the restoration will take times. Those released from the judgment of damnation are not yet immediately able to enter the presence of God. What they missed on earth, they now have to make up for. They can neither endure the full light of God's presence in the city, nor are they able to enjoy the power food of the tree of life. Therefore, they also receive only the leaves of the tree of life, which serve for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).

But this healing process leads to the fact that finally the whole creation is freed from the bondage of corruption and is raised to the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The end of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the last Bible book, leads us to the point where the new earth and the new heaven are there and the times of the restoration of all things start to run. The full goal and end, as God shows it among others through Paul in 1. Cor. 15,28 or Eph. 3,9-11, is no longer shown in the revelation. For Paul was allowed to say what was not revealed to anyone else. The final goals of the eons were revealed to him (1Co 10:11 basic text). And these revelations were necessary to complete the body church for the cosmic goals and tasks that God set for this firstfruits of the Spirit. But for this we worship Him, now and forever!

All beings pay homage to the Lord! (Is. 45, 22-24) [K. Geyer].

"I have sworn by Myself, out of My mouth has come a word in righteousness, and it shall not be undone, that every knee shall bow to Me, every tongue shall swear to Me and say: Only in the Lord do I have righteousness and strength! For unto Him shall return, and be ashamed, all they that were aroused against Him."

Isa. 45, 22 - 24

"Jehovah of hosts has sworn and said: Verily! As I have purposed, so shall it come to pass; and as I have decreed, so shall it come to pass."

Isa. 14, 24

Remember the former from the primeval times, that I am God and no one else; a God to whom no one can be compared. I proclaim from the beginning the end, and from the former times what has not yet come to pass. I say: My counsel shall come to pass, and all that I please I will accomplish.

Isa. 46, 9. 10

„ . . . having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath set before Himself for the administration of the fullness of times: to bring all things together under one head in Christ, things which are in the heavens, and things which are in the earth; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being first ordained according to the purpose of Him that worketh all 5 according to the counsel of His will."

Eph. 1, 9-11

"And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all that is in them, I heard say, To Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the power, From everlasting to everlasting!"

Rev. 5, 13

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of the heavenly and earthly and subterranean, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Phil. 2, 9- 11

" . that even the creation (ktisis = the created) will be set free from the bondage of corruption to the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth together, and lieth together in travail of birth until now."

Rom. 8, 21.22

Author: Karl Geyer, excerpts from his book "Lebenswurzeln der Gemeinde - Band I".

God has sworn! What creature dares to doubt His oath? Does He not expressly say that everything will come as He has sworn, and that He will carry out everything as He has previously considered? Nobody can prevent Him from it! And a piece of this will is this: God wants that all people are helped and that all come to the knowledge of the truth. And everything that He wants, He also does!

To carry out His will, there are two ways open to Him: Grace and judgment. He who submits voluntarily receives mercy and does not come to judgment. Those who are recalcitrant will be broken in judgment when their own ways come upon their heads.

That will just be the bitterest realization in the judgment that one has caused this disaster oneself.

In the judgment it is demanded of every human being according to what he has or received before, but not according to what he does not have. God's justice is absolute and untouchable. He can prove once all events of the world history "on record", because every ray of light reproduces everything pictorially and every breath of age accompanies the enormous sound film at the end of the world history in divine volume. There everything is revealed down to the depths of the heart, and the motives of all actions are made clear. There will be no more denial, because everything was really so, as it is shown publicly. God remains righteous when He judges, and His righteousness is proven when He completely reveals all the cards and completely convicts all godless sinners of their evil works. .

There all talking back falls silent! Every tongue is silent, and every mouth is clogged and closed.

According to the Scriptures, the majesty of God is shown precisely in the execution of His judgments. He does not despise His captives (Ps. 69, 33). Yes, although He is very powerful, He does not despise anyone (Job 86:5). On the contrary! When He has to punish, His pain is so real and deep that no creature can feel it. Just read the judgment of Pharaoh of Egypt (as an example of the true ruler of darkness) in Ezk. 31 and notice in verse 15 how deeply the Lord grieves for a sinner! We feel in our worthlessness nothing so pure and sublime as He, the thrice Holy One. That is why many speak of the judgment so throwingly, because they unconsciously bring their own sadism and Pharisaic gloating into everything, so that an old church father said, "This will indeed just increase the blessedness of the blessed, that they may see the torment of the damned." - To add anything to such a word would be to do it too much honor. Such a thing can only be read with pain and disgust. But God, who does not proceed violently like the prince of the power of the air, also always applies His great power and glory gloriously and sublimely and holy and wonderfully. And His motive is and always remains love! He not only demands from us that we do everything out of love, because without love everything is of no use, but this demand to us comes from Him so that we prove ourselves as His sons in this way (Matth. 5, 44-48; Rom. 13, 8-10; 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5,6; 5, 14; 6,1.2; Eph. 1, 15; 3,17-19; Phil. 1,9-11; 1 Thess. 1,3; 1 Tim. 1,5 and

many more). The God who expects us to gather coals of fire on the head of our enemy and thereby overcome evil with good (Rom. 12, 20. 21) only demands this from us because this is His own principle according to which He Himself acts. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world with Himself, not imputing their transgressions to them (2 Cor. 5:19). Thus He Himself fulfilled 1 Cor. 13, 5: "It (love) does not impute evil." From Ezk. 31, 15 we already saw how much He suffers with the head of His enemies, so that for His sake He arranges a mourning, covers the deep (so that the shame of the one who fell down there is not permanently seen by all creatures!), holds back the rivers, hinders the great waters and covers Lebanon (= the white mountain, the white one, i.e. white with snow) in black. Three times it says in Ezk 31, 15: "for his sake". - Thus God mourns for the head of His enemies.

Thanks be to Him that He is love! And love is the greatest thing there is! And the greatest overcomes the lesser! Therefore, evil can be overcome only with good. And therefore God will not always quarrel nor forever. His wrath holds, although His wrath is a holy wrath, not a sadistic one like that of many people; but His goodness is eternal. And this goodness leads to repentance! And so, after all judgments, He overcomes evil with good. For after all judgments, even the most merciless, mercy triumphs over judgment (Jam. 2, 13). The Son of Love himself testifies to it in Luk, 18, 19: "Why do you call Me good? - No one is good but One, God!" And likewise in Matth. 19, 17: "One is the good one!" And this Good One alone has the strength and the power and the glory to overcome evil with good in the most sublime and divinely-spiritually perfect way, by gathering fiery coals on the head of His enemies.

This overcoming of evil through good or with good is also the future task of the body church. She, who as the firstfruits carries the spirit (Rom. 8, 23) and is thereby partaker of the divine nature (2. Petr. 1, 3. 4) or, as Paul says in Acts 17, 29- "God's generation", so that the Lord Himself in Joh. 10, 34-36 says: "I have said, Ye are gods! and the scripture cannot be broken open!", may indeed by the power and authority of the spirit in everything far overcome (Rom. 8, 37) or be more than overcomers (according to the basic text: be overcomers). Although we are outwardly weak and are respected all day long by the world like sheep for slaughter, we still overcome far in everything, we are more than overcomers in everything through Him who loved us.

So, already now in the miserable shell of our flesh we overcome far in everything by the love of Him who is in us. What will it be like when our body is also redeemed and we have the glorious vessel of the spiritual body in the likeness of His body of glory? Do we not see from this why the body church should know the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ, so that it too may be filled with the fullness of God? (Eph. 3, 17-19.)

Even now, while we are still on the way to being filled with the fullness of God, we overcome far in everything through Him who loved us. Even death can no more separate us from Him and His love than life can. And neither can principalities and powers

in the present or in the future separate us from Him and His love. And because we thus remain in His love, we overcome in everything!

And He who works all this in the members of His body, the Son of love, and His glorious Father, the Father of love, they both should not be able to do what you enable the members of the body to do."

Truly, the concepts that the soul-minded believer brings into the being of God are very often blasphemy, but not worship and glorification of Him to whom no thing is impossible, who is able to do everything, and who also does everything that He wills, and brings out everything as He has sworn to do.

He has mercy on all His works! And He has included them all in disbelief (= disobedience), so that He pardons all of them! Because He does not only lead into hell, but He also leads out again. And the prisoners who languish in the pit without water will be released because of the blood of the covenant, as we already saw in the example of Sodom and Gomorrah, and as it is further confirmed in Zech. 9, 11. 12.

Jehovah kills and makes alive. He leads into Sheol, and He also leads out again! (1 Sam. 2, 6.)

Death completely disempowers every being. No one is able to free himself anymore. It is therefore a royal means in the hand of him whom all things serve, to convince every creature of its own powerlessness and of the impossibility to exist in itself. Therefore, one day all will confess: "Only in the Lord do I have righteousness and strength". So we need not only righteousness, i.e. cleansing from sins and putting on God's righteousness, which is offered to us in the Gospel, but also God's life, God's power, His strength. This means, however, that there is no possibility of existence apart from God.

In Him we live and we are. Even His enemies exist only because He keeps them alive, for He makes His sun shine on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Whoever does not want to recognize and admit this in life, closes the way of grace for himself. He must then learn all this from the bitter reality of death and judgment, until even those who do not want to say: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! (Matth. 23, 37-39)

God is sure of His matter! He knows the omnipotence of His love, which is His nature and therefore also the greatest among the three, which remain. Therefore He can determine the outcome of all world events with a holy oath in advance. He knows that He overcomes far, in everything, more than we, His plenipotentiaries, are able to do, because we can do everything only out of Him. Therefore, all His promises of God are also fulfilled through us (2 Cor. 1, 20), as the Son is to all *Ia* and Amen. And as we may do this to the glory of God the Father, so also once all knees bow to the Son, and

all tongues confess that He is Lord. And all do it to the glory of God the Father, all saying, "Only in the Lord do I have righteousness and strength."

God all in all (1 Cor. 15:28) [K.Geyer]

"... that God may be all in all"

1Co 15:28

Author: Karl Geyer, excerpts from his book "Lebenswurzeln der Gemeinde - Band I".

Here We would prefer not to write any more, but to fall on our faces and worship Him who, as our Lord and our God, is worthy to take the glory and the honor and the power. For He created all things (the universe), and because of His will they were and are created (Rev. 4:11).

What God once was in Himself before the time of the world, namely everything in One, having all God's fullness in Himself alone, what He then gave to the Son, in whom, according to the Father's will and good pleasure, also dwells the whole fullness of the Godhead, what He then realized in the body church, which He also led through the Spirit into the whole fullness of God, that is God now in all, after the Son begat the universe into life through the church. God is now in truth all in all! No being is outside and hostile to Him anymore. Everything is subordinated to Him, even the Son of Love. Everything is equal to Him, the Father of love. He is in truth everything in all.

Who can imagine what it is when we are perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect? - And who can grasp what it is when all creation is raised to the same freedom of glory as the sons of God?

There is no more any inferiority consciousness with any creature. All complexes are dissolved by the positive fulfillment with all God's fullness, and all this on the only positive way of the eternal love of God!

No one needs to envy another anymore. All are equal to Him, the One! Everyone has only reason and cause to worship the eternal love forever.

But one thing remains and can never be extinguished: The ground on which everything stands is not the creature, but the Eternal Himself. He was before we were. He is not a become-one. We have become, and we have become by grace, because love willed it. And we worship this love! Yes, Amen!

Gold, silver, precious stones (1 Cor. 3, 11-13) [A. Heller].

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 But if anyone builds on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will be revealed; the day will show it, because it will be revealed by fire. And what kind of work each one does, the fire will test. 14 If any man's work, which he hath built thereon, remaineth, he shall receive reward: 15 But if any man's work be burned up, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, even as through the fire.

1 Cor. 3, 11-14

Author: Adolf Heller, after his article of the same name at GuH

God has placed a deep desire for beauty and joy in the hearts of his creatures. If we do not satisfy it in him and his fellowship, we fall prey to earthly images of the essential, to mirages frozen in matter and time and space. This may become clear to us if we place two testimonies next to each other, which deal with gold, silver and precious stones, i.e. coveted treasures of this world.

To this we turn to Rev. 18:11, 12 a: "The merchants of the earth weep and mourn over them (i.e., over Babylon), because no one buys their merchandise (actually shiploads), merchandise of gold, silver, and precious stones anymore."

Gold is a symbol of faith, silver a symbol of redemption, and precious stone an indication of glory. Biblical evidence for the significance of gold and silver is well known to all of us. But perhaps we may cite one more scriptural word that tells us a guiding word with regard to precious stones. In Rev. 21:10, 11 it is written: "He (i.e. an angel) carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God; and it had the glory of God. The brilliance of her light was like a very precious gem." The glory and the brilliance of light of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven are compared to a precious stone. So gold, silver and precious stone shadow faith, salvation and glory. Even the simplest and poorest believer is able to build gold, silver and precious stone on the Christ ground of his salvation given to him by grace through a life of faithfulness and devotion. Where these essential heavenly treasures and God's riches do not exist, a hot desire burns in the human heart that cannot be satisfied by anything earthly. That is why Satan offers the fallen creation the material distortion and degeneration of what God wants to give us now in spirit and once in essential perfection.

Gold, silver and precious stones do not occupy much space. Wood, grass and straw are of much greater extent and visible from afar. But for it they are also quite worthless and burn quickly, while the noble materials are much more valuable and are not consumed by the fire, but are at most purified. Also this is of deep importance to the faith!

Babylon will one day become the all-dominating world center of the end times. It will glorify itself and be filled with fornication and opulence, with which it will seduce the kings of the earth (Rev. 13:7, 9). The merchants of the whole world will receive shiploads or freights (literally: stuffed!) of all earthly goods, which will make human life pleasant and seek to suppress the divine longing for eternal joys.

From the 29 pieces of the ship freights (the two last mentioned are characteristically human bodies and human souls!) the first three are: gold, silver and precious stones. It is typical for the near, who knows how soon breaking end time that almost all of the things mentioned here have to do with pleasure and jewelry. External freight and voluptuousness seek to satisfy people's longing for divine faithfulness, salvation and glory by switching them over to the earthly, to the flesh, to sin.

- May the Lord grant that we let ourselves be detached from all Babylonian demons of money and the power rush of possessions and wealth, and that we let ourselves be given the essential gold and silver and the divine precious stones to build them on the Christ foundation of our salvation! Then our fruit of life will not burn (1 Cor. 3, 13 b. 15; Rev. 18, 8. 9. 16-19), but we will receive lasting reward (1 Cor. 3, 14) and be partakers of divine praise (1 Cor. 4, 5).

Jonathan and his armor bearer (1 Sam. 14, 13) [K. Geyer].

"And Jonathan went up on his hands and on his feet, and his armor-bearer after him. And they fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer slew after him".

1 Sam 14:13

Author: Karl Geyer, based on his article of the same name at GuH

The Philistines (= the wanderers) invaded the land of the children of Israel (= God fighters). (1 Sam. 13:5.) They came with 30000 chariots, 6000 horsemen and footmen, like the sand on the shore of the sea. In three great armies the devastation poured through the land (1 Sam 13:17). Israel was without weapons. There was no blacksmith in the whole land. Even the garden and field tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Sam. 13, 19-22). Only Saul and his son Jonathan had weapons.

Jonathan (== the one given by Jehovah, the gift of Jehovah) knew that against this superior power the few weapons were not sufficient. But he also knew that this is no obstacle for the Lord, because he can save by many or by few (1 Sam. 14, 1-6). And his armor bearer was one with him in faith and faithfulness (verse 7).

Thus they passed together through the bottleneck between the rocky peaks Bozez and Sene (Bozez = excrement; Sene = putty or glue).

Faith is led through bottlenecks that make the believer aware of all his weakness. Only when we are weak are we strong (2 Cor. 12:9, 10), because grace reveals its divine victorious power only where the creature, the flesh, no longer has its own glory before God. We have this treasure of the Spirit and of authority in earthen vessels, that the abundance of power may be of God and not of us (2 Cor. 4, 7). "Pressed in every way, but not straitened; seeing no way out, but not without a way out; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not perishing; always bearing about in our bodies the death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:8-10).

What is man in himself? - Man without God? Man without faith and without the authority of the spirit? - Man according to the flesh? - —

Born in poverty, he goes his way in the weakness of the earthen vessel, the body of lowliness and humiliation, and at all the bottlenecks of his life it comes to him that he is excrement and glue (Bozez and Sene). Every ascent is a path of toil on hands and feet, reminding the one born of woman that man is a worm and the human child is a maggot (Job 25, 4-6).

And this earthen vessel is the bearer of God's revelation as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 1:26-30), and the fighter of God's battles on earth (Eph. 6:10-18; Rev. 17:14) and the future judge of the world, angels and men (1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 18:20).

But nowhere in this world, whose god and prince is Satan, and whose helpers are the demons, is one more dependent on the fellowship and help of faithful people than in the days of battles and confrontations with the power of darkness. And most in need of this help of a faithful comrade-in-arms and weapon-bearers are those who are in the forefront of the battle, the ministering brothers, the evangelists, shepherds and teachers. When they make an incursion with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, into the kingdom of darkness, into the battle lines of the uncircumcised, the spirit powers, he cosmocrator, then it is a vital necessity for them that faithful prayers stand behind them while they preach the Word, so that the world rulers of darkness do not stab them in the back.

Therefore the Lord sent His disciples two by two (Luk 10, 1). And when they returned, they were able to report to Him that they had victory over the demons (Luk 10:17-19). But Jesus rejoiced in spirit that the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, had hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes (Luk 10:21-24).

But greater than the authority given to us over the spirit world (Col. 2:10) is the fact that we are children of God, the knowledge and certainty that our names are written in heaven.

As partakers of the divine nature (2 Petr, I, 3. 4) we are of divine gender according to the inner man (Ap. 17, 29), are of one spirit and one being with Him and may go our way here as the empowered sons of the Father, to reign royally and serve priestly in the supremacy of grace and to overcome far in all things as overcomers in every battle (Rom. 5, 17; 8, 37-39).

Paul, the slave and messenger of Jesus Christ, knew how necessary the backing of a faithful armor-bearer and comrade-in-arms is. Cf. Phil, I, 27; Philemon 2; Rom. 15, 30; Phil. 4, 3. After naming the sword of the spirit as the last piece of the frontally used weapons in Eph. 6, 17, he turns to the backing in verse 18. He is aware of his weakness, both in speech and in external circumstances, because he was in prison in Rome as a bound of Christ Jesus. Just as Joshua (= the Lord is salvation, Jehovah is savior) could not win in the battle against the Amalekites (= the destroying vultures, the troublesome in the deep) if Moses did not lift up his hands for him (Ex. 17, 8-13), so Paul cannot break through in the battle against the lustful destroyers of the spirit world without the prayer help of the saints (Eph. 6, 18-20; Rom. 15, 30 -32; Col. 4, 3. 4; 1 Thess. 5, 25; 2 Thess. 3, 1. 2; Hebr. 13, 18. 19).

No one can! Not even you and I. We need the fellowship of the saints, we need the ministry of the brethren, we need to have a faithful prayer warrior standing behind us, covering our backs and strengthening our arms as we fight battles of God.

Who watches over you when the wanderers invade your life area and desecrate and devastate the ground of the promises to you? - Do you have an armor-bearer who

goes after you and renders harmless everything that wants to stab you in the back ?

- —

Do you know the blessing of the prayer help of a faithful brother who knows your weak places and covers them from the assault of the enemy? - Do you know something of the priestly ministry of pastoral care, as love covers the multitude of sins and bears the brother's weakness, praying for him to be healed? - —

Many do not know why they have no victory or why so often their victories turn into defeats again. No one watches over their weak points because they hypocritically deny them. Only when we step into the light before God with a brother and confess our sins to one another do we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, for whose sake God once forgave our sins, i.e. the evil fruits of the sin that dwells in us, now also redeems us from the inclination to sin through its liberating power (1 John 1:7). If we confess our sins to God, he forgives them so that we are no longer punished for their sake. But if we confess them to one another and pray for one another, we will be loosed and cleansed and healed (1 John 1:9; Jas 5:16).

This service of purifying and sanctifying intercession can only be done in a priestly heart position, and it can also only be done to oneself by faithful brothers. *Sin must be covered immediately*, i.e. brought under the covering of the blood forever, and thus consigned to oblivion forever, otherwise it will have a contagious effect. Whoever deals with it unholily, digs it up again and brings others into contact with it by passing it on, infects himself and others. In a sanatorium, doctors and nurses have to be careful with the expectoration of the sick and render everything harmless immediately. But the most contagious power in the world is sin. Whoever does not cover it, falls prey to it himself, and the unfaithful armor-bearer must experience the bitter truth: "The leprosy of Naaman will cling to *you*!" Let us ask the Lord, "Give me a faithful armor-bearer to watch over me and help me fight and clean up after me and cover my nakedness, so that my walk may be a sure one and leave a light trail, and the name of the Lord may be glorified by a walk worthy of His name and our calling! Amen!

On the riddle of guilt (Ps. 34, 21b) [A. Heller].

June 13, 2021 Categories: Light points 2021

"Those who hate the righteous man will be held guilty. All who trust in him will not be held guilty."

Ps. 34, 21 b, 22 b

Author: Adolf Heller, after his article of the same name at GuH

Without a doubt, guilt is "the greatest of evils". A life burdened with guilt torments and destroys itself and others. People and nations experience this again and again, and it is almost incomprehensible that in this respect no one learns anything from the change, no generation from the previous one, no nation from its history.

For the individual, the real and essential elimination of his guilt is profoundly very simple. It is so simple that a child can grasp it, and yet so powerful and of such indispensable claim to totality that the proud and strong break and perish over it.

For hatred of the righteous, that is, of Christ, and trust in Him are not primarily a matter of our thinking, feeling and willing, but an innermost moral decision of the heart. This decision, however, is infinitely more than the acceptance of a dogma, the adherence to a doctrine: it is a deliberate surrender, a complete abandonment of any attempt to save oneself or to be saved by any circumstances, people or powers, a final, irrevocable renunciation of any place of salvation. Faith means as much as taking refuge or letting oneself fall on someone. A child can do this much better and more unhesitatingly than an adult. That is why the Lord also admonishes his disciples to become like children. This applies, not in a spiritual sense, but in a spiritual sense, also to us, the members of the Body of Christ.

Whoever hates Him who was made righteousness for us by God (1 Cor. 1:30), who was already called Yahweh tsidkenu = Lord, our righteousness, in the Old Testament (Jer. 23:6), thus consciously rejects and rejects Him, commits the decisive sin of his life (John 16:9). But whoever hides in the God-given place of refuge and salvation, whoever lets go of himself and surrenders, who trusts in Him from the heart and counts on Him alone, who has atoned for the sin of the world, who has borne the punishment of creation, will by no means be considered guilty.

But since this act of faith, if it is genuine and spiritually worked, is always at the same time a way of humiliation and a process of dying for one's own self, which at first seems dark, but leads into true life and into undreamed-of glories, only he who is willing to give up his own life is able to accomplish it. However, only those who begin to recognize the depth of their guilt and want to get rid of it at any price and become free can leave their ego and consecrate it to God.

The question of guilt, the greatest problem of creation, is solved Godward and completely only by faith, which is really "the greatest deed of the spirit". But this solution

leads into such blissful depths and expanses of salvation, into such an overabundance of grace and glory, that ever and anon men who have grasped and experienced it have exclaimed, "O blissful guilt!" For without night the essence of light, without sin the overflow of grace, without God's remoteness the delights of communion with the Father through the Son in such scope and richness as we may now possess, enjoy and witness, would never have been granted to us.

Of the elements of the world (Gal. 4:1-11; Col. 2:8-10; 2 Pet. 3:10-13) [A. Heller].

But I say, As long as the heir is a minor, he differs in nothing from a servant, though he is master of all; but is under guardians and stewards until the term appointed by the father. So also we: When we were babes, we were under bondage to the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law, that he might redeem them which were under law, that we might receive adoption as sons. But because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father! So you are no longer a servant, but a son; and if a son, then also an heir through God. But then, of course, when you did not know God, you served those who are not gods by nature; but now that you have known God, but rather have been known by God, how do you turn again to the weak and wretched elements whom you want to serve anew? You pay attention to days and months and times and years. I fear for you that I have worked on you in vain.

Gal 4:1-11

Take heed that there be not one that leadeth you away a prey through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are perfected in him, who is the head of every principality and power;

Col 2:8-10

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, when the heavens will pass away with a mighty noise, and the elements will be dissolved in fire, and the earth and the works upon it will be burned up. Since all these things will be dissolved, what then should you be in holy walk and godliness! - by expecting and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens, caught in fire, will be dissolved and the elements will be melted in fire. But according to his promise we expect new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

2 Petr 3:10-13

Author: Adolf Heller, after his article of the same name in GuH

According to our father's inscrutable thoughts of salvation, powers and forces are interposed in the course of eternities, which often seem to have negative rather than positive services, i.e., which sometimes have more inhibiting and destructive than constructive and accomplishing effects. To these forces also belong the stoicheia, the basic substances or elements of nature, the initial grounds of worldly and divine teachings.

Stoidieion means letter or basic substance. The plural, stoicheid, in connection with cosmos (world system) is a designation for elemental spirits. These are probably certain groups of angelic powers through whose mediation the law was given. This seems to emerge from a number of scriptural connections. Perhaps this becomes

clearest to us when we consider how the word stoicheo = to walk is used in Acts 21, 23. 24. There we read: "Do this which we say unto thee, We have four men which have taken upon them a vow. Take these unto thee, and purify thyself with them, and bear the expense of them, that they may have the head shaved; and all shall know that there is nothing in that of which they are reported concerning thee, but that thou thyself also walkest in the observance of the law." The last word, stoicheo means to walk in a row side by side or one after another; but also means to follow or imitate someone's example. It is used in this sense in Romans 4:12 of Abraham and all believers. Another meaning is: to set up one's way of life according to a certain standard or rule (Gal. 5:25; 6:16; Phil. 3:16).

Stoicheia are therefore initial teachings, basic norms and rules. Seen more deeply, they are elemental spirits, which may somehow intervene in the course of cosmic events in a restraining or formative way. Let us now ask God's word what it teaches about these elements! First we open Hebr. 5, 12 and read: "Since you should be teachers according to the time, you again need to be taught which are the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God; and you have become such as need milk and not solid food." The reproach here leveled at the believing priests in Jerusalem has much to say to us. These men were always stuck in the legal beginnings because they were sluggish in hearing (verse 11 b). They were inexperienced and immature regarding the word of truth (verse 13) and could not yet distinguish good from evil (verse 14). This is probably a conscious persistence in the law, in which so many are caught without knowing it. In addition to this, the Jewish-Christian congregations also held fast to the handling of the law alongside the gospel, which for this group of believers initially corresponded perfectly to the will of God. Nevertheless, these readers of the circular letter to the Hebrews are admonished to leave the word of the beginning and proceed to the full growth or perfection truths.

Repentance and faith, baptism and laying on of hands, resurrection and eternal judgment should not be proclaimed exclusively, since they belong to the "word of the beginning". The congregation should leave (literally: put off, put in the back, say goodbye to) these basic things. This does not mean that we are not dealing with important fundamental truths here! That is absolutely the case. But they are only basics, beginnings, elements. It is just as if one wanted to teach young men at the high school or in the university only in the small multiplication table and in reading and writing. They need the elements of numbers and letters all the time, but they do not stop there, but use them on a higher spiritual level. It is exactly the same with the biblical truths. But what does one experience in churches and free churches, communities and brother circles, if one goes beyond these six basic elements of proclamation and wants to progress to the fullness of truths? The answer may be given by everyone who has ever had his heart burn when God imprinted such testimonies in his spirit as we find in Eph. 1, 9; 3, 19; 1. Tim. 4, 10. 11 and many more. And how they are our guideline and assignment.

Consciously held immaturity is something the apostle fiercely opposes. Let us just read Gal. 4, 1-3: "As long as the heir is underage, he differs in nothing from a servant, though he is master of everything; but he is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the Father. So also we, when we were babes, when we were enslaved under the elements of the world." How serious this "enslaved under the elements of the world" sounds! One can have overcome this state and then fall back into it again. We see this from the 9th-11th verse: "Now that you have known God, but rather have been known by God, how do you turn back again to the weak and wretched elements, whom you want to serve all over again? You watch days and months and times and years! I fear for you, whether I have not worked on you in vain/' The growing into the divine fullness and goal truths of the Scriptures is thus by no means a hobby of some eccentrics; it already moved the heart of the apostle Paul.

He already had to reproach the Corinthians that they were minors who were only able to grasp the milk, i.e. the initial principles of biblical teaching (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Wouldn't his reproach be even more appropriate today? What will happen in front of Christ's judging stage when the reviled and slandered witnesses and martyrs of the fullness truths will be confronted with their pious opponents and persecutors! On which side will you and I stand?

After the two important testimonies of Gal. 4 we want to look at two scriptural contexts each from Col. 2 and 2 Peter 3, which have something to tell us about the *stoicheia*, the initial norms, basic rules or elementary spirits.

Let us first hear the urgent warning of Col. 2, 8: "Take heed that there be no man that leadeth you away a prey through philosophy, and through vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ." The apostle here writes of being led away as spoils of war or as prisoners of war! Drastically and vividly translated by Theobald Dächsel: "Be very careful that no one may take you away with the help of worldly wisdom and petty deceit in matters of religious precepts and human power, which amount to natural things and not to the Messiah!" Very finely the French Segond Bible says: "Take heed that no one seize you as a prey by philosophy and vain deceit, relying on the tradition (tradition) of men, on the rudiments (basic knowledge, initial reasons) of the world instead of Christ." The following verse is characteristic: "For in him (i.e. in Christ) dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily!" The point, then, is that the fullness or fullness of God is to be known and grasped. That in the law and in the natural orders of this time and world much is noble, good and divine, representing, as it were, a remnant of paradise, no one will doubt. But we are called into existence for God and all the riches of Him. And therefore we are also ordained or put into life for God's own glory.

Whoever rejects this and has had enough of what this darkened, fallen world offers, one should not argue with him. He is still under the spell of the *stoicheia*, the elemental spirits, who want to keep us from the fullness of the Father. And there are many,

many more of these than one should believe. Whoever has experienced and suffered something of this through the proclamation of the message of the fullness of the blessed God will admit this with emotion.

Now, how should we relate to the stoidieia, the basic rules and elements of the natural and divine world? The 20th verse of our chapter gives us the answer: ". . . having died with Christ away from the elements of the world . . ." We are to die to the "natural powers of the universe" (Dächsel), to the "meager initial grounds" (L. Reinhardt), to the "world elements" (Dr. Rösch). But dying off means not only mental and spiritual, but rather spiritual overcoming! And this never takes place without humiliations, loneliness and pain.

It is much easier and simpler to walk freshly-cheerfully-freely in the tracks used from the forefathers "in one line after another" (because that means, as we saw, stoicheo!) than to be led from one clarity to another (2. Cor. 3, 18), to be poured from barrel to barrel (Jer. 48, 11). It is not praise at all that is given in the next verse when God states that Moab's taste has remained to Him and its smell has not changed (Jer. 48, 12).

Any knowledge of salvation and glory that is not, seen from God, a revelation and, seen from us, a path of humiliation and death, is not much good. Every breakthrough into a higher sphere of faith means loneliness, is a dying away from what has gone before.

This is already so in the earthly! If the child still rests under the heart of the mother and both are completely one, the relationship of both is completely untroubled. With the birth act and the contractions and dangers connected with it the situation becomes, at first outwardly, critical. And with the upbringing and the gradual detachment of the child from the mother and the parental home, there are always tensions and pains. Only in these natural processes animals are usually much more reasonable than we deluded, selfish and mentally abused humans.

Let's keep in mind: The basic norms and initial rules of all life, including spiritual-divine life, are necessary. But we must not remain stuck in them! For we are to be "filled to the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19). Spiritual powers of the angels far away want to keep us from this, partly certainly with the best of intentions. It is a matter of dying to them. This leads to many pains and heartaches. But nobody can be spared. Our whole life goes through birth processes and labor pains (Gal. 4, 19).

This applies not only to our personal existence in faith, but also, to pick out just one truth from natural life, to the second people of Israel in the last days. That is why the Lord says in Matth. 24, when he speaks of the wars and revolutions in the world of nations, the serious words: "All this is only the beginning of the travail" (verse 8). Every new and healthy life is born only from labor pains. This must be grasped and willingly affirmed. - —

Let us look up two more words from 2 Peter 3, the 10th and 12th verses, which read: "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, when the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will be dissolved in fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

Expect and hasten the coming of the Day of God, because of which the heavens, caught in fire, will be dissolved and the elements will melt in fire." According to the first word, the stoicheia will be dissolved on the Day of the Lord. The heavens will pass away or melt away. The elements, however, will be done away, annulled or eliminated. According to the 12th verse, the stoicheia will pine away or perish with grief, fade away, rot or melt away.

These testimonies make us realize that stoidieia are not only philosophical concepts, but profoundly powers, beings, spirits. Their abolition means the introduction of the visible kingship of Christ. We see from this that the stoicheia are not only in a certain opposition to the Pauline fullness truths of the body of Christ and the reconciliation of the world, but also to the Kingdom message as given to Israel.

Perhaps now the word in Hebr. 2, 5 shines in brighter light to us: "Not to angels (messengers or agents) has he (i.e. God) subjected (or subordinated) the future inhabited world circle." That is, that the present oikumene, that is, all that is somehow inhabited in creation, is subject to angels. That the rule of these beings and powers is not only a purely spiritual one, but works itself out in terrible discharges of wars and revolutions, acts of violence, horrors and crimes, brings about earthquakes and floods, famines and epidemics, everyone knows who looks open-eyed into the world or, what belongs to it, or is still far better, knows his Bible.

But how does God go about disempowering this stoicheia? How does he finish them off and set them aside so that the longed-for kingship of his Son may come? He simply holds back his breath! So we read e.g. in Job 34, 14. 15: "If he (namely God) directed his heart only on himself, his spirit and his breath pulled back to himself, then all flesh would pass away altogether and man would return to the dust."

The Lord confirms this through Paul in Acts 17, 24. 25, when he says: "The

God, who made the world and all that is in it, this one, being the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is he served by human hands, as if he still needed something, since he himself gives life, breath and the universe to all.* But not only men live by the breath of God, having in it power and existence, sense and understanding; - in the last days, in order to make full the measure of sin of Satan and those consecrated to him, "he gives breath (or spirit) to the image of the beast (i.e., the ally of the Antichrist), that the image of the beast may speak and cause all to be killed who do not worship the image of the beast. And he causeth all, both high and low, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in

their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:13, 17).

Here we have the last great attempt of Satan to keep the present world of curse in its present state and to improve and renew it on his way of self-willed arrogance. There all cosmic powers and forces unfold once again, partly in pious garb, so that even the elect are threatened to be seduced. We must by no means imagine the antichristian last days as a chaotic hustle and bustle. It will certainly become that one day, because it must ultimately end there according to inherent laws. But first of all it is a clever, dazzling deception maneuver which enchants the whole world.

It is similar in all earthly areas, which, detached from God, go their own ways, whether it is about art and science, about politics and world view, about economy and world unity. Everything begins as a seductive dazzle and ends in total collapse. Have we not experienced something of this and do we experience it again and again in large and small things? - —

God breathes! And what happens? "By his breath the heavens are made bright!" (Job 26:13.) That this cannot mean only the blowing away of clouds is clear from the second part of this verse, which tells us: "His hand pierces the fleeing dragon." That this dragon is ultimately the enemy we know from the whole of Scripture.

What is true with regard to creation ("By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of His mouth": Ps. 33, 6), is also true with regard to the dissolution and elimination of all the beings and powers that, as unconscious instruments of God, are only allowed to carry out their tasks of destruction for a short time. That is why we read in 2 Thess. 2, 8 of the Antichrist, Satan incarnate, that the Lord Jesus will consume him by the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the appearance of his coming. This completely coincides with the great Satanology in Job 15, the 30th verse of which reads: "He (i.e. the lawless one) must depart by the breath of his (i.e. the Lord's) mouth." - —

We are amazed to see how deep and powerful the biblical view of the essence of things is, far surpassing all human thinking. The word of God does not give us a complete scheme of powers and authorities and their conscious and unconscious influence on the course of all cosmic events. But it makes us tremble in holy awe and begets and gives birth in us faith and trust, devotion and loyalty to the great, wonderful Father God, who is profoundly only love and is willing and able to give his salvation and glory to all that he has created. Praise be to Him in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Head!

Everything brought back David (1 Sam. 30, 19) [A. Heller].

18 So David rescued all that the Amalekites had taken; and David rescued his two wives also. 19 And they lacked nothing, from the least to the greatest, neither sons nor daughters, nor of the spoil any thing that they had taken from them: David brought it all back.

1 Sam. 30, 18-19

Author: Adolf Heller, excerpted from his article "Vorbilder der Wiederbringung" at GuH

David, too, was a Christ-performer in many ways. Just look at his psalms! He also foreshadows the return. Let us read the 30th chapter of the 1st book of Samuel! The Amalekites "had carried away captive the women and all that were therein (i.e. in Ziklag) from the least to the greatest; they had slain none, but had driven them away, and gone their way. And David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were carried away captive. . And also the two wives of David were carried away captive, Achinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabai the Carmelite. And David was in great distress, for the people spoke of stoning him; for the soul of all the people was embittered, every one for his sons and for his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God." (Verses 2-6.)

David asked the Lord whether he should pursue the enemy. He received God's assurance: "Go after them, you will surely reach them and you will surely save them" (verse 8). David does not surrender to his mental pain nor to the consciousness of his warlike prowess. He consults the Lord. And on the Lord's clear instruction and promise, he sets out in pursuit of his enemies, completely certain of his victory.

Thus it is also written of Christ that He will carry out the saving thoughts of God. Both the Lord and His model David were given divine salvation orders to deliver captives from the bonds of the enemy. "For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that He might loose (or make good) the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8b.)

At the brook Besor, David left 200 men behind and chased after his enemies with the remaining 400. A weary Egyptian, the servant of an Amalekite who had stayed behind, led him on the trail of the enemy. These were "scattered over the face of the whole land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah" (verse 16).

David attacked them and defeated them completely. The battle lasted from dusk until the evening of the following day. "And David saved all that the Amalekites had taken, and David also saved his two wives. And they lacked nothing from the least to the greatest, and to the sons and the daughters, and from the spoil to all that they had taken from them; all David brought back. And David took all the small cattle and the

oxen; they drove them before the changing cattle, saying: This is the spoil of David!" (verse 18-20). Three times it is pointed out that David brought back everything and nothing was lost: "David saved everything", "they lacked nothing", "everything David brought back".

Thus also "the offspring of David", Christ, will one day bring back everything in His entire domain, namely in the whole wide world, so that nothing will be missing. Many exquisite examples testify to this truth, which are laid down everywhere in the Scriptures, clearly recognizable to the eye of faith.

"David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker."

The battle between Saul and David is of exemplary significance. While David is a Christ-image - just remember that many promises seemingly given only to David find their fulfillment in Christ! -, Saul is an image of the enemy. David is called in German the beloved, Saul on the other hand the covetous, between both a long, bitter fight broke out. We do not want to talk about how the opponents fought in different attitudes and with completely opposite means. Only the broad line of the course we want to read, as it is in 2 Sam. 3:1 with the brief words: "The battle was long between the house of Saul and the house of David, but David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

Abner (German: Vater des Lichts) wishes and strives that David exercises a full rule. He summarizes this in the wonderful words: " ... that you rule over everything your soul desires!" (verse 21). Do we not have here a delicious illustration of the fact that the Father of Light has put everything under the feet of His Christ and He must reign until He has executed and carried out all God's good pleasure? After all, we read in Is. 53, 10 that the good pleasure of the Lord is brought to its goal in His hand. In addition, there is a whole series of unveiled, clear scriptural statements from the Pauline epistle that reveal to us even higher and more glorious God's intentions. What was the outcome of the conflict between David and Saul, which is an image of the struggle between Christ and Satan? 1 Chron. 10 gives us the answer. The Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Malkishua, Saul's sons. Saul could not survive this ignominy and threw himself on his own sword.

We want to suggest in this context that great divine laws are revealed here. For the Lord catches His enemies by their own cunning, defeats them by their own weapons. It was not David and his faithful who killed the sons of Saul, but the Philistines. It was not David who took Saul's life, although he often had the opportunity to do so, no, Saul killed himself. The 6th verse reports clearly and exhaustively, "So Saul and his three sons died; and all his house died at the same time." We know that from the family of Saul, David's mortal enemy, only one man remained: Mephibosheth. David sent for him, not to take revenge on him, but to show mercy and kindness to him and

to reinstate him as a friend and table companion in the possession and enjoyment of all his father's former goods.

Here we see the way in which the Lord will overcome His last enemy. If David, an erring, sinful man, was already able to love his enemies in this way, putting them to shame and overcoming them by grace and goodness, - how much more will the Father of faithfulness and mercy, who calls Himself Love, make true in all beings and worlds Paul's word that we read in Romans 2:4: "Do you not know that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"

Mephiboseth (2 Sam. 9, 7) [A. Heller].

And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee mercy for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the fields of Saul thy father: but thou shalt eat bread daily at my table.

2 Sam. 9, 7

Author: Adolf Heller, after his article of the same name at GuH

1. mephiboseth, a grandson of saul

When David finally came to rule over all of Israel after years of agonizing oppression and persecution, he asked if no one remained from the house of Saul, his mortal enemy (2 Sam. 8:15; 9:1a). Through a servant named Ziba he learned that in the house of Malsir in Lodebar lived a grandson of Saul, Mephiboseth, who was paralyzed in both feet. Mephiboseth knew why he was hiding in Lodebar (German: Land of the Desert!). He reckoned that David, having finally come to power, would exterminate all of Saul's relatives and friends. That would have been quite understandable according to human judgement and would not have contradicted the custom of that time at all. Just think of the instructions God Himself gave regarding the Gentile nations that had resisted Israel on its march to the Promised Land, and the commands regarding the seemingly blameless nations that inhabited the land promised to Israel!

So we can well understand why Mephiboseth hid himself from David; his fear of revenge and retribution, justified in and of itself, was the cause. - —

But did David intend to execute judgment and punishment on Saul's grandson? Not at all! We hear just the opposite! David states as purpose of his inquiries: "that I may show kindness (grace or mercy) to him ..."

What a noble character David has become in the school of sufferings and persecutions! How he reflects God's nature and character in his attitude! Not base vengeance desires his heart, but mercy and pity he wants to exercise on his defenseless, humiliated former enemy!

What feelings might have moved the poor cripple when he was brought before David, fell on his face and bowed down (2 Sam. 8:6)? And how might he have heard the words from the lips of the king in unbelieving joyful amazement: "Fear not; for I will surely show kindness to you ..." (2 Sam 9:7)!

But not only that! The grandson of Saul was not only pardoned, he was not only given his life, he was given back the former property of his ancestors, he was allowed to dine at the royal table and to live in Jerusalem at the royal court (verse 7.9.13).

What did this truly royal offer cause in the heart of the cripple? Mephiboseth bowed down and said, "What is thy servant, that thou hast turned to a dead dog, as I am one?" (verse 8).

This self-knowledge and confession did not come about through threats of judgment and punitive measures by David, but through acts of mercy and communications of grace. Now Mephiboseth was certainly overcome much more than it would ever have been the case by a royal decree of power; David's goodness had won him completely and totally for "the new government".

We find here again confirmed the great principle of God that ultimately and most profoundly His goodness leads us to repentance, as Paul testifies in Romans 2:4.

Mephiboseth the cripple, Saul's grandson, lived permanently in Jerusalem and ate at the king's table. What a change! From the desert to the city of God! From loneliness to the king's court! From fear to joy! From shame to honor! From the flight from the supposed avenger to the grace of the most gracious Lord! Truly, his heart must have rejoiced at these undeserved, unexpected proofs of the king's love! - —

2. mephiboseth, an image of us

Mephiboseth means shame, shame mouth or shame image in German. Is he not our reflection? What are we in the sight of God's holiness other than disgraceful mouths and images of shame? Whoever has the courage to examine himself in the light of incorruptible truth and justice cannot but subscribe to this judgment about himself.

As Mephiboseth fled from David, so are we all by nature fleeing from God. We know that we have stained His holiness a thousand times and that we have struck Him in the face through our ingratitude and sins. We too, like Mephiboseth, dwell in a hiding place in the desert. The name of this hiding place is quite different. With one it is denial of God, defiance and conscious sin. With a change cultural, artistic or scientific maximum achievement may be the hiding place, into which he flees, in order not to have to step under the examining view of God. A third hides behind all kinds of religious forms, ceremonies and attempts at self-redemption in order not to be revealed to the flaming eye of truth. In any case, we are all on the run from God and hide from Him, as the first man once did after the first transgression.

But just as Mephiboseth did not know David's true disposition and attributed to him feelings and intentions that did not move his heart at all, so it is with us.

We all suffer from not knowing who and how God is. We see in Him only the avenger and judge who seeks to call us to account and to punish us. If David, who was only a sinful, weak man like us, was able to act so royally, how much more will He, who is love and whose grace and mercy far exceed every human measure, act full of goodness and mercy on His enemies!

When God lets us come out of our sinful or pious hiding place, He does not do it because He hates us and wants to take revenge on us, no, He does it in order to reveal His goodness and grace in us. And if, because of the love of sin that is so deeply rooted in us, He must lead us through many sufferings, tribulations, trials and judgments until

He has conformed us to His image of glory, the motive for this is also nothing other than love. - —

Mephiboseth obtains mercy for Jonathan's sake (2 Sam. 9, 1. 7). But Jonathan means in German "gift of God" or "the one given by God". This has something to say to us! If God wanted to overlook all our enmity against Him without further ado, this would contradict His holiness. For the sake of His justice, God must judge and punish all and every sin. This is where the gospel of grace comes in. Jesus Christ, "the gift of God" (2 Cor. 9:15), has borne all the guilt of creation and has taken it away forever. For the sake of His Son's sacrifice, God can now deal with us as if we had never sinned. If already David for Jonathan's sake received and richly blessed Mephibosheth's image of shame in undeserved, never hoped for grace and love, how much more will the God of faithfulness and Father of mercy give us everything in abundant kindness for the sake of His beloved Son, who is the true Jonathan, the real God-given! (Romans 8. 32).

Just as Mephiboseth was first led into bowing and self-judgment by David's show of grace and called himself a "dead dog", so God's surpassing goodness brings us ever deeper into self-renunciation and into complete surrender to Him. If already the goodness of a human being bent a fellow human being, how much more is the incomprehensible, boundless mercy of the supreme All-Lord (Rev. 1:8) able to bend a stained, indebted creature!

It is not true that the knowledge of the highest and most glorious truths makes a man arrogant, that the occupation with our mighty calling and the comprehensive future tasks, which we will carry out one day as glorified members of Christ, makes us proud and self-confident. The exact opposite is the case! God's goodness never leads to carelessness and superficiality, but to repentance. If we really receive something from grace messages and revelations of God, we become small and poor in ourselves, learn to willingly give our own ego to death in order to become worthy of Him who has chosen and called us to such inconceivably great things. Where this double is missing, the revelation of what we are destined for in Christ, what we are worth in the eyes of God in Christ and how the pleasure of the Father of glory rests on us, - and the resulting practical sanctification, willingness to die and death fellowship with our Lord and Head, Where this Pauline proclamation is neglected, mostly only legal, ego-proud performance Christianity is bred, which in apparent humility desires nothing of all the great and high things to which God has chosen us for His own sake.

Just as Mephiboseth was invited to the king's table, not only to be a one-time guest there, but to eat there constantly, so we too may feed on the one who is God's bread, Christ! We may enjoy God's food and thus have intimate fellowship with Him. Thereby we learn to think with God's thoughts, to feel with His heart (Phil, I, 8) and to love with His love (Romans 5, 5). Table companions of God! What a height of the most glorious calling!

And just as Mephiboseth henceforth no longer dwelt in Lodebar, the land of the wilderness, but in Jerusalem, the castle of peace, so also we are no longer citizens and subjects of this accursed eon and world system (Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:13), but we are fellow citizens of the saints and household members of God (Eph. 2:19) and have our citizenship in the heavens (Phil. 3:20).

May we prove ourselves worthy of this high calling, so as to honor and glorify our glorious Savior God! - —

3. mephiboseth, an example of Israel

What Mephiboseth, the crippled image of shame, experienced is a small example of what Israel will experience in the great one when it is brought to rights. The grandson of Saul is a true image of the earthly covenant people of God.

Israel put itself under law, as it were, when it did not pronounce a confession of guilt and a confession of its own inability/ to walk in God's commandments in response to the enumeration of Jehovah's graces in Exodus 19:4-6, but "answered altogether, and said, All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do."

It was given to the angels as nurses and servants (Hebr. 1,14; Acts 7, 42), through whose business the law was given (Acts 7, 53). But these nurses were not able to lead the people of Israel to the God-given goal of blessedness, - just as the five year old grandson of Saul was dropped by his nurse and thus became lame and received the name of shame, so also the law not only could not bring anything to completion (Hebr. 7, 19), but even caused wrath and transgression (Rom. 4, 15).

By its outward, ego-proud law service Israel developed to the Mephiboseth, to the image of shame! For the sake of this people, which should have been a praise of God (Judah means praise of God in German!), God was blasphemed by the nations.

Expelled from its God-given homeland, the promised land, Israel dwelt in the lodebar of Christlessness and remoteness from God. But it cannot find a permanent resting place among the nations (Deut. 28:65), and it fears night and day and does not trust its life (Deut. 28:66).

And yet Israel will come to glory again! If Paul already had "great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart" and was ready to be "hurled away from Christ by a curse" for the sake of his brethren according to the flesh (Romans 9:1-3), how much more is the heart of God moved for the sake of the judgments necessary for salvation that Israel is now undergoing!

After deep and severe purification processes, Israel will turn back to God and the cover will be removed from its eyes (2 Cor. 3:16). Then it will realize like Mephiboseth that the thoughts of God were only thoughts of peace to grant future and hope to His beloved people (Jer. 29:11).

For the sake of Jesus-Jonathan, the God-given, Israel will not only be given acceptance (Romans 11:15), but sonship and glory (Romans 9:4)! And then this people, once a curse-bearer, will be a wonderful blessing-bearer, the light of the nations, the salvation of God to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6). It will no longer dwell in the godless wilderness of hardening, but will dwell securely in the glorious restored Jerusalem, the center or navel of the earth (Ezek 38:12). All the promised blessings will be fulfilled in unimagined fullness and glory. Israel will see it and shine with joy, its heart will tremble and become wide (Isa. 60, 5), kings will serve it (Isa. 60, 10b), because God's mercy has had mercy on it (Isa. 60, 1 Ob).

Mephibosheth is truly an excellent example of Israel. - —

4. mephiboseth, a type of satanic powers.

We see in Mephiboseth not only an image of us and a model on Israel, but also a type of the one who is the greatest image of shame in the whole world, Satan.

Whoever cannot take this step of faith with us, to recognize the invisible in the visible, the supernatural in the earthly and the great archetype in the small image, may not blame us. We believe, therefore we speak.

Satan, the rushing enemy of God hiding in ambush, knows that he has to expect judgment and punishment. He, the great, dark usurper, rebel and rebel, along with his followers, truly has every reason to flee God. May we believe that the love of the Father of all worlds will prove effective even against these greatest enemies? Do we have biblical reason to believe that there is goodness and mercy for them as well?

Instead of many unambiguous scriptural statements on this important question, we will cite only two brief words from the 145th Psalm: "Jehovah is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works" (verse 9). "Thou dost open Thine hand, and dost satisfy all living things with mercy" (verse 16).

Just as Mephiboseth obtained grace and mercy for Jonathan's sake, so at the end of the eons salvation and peace will also be granted to the worst defilers of creation. God's oaths that all knees will one day bow worshipfully before Him and all tongues will confess that they have righteousness and strength in Him (Isa. 45, 23. 24) will certainly be fulfilled, and we feel a holy awe to make our Father a liar and perjurer through impudent unbelief.

Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and ate at the king's table. So we also read in Ps. 68, 18 that even the unruly or apostates shall dwell with God, or God will have a dwelling in them! What a mighty promise of the "God of salvations", with whom "the exits from death" stand (Ps. 68,19. 20)!

The whole universe will experience the wonderful change from the desert of fear into the city of peace. In accordance with the mystery of God's will according to Eph. 1, 10, it will be united in and with Christ, the Head, into one unity or be raised up in Him.

When God has truly become all in all, then nothing and no one in the whole wide universe will be separate and distant from Him. Then it will be proven that God only included everything in unbelief or disobedience in order to have mercy (or pardon) on all of His creatures for His own glorification and happiness (Romans 11:32).

The praise of creation made right by judgment-grace will be far more glorious than would have been the worship of a world that never knew about sin, darkness, death and damnation.

As dark, painful and incomprehensible as many things may seem to us now, the time is coming when all God's works will praise Him (Ps. 145:10).-

May we learn from the life story of Mephiboseth that which is for our salvation and peace and for the worship and praise of our glorious Savior God!

Four examples of the rapture (Heb. 11, 5-6) [W. Kernchen].

5 By faith Enoch was caught up, so that he did not see death, and he was found no more, because God had caught him up; for before he was caught up the testimony was given him that he had pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he will reward those who seek him.

Heb. 11, 5-6

Author: Wolfgang Kernchen, based on his article of the same name at GuH

After years of high tension and near expectation, one now has the impression that the testimony of the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ is no longer so much the focus of the proclamation. But also the personal near expectation of our Lord and Head Jesus Christ is receding more and more. This is recognizable in prayer meetings, but also in personal conversations. And yet the signs of the times speak an unmistakably clear language for those who are only somewhat trained in the Word of God. Among mature believers, one already hears the question whether the Lord must still hesitate because His church has not yet prepared itself sufficiently for that day. A thought worthy of consideration for a child of God. And yet - how much longing is still present among the people of God, waiting for this central message of the Word of the Lord, the longing that finds its expression in the petition: "O come soon, Lord Jesus".

expression. Thus, a brief testimony about the Rapture will be given below based on four examples from Scripture. Pictures often speak a deeper language than words. We begin with the "seventh from Adam", i.e. with

Enoch.

The meaning of his name is: consecration, offering, consecrated, instructed or inspired. Thus, his name already has much to tell us. Consecration is related to abiding in the sanctuary and the anointing oil, which represents the Holy Spirit (Deut. 21:12). To this the Scripture tells us: "The Son abides in the house forever" Joh. 8, 35b) - "But if anyone does not have Christ's Spirit, he is not His" (Rom. 8, 9b). To be consecrated means to be set apart for God (Rom. 12, 1-2; 2. Cor. 5, 15; Gal. 6, 14 and others). For the offering the Lord, who bought us so dearly, is Himself a shining example (see Eph. 5, 2).

The letter to the Hebrews reports about men of faith like Abel, Enoch, Noah, while we do not read anything about their faith in the OT yet, but may see it clearly in retrospect. Enoch is mentioned in Hebrews 11:5-6. These are wonderful, powerful words that tell us a lot:

a.) "By faith Enoch was caught up". To the often asked question: Who will be raptured? we get here an unmistakable answer: the believer. This is also what the apostle Paul teaches in his chapter on the Rapture, 1 Thessalonians 4:14: "If we believe that

Jesus died and rose again, God will also bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus." We should also read Rom. 4, 25.

b.) "As a believer he shall not see death." In view of Enoch, we understand it, and it also applies to those who will participate in the soon-coming Rapture of the church. But what about "seeing death" in the case of brothers and sisters in the Lord who fall asleep beforehand? For this then a short answer at the next example for the Rapture, Elijah.

c) "Enoch was not found because God had raptured him." So that means: he was searched for. We can well imagine how the dear mother together with the children searched for the father Enoch - but in vain. What will it be like on earth when the Lord has brought His church home? We don't want to imagine it here, but certainly there will be a great search, even if in vain.

d.) Before the Rapture, Enoch received a testimony from God that he was pleasing to Him. What a joyful testimony! Will the church, because it is in Christ and in Him under the pleasure of the Father, also receive a personal testimony of His pleasure shortly before the Rapture and then know: "Now the hour has come"?

e.) Without faith this is not experienced; for "he that draweth nigh unto God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder unto them that seek Him." There is a divine "must" here. Further, we are told that God rewards. Many a time we have sung: "Then it goes from faith to sight, where trust is richly rewarded" (Canticles No.66).

Then we find other valuable clues in the life picture of Enoch in Genesis 5:21-24. In passing, let us note: Enoch's father, that is, Jered, became the second oldest at 962, and Enoch's son, Methuselah, became the oldest at 969. Enoch, on the other hand, was raptured at the age of 365. There we read that after the begetting of Methuselah he made an important decision for God. Twice, the Bible's brief account confirms for us, "And Enoch walked with God." This was something quite outstanding for that time, otherwise the Scriptures would not tell us so. What a testimony to this OT saint and what encouragement to us! His life, actions and deeds now had a single orientation: God. That is why our fathers in the faith, who taught us the Word of God, attached such great importance to a worthy walk, according to our high calling. "Walk as children of light!" In these footsteps of faith let us also enter, so that it may be said of us also: He walked with God.

In conclusion, we read in Jude 14 - 15 about Enoch, that to his exemplary walk was added his testimony. He preached to the people of his time, he reproached them for their ungodliness and announced to them the judgment of God, which also came in his time. Whether we, who live in the days like in the time of Noah and Lot (Luk 17, 26-30), miss this commission for our time?

We have a second example of the Rapture in the prophet

Elijah.

We will read the passage in 2 Kings 2:1-14, paying attention to the stages Elijah went with his successor Elisha before his Rapture, and recognize with wonder how these mark our journey of faith.

a.) Gilgal is the starting point. The name means rolling away and has always been considered a model for Golgotha. When Joshua led the people through the Jordan into the land, the first station was Gilgal: here again the people were circumcised, the shame of Egypt (darkness) was rolled away. If in Enoch we first saw faith as the foundation, here the focus is on the cross, the crucified. We have the summary in 1 Thesalonians 4:14: "If we believe that Jesus died . . . "Yes: "At the cross of my Savior, there is my sure footing," there is my reason for living. Here faith dwells in reverence, gratitude and love. He knows: "Now I have found the reason."

b.) Bethel - the further station - means "house of God". Here is clarity of Scripture. The Bible does not know soloists. After salvation by the blood of the Lamb, the way of a child of God is into the fellowship of the saints. Paul writes about this: "That you may know how to conduct yourself in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3, 15). What a lovely lot has fallen to us. In His house we may be and recognize Him, the Eternal, Him who loves us as He loves His only begotten. Here He transforms us into His image, takes us into the divine, in the beholding of Himself. Whether we can also say in view of our assemblies: "This is nothing but God's house" (Genesis 28:17)?

c.) Jericho is the next place our two wanderers come to. It means fragrant or fragrant place. God is still sending people out today. He leads us around in the triumphal procession of Christ to pass on to others the blessing - balm - received in the house of God, to be a fragrance of Christ, to proclaim the virtues of Christ. In doing so, we are a savor from death to death to some, and a savor from life to life to others who are saved (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

d.) Now comes the fourth and last station before the rapture of Elijah: Jordan = flowing down, hurrying away, an image for death. That is why it is called the river of death again and again. But, how wonderful, on the way to the Rapture the waters of death have to part: Dry-footed Elijah and Elisha pass through the Jordan. And at the Rapture of the church, it is again like Enoch: "so that he should not see death." What a triumph of the Son of God! What a triumph of life when the living part of the church experiences the "overclothing"! Paul tells us in this regard, "We shall not all sleep." - But what about the many dear children of God who will not be clothed over but unclothed (2 Cor. 5:1-5), that is, who will not experience the Rapture in their lifetime? To them, too, it is true that the believer will not see death. A small experience about this. A brother, seriously ill, was on his way home. We sang him some songs. They had a common denominator that was always important to him, but not now. He was moved by the question: How will I fare when I close my eyes here? In answer we said something like this: When the children of Israel went into the Promised Land after

their wilderness wanderings, they went through the Jordan dry-footed; the waters of death were not allowed to touch them Jos. 3). So now you also go through the "Jordan" into the land of promise. But you will not see death; death must not touch you; you are in HIM, the life. He nodded in agreement. A few days later, while his loved ones were with him and sang him some songs, the last being the song "Grasp my hand", his last breath was taken as the verse sounded:

Take hold of my hand; and when I
stand on the Jordan of death,
which You have crossed for me,
let heavenly light from Your throne shine for me;
let me walk fearlessly even in the valley of terror!

The brother went through the Jordan, without seeing death, to his Lord.

What a way is shown to us for the rapture of the church in the taking away of Elijah: Golgotha - house of God - triumphal procession - taking away.

Then, when Elijah went up to heaven in a fiery chariot, the prophet's mantle fell down and was given to Elisha, who still remained. May we understand it this way: When the Lord has caught up His church to Himself, the then gathered and still gathering multitude of Messianic believers from Israel will be granted the prophetic testimony of the church. Yes, they will receive and need a double part to deliver the prophetic testimony in the last difficult time. Therefore, we look at God's action in Israel, rejoice in the brethren from there and may participate in the ministry for them in prayer and gifts.

Now we turn in the New Testament to the Rapture of the

Philip

to. The whole 8th chapter of Acts is about his ministry, how the Lord leads him and needs him. But for our consideration, the last two verses of this chapter will suffice. Verse 39: "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip: and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went his way rejoicing." The account could conclude here, but there are still some important clues for us, His church, in the very next verse. Verse 40: "Now Philip was found at Ashdod; and passing through, he preached the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea." Ashdod was one of the Philistine cities and had been assigned to the tribe of Judah when the land was taken under Joshua. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 we read:

"The Lord will come down from heaven...and we will be caught up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air." According to Ephesians 2:2, the air is still an area of authority of the enemy. Is the "evil day" (Eph. 6, 13) to be thought of here? On the other hand, we would like to ask: Why is the church not immediately caught up into the glory of Christ and the Father? Well, whoever sees himself and the church in the light

of God recognizes that a final cleansing or purification is still needed. This then is our "Asdod". The name means: fire of love, loving fire.

Turning again to the Apostle Paul and reading in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, we see that the church will be revealed in a "fire of love." "The work of each one will be made manifest, for the day will make it manifest, because it will be revealed in fire." - "What the work of each is, the fire will test (examine or investigate)." It can then happen, "If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer harm, but he himself will be saved, yet as through fire." Three times Paul talks about fire here, certainly a fire of love. That is why it is so important to understand the

Verse 10 to note: "Let each one see how he builds on it." We often see and admire the what, but the Lord looks at our how. For example, 2 pennies can carry more weight than mountains of gold (Luk 21:1 - 4). Our "how" builds lasting and imperishable values on the foundation laid. Expressed in symbols: "gold" for faith, faithfulness, "silver" for salvation and "precious stones" for glory. May He grant us a life of faith on the ground of salvation and the glory assigned to us. On the other hand, He keep us from the transitory values of the only human = wood, the transitory = hay, and the fruitless life = straw. All own, human doing is under the transitoriness and brings nothing to maturity, to fruit. Thus, in view of 2 Corinthians 5:10, we should not speak too much of a "judgment seat", especially if we still think of the related verse 11.

In view of this day, Ephesians 5:27 can fill us with great joy: HE will one day present His church glorified to Himself, without spot, without wrinkle or anything like that. After that, the church with its head Jesus Christ will be placed before the bāma (judgment seat, stage) of God. How may the words sound there: "Behold, I and the children whom God has given me!" (Heb. 2:13). Let us look again at Philip: his ministry soon continued after the Rapture to Ashdod. What a ministry we will have with Him until God will be all and in all! Finally, let us take a look at the Rapture of the Apostle

Paul

(2. Cor. 12, 2 - 4). For him it was such a great experience that he does not know how to interpret it completely, he can only say: God knows. How pleasant is such restraint and the waiting of 14 years until Paul reports about it! What about some people today who (supposedly) have visions? Paul tells us that he heard unspeakable words, which a man (now) is not allowed to say. Which

Delightful to think now of the time of which it is said: "We shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17)! What glory will be revealed to us there! Let us just think of some words from the Epistle to the Ephesians: ". . . that in the ages to come He may show the abundant riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus . . . and to know the love of the Christ that surpasses knowledge . . . filled to all the fullness of God . . . to the measure of the full growth of the fullness of the Christ. . . filled with the Spirit."

What an exceedingly glorious day we are approaching! Let us ask again and more: O come soon, Lord Jesus

The believer's sources of strength to overcome (Eph. 6, 10-20)[Th. Böhmerle].

10 For the rest, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the crafty artifices of the devil; 12 for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this world time, against the spiritual ones of wickedness in the heavenly .

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having well directed all things, to stand your ground.

14 Stand fast therefore, your loins girded with truth, and clothed with the breast-plate of righteousness, 15 and your feet booted with readiness for the gospel of peace. 16 Above all, take hold of the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the fiery darts of the evil one, 17 and take also the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watch for this purpose with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints, 19 even for me, that the word may be given me, as often as I open my mouth, freely to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in it I may speak freely as I ought to speak.

Eph. 6, 10-20

Author: Theodor Böhmerle, according to his writing "The Sources of Strength for the Believer to Overcome in the Inner and Outer Struggle of Life (Eph. 6, 10-20)".

God's children should be victors, not defeated; God's children should be overcomers, not conquered in the inner and outer struggle of life. The whole world is full of the slain and the beaten. The mass of people finally stretch out their arms and must stretch them out, even if it is only before the last enemy, death. How few there are who hurry towards the goal of life in the armor of Christ. The believers in Christ should be such. But where do we get the strength for such a victory? If a thousand fall at my side and ten thousand at my right, how can I not be struck? Paul leads us in the Spirit to the sources of strength from which faith draws its victorious overcoming power.

"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His strength," he begins. So the source of strength of the believers is not in themselves, but in their Lord. This is the fundamental thing. Believers are people who have recognized in the light of God that they themselves and from themselves are not able to carry out the inner and outer life struggle victoriously. Believers, true believers are broken and broken people. We have a heart that always wants the wrong way; we have a heart from which evil thoughts come; we are enslaved by sin. We have a soul life with disordered, confused, and confusing urges. We have a mind that is short-sighted and naturally lacking in true wisdom. The sharper it is, the more foolish things *it* does. We have a body that is subject to a thousand and one weaknesses. Our whole being is subject to death. Our gifts and powers are all involved in this miserable being. They make us defiant for a while and blind in defiance, and then despondent and blind in despondency. The person who

has become a believer recognizes all this. He trusts no one less than himself. Self-knowledge, the truer and deeper it becomes, is the basic source of strength of the child of God. All self-confidence is a miserable deception leading to breakage. The whole nations and the overwhelming number of individuals are a striking proof of this. The believer says: "I am miserable, poor, blind and naked." He believes the word: "All flesh is like grass, and all the glory of men like the flower of grass"; therefore he cannot take flesh for his arm.

Man does not come to such knowledge by himself; no, he resists it by nature. This realization is an effect of the mighty power of God, which breaks fortresses. Therefore, because it is an effect of the divine power and strength, there is so much strength in the admission of this powerlessness. That is why people are defeated, because they think they are strong. And that gives the overcomers, who recognize and acknowledge their weakness and nothingness.

That is why Paul says, "When I am weak, then I am strong"; and again, "I will most of all boast of my weakness, that the power of Christ may dwell with me." This emptiness and emptiness of our inner being gives room to God and the Savior in us. The more someone is in himself and thinks of himself, the less the Savior can work in him. Our defeats all come from our own strength and self-strength; think of Peter in some situations, especially in Gethsemane. Thus the basic source of the believers' strength is their deeply recognized powerlessness and nothingness. It throws us on the Savior and brings us to the point where we can finally do nothing without Him and have to be constantly in Him. We are strong in the Lord and in the power of His strength. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who came into the flesh. And He has victoriously overcome every sin in the days of His flesh; He has also endured all sufferings, tribulations, fears and agonies in free obedience. He went down into death, the grave and the kingdom of death and came forth again victorious. Now in Him dwells the fullness of all powers to overcome everything that may be called inner and outer struggles, and this fullness is completely at the disposal of the faithful, those who are weak in themselves and devoted to the Lord. In the Holy Spirit, the Lord communicates His own to the believers. Thus we are able to do all things through Christ, the one who makes us mighty. We can be high and we can be low; we can have plenty and we can be in want; we are able in all things and for all things. From His fullness we daily receive grace upon grace. The Savior is tempted everywhere like as we are, but everywhere without sinning. How gloriously He can help us in everything in which we are tempted. Jesus Christ, our Reconciler, Lord, Shepherd, Head, whatever we want to call Him, He is the daily and hourly source of our strength. Whoever is in Him, his face shall not be ashamed. It is lack of repentance and weak faith if we are so weak. He is strong and always ready to make us strong.

That is why we put on Him in faith. He is our armor, or as it is actually called: our total armor. Further down in our text verses, the apostle lists the individual special

weapons that the believer in Christ can take up for his battle and victory. Here in the beginning and then still in the 13th verse he speaks of the armor or the total armor. This total armor, all in all, is the Lord Himself. Faith seizes him according to the situation in the diversity of weapons. Thus, children of God never fight their life's battles alone, they fight in their Duke, who goes before them and makes way. These are the foundations of the believers' power of victory: their own nothingness and their standing in the Lord.

Another main source of the strength of God's children is their clear sight of the enemy. The apostle leads us to this source when he writes: "Put on your whole armor, that you may be able to stand against the crafty attempts of the devil. For we have to contend not with flesh and blood, but with princes and mighty men, even with the rulers of the world, which reign in the darkness of this world, with the evil spirits under heaven. "Here is drawn for us with clear revelatory strokes on various sides the enemy with whom we have to deal in our outer and inner life struggles. It is the quickest way to defeat if one does not estimate the enemy correctly, if one considers him too big or too small. Both weaken in battle. Clear eye for the enemy forces is power and strength. The spirit creates this clear eye for us in our verses.

First of all we hear that we are not only dealing with flesh and blood, i.e. not only with the external, sinful and death-decayed natural stock of our own being and of the whole creature, but that in everything and with everything we are dealing with invisible spirit powers and their prince, Satan. Flesh and blood, that is the human being as he has become through the Fall, according to spirit, soul and body arrested to the I and arrested to death. Flesh and blood is in the broader sense all creature subjected to death and vanity. From this well springs, indeed, the calamitous of our outer and inner struggles; but behind it all stands a spirit prince of darkness and his army, and in the last analysis it is with this that we have to do. Personal spirit influences underlie everything. Nothing takes place only before eyes in flesh and blood, everything has an invisible spirit and spirit background. We are no match for this invisible enemy with weapons taken only from visibility. This is the great mistake of most people and often also of believers, that in their life struggles they only look at the visible and only seek help in the visible. Then one is infallibly lost sooner or later. You must always keep an eye on the invisible forces in everything: in inner temptations, in suffering among people, in adverse circumstances, even in the distress of sickness and death. Then you will also resort to invisible weapons of war, i.e. those forged in the invisible world of light. A child of God, who knows with whom he has to deal, always reaches into the invisible world of light and life and gets his weapons there. That is why a person of faith is so strong, because he is at home in the spirit world of light, which is superior to the spirit world of darkness, and always arms himself there. Poor people, who have to get their armor in the life struggle from the visible. Our change is in the heavenly, therefore the prevailing forces.

But we are not only confronted with an invisible spirit world, but also with one that is spiritually very high and equipped with cunning. Luther speaks of the "cunning attempts of the devil". Quite literally, this means: the methods of the devil. Yes, the devil has method. There is cunning plan in all his doings. He always knows when, where and how he can best attack. He has his own method with every single person, which we are not able to cope with for a long time! How often we are surprised and taken by surprise. We are superior to this method of Satan only through the wisdom of Christ. Therefore He is also made wisdom for us. The divine wisdom of life, which the Holy Spirit communicates to the believers, is higher than all reason and more powerful than

all the methods of Satan. A simple child of God, in his faithfulness, goes right through all the cunning snares of Satan. Because a believer has light on Satan's methods, he is never safe; he knows that the enemy is always in arms.

In addition to this outstanding spiritual power, there is also great majesty. We are dealing with princes and mighty men, with earthly rulers, who in the darkness of the world, i.e. in everything that does not belong to God, exercise a tremendous power from the visible heavens, thus pressing from above. What gigantic forms of violence and violent acts evil often assumes in this world. We are not able to cope with it, if there is not a greater one with us.

The knowledge of the enemy drives us to the Savior. Then the consolation of power is ours: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." As a child of God, remember: we are transferred by faith from the authority of darkness to the kingdom of the beloved Son. Now Satan has a great wrath, that we are withdrawn from his world dominion. Count on it, the more you are connected to salvation. This will drive you more and more into him. This is how the knowledge of the enemy creates power.

Believers do not deceive themselves as to whom they are dealing with. That is why they flee to their fortress and become strong. That is why Paul says: "For this reason, take up the total armor of God, so that you may resist in the evil day (precisely in this time of the reign of the evil one, which also manifests itself again and again on special days and hours), and that you may well direct and stand all things." Now here are two words in Scripture that lead us again to a new source of strength. The words are called resist and stand. It is very important to note how many times in the Greek the word „stand" occurs. Verse 11: stand; verse 13: resist and stand; verse 14: stand therefore. To this four times "standing" is added verse 12 the expression "wrestling". "To us the wrestling match is not with flesh and blood." So our life's struggle is described as a wrestling match in which the most important thing is to stand still. We think here involuntarily of Jacob's wrestling match at Jabbokfurt and of Jesus' wrestling match in Gethsemane.

To all this is added the perception, which we make in our text, that all the individual weapons, which the believer puts on in battle, are all protective weapons for close

combat. Belt, armor, boots, shield, helmet and the very short Roman sword, which could only be used for thrusting while standing, are all protective and defensive weapons. The only long-distance weapon and offensive weapon, which occurs, has the devil. All this, taken together, is very remarkable and indicates that our life struggle should be fought by us as a positional and defensive struggle, as a close-range struggle and not as a long-range struggle. Christians do not attack and go off. They do not worry about things far away and things to come, and they do not get upset about things that have not yet come. Thus, they save tremendous strength and are stronger when it comes.

Many people are already consumed in their strength by heavy things before they have come to them; a child of God is not. Many people get into the restless running back and forth in the outer and inner life struggles. Believers stop, seize their weapon of protection in the Lord and fight back. Again we see clearly the passive, or rather the passionate of the children of God. There are no daredevils among them; daredevils are people of the flesh. The Savior also let everything come to him. Everything that my Father gives me comes to me" is a significant word in this respect. Stand more in your outer and inner life struggles! Stand more before the Lord, in the Lord, and be still, quietly defending yourself with spiritual weapons. The restless to and fro to people and things is the most strength-sapping thing there is. My soul is silent to God, who helps me - that is standing still. Truly, a real source of strength. When we stand still, we take the individual weapons from the heavenly arsenal as needed and fight back with them. This is our great power, that we can get our own weapon from our heavenly arsenal for every battle and in the increasingly difficult battles we can get more and more powerful weapons. The basic weapon of all Christian struggle is the *belt of truth*. In wrestling, strong loins are needed above all; we know this from Jacob, whose hip was dislocated. Therefore, first the belt around the loins, which is the truth. The basic weapon of Satan and the world is the lie. With lies everything is tried; with the help of lies one believes to achieve everything. The basic element of the child of God is truth. Only those who are of the truth can hear Jesus' voice at all. Being sincere is the basic condition of all success. The child of God believes and knows that the truth will always be the winner. Lying is the deepest contrast to the state of faith. Therefore, for John, "being in the truth" is the whole Christian state, and truth makes strong. All lies weaken and make us insecure. Even if it makes you bold, it still makes you waver. Truth is of penetrating power. Therefore, even in these lie-soaked times, we always remain steadfastly with the truth and in the truth, in Him. Never be led to the ground of lies, or you will soon have dislocated hips. Fight all your life's battles in the truth, then you will remain strong.

Of course, the enemy will say to us: You have already lied and do not yet stand completely in the truth. This bends us and wants to make us weak. We arm ourselves with the armor of *righteousness*. We put on Christ's blood righteousness in faith; we hold out to the enemy the atonement in the blood of the Lamb. This armor is impenetrable.

Again and again we put it on when the enemy in outer or inner difficult situations wants to make us dull and weak with our sin. How difficult it is to fight when we are inwardly troubled and torn. If the heart is not firm, there is no standing. The armor of Christ's righteousness protects the chest and the heart. And in the righteousness of Christ we also want to offer righteousness against everyone. With injustice the world fights, with righteousness believers fight. This is a hard stand in the midst of this world, but it is the

Armor reflection of the living Christian. The righteousness of God, which we put on in Christ, shines as the righteousness of life in the face of those who meet us.

This righteousness in Christ, together with the truth, gives the fighter against God the strong *state of peace* in which he fights. If we have become righteous through faith, we have peace with God, and if we have a good conscience, walking in truth and righteousness, then the Lord seals this peace in us. This peace is comparable to the boots, because it helps the most to stand. We stand in the readiness of the peace which the Gospel gives". The inner peace, in which a child of God can fight even his most difficult battles, is an unparalleled inner strength; it is the central power.

And when the enemy gets angry at such a girded, armored and booted fighter of faith and shoots incendiary arrows to mortally wound him, when he wants to shoot into fire with outer and inner troubles, into fire of conscience, heart, soul, restlessness, doubt, despondency - then the believer takes his *oath of faith*. He believes in distress of mind, body and soul and goes from faith to faith. The love of Christ and God is certain to him; with it he extinguishes the arrows and their fires.

And when he almost suffocates from poisonous fumes, he puts on his *helmet of full salvation* - the modern soldier would add a gas mask - and consoles himself with the certain hope of the coming full glory. And when faith and hope become small to him, when he feels nothing at all of the power of the Lord, then he takes his short *sword* out of the scabbard: He stands freely and frankly on the word alone. He takes one promise after the other and holds it up to the enemy as a divine spiritual word. And when even this no longer works, then faith begins to cry out, then comes *petition* and *prayer*, yes, then comes vigilance and supplication; and when crying out is no longer possible, then the spirit sighs. And in this crying the fighter of faith has the weapon with which he can also serve his comrades, the saints. With this weapon the churches once also carried their apostle through, so that he could create an abundance of blessing in bands. With the weapon of prayer the faith fights, when fetters and bonds force the bodies and prevent the work. In prayer and supplication, faith, in the face of death, completes its course to the victory of the glory life. Sevenfold is the armor. All seven spirits of God with their gifts and powers are at the disposal of the children of God in their outer and inner struggles, strengthening them from step to step. Well then, you believers, draw near to your sources of strength: Put on your total armor, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His strength! (1.Oct.1923)

Corruptible and incorruptible body (1 Cor. 15, 42-44) [E.F. Ströter].

42 So it is also with the resurrection of the dead: It is sown in corruption, and is raised in incorruption; 43 it is sown in dishonor, and is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, and is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, and is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Cor. 15, 42-44

Author: Prof. E.F. Ströter, from his book "The Prince of Life Must Once Inherit Everything."

In these words of the apostle Paul we see very vividly and plausibly the great contrasts between the corporeality that is sown (in death) and that which is to be resurrected.

But before that we note that the simple wording leaves no doubt that what is sown shall and will rise again. There is no room here for the popular assumption that there can and will never again be a use for the dead body lowered into the grave or into the embers of the crematorium.

The first pair of opposites is called: corruptible and incorruptible. Nothing is easier to understand, however incomprehensible the divine procedure may appear to us, to transform our bodily materiality so radically. For millennia, mankind has stood helplessly at the edge of the grave and has had to abandon countless beloved human bodies to unstoppable decay. Certainly, already thousands of years ago in Egypt one knew to protect the framework and housing of the wonderful human body by embalming from the so horrible decomposition. But is a mummy an appropriate substitute, so that one would like to have it with him in the house or in the room? God's procedure is different: "And shall rise incorruptible." Again, the ancients have known how to hand down their thoughts and decrees, their knowledge and skill, on clay tablets intact to our day. The ravages of time have neither yellowed nor worn them down. But incorruptible is still something else than rigid and dead and numb, even if wonderfully durable. A living organism, to which death can never again approach in any form, which will never again be exposed to decay, withering and withering away. Only our God can work this.

Sown in dishonor, rise in glory. It is a nameless disgrace that the most wonderful creature that ever came out of the great Creator's hand, man, built and formed from the dust of the earth, becomes an object of indescribable horror and horror, which after a few days, in spite of all the deep sorrow about it, must be removed from the circle of vision as quickly as possible, as food for the worms. And exactly this structure shall rise in glory. It is hardly to be grasped. But the Scripture clearly says: "Who will change the body of our lowliness into conformity with the body of His glory" (Phil. 3, 21).

Sown in weakness, rising in strength, Yesterday a giant in stature and growth, a giant in physical strength and endurance, who could defy all enemies, and tomorrow more

helpless than a newborn, than a little worm in the dust. And rise in strength? In whose strength? The Almighty, the only Mighty One, who made heaven and earth, who carries all things with the word of His power, who does great wonders, and there is no one who could do like Him. Who gave all authority in heaven and on earth to the Son and subjected everything to Him. In His uncreated, inexhaustible power they shall rise, never to tire, never to flag, never to falter nor give way in the face of all imaginable opposing forces or powers. This is God's goal with those He calls out of the dust. O a wonderful God! Sown a spiritual body, raised a spiritual body. The last expression can easily be misinterpreted to mean a spiritual, immaterial corporeality. To counter this misinterpretation, we need only ask what a spiritual body is, as we carry it in the present according to the words of the apostle. It is not a body that consists of only soul, but a body whose life stock lies in the so-called soul, whose carrier is the wonderful red juice called blood. Our soul lies in the blood, teaches the Scriptures emphatically from the beginning (Deut. 17, 11; Deut. 5, 12, 23). On the cross our Lord and Savior poured out His life, that is His soul for us (Ps. 22, 15). Thus, a spiritual body is one whose life stock is no longer in blood, but only in the living spirit, which directly maintains, nourishes, controls and completely subdues all bodily functions, so that my physicality is no longer the slightest obstacle, no longer the easiest fetter for all movements and undertakings of my redeemed spirit, but rather the most willing and compliant organ for the perfect execution of everything that my spirit determines and aims at.

The animals: also the groaning creature shall be delivered (Rom. 8, 19-22) [E.F. Ströter].

19 For the eager expectation of creation longs for the revelation of the sons of God. 20 For the creation is subjected to corruption, not willingly, but by Him who subjected it, in hope, 21 that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of mortality to the liberty of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth withal, and lieth in travail withal, even now.

Rom. 8, 19-22

Author: Prof. E.F. Ströter, excerpts from his book "The Song of Sonship", edited by Heinz Schumacher.

Where does the further train of thought of the apostle Paul lead us now? The context of his speech is not interrupted in any way. What follows is intended to give us information about the character of the very glory to which we are called as sons of God. And what do we learn there? One would expect a very grand enumeration and demonstration of all the high heavenly beings and creatures, the strong heroes of God, the indomitable hosts of most powerful angels, seraphim, cherubim and as they are called before Him who created them all and calls them by name. A glowing, radiant description of the beauties, lovelinesses, treasures and goods of the heavenly worlds, the dwellings of those millions of holy angels. At least the thoughts of many Christians go in this direction with such persistence that one would think there could be nothing else for our longing and hoping for the glory to be revealed.

But where do the words of Scripture point us? Not up above all the heavens, **but down into the** lamentation of the **groaning creature**, which writhes in travail until this very day. There it stands massively and tangibly before us: The tense expectation of the creature longs for the revelation of the children of God. This is the leading thought of the apostle for the whole now following treatise. And of the beautiful heaven with all the lovely little angels and other charming creatures is also not mentioned with one syllable. Whether our guide has grasped the matter quite correctly? He himself was once enraptured in *paradise* (2 Cor. 12:4), and even if he was not allowed to reproduce the words he heard there, he must still have remembered in his mind what he saw there of the redeemed creature. For the paradise is not to be thought at all without a creature freed from the bonds of mortality and bondage. The theological invention that a part of the realm of the dead is paradise cannot be supported by a thread of scriptural testimony.

What does the 8th Psalm say and sing and jubilate about the Son of Man, first humbled but then highly exalted? "You will make Him rule over the works of Your hands; You have put everything under His feet." And what comes next? Again, not angels or archangels, but the whole series of creatures we readily dismiss as "unreasonable": sheep and oxen all, plus the wild beasts, the birds of the air, the fish in the sea. And

to this it is said, "Jehovah our Ruler, how glorious is Your name in all the earth!" Who, then, among our very devout Christians can be at all enthusiastic about the animal world and find anything great in the fact that the Son of Man should one day reign as the second and last Adam over all these teeming creatures of His Father, of which we know little more than to make riding animals and beasts of burden, slaughter animals which we make to taste good, and as very useful purveyors of fabulous footwear and of warm clothing and of very lovely little feathers with which women adorn their hats? And yet our great Creator God must have had something great in mind at that time, when He determined that man, formed in His image, should rule over all this colorful, rich creation.

What do we understand about it at all? Who of our most eminent scholars and natural scientists can tell us even from a single little worm in the dust or a single bird on the roofs or from *one of* the billions of silent fish in the depths of the sea, what was the thought of God, which found its appropriate expression in this creature? Or did God thoughtlessly let all this become just so by itself? Is not every work of God, however small, an expression of His holy and perfect will and plan? Yes, once upon a time - O how far it lies behind us! There was a man on earth who knew how to read the book of creation. He was the crown of the whole creation, the image of the living God, even if formed from earth dust. It belonged to his created nobility, to his royal dignity, that he was able to call every being that came into being by God's creative word by its correct name (Genesis 2:19,20). And to be able to name something means to control it. Who can do that today? It is a Babylonian confusion of all conceivable, terribly learned sounding names which our highly praised natural science likes to assign to the animals. But what do they tell us of God's thoughts which find their expression in the creatures? We have not even the shadow of an idea of it any more. We are dreadfully sunk majesties. That is to be recognized also here frighteningly clearly. Only what we fabricate ourselves - ink barrels, umbrellas, pins and other dead stuff we can call with appropriate names. But not even to our own children, who are our flesh and blood, we can attach correct names, which designate their true nature and their occupation in the life.

What then do we find in those marvelous living creatures that form the throne chariot of the heavenly Creator Majesty? Of their four faces, only one is human (Rev. 4:7). Next to it, on the same level, is the lion, the bull, the flying eagle. What are they doing there? Yes, who of us proud people would still know that! But one thing is certain: There they are, and there they will probably remain, whether this society is quite congenial to us or not. Because our God has also with the animal creation still quite unfathomable thoughts, otherwise they would not be there, where it is about His glorious power development. We will probably still have to relearn as far as the appreciation of the now still groaning creature is concerned. We feel very pious and consider it a "heavenly" attitude when we sing and sigh: Away, away from here to heaven! But that alone is not a heavenly attitude! It means that we are like Jesus Christ, Son of

Man and Son of God, who understood the Father better than our most pious theologians and poets. What God thinks of His creation, we should think after Him - this belongs to the heavenly mind, and not only the constant thinking of our own exuberant enjoyment of unspeakable bliss in heaven.

Has it nothing to say to us that the Scriptures, that faithful mirror of the true thoughts of our God, speak of a **Lamb of God** and of a *Lion of Judah*, and that they make the personal Holy Spirit appear in the form of a **dove**? Are these designations, taken from the animal creation, quite inappropriate and inadequate? It would be a piece of presumption to want to assert this. There must be something in the nature of these creatures that harmonizes with the divine nature and can be chosen as a symbol for it.

To complete what has been said about God's thoughts with the creature to be liberated, Is. 11,6-8 should be pointed out: The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard with the kid. The calf, the young lion and the fatling will be together so that a little boy can drive them. The cow and the she-bear will graze together and lay their young together. The lion will eat straw like the cattle. The infant will play at the hole of the otter, the weaned will stretch out his hand to the cave of the basilisk. These are lovely and pleasant pictures of a happy time, when the mortal enmity between animal and man as well as between animal and animal will be abolished. This is the lost and then restored **paradise**, in which the repentant criminal, as the Crucified promised him, will meet Him at His side.

In the life of Jesus, too, we encounter few but telling samples of man's originally God-given dominion over the creature. Wind and sea are obedient to Him. The treacherous flood of water, which gurgles with pleasure when it has again swallowed a "lord of creation," must obediently carry the Son of Man and His disciple at the Master's word. Jesus needs a donkey filling, so that the scripture is fulfilled. Who knows the oriental gray donkey, knows how different he is from our tame long-eared donkey. But in spite of all the noise and cheering of the intoxicated crowd, the animal, which recognizes its master in Him, carries Him calmly into the excited city of the daughter Zion. These are only a few samples of the willing submission of the creature to the Son of Man. To whom this does not seem "heavenly" and "spiritual" enough, we do not want to argue with him; but to us this seems far more heavenly than all sweet talk of blissful feelings, in which one wants to revel, and for which the dear little angels are supposed to supply the decorations and the spheres the music. If winds are His angels and flames of fire are His servants - according to the Scriptures, which cannot be broken - then some pious-aesthetic fancies will probably have to go the way of all flesh. Our God is a very great practical realist, who has a somewhat different conception of creaturely corporeality than the super-spiritual pious of our day, who would prefer to spiritualize everything that is written. God himself takes over all responsibility for the

creaturely corporeality and does not push it at all to the devil or the demons and "aeons" of the Gnostics.

When He lets His inspired prophet prophesy of the future reorganization of things, of the completely new culture and art and science and technology, then He speaks: "I will bring gold instead of ore and silver instead of iron, and ore instead of wood and iron instead of stones" (Is. 60, 17). Not instead of ore, stone and wood wonderful sensations, exuberant moods, delightful imaginations and images of ideas. Corporeality is the end of His ways. God "revealed in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3, 16) is the highest level of His self-manifestation to mankind and the angelic world. From the dust of the earth He forms His own image. This is God's method and goal.

Has one found any proof from the Bible or nature that somewhere or sometime in the area of the divine creation there can be and should be beings, conditions and relations which are fundamentally different in their existence from what we know and have here on earth and in the sky? The astronomy gives only one testimony for the fact that also the most shining celestial bodies consist of exactly the same gases, substances, atoms and molecules as our globe. Just stretch your imagination before the highest-flying chariot to imagine "heavenly" conditions - will you ever be able to get beyond what this earth would be, if only no sin, no death, no ruin, no suffering and no screaming were here? What kind of language vessels does the spirit of prophecy use, if it is about the description of the city of God, which has foundations? Certainly, if one has the courage to reinterpret all this in mood and pious feeling, what is spoken there of golden streets, of noble and shining stones and precious pearls, then one may do it. But then also stop taking God's word at face value elsewhere. If these are not realities, where are there to be any? Then comes the kingdom of the imperishable realities, which are not exposed to any death, no more withering and fading in eternity.

The language of the apostle is mysterious to us when he speaks of the tense expectation of the creature. How little do we understand their longing, how little do we care about their unspoken, but certainly deeply felt pain! We judge their sighing, their moving contractions from too much above. How we have so completely forgotten that we human children are the only ones to blame for their misery, their subjection to mortality! For the creature has not sinned, but we have. How loud and moving is this silent sermon of suffering through no fault of her own, which she has to endure for our sake!

And the word declares that the expectation of the creature longs for the revelation of the children of God. Is this not again a just reproach to so many children of God, who do not even long for their "revelation" themselves, but only for the hour when they turn their backs on the frightened creature and withdraw into the "beautiful heaven" to the angels, where they only revel in pure bliss, but do not want to care at all about the creature that has remained behind? What will become of the creature, they do

not care about, if *they* are only blessed! But the great Creator and Savior God, who subjected the creature to mortality out of mercy towards us, hears and hears their longing for our revelation, and He will neither forget nor neglect it. The Lord has mercy on all His works, even on the groaning unreasonable creature. It is subjected to hope. And even if our understanding of such creaturely hope is very limited and undeveloped, His is all the better for it. To Him, our Lord, the Father has put all things under His feet and given Him authority over all flesh.

Do we ever imagine what a terrible fate it would have become for mankind if the rest of the creatures, which have not sinned, had not been subjected to mortality all around us? How much more bitter would dying have become for us if we, the appointed masters of the creature, had had to pay tribute to death over and over again, but it had been free of it. How would we then have hated it, cursed it, cursed it, and yet would not have been able to harm it. Any praise of the feathered singers would have been an insufferable mockery of us servants of the fear of death! It was an indescribable grace and kindness of God when He subdued the creature with. And how thankful we can be that it happened "in hope", as it is written.

"For the creature also shall be set free from the bondage of mortality unto the liberty of the glory of the children of God." We cannot think this out and imagine it. The mere thought of immortal animals - horses, dogs, birds, fish - seems so outrageous, almost distasteful, that we have not even become familiar with them. And yet their archetypes and representatives have been for eons in the cherubim the bearers and witnesses of divine Creator glory and majesty. We have hardly paid attention to that. We are just terribly burdened by the conventional philosophical treatment better maltreatment - of all biblical concepts and ideas. The ancient pagan dualism philosophized into creation, according to which only the spirit is good, but matter is inherently evil, sits horribly deep in today's Christian thinking.

With healthy indignation F. Bettex in "Symbolism of Creation and Eternal Nature" opposes this naughtiness of evaporation of biblical realities:

"A natural and above all a bodily heaven teaches the Bible. For God has created man according to body, soul and spirit and wants to receive him once in His kingdom according to body, soul and spirit, to entertain, to refresh and to make him infinitely happy. But because this is truth, no doctrine is so zealously and persistently opposed, falsified and obscured by the spirit that always denies... Away with the flat obfuscations of the glorious eternal nature proclaimed to us by God's Word! Let us have the courage to believe this dear Father, when He tells us something about how good we shall have it with Him one day...!"

Further, the apostle testifies that the groaning creature is in **labor pains until now**. Labor pains are painful. But they are the indispensable passage to new life. We already know that from this old creation. So already in the expression chosen here lies the assurance of a completely new being and life. Let us leave it to the brave Bettex

to say: "What shall she give birth to? The new heavens and the new earth. Why does the earth restlessly circle around the sun, returns again and again to the vicinity of the sun, draws new strength there and tirelessly begins new circulation? Why does the wave roll monotonously for millennia on the beach the millions of pebbles up and down and grinds them smooth and round in laborious Sisyphus work? Why do the rivers strive without rest toward the sea, and winds and clouds circle eternally around the world? - How every year, as on the third day of creation, the earth labors with touching fidelity to make grass come forth and trees to bear their seed with her, and always works to bring forth good fruit; and do frosts and the host of the destroyer ever spoil her, or does drought scorch her, or does the worm of destruction eat her in the germ, so she tries again and again, and drives and drives to fruit in the sunlight as a revelation of her fruitfulness.... Or do you think that this immense, incomprehensible, all creatures crushing work and burden of existence is in vain and futile? Do you think that the fixed stars in the sky and the atoms in the drop of water, the planets in their orbits and the people behind the plow are struggling for nothing and nothing, only so that this deception of earthly life and this most miserable of all existence continues to spin through the millennia? Then, however, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall be dead" (1 Cor. 15:32)!"

Thus, in the groaning of creation in travail, the ear open to faith hears clearly the voice of Him who said, "Behold, I make all things new!"

Stand firm in the Lord (Phil. 4, 1) [W. Kernchen].

1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and my crown, stand fast in the Lord in this way, beloved.

Phil. 4, 1

Author: Wolfgang Kernchen, based on his article of the same name at GuH

Our apostle begins this substantial sentence with "therefore". Thus he has in view what has been said before. It is about our hope: Our Savior will come again soon and will transform our lowly body into the likeness of His glorious body (Phil. 3, 20.21). Paul sees the saints in Philippi already at the goal, and he wants to see this living hope already realized in the community. So he adds four delicious statements to the brother's name: Beloved - Desired - Joy - Crown. But first it should be said clearly: This high name "brother" can in truth only carry who comes from Golgotha, who has received here forgiveness of sins and new, eternal life, redemption through the precious blood of Christ Jesus. From Golgotha = Gilgal we go to Bethel, to the house of God, to the fellowship of the saints (cf. 2 Kings 2:1-2). Here brotherhood is experienced and experienced, also in the way Paul describes it here:

Beloved. This is not an emotional exuberance, but a word of truth. Together with other apostles and writers of the Word of God, he listened into the divine life and recognized: God is love. The Son is the bearer and revealer of this love. He, who from

eternity has been in a communion of love with the Father, which never experienced a dimming, never a change of shade, came in the fullness of time and revealed the Father's love in a way that far exceeds all our thinking and feeling: ". . . and loved them, even as you have loved me" (John 17:23 b). Since God has poured out His love into our hearts through His Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5) and through prayer makes this love overflow (Phil. 1:9), and since in obedience to the truth we may purify our souls to unfeigned brotherly love, this statement of the apostle is not strange or unfamiliar to us, no, we gratefully join in this salutation: "beloved brethren", loved by God and also by us.

Desired. This address is also only possible by listening into the divine, into the heart of the one who loves us. It was given to Paul. He could write to his Philippians: ". . . as I long for you all with the heart - the innermost part - of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1, 8). It is amazing that such a listening into the heart of our Lord and Head is possible, yes, even more amazing that in His heart there is a deep longing of love for all whom the Father has given Him. Whoever recognizes this may also carry this longing in his heart, he no longer avoids his brother, he rejoices in the encounter - out of longing.

Joy. Paul may have thought of the goal here and also in the next statement. We take it from the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians (2:19). In the unspeakably glorious day of Christ Jesus, his Thessalonians, his Philippians, and all who have believed through his ministry will be his joy. So it is fair for this apostle, who lives so strongly purposefully, that his brethren "today" are already his joy. But don't these saints still lack so many things? Most certainly. Paul says it immediately afterwards and in other places of his letters, but he looks to his Lord, who is able to add all that is lacking. Joy in the Lord is our strength and helps us a lot to deny the ungodly and to follow the word of the Lord. Therefore, Paul does not want to lord it over the faith of others, but to be co-workers in their joy. Shared joy makes us rich.

Crown. Yes, Paul knows that on the glorious day of Christ the Philippians will be his crown of glory (1 Thess. 2:19). How our great apostle may forget all the efforts of his restless work in the gospel of Christ - in view of this day! My brothers - my crown.

Here we want to be encouraged to participate in this saving gospel, to be fellow fighters of the gospel and not only enjoyers. We want to pray that the Lord will show us how we can participate in the gospel of salvation, so that we too may one day join in this brotherly address.

After this lovely brotherly address follows an important exhortation to those addressed: ". . . **stand fast in the Lord, beloved.**" First, recall the conclusion of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Now I beseech you, brethren, endure the word of exhortation!" (Heb. 13:22). Further, let us note: Exhortations to the members of His Body are made "in the Lord," they are expressions of their communion of life with Him in practical walk. Here it is a question of our representation. There we will all need exhortation! Encouragement.

On the other hand, the words "in Christ" refer to our innermost being, our being complete in Him, being made full. There the scripture speaks of our **position**. We do not want to play one off against the other or even cancel it out. Scripture speaks of both, and we should "remain in the balance of divine truths," as our brother Adolf Heller used to say.

"So stand fast in the Lord," Scripture tells us. "Stand firm" (stākete) we find 10 times in the NT, 7 times in Paul. How important it is for every child of God, especially in our days, where new "teachings" reach us again and again, to stand firm, so that we are not driven to and fro by every wind of doctrine like minors, but hold on to the truth in love and grow up with all the saints towards Him, who is the head, the Christ (Eph. 4, 14 - 16). We feel our standing fast in the Lord has value and importance not only for ourselves, but also for our brother. When Paul writes, ". . . for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thess. 3, 8), we should add: how much more also we! We are one body and each member urgently needs the other. So we may say: the firmer the stand of the individual, the greater the growth, the maturity of the whole.

Let us briefly look at some more words of our apostle about "stand firm".

"Stand firm in faith" (1 Cor. 16:13). If God in His faithfulness has called us, He has endowed us with faith. This faith is designed to grow and requires daily nourishment of faith. This was the case with the Thessalonians, to whom Paul could write: "...because your faith grows exceedingly" (2 Thess. 1, 3). Such growth needs fortification, and it is granted to us in the fellowship of love with Him and with one another. Thus, the apostle always longs for the fellowship with all saints, because he knows about the so necessary mutual offering (Rom. 1, 9-12).

Freedom. "For liberty Christ hath set us free, stand fast now. . ." (Gal. 5, 1). What a precious thing this is, and precisely why it is so endangered; just think of Galatians 5:13! How easily we are in danger of misinterpreting this freedom for the sake of self-love, of giving it a place that Scripture does not even mean. We want to recognize that real, essential freedom can only arise from the bond with Him, the firmer the better. In the life of the Son in lowliness we see it clearly. In John 5 He says it twice: "I can do nothing of myself" (v. 19 u. 30). Thus speaks He through whom the worlds came to be! But in the same chapter we also see how this very life produces wonderful results; read the whole chapter on this. Truly, we need the exhortation: Stand firm in freedom!

In spirit. ". . . that you may stand firm in one spirit" (Phil. 1, 27). The beginning of this verse: "Only walk worthily . . ." should be rendered more accurately (according to Dr. de Boor) as, "Lead your church life only worthy of the gospel." We saw already at the beginning: a brother belongs in the fellowship of the saints. Here is limitation, here is encouragement, strengthening, consolation, cooperation. Here is standing firm in one spirit, struggling along with one soul with the faith of the gospel. What a great task

for a congregation that is made up of individuals. It will only be possible to carry it out if we personally stand firm in one spirit. Do we also need this encouragement?

Tradition / Instruction. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (2 Thess. 2:15). In our days we are facing dissolutions of orders that for centuries formed the solid foundation of our existence. The dissolutions are progressing rapidly and yet are only little seen and understood. If it only affected the world, it would be easier to bear. But we see more and more how the assemblies are also affected. Instead of mourning and repentance, which are few, they still praise it and enjoy the progress of our days. How one empties the Word of God is not noticed, because one has long since stripped the Scriptures of their divine authority and does it more and more every day. Whoever is also grieved for the sake of these things, may read 2 Timothy 4:3 and Titus 2:1 and the following remarks about older men and women, young women and men. May we ask the question: Are we still speaking what befits sound doctrine, or are we excluding this sound doctrine from our preaching? But the command still applies: "But you speak what befits sound doctrine!" How necessary, especially in our days, is the encouragement to stand firm on this point.

With our apostle, the "teacher of the nations", Paul, let us hold the conclusion of our verse and thus greet all those born of God:

Beloved! God is love - and love never fades away. We worship Him over it and rejoice that one day everything will be subordinated to Him. As beloved of Him, we want to do it already today and stand firm in the Lord.



Balaam's talking donkey (Ex. 4, 22-33) [A. Heller].

22 But the wrath of God was kindled against him that he went. And the angel of the Lord stood in his way as an adversary. And he rode upon his ass, and his two lads were with him. 23 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and the drawn sword in his hand, the donkey turned out of the way and went into the field. But Balaam struck the donkey to direct her to the path. 24 Then the angel of the Lord entered a hollow way by the vineyards; a wall was on this side, a wall on that side. 25 So when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pressed against the wall and clamped Balaam's foot against it. So he struck her some more. 26 Then the angel of the Lord went on and entered a narrow place where there was no room to escape, either to the right or to the left. 27 So when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she fell to her knees under Balaam. Then Balaam's anger flared up, and he struck the donkey with a stick. 28 Then the Lord opened the ass's mouth; and she said to Balaam, "What

have I done to you, that you have now struck me three times? 29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast done wickedly unto me. If only there were a sword in my hand, I would have killed you now! 30 And the ass said unto Balaam, Am I not thine ass, which thou hast ridden from of old unto this day? Was it ever my way to act like this against you? He answered, "No." 31 Then the Lord uncovered Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and the drawn sword in his hand. Then he bowed down and threw himself on his face. 32 And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore now hast thou smitten thine ass thrice? Behold, I am gone out to resist thee, because way leads before me to destruction! 33 And the ass hath seen me, and hath now thrice avoided me. And if she had not evaded me, I would have killed you now, but left her alive!

Genesis 4:22-33

15 Because they forsook the right way, they went astray, and followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of iniquity; 16 but he received a rebuke for his iniquity: the dumb beast of burden spake with the voice of men, and rebuked the folly of the prophet.

2 Peter 2:15-16

12 But God said to Balaam, Do not go with them. Do not curse the people, for they are blessed!

Deuteronomy 22:12

14 But I have a little against thee, that thou hast there such as hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, so that they did eat things sacrificed unto idols, and committed fornication.

Rev. 2, 14

Author: Adolf Heller, excerpted from his writing "God's Miracles in the Desert".

One of the most contradictory, mysterious figures in Scripture is Balaam. He is a pagan seer from Pethar (in German: Auslegung oder Stadt des Traumdeuters) on the Euphrates. Balaam means corrupter of the people or curser of the people. He was a shiverer or seer, a man to whom God spoke, and who was so convinced of His omnipotence that he acknowledged and testified to the impotence of every creature to God.

On the other hand, Balaam was a clairvoyant in the manner of the Chaldean magicians who exploited his gifts for monetary gain. Although he did not consciously want to fight against God, he had nevertheless wanted to be of service to his pagan friends. His clear knowledge on the one hand and the dark, ungodly urge of his heart on the other hand brought a strong ambivalence into his person. Seized by divine enthusiasm, he had to bless where he should and wanted to curse. His prophetically enlightened view foresaw the break-up of the pagan world powers and looked into the time of the Messiah.

His deceitful advice to entice the Israelites to idolatry through the wives of the Moabites and Midianites reveals the wickedness of his heart and shows that the temporary enthusiasm for God and the spiritually given vision of divine ways and goals do not mean inner renewal and transformation. This is a serious warning for us.

Therefore, during the holy war of revenge against Midian, Balaam was killed with the sword (Deut. 31, 8; Joshua 13, 22). The Lord Himself puts his shameful behavior in perspective when He has the church of Pergamos told in Rev. 2, 14: "I have a little against you, that you have such there who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a nuisance before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication."

But the outer historical framework, as captivating as it is, shall not concern us in detail. We want to deal here only with what the miracle of the talking donkey has to tell us.

We have already seen that Balaam was a conflicted man. God had given him the clear, unmistakable instruction concerning the messengers of Balak and Moab: "You shall not go with them, you shall not curse the people"! (Exodus 22:12).

The seer first obeyed this order and said to the princes of King Balak, who were waiting for an answer, "Go to your own land, for the Lord has refused to allow me to go with you!" (verse 13).

Soon more and mightier princes than the first time came and again asked Balaam to curse Israel. Instead of firmly rejecting them, the summoner gave way to the tempting voices in his heart and again asked the Lord what he should do.

Here now a peculiar way of education of God begins, which we want to pay attention to. The Lord lets Balaam go! God lets himself wring something from stubborn creatures now and then. He knows that they can only be helped if He first of all leaves them to their self-chosen course of destruction. He does not rape and force, but entices and admonishes and lets - let us think of the father of the prodigal son! - He lets the stubborn creature go its own way.

So Paul also testifies to the men in Lystra that God lets all nations walk in their own ways. Is this not also the case with the individual man, that the Lord lets him walk first and succeed in many things, if he closes his heart to grace?

But God does not let His creatures run into ruin without further ado. Again and again, without forcing or raping a creature, He works holy stopping points into its life through judgment and grace.

Three times the angel of the Lord stood in the way of the disobedient Balaam. But let us read what the holy document of God tells us about it: "Then the wrath of God was kindled, and he went; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way to resist him. And he rode upon his ass... And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, and the ass turned out of the way, and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass to turn it again into the way. Then the angel of the LORD entered into a hollow way among the vineyards: a wall was on this side, and a wall on that side. And the ass saw the angel of the LORD, and pressed against the wall, and pressed the foot of Balaam against the wall; and he smote her again. Then the angel of the Lord went on again, and entered into a narrow place, where there was no way to turn out, either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; and the anger of Balaam was kindled, and he smote the ass with the staff. Then the LORD opened the ass's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have now struck me three times?" (Genesis 22:22-28).

In many ways the faithful God of mercy tries to save His erring creatures from deviations and detours. Here He uses a dumb beast of burden. It does not take much wit to make fun of this story. The prophet Jonah in the fish belly and the talking donkey of Balaam have always been cheap targets of unbelieving mockery. We do not make any scientific investigations whether and under which conditions it could be possible that the prophet could pass through a narrow gullet and could endure three days in the bowels of a fish, and that a donkey speaks with a human voice.

We believe what is written, whether it is interpreted to us as stupidity or malice. It is enough for us that the Lord Jesus, the eternal mouth of truth, who cannot lie, said:

"Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish". The Lord did not say that he should have been or could have been in it, but that he was in it. And this little word "was" from their mouth of the Son of God weighs us more than all real or sham science of even so clever people.

It is the same with the ass of Balaam. Peter writes in the 2nd chapter of his second letter about false prophets and unjust unrighteous ones that they "left the straight way, went astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but received a rebuke of his own folly: a speechless beast of burden, speaking with the voice of man, rebuked the folly of the prophet" (verse 15.16).

If the Old Testament is not right, then the New is not right either. And if Moses or the prophets deceived themselves and us, so are Peter and the Lord himself... no, we do not want to say this word. One may speak of poetic folk tradition, deception of the senses and the like, if one rejects the reports of the Bible, - we believe what is written and hold fast to it. Not our darkened reason nor the so-called sure results of science - as important and indispensable as they are in their place! - form the basis of our faith, but God's word alone.

Let us reflect a little on the personal-educational and prophetic significance of the story of the talking donkey!

First, something personally edifying! God let Balaam go after his second request for permission to travel with the messengers, yes, He even commanded him to go to Balak. And yet, in holy earnestness, He put obstacles in his way three times. Has God not thus time and again "fenced in with thorns and built up a wall" the erring way of Israel, as is written in Hosea 2:6? Didn't He also stand in our way in varying forms when we, as worldly people or children of God, wanted to go astray or take a detour?

It often turned out that the foolish was wiser than the high of this world. A donkey had to teach a seer! It is only to our own harm if we overlook and run over the God-ordained stopping points in our life and let nothing more be said to us. If humility is the crown of virtues, then many greats and rulers of the religious world have lost the crown long ago.

The animal saw beings that man did not see. Was that only at that time so, or is that also for usually the case? We do not know! We read that the Lord had to unveil the eyes of Balaam first, so that he could see the angel, while with the donkey nothing is reported about an unveiling of the eyes. But we do not want to dare to make firm assertions on this, even with the help of strange observations. In any case, the apparent detour of the donkey was more reasonable than the straight path intended by the seer.

So also in our life some apparent detours are nothing else than divine preservations. Our self-chosen path would sometimes have driven us directly into the sword. Even if we do not recognize this now or only rarely, we will understand it one day when we

are with the Lord. But in faith we may already grasp this with regard to all His ways and praise and thank Him for them, however dark and painful they may often appear.

The language of the donkey was also prophecy. For the Scriptures speak in unmistakable words about the fact that one day even the beasts of the field will praise and glorify God. First of all, let us remember a word of Psalm that testifies to the fact that God's salvation refers not only to human beings but also to animals. In Psalm 36, 6b, David writes: "People and livestock You save, O Lord." Let us also look up Isa. 43, 20. There God himself says, "The beasts of the field will praise me, jackals and ostriches."

How far not only the animals, which have only spiritual, animal life, but even the "lifeless nature" according to our opinion, will praise and glorify God one day, we can see from verse 7-10 of the 148th Psalm: "Praise the Lord from the earth, you water monsters and all depths! Fire and hail, snow and fog, you tempestuous wind that sends forth His word, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild beasts and all cattle, creeping animals and winged birds!" Now and then God lets shine through something of what He will do one day. Should anything be impossible for our God? As incomprehensible as His ways may often appear to our blind eyes, so unerring and sure of victory He goes His way of judgment and salvation with all His creatures. He is truly a wonderful and glorious God!

Preserved by God's power (John 17:14-15) [O. Vosseler].

"I have given them Your word, and the world hates them. I do not ask that You take them from the world, but that You keep them from evil."

Joh. 17, 14. 15

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for us, 5 who are kept in the power of God through faith unto that salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time.

1. Petr. 1, 3-5

Author: Otto Vosseler, after his article of the same name at GuH

The church - and thus everyone who sticks to Jesus - is assailed by destructive forces. This does not happen because we are special, but because we have been given His word. This word is profoundly Jesus Himself. He alone will disarm all the powers storming against God - with His word.

These powers want to invade the communities by devaluing the Word. They want to invade families by dividing them into those who keep the Word and those who oppose it. So it is not ultimately a generational problem in the families of believers; rather, the Lord says: The enmity comes because *of* His Word. And these powers want to invade the lives of believers by obscuring the goal, in that daily life brings with it such an abundance of problems that the very goal is obscured.

We know these powers from our everyday life: the worry, the distress, the inadequacy to endure in the tension between should, will and can and still look to God. - Probably there are two groups of brothers and sisters at this Prophetic Week: some want to hear new things, and it is good to learn new things in addition to the old. But there are also others here who have been assailed by powers and hope that they will find help here under the Word and in the community against these powers.

One of our believing brothers once expressed being besieged by these powers in the Russian captivity in this way:

Who never called hunger "you",
what does he know of bread?

Who never banished to the night, what he knows of
the dawn?

He who never groaned in hard drudgery, does
not know the free walk;

He who never
thirsted for it, does
not appreciate the fresh drink.

He who never
played out the arbitrariness
on the steaming scaffold,
stirred up by a thousand fears,
what does he know of God?"

There are also those among us who are "stirred up by a thousand fears". They have "felt the devil in their necks". For them, I pray that by God's grace, through the prophetic word that applies to the church of His Body, they will be helped.

Certainly, there would be a radical protection against the evil powers by the Her simply taking us out of the world. But that does not correspond to Jesus' request. "I do **not** ask that You take them out of this world." Jesus has something special in mind for His own: He wants not only to show His saving power, but to reveal His preserving power. And I wonder: which is greater, salvation or preservation? We cannot put one above the other here, but it is certainly the case that salvation would be in vain if preservation were not added.

Salvation can happen quickly, it only requires looking up to Jesus with faith. All those who look to Him, the Exalted One, and say "yes" in faith will be saved. This can happen in a moment. **Preservation**, however, extends over years and decades. We would not be here together if God had not preserved us.

We live in an evil age. Galatians 1:4 calls it the "present evil eon". And this eon remains evil - we cannot change that - until Jesus Himself replaces the evil one. And in this evil

time, as in no other time, God proves the greatness of His power by preserving His own. Preserved by God, even an apostle Paul can speak (Col. 1, 24): "Now I rejoice in my sufferings". Then follows a few verses later the revelation of the great mystery "Christ in the midst of you, the nations". Therefore, He is also among us today, and His prophetic word always has to do with His person and His through-keeping power.

Nothing is too dear to God for His own. For the church has seen God "for Himself" (Eph. 1:5), so to speak as His private property, as His beloved. For Jesus' sake, we are His beloved, for whom He Himself is. This is the prophetic word of Jesus that concerns us. As His beloved, we don't have to look around here and there and add to our fears a thousand more fears. "When is He coming?" many anxiously ask - not Jesus, but World War III. "Then what else can occur in my life?" is the question, instead of being anxious for **Jesus** to enter. To His beloved ones, God does not put up with such fears. For them He is always available. God deals with His church Himself, He does not hand this over to anyone else, neither to an angel nor to an archangel nor to any other power. Titus 3, 14: "He purifies for **Himself** a people for His own possession", who would be diligent in good works, which He Himself has prepared.

But the most delicious word - actually there are 7 words - we find in Joh. 16, 27: "He himself, the Father, loves you". What are these 7 words worth! He Himself loves us, and therefore the effort to preserve His own. Let us take this with us, especially when the thousand fears want to start rooting again. Most of the time they do not stir when it is about us alone, but when we are responsible for others, whom we should lead and guide, help them, preserve them, pull them back - and we cannot. We are condemned to do nothing and can only fold our hands and say, "Thou God and Father, Thou Thyself lovest us, but Thou lovest others also." A prayer of Paul Le Seur on the occasion of an evangelization in Munich will remain unforgettable to me: "Lord have mercy on Your faithful! Lord, have mercy on Your unbelievers; for Thine are we all!"

How good that we may already recognize Him today and belong to the congregation that God is preparing for Himself, that He is preserving because He wants to use it, because He does not want to continue working without it in the times to come, when salvation will expand to an extent that we do not think possible today.

This extension of salvation is the content of the prophetic word given to us. This word can make our heart happy and calm; because this word tells us:

"He Himself, the Father, loves you!" Amen

No temptation is beyond our ability (1 Cor. 10, 13) [K. Geyer].

"No temptation has seized you but human; but God is *faithful*, who *will* not suffer you to be tempted above ability, but with the temptation will also provide the exit, so that you may endure it."

1.Cor. 10;13

Author: Karl Geyer, from GuH

The question of the temptation (= testing, trial) of believers, which is posed in many places of the Holy Scriptures and already forms the basic theme of the oldest book of the Scriptures, the Book of Job, is one of the most important

Questions with regard to our faith and our walk. After all, we should not become despondent or indifferent or even careless in the face of temptations. Therefore, we must know both their causes and their outcome in order to shape our practical behavior accordingly.

The causes of temptation can be very diverse. We can be tempted and lured by our own lust. Further, the sin dwelling in the flesh can tempt and lure us. Temptation can be brought to us by other people. The circumstances in which we find ourselves can also tempt us to do something that we would not do under other circumstances, e.g. theft out of hunger or manslaughter out of self-defense. Then there are also direct temptations from Satan, the evil one, and also by the evil one. In alliance with Satan, we are also tempted by the demons, whose chief is Beelzebub, Satan.

God also tests us, but He never tempts us to sin, but only tests us when He has made the outcome so certain in advance that a triumph over Satan will result from the test.

The test of Job already shows that there are satanic temptations as well as human ones. There, however, this test is not imposed on Job's weak friends, but only on the man who in every respect stood before God as the most mature and perfect of his time and was also called such by God Himself. There were no more like him in the land (or on earth) (Job 1:8).

Job endured the trial. God was glorified, and thereupon He also glorified His faithful servant. The Lord's final intention with Job was his blessing and the display of complete triumph over Satan, who was silenced by Job's testimony of faith and praise with his false claims that godliness is only a business matter and exists and functions only as long as God buys it from his creatures through favor and good deeds.

In everything, however, it showed how merciful and compassionate the Lord was with his faithful servant. Compare the final chapters of the book of Job with Jam. 5, 11.

In contrast, the Corinthians were still immature, minors who were not able to endure such a temptation. In 1 Cor. 3, 1-3 this is clearly testified. There it says, "for ye were not yet able, but ye are not now able." - —

If we compare this with the passage in 1 Cor. 10:13, it becomes clear what this means: "*But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability.*" - After all, they had not been able to overcome even the very worst human temptation and put leaven out of their midst (1Co 5:1-10). Their condition was such that Paul has to ask in 1 Cor. 4, 21 if he should come to them with the rod or in love and with the spirit of meekness. There was no power with them to overcome evil. Thus they characterized themselves as those who had not yet reached the maturity of a young man in Christ, whose characteristic is that he is strong, keeps the word of God and has overcome the evil one (1. Joh. 2, 14 b), while the little children in Christ simply have forgiveness of sins, but not yet victory over sin, which dwells in the flesh and therefore must also be overcome in the flesh. This happens through the power of the indwelling Spirit, which is made effective through faith.

The Ephesians, on the other hand, were saints and *faithful*, with whom Paul no longer needed to speak about such questions. Since they were on the way to spiritual maturity and stretched out to be filled with the whole fullness of God (Eph. 3:19), he could not only reveal to them the mystery of God's will, but also reveal to them that their battles were shifted to another front, namely to the heavenly or cosmic front. They were now ready to fight on the front line, which means the front line to the spirit world (Eph. 6, 10-18).

God, who himself cannot be tempted by evil, does not tempt anyone to evil by himself. The reason for temptation never comes from the unchangeable, but always lies in the changeable, in the creature. But so that the evil in the flesh can be overcome, God lets us be tested or tried in every area of life by just such creatures who are masters there and therefore squeeze the last out of us or let it appear what is in us in this area. That is why he hands over blasphemers to the blasphemer (Satan), so that they would be instructed by discipline not to blaspheme anymore (1 Tim. 1, 20). And just in Corinth he had already done the same with that carnal man and incestuous person, whom he handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit would be saved on the day of the Lord (1. Cor. 5, 1-5).

So, the final intention of God even in this most severe case of testing, in which he lets a believer be put under discipline and judgment by the apostolic authority of Paul and the authority of the assembled church (verse 4), is not the destruction of the person concerned, but his salvation. This also applies in general to the greatest test and probation of the believing whole church at the judgment seat (*bäma Christi*), where even the one who has everything burned up is saved, - but as through the fire (1 Cor. 3, 12-15).

The spirit of man shall be saved because it is of God! That is why Christ, after being made alive in the spirit of resurrection, went to prison and preached to the spirits that were once disobedient. The dead, who were once judged according to the flesh in the days of Noah, should nevertheless live according to God in the spirit (1 Petr. 3, 18 -20;

4, 6; Zech. 9, 11. 12; Eph. 4, 8-10; Psalm 68, 18 (Luther verse 19); Psalm 107, 10-16; 1 Sam. 2, 6; Isa. 57, 16; Ezek. 16, 44-55; many others).

For the achievement of this goal, to save the spirit of man, also the way of the destruction of the flesh by the destroyer or the destruction of the flesh by the destroyer is a means in the hand of God, who proves himself here as the one who *creates the exit* even in the judgment of the most severe trial. For he does not leave the determination of the outcome to Satan or to any other creature. He uses the creatures (according to their character) as chastising rods; but the aim of the chastisement, the purpose of the trial, the *final result of the temptation he determines! This is the depth of wisdom that is inherent in His judgments (Rom. 11, 33)*. In Christ there is no "yes" and "no", but *in him everything is pure "yes"!* Everything! Also temptation and trial. Also judgment and destruction of the flesh! And every temptation of the believers only serves to make them like Him in all things, who was tempted in *all things as we are* (Hebr. 4:13). Our knowledge should be increased, our faith strengthened, our understanding of others deepened, our compassion for our brothers internalized, our willingness and ability to help strengthened, our trust in God enriched and our joy purified and strengthened.

"Therefore, my brothers, consider it a great joy when you fall into many temptations, knowing that the preservation of your faith brings about perseverance. But perseverance is a perfect work, so that you may be complete and perfect and lacking in nothing.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation! for after he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which he hath promised to them that love him."

God is faithful, who will not allow us to be tempted beyond ability! God is faithful, who has called us, and his gifts of grace and callings are incalculable! God is faithful even when we are unfaithful! And His faithfulness is not only the basis of our peace and full assurance of salvation, but also the only guarantee for that outcome of all world events, which corresponds to His own God majesty and glory! His name be praised for everything! Amen!

Curse bearer or blessing bearer (1. Petr. 3, 9) [A. Heller].

8 Finally, all of you be like-minded, compassionate, full of brotherly love, merciful, kind. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or abuse with abuse, but on the contrary, bless, knowing that you are called to inherit blessings.

1. Petr. 3, 9

Author: Adolf Heller, from GuH

What an aircraft carrier is, every child knows. It is a mother ship from which aircraft can rise and land on it again after carrying out their mission. Such an aircraft carrier is an important help for one side, but a great danger for the enemy. ,

Now, just as such an aircraft carrier accommodates easily dispatched aviators and lets them constantly ascend, so that they can do their work of destruction, or their important aid and rescue task for their troops, so also every man is either a dwelling place of demons or a 'dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. He is a curse bearer or a blessing bearer.

Depending on his innermost attitude, a person can help and heal, love and bless, and thus bring light and salvation, peace and joy into the hearts of the disappointed and despairing, or he can be a darkling who prepares the way for Satan and, through ingratitude and unkindness, malice and selfishness, envy and hatred, not only torment others, but also ruin himself. For the popular saying is only too right when it says: "Peace nourishes, discord consumes."

This can be observed not only among the nations to a frightening extent, as we constantly experience and suffer, but it also applies to professional and social relationships, to marriage and family life, even to Christian circles in churches and free churches, communities and fraternities, and profoundly to the narrowest cell of one's own heart. He who does not live in peace with others and himself is a darkness-bearer and consumes himself. Is it not written in Job 18:13: "The firstborn of death shall devour the members of his body, his members shall he devour!"? While Christ, the life, nourishes and cares for his members, namely the congregation of his body, death, this cruel prince of hell, eats his own members, just as Nebuchadnezzar once put to death his own servants, who had to drag the three friends of Daniel into the fiery furnace. So there are also people who are not good to themselves; how could they love and bless others? They destroy themselves through their envy and hatred. Woe to him who is forced to live with such bitter, hateful people! He will hardly be happy in such an environment, unless he has really learned. To remain in Christ moment by moment and to give thanks for everything at all times.

Man is the link between heaven and hell, the bridge between the worlds of light and the darkness of death and damnation, God's savior for his lost creation. Who does not have this deepest vision, gropes in the darkness and does not know for what he was

actually called into existence. He has missed his original goal in life. If we are on this poor, blood-soaked earth full of fear and horror only to earn as much money as possible with as little effort as possible, to keep everything unpleasant away from us and to enjoy everything we can get, then it would be better if we were never born. Such a life is really not worth living.

When Goethe sings: "High as heaven rejoices, saddened to death: happy alone is the soul that loves!", this applies to the essential, divine love to an infinitely higher degree than he could know and suspect. For we are set to love and to bless. The highest spiritual gifts, the most comprehensive knowledge and the sacrifice of one's own life are nothing against love. "Bless because you have been called to do so!" God calls us in 1 Peter 3:9.

There is no greater happiness on earth than to love and bless selflessly. Whoever has never felt compelled to lay a blessing hand on a person's head (be it his friend or a prison convict, be it father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, or a strange, dirty child in an alley or gutter) - whoever has never bent with a hot heart to change, has not yet been seized by God's most pure being and essence. A truly gifted and blessed person cannot help but also desire salvation, implore mercy and mediate peace. Only in this way can one learn to understand and grasp something of the unheard-of dignity of being human.

Oh, what miserable, selfish, envious darkies we are, begrudging nothing to the other, instead of redeeming and rejoicing and blessing on behalf of God, in the mind of Christ and in the authority of the Spirit! - How good that our Lord can transform curse-bearers into blessing-bearers! Do you know something about this from your personal life? This happens even under certain circumstances, humanly speaking, against our will! Just think of Saul, who snorted threats and murder against the disciples of Jesus (Acts 9:1) and persecuted the church of the Lord beyond measure (Gal. 1:13)! According to his own testimony he was a blasphemer and perpetrator of violence and persecution (1Ti 1:13) and called himself the "outermost" or "highest ranking" sinner (1Ti 1:15). This was not just pious talk, but a testimony of God full of deep prophetic and symbolic meaning. Saul was like that. Was this not a proof that even increased religiosity and holy, burning zeal for tradition and dogma can be nothing but enmity against God and make their bearer a murderer? The number of true saints and faithful, the redeemed and beloved of the Lord, who have been tortured to death physically or economically or morally in the name of God or a pious organization, is legion. So it was and so it is and so it will be until Christ returns.

And what a blessing bearer without equal this Saul of Tarsus became at one stroke! What the Lord Jesus could not yet reveal in the body of his lowliness, he revealed as the glorified Christ at the right hand of the Father through the mouth and the pen of his instrument, the apostle Paul!

If some think that Paul did not know more than Jesus and that the epistles should be subordinated to the gospels or that the statements of the gospels should be placed above the epistles, this proves a total ignorance of God's thoughts about Israel and the nations as such on the one hand and the church of the nations on the other hand. The apostle of the body of Christ had the commission to lead or complete the word of God to its full measure (Col. 1, 25). When he speaks and writes, he does not do it out of himself, no, Christ works through him.

However, these things can neither be learned nor handed down, but must be personally revealed to us by the Lord (Gal. 1:11,12; 1 Cor. 2:12,13).

The more precious and blessed the entrusted good of salvation is, which a person may have and testify to, the stronger is the enmity of darkness and the stronger is the pressure which Satan exerts on such bearers of salvation by means of his instruments. This was already the case at the time of Jesus and will remain so for the time being, even increasing towards the end of this world time. Essential possession of salvation and enjoyment of salvation always leads to loneliness and suffering. We see this in the Lord himself, in all true apostles and prophets and in the saints of all times. Real blessing bearers will always be cursed. And not so much by the godless world as by the pious world. That is why also the "blessed of the Lord", Christ, became a curse for Israel and all other nations, beings and worlds.

Besides Paul, we want to name another curse bearer who, humanly speaking, also became a blessing bearer against his will. It is Balaam, of whom Genesis 22 reports. Since God was with his people Israel according to his promise and gave them, as long as they stood in obedience of faith. victory over all his enemies, the Moabites were afraid of him, and King Balak had the well-known prophet Balaam say in Pethor on the Euphrates: "Come, curse me this people, for they are stronger than I am. Perhaps I will succeed in defeating them and driving them out of the land. For I know that whom you bless is blessed, and whom you curse is cursed" (verse 6).

Despite God's warning (verses 9-12), Balaam went to Moab after initially refusing, because the soothsayer's wages blinded him. How many have been unfaithful to clearly recognized truths for the sake of honor and money and "have given themselves over to the error of Balaam for wages" (Jude 9).

Also the experience with the talking donkey - **to the** unbelief an object of mockery, but **to the** faith a delicious prophetic revelation! - did not keep him from getting involved with Balak (in German: Verwüster!). See verse 22-35! But then, seeing the camp of Israel, driven by God's Spirit, he must say the poignant words, "Out of Aram Balak has brought me, the king of Moab from the mountains of the east: "Come, curse me Jacob, yes, come, curse Israel!" "How shall I curse whom God does not curse, and how shall I curse whom the LORD has not cursed? For from the top of the rocks I see it, and from the heights I behold it: behold, a people dwelling apart, not numbered among the nations. Who can number the dust of Jacob, and the fourth part of Israel

by number? Let my soul die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like theirs!" (23, 7—10.)

When we have once understood that blessing and cursing are not empty words, "sound and smoke, fogging heavenly embers", but essential offerings from the upper or lower world, that a blessing or a curse in truth releases or binds, means a filling with heavenly powers and bliss or a handing over to darkness and the horror of Satan's powers, - when we once again learn to understand this, then we also understand Balak's sharp reproach to Balaam: "What have you done to me? To curse my enemies I sent for you, and behold, you even blessed them!" (Verse 11.)

Thus, despite his fickleness and unresolved ambition and greed for money, Balaam also became a agent of blessing in those moments, although he wanted to use the gift of God that he had received to curse. Later, however, he was killed on the Lord's behalf (Exodus 31:8; Joshua 13:22). These are quite serious and holy things that should move our hearts. Being a blessed person or even a bearer of blessings does not mean that one has reached the goal! And that is what we all want to become. May the Lord protect us from being conscious or unconscious curse-bearers who torment and destroy themselves and others through sin and unfaithfulness, hatred and envy! Rather, make us channels of blessing of his wonderful goodness and faithfulness, so that we may be something to the praise of the glory of his grace before the visible and invisible world!

Of the faithfulness of the stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1) [A. Heller].

1 This is how we are to be regarded: as servants of the Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 For the rest, all that is required of a steward is that he be found faithful. 3 But to me it is the least thing that I should be judged by you, or by any human judgment day; neither do I judge myself. 4 For I am not conscious of anything; but by this I am not justified, but it is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will bring to light even that which is hidden in darkness, and will make manifest the intentions of hearts; and then praise from God will be given to everyone.

1 Cor. 4, 1-5

Author: Adolf Heller, from GuH

It is an almost overwhelmingly great fact that the members of the church of Christ Jesus are nothing less than stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1). Only when we begin not only to think through this truth, but also to give thanks in holy devotion for this calling of grace, do we become blessed and delighted by it, but at the same time humbled and bowed. If this double effect is missing and the messages of God in the long run only cause an intoxication of joy or only bending and breaking, then there is a dangerous one-sidedness, a pathological shift of emphasis. This makes a healthy, fruitful, God-pleasing life of faith impossible.

We do not want to talk about the mysteries of God as such in the following, as important as it is to point out the difference between kingdom mysteries and church mysteries, so that we can recognize our position and task in God's plan of salvation. And furthermore, how are we to administer, to be stewards over something of which we hardly know anything by hearsay? That would be a peculiar storekeeper, who would neither know the stock of his store nor anything about the instructions to whom and how much of the goods to be managed he would have to give out. In a worldly business, this would simply be unthinkable. But what about with regard to divine stewardship? When Paul, the apostle of the body of Christ, joins with the certainly not perfect Corinthians and calls them and himself economists of the mysteries of God, does this mighty word not apply to all those who in truth belong to Christ? Compare 1 Cor. 1, 2! According to the meaning and spirit of the New Testament, but especially of the Pauline letters that apply to us, to ask this question means to affirm it wholeheartedly. However, one will be deeply shocked in the face of such considerations of faith. And this also happens to every believer who is not only in the outer course of a pious business, but is really called by God to be a member of the body of Christ.

For a decisive question arises, which demands an answer from us: What does the Lord expect from those who are "subroutines of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God"? What is the most important thing? - Those who have not yet been moved and

stirred, filled and troubled by these problems, probably know little of a true divine calling. If already on earth an important position in the economy or in high politics requires special prerequisites and obligations, insights and abilities, how much more must this be the case when it is about the greatest, highest and most glorious thing that exists in the worldwide universe, about the great and wonderful secrets that God the Father Himself cherishes in the heart?

The question of what matters to us as stewards of the mysteries of God, what is most important and decisive, is clarified immediately in the following verse of our word. The expression *loipon, which connects* the second verse with the first, can, if we may quote and explain the context of the text, be translated as follows: "For this we are counted: Sub-ruiners of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. It remains to say (i.e.: to this must still be made clear, or: according to this, or: resulting from this), one seeks here from the stewards that one (someone, i.e. the individual, that is, each one for himself) be found faithful (*pistos* = trusting, believing, reliable, sincere, offering security)."

God does not expect natural gifts, high intelligence or brilliant eloquence. Most of the time, the real saints have just the opposite. He does not want us to assert ourselves by our cleverness or the force of our personality in order to then play a role. The world may appreciate all this. Our God uses the weakness and foolishness of the testimony to reach His goal.

One thing, however, is indispensable: faithfulness, which selflessly, without cunning and violence, goes its God-ordained way of death and victory. God is looking for you and me to be invented faithfully. There are innumerable hidden saints who, in selfless devotion with a joyful heart, walk a sacrificial path of love without equal. They are nowhere chairmen and play no role, they are neither great orators nor brilliant organizers, but they love and suffer and bless wherever God has placed them for the witness of the invisible world. Doesn't your heart burn with holy ardor to be one of them? I was moved and moved by what Ralf Luther writes about faithfulness in his New Testament Dictionary, an introduction to the language and meaning of Original Christian Scripture, published by Furche-Verlag. Only a few sentences are quoted here, which are truly worth thinking and praying through again and again in quiet minutes. "Faithfulness is understood in the New Testament as proving oneself in the stewardship of what has been entrusted. Every person is in some way a steward to whom God has entrusted important things (Luk 16:1-18; 19:11-28; 1 Cor 4:2). Whoever uses his possessions and gifts according to his own discretion is guilty of embezzlement. . . . The heavenly Father does not give the "actual" gifts (Luk 16, 11. 12) of His house out of the blue. He tests faithfulness beforehand. He is a solid master builder. He builds from the bottom up. He first asks whether people are faithful in small things, whether they prove themselves in their immediate environment; whether they also deal honestly with the "evil thing", the money. If even the stinking mammon, to which so much

wickedness has adhered in its many tortuous ways, can have such a shine in the eyes of man that he allows himself to be seduced into unfaithfulness for its sake, how much more will man allow himself to be beguiled by high spiritual gifts! A man who has so little hold that he becomes a deceiver for the sake of a little dust would all the more abuse high spiritual revelations and spiritual powers for his own purposes.

Unfaithfulness is letting gifts that are given to you go to waste, withholding them from your fellow man (Luk 19:20).

Unfaithfulness is to take on too much work or too wide a field of work. The normal thing is that more work comes into a man's life when God sets man above more (Luk 19:17); but not when man undertakes or establishes all kinds of things or allows himself to be talked into tasks that his divine householder never gave him. Busyness and hustle are always based on unfaithfulness. It stems from the lack of orientation about what God wants from man. The heavenly employer does not rush his workers to death. Faithfulness works only where it is placed and otherwise does not lift a finger. Faithfulness makes healthy and strong nerves." - So much for Ralf Luther. - — —

Will we not have the courage of humility to rededicate ourselves to our God in the light of this testimony? Are not these dangers also present in your life and mine? What good are the highest and most glorious insights if we do not administer them faithfully and unselfishly, humbly and obediently? Must they not one day become an accusation to us? Is not Thomas a Kempis right when in his famous "Imitation of Christ" he earnestly endeavors to speak into our conscience by testifying to us: "The more and greater things you know, the harder judgment you must suffer, if you do not also live holy according to them."

May we, in humble fear of God and loving total surrender, place ourselves under the word of our brother and teacher Paul, which he calls to us in 2 Cor. 13:5: "Examine (try, try) yourselves whether you stand in the faith (in faithfulness or reliability); investigate yourselves thoroughly (make a muster as to whether there is real ministerial ability)." - —

Our Father of faithfulness grant it to you and me and to all His people that we really fulfill the only basic condition to be, to remain and to become more and more essential His bearers of salvation: to be found faithful, selfless and conscientious in everything that He has entrusted to us in spirit, soul and body, in time and strength, in money and goods, in knowledge and ability. Then, and only then, will we one day be able to stand with joy before his face and be found to be reliable stewards, whom he will set above far greater and more glorious things than we are now able to comprehend in the body of lowliness.

God gives so that we may take (Deut. 2:31) [A. Heller].

1 And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give away Sihon with his land before thee; begin to possess it, that thou mayest possess his land.

Deut. 2:31

Author: Adolf Heller, from GuH

Divine truths are neither logical nor illogical: they are superlogical. This means that they do not correspond to our narrow-minded laws of thinking, since the thoughts of God are of a different, higher kind. The natural man cannot recognize the ways and even less the nature of God with his thinking. How comforting and reassuring it touches our heart when the Lord testifies about Himself: "I know the thoughts that I think about you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of misfortune, to give you a future and hope" (Jer. 29, 11). And when He extols His mercy and the riches of His forgiveness in Isa. 55, He underscores it with the words, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Verse 7 b-9.)

The divine goods and treasures are there to be grasped in faith. However, their acceptance is not a religious achievement, as some think. And yet it is a moral act, is the proof of the trust one has in God and His Word, is the rejection of all kinds of sin and the methods of darkness.

These are wonderful things, which one can experience and fall in love with, but not grasp in all their inner connections only intellectually. *God's ways and nature cannot be learned and studied, but only experienced in obedience of faith.*

Also our word from Deut. 2. 31 confirms this truth. There the prophet testifies to his people who were about to enter the land of promise: "Behold, I have begun to pass Sihon and his land before you; begin, take possession, that you may possess his land!" There are many things we can learn from this verse. First, that God does not restore or complete anything in one fell swoop. Even concerning the mission of His Son in whose coming, after all, "the time was fulfilled," it is written: "He (i.e. Jesus) began to do and to teach" (Acts 1.1) and "the great salvation has received the beginning of its proclamation through the Lord" (Heb. 2. 3). And doesn't Jesus himself say regarding his teaching: "I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now" (Joh. 16. 12)? Only through the apostle Paul. The teacher of the nations, he had his word completed, brought to its full measure or brought into fullness (Col. 1. 25).

So the Lord also says in our word: "Behold (i.e. open your eyes wide for once !), I have begun." God first works beginnings, prepares for himself firstfruits as vessels of grace for the remaining beings and worlds. He places his creatures, so to speak, in his work of salvation with love and compassion. For example, Paul writes in Col. 1: "I add to my

flesh what is still backward from the tribulations of Christ for his body, that is the church whose servant I have become according to the administration of God that was given to me concerning you (churches of the nations)" (verse 24. 25).

This does not mean that we would be his co-advisors or that we would be able to accomplish even the smallest thing by our own strength! Certainly not! And yet we are "co-workers of God" as we read in 1. Cor. 3, 9; 1. Thess. 3, 2 a. o. St. lesen.

The Lord works everything alone; but "we must be there"! He can do everything without us, but we can do nothing without him. He does not need us. But he uses us in his inimitable wisdom and grace. He gives us without any "merit and worthiness" His great, wonderful salvation and His own glory (1 Thess. 2, 12; 2 Cor. 4, 17; 8, 23; Phil. 3. 21; Col. 3. 4 and many more). but we have to "believe" all this, i.e. trust Him and obediently grasp and hold on to His salvation. For he who does not believe does not have life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

God has begun to pass Sihon before Israel. How did he do that?

Here again we stand amazed before the incomprehensible methods of God. The preceding 30th verse tells us, "Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through with him, because the Lord thy God had hardened his spirit, and hardened his heart, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as it is this day." Such a divine statement breaks the narrow limits and fetters of our blind. dark thinking.

Sihon, the king of Heshbon (in German: der Auswurzler oder Ausrotter von Rechnung Messung Nachdenken oder Weltauffassung) wanted to grant no passage to his people Israel against God's explicit command. Do we not see here a picture of the tactics of the enemy? While the Holy Spirit works to make us "rooted in Him" (Col. 2. 7) or "rooted in love" (Eph. 3, 17). Sihon Satan is the uprooter or exterminator. He does not want us to be prudent (cf. Titus 2:12!) and think or consider what is true, worthy, just and pure (cf. Phil. 4:8). How many delicious truths do the examples and images of Scripture reveal to us! What is the name of your Sihon, who restricts your life, deprives you of gratitude and love, burdens and torments you wherever he can? Whoever he may be, God has set and appointed him for this purpose! Only when we can give thanks in truth for everything, also for our Sihon of Hesbon, only then we will be redeemed people who are able to lead a victorious life of peace, joy and fruitfulness. May this be the case with you and me and all the beloved of God! - —

How did Sihon come to be so spiteful against Israel? He was a wicked man, "quarrelsome and disobedient to the truth" (Rom. 2:8), who incurred God's wrath and anger. This is a natural, reasonable answer. But it is not exhaustive, does not show the divine background.

However, we find this in our Moshe word: Sihon of Heshbon did not let Israel pass through his territory because God had hardened his spirit and hardened his heart.

But why did God do this? Because he was willing to give him into the hands of his people! And this again happened because Sihon, like other nations, had become ripe for judgment and should no longer destroy the neighboring peoples. Thus the ring of cause and effect closes. Only faith is able to grasp these inner connections, which let us see both the sole action of God and the indebtedness and the resulting punishment of the creatures shining in the light of his incorruptible justice and unimpeachable holiness. The Lord began. Sihon and his land before Israel. But because God had begun, his people should also act. Therefore Jehovah calls upon his inheritance, "Begin, take possession!" Nations and people are not chess pieces, which are pushed back and forth without moral freedom of decision and a self-will reaching up to certain limits. However, that they are also not able to do or to leave the slightest thing without or against the will of God, is a second, superior truth, which only seems to contradict the first fact according to the rigid laws of our eclipsed mind. "Take possession that thou mayest possess!" That means nothing else than: you come into conscious possession and enjoyment only when you really seize what God assigns to you. If I hold out or offer something to a dead object, it does not react. It seems at least in such a way, because we know only very little of the hidden laws of the apparently lifeless matter; one thinks only for instance of adhesion and cohesion, of magnetic and electric currents or of the only now developing atomic physics! We grope blindly in a misunderstood world of the things and things, the peoples and people, the angels and demons and think miracles, how clever we would be and how far we would have brought it. What pathetic, ridiculous fools we are (Is. 44, 25; Matth. 23, 19; Rom. 1, 22; Ps. 2. 4)!

Paul, our brother and teacher in Christ, also encouraged his disciple and co-worker Timothy: "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called! (I. 6, 12.) Did not Timothy have eternal life? Most certainly he had it, because "he who believes in the Son *has* eternal life" (Joh. 3, 36). And should Eph. 2, 5, according to which we have been made alive with the Christ, not apply to his most faithful and valuable co-worker? Certainly! And yet, what is given to us by God must always be grasped anew and lived out practically. God gives us everything. But what we do not take in obedience of faith is not ours. Only what we grasp in holy, grateful trust and hold on to in the worshipful surrender of our body, soul and spirit becomes our divine possession and enjoyment, our source of strength and our mission. "My brethren, hold fast that which is grasped!" Spurgeon used to cry to his students. This is what Scripture tells us in manifold contexts and ways, and what we should encourage one another to do.

God gives us his Son, and with him and in him everything - absolutely everything! But our faith is the hand that grasps and holds what is offered out of love and grace, out of kindness and mercy. A beggar will never praise his hand because it accepted a gift, but the giver and his gift. Let us do it just like this: we do not believe in our faith, as necessary and indispensable as it is, but we praise the Giver and His unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9. 15).

Would we be those who can say of ourselves in truth: "From His (i.e. the Father's) fullness we have all received grace for grace" (Joh. 1. 16)! Does not Paul, who was taken by Christ, testify in Phil. 3, 12. that he "pursues" the goal of resurrection from the dead, so that he may take hold of it? Resurrection is a gift of grace wrought and bestowed by God alone. But we must "conquer" or "capture" it, as we may translate the word *lambano* used here.

Without our holy earnestness and zeal we will not realize God's goal in our life during our walk on earth in the body of lowliness, although the Lord works and causes everything alone without and often even against our will. Even to be still it is necessary that we "hurry" (1. Thess. 4, 11), which according to human opinion is a contradiction in itself! Only what we take in faith, we possess. "Every place on which the sole of your foot will tread will be yours", the Lord promises His people in Deut. 11, 24 (cf. Joshua 1. 3!).

Let us also learn to gratefully receive the great promises of our Father in Christ Jesus by faith. For thereby we glorify him. But if we disregard or even reject what he is willing to give us in the overflowing fervor of his love, we grieve and dishonor him. Through the "full assurance" that God is able to do "what he has promised," we praise, extol or glorify him (Rom. 4:20, 21). And to do this completely is what our heart strives for.

The singer of the 116th Psalm asks in holy thanksgiving, "How shall I repay the Lord for all his benefits to me?" (verse 12) and, inspired by the Spirit of God, answers in the next verse: "The cup (or cup) of salvations (or salvation) will I take, and call upon the name of the Lord." He thanks and repays his God by taking more salvation ! - —

God gives so that we may take. But our believing taking means thanksgiving and glorification for God. In this way we may listen to and look into, die into and grow into the fullness of the certainty and joy of salvation and the glory of the Father. God grant this the longer the more to you and me and to all those who are in truth his own!

Our portion and inheritance (Deuteronomy 18:20) [A. Heller].

20 And the LORD said unto Aaron, In their land thou shalt inherit nothing, neither shalt thou have any part among them: for I am thy part and thine inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel.

Genesis 18:20

Author: Adolf Heller, from GuH

All the people of Israel were promised the land of Canaan and all its treasures and fruits. All were to enjoy streams of milk and honey, possess the cities of the inhabitants, and be prosperous and happy in every way.

It was different with the Levites! Concerning their possession the Lord said: "To the children of Levi I have given all the tithes in Israel for an inheritance for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting. And the children of Israel shall no more approach unto the tent of meeting, to bring sin upon themselves, that they die: but the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity: an everlasting statute among your generations. But in the midst of the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance" (Deut. 18:21-23). Levi was not to have an inheritance of his own, but he was to have a share in everything that belonged to the other 11 tribes in terms of possessions and enjoyment.

With Aaron, the high priest, on the other hand, and his sons after him, God went one step further: he was not to inherit or have any share in the goods of the change, as is written in Exodus 18:20: "The Lord said to Aaron, 'In their land you shall inherit nothing, and you shall have no part in their midst; *I am* your part and your inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel.'"

Aaron not only had access to the outer court, like all Israel, and not only served the sanctuary, like Levi, but had his God-ordained place in the Holy of Holies, which no human foot was otherwise allowed to enter.

But with that he had a claim on God Himself. "I am your portion and your inheritance!" the Lord testifies to him. What a precious word!

To the children of Israel the natural treasures and riches of the land belong for their possession and enjoyment; the Levites enjoy and feed on the rich offerings made to them for their service; but the high priest lives deeply of, for and with God Himself. Only those who have ever truly tasted communion with the Lord and lived in it know what this means.

To the carnal man this appears as foolishness and nonsense; the spiritual man considers it exaggerated and rapturous; but the spiritual man knows that our life is not in blood and soil, in food and drink, in clothing and food and dwelling, but only in Him who in the full sense is life itself. Only he who has the Son has life. A thousand times better to suffer and die with Christ than to vegetate without him! For this short, poor,

laborious existence on earth is nothing else than the preparation for true life, is only, as the "world child" Goethe already recognized, "a planting school of the spirits.

God Himself wants to be our "part and heir. What does this mean? What does the Lord mean by this? All beings and worlds have their special "allotment", if we may say so, their inheritance, or, translated more precisely, their species-specific lot. Just as the Lord "allotted" his property to each tribe in Israel, the model and image for angels and humans, so also to all creatures that change.

Perhaps we now understand the royal singer David when he rejoices in PS. 16, 3. 5. 6 rejoices in holy joy: "You have said to the saints who are on earth and to the glorious ones: On them is all my delight (my pleasure or delight)." Andre translate, "On them my heart is set!" and French Bibles say, "They are the object of all my affections."

The 5th and 6th verses of this delicious psalm read, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; you receive my lot. The measuring cords have fallen to me in lovely places; yes, a beautiful inheritance has become mine."

Already on the ground of the Old Covenant, the shadow law of Sinai, there was a breaking through and growing out over the factual relations of divine blessings into the personal community of life and love with the Lord. All true prophets were allowed to experience this and knew to boast about it. That is why they were hated and killed by their pious contemporaries (Luk 13, 33. 34 a).

What Israel experiences in the *example*, we possess and enjoy as a congregation of the Body of Christ in *essence*. The true members of Christ, who are present in all churches and free churches, communities and brother circles as "silence in the land" in despised minorities, may testify in holy joy something of what their brother and teacher, the apostle Paul, who was already in his lifetime a lonely man, misunderstood by most, clothed in the worshipful words: "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, grant you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that, being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, you may know . . which are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:17, 18).

When we speak of the inheritance or lot of God, we think of the inheritance that we will receive one day, since we are mostly self-centered, i.e., ego-centered. This is also correct at first. For the Scriptures, especially in the Epistles of the fullness, speak of our "share in the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1, 12), speak of the "recompense of the inheritance" that we will receive from the Lord (Col. 3, 24), confirm that we are "heirs of God" (Rom. 8, 17) and that we have become "heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3, 7). This is all right and important, great and wonderful. And yet the Scriptures say something even greater and more delicious about our inheritance relationship to God and Christ!

We already saw that Eph. 1, 18 does not speak of the riches of the glory of *our* inheritance, but rather of the riches of the glory of *His* (i.e. *the Father's*) inheritance. So it

is about an inheritance or lot of God! And this divine lot (klärouomia = something into whose complete possession and personal enjoyment one comes) are his saints, are we, the firstfruits church from the nations, the members of the body of Christ. Since the Father does not only want to have a glorious Son, but in His holy longing for joy wants to "bring many sons to glory", He has also ordained us to sonship or sonship through Jesus Christ "for Himself" (Eph. 1, 4).

We think that sonship is something that is primarily for us, that is, it is for our benefit alone. No, it is primarily for God Himself and for the salvation of His creatures. In our pious egoism, however, we do not think of this at all and always turn in circles in our joyless self-centeredness. We are *his inheritance*, i.e., roughly speaking: God inherits us! This is also written in Eph. 1, 11, where we read that in Christ (see verse 10!) "we have been made heirs", that is, we are the portion that God wants for Himself.

In a right marriage and family, the wife and children are beneficiaries of what belongs to the father and what the father enjoys in the joys and blessings of and in the common house and home.

But the reverse is also the case: the father wants to have a faithful life partner who loves and cares for him, and healthy and obedient, grateful and happy children. A one-sided friendship or marriage can no more exist than a head without members or a body without a head.

This is exactly how it is in the divine. It is not for nothing that the images of the body and marriage are used so often in Scripture. We are the heirs of God, but God is also our inheritance. He gives himself completely to us, so that we too may consecrate ourselves completely to him in holy communion of love and unity of life. God in Christ Jesus is our part and heir, and we are his. What dignity, what majesty, but also what sacred obligation lies hidden in this truth! May we see and grasp it in all its blessed richness, so that we, "filled with all joy and peace in believing, may be overflowing in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13)!

Everything came to pass! (Joshua 21:43-45) [A. Heller].

43 So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. 44 And the Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that he had sworn to their fathers; and none of their enemies could stand before them, but the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. 45 There was no lack of all the good things the Lord had promised the house of Israel; everything had come to pass.

Joshua 21, 43-45

Author: Adolf Heller, from GuH

After 40 years of grumbling and unfaithfulness, God nevertheless brought his people and heritage into the land he had promised them. Despite Israel's sin and continual failure, he fulfilled "all the good sayings" he had spoken. As true and delicious as these three words, "All things came to pass," were at that time, they are profoundly prophetic. For even though Israel at that time occupied the land promised to it and enjoyed its blessings, the borders once promised to its progenitor Abraham were far from being reached and still are not.

God had promised Abraham to give his seed the land from the Nile to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18). However, as a cursory glance at the map confirms, this is a much larger area than today's small Palestine. Therefore, these words "all things came to pass" have a prophetic meaning for the future in addition to their limited historical meaning.

Now God's word testifies to us that the authenticity of divine prophecy is proven by the fact that what a prophet promises actually comes true, and that, conversely, the non-fulfillment of a prophecy is proof that no real prophet has spoken. Let us read, for example: "The prophet who will presume to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded him to speak, or who will speak in the name of other gods: that same prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?: if the prophet speak in the name of the Lord, and the word come not to pass, and come not to pass, that is the word which the Lord hath not spoken: with presumption hath the prophet spoken it, thou shalt not be afraid of him." (Deut. 18:20-22; cf. Jer. 28:9 et al.!)

On the other hand, especially with the approach of the end times, it cannot be pointed out seriously and clearly enough that the occurrence of a promise is by no means a clear proof that a prophet of God has spoken (cf. Deut. 13:1-3!). For even the demons can predict and perform miracles and signs, of which the Egyptian sorcerers gave samples (Exodus 4:1-9; 7:10-12).

Whoever does not want to be content with the living word of God, but instead seeks signs and wonders, will fall prey to the deception of the demons and sooner or later

perish miserably. This cannot be said seriously enough, especially in our time, when the powers of darkness are trying to take possession of people in thousands of ways.

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When Joshua felt his death approaching, he again solemnly confirmed the reliability and unbreakability of God's promises with the words: "Behold, I go this day the way of the whole earth; and you know with all your heart and with all your soul that not one word has fallen from all the good words which the Lord your God has spoken concerning you; they have all come to you, not one word of them has fallen" (23:14). God puts all his glory in the fact that he really keeps his given word and is able to carry out his promises. For example, he once said to Moses: "Is the hand of the Lord too short (literally: mutilated!)? Now you shall see whether my word comes to you or not!" (IV. Mo. 11, 23), and in Is. 42, 8. 9 he testifies in holy zeal about himself: "I am the Lord, that is my name; my honor I give to no other, nor my glory to carved images. The former things, behold, have come to pass, and new things I proclaim; before they spring forth, I will let you hear them."

In Is. 48, 5. 5 he confirms his own true prophethood with the words: "I proclaimed the former things long ago, and out of my mouth they came forth, and I caused them to be heard; suddenly I accomplished them, and they came to pass. I proclaimed to you long ago; before it arrived, I made you hear it, so that you would not say: my idol did it, and my carved and cast image commanded it."

The real and final questions that move and excite the heart of a creature are these: is the supreme and highest being who brought everything into existence and whom we call God a cruel egoist and tyrant, or is he really love? And the second riddle, the solution of which we would like to find with a burning heart, is: does this God have enough wisdom and power to actually bring about what he has set out to do, or are there beings and worlds that can thwart and make impossible his will to love and accomplish?

If these two questions are not solved, then being human is a continuous fear and torment. Of course, this solution cannot and must not be purely intellectual in our fallen, sinful state. That would be poison for us! It must be a faith- and love-based one, which, seen from the human side, is based on our obedience of faith and our devotion of love.

Now God has given us His word and thereby revealed His whole heart to us. There are many people who, in apparent humility and holy seriousness, claim: "We cannot know what God is like in the depths of His being and what He does and will do. We certainly do not wish to revile their view. But we would rather adhere to our God-given brother and teacher, the apostle Paul, who had the expressed task of bringing the Word of God to its full measure or leading it into fullness (Col. 1, 25), who exulted: "He (i.e. God) has made known to us (or let us know) the mystery of His will!" (Eph. 1, 9).

Whoever rejects this testimony and prefers to stand on the Israelite ground of Deut. 29, 29 - "The hidden (or secret) is the Lord's of our God" - and from this concludes that the secrets of God do not concern us, because we are not His secret councils, must also delete 1 Cor. 4, 1 - "For this we are considered stewards (or stewards) of the secrets of God! - and many other passages of Scripture. Let it happen to him according to his faith, but let him see that it does not happen to him according to Rev 22:19! What God promises, he certainly keeps, and what he promises, that also comes true. All his good pleasure he will do in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and in all depths. His good pleasure or will of delight is not death and destruction and endless torment, but salvation and rescue, peace and bliss. If God did not *want that*, he would not be love, and if he *could* not, because he would have to capitulate to the stubbornness or stupidity of men, then he would not be omnipotent, but an impotent idol. But to think this or even to say it borders on blasphemy.

"Everything arrived!" What lies hidden in these three little words! Who knows something of the exemplary meaning of the Old Testament, to whom the prophetic and symbolic lines of the entire Scripture begin to shine, this small, inconspicuous sentence fills him with deep, holy joy. Let us see from a purely external, historical example how important it is that "everything comes to pass". Let us turn to Ezra 8:28-34! What was the situation at that time? Artasasta, the king of Persia, because God put it into his heart, had decreed that the Israelites could return to Jerusalem and take with them whatever gold and silver treasures they could get. In an escort letter (read this decree of world political importance literally in Ezra 7, 11-26!) he secured the welfare of the people of God. This was a tremendous event in the history of Israel. Four months after his departure from Babylon, the small group, this dawning and firstling of Israel to be restored, arrived in Jerusalem. But why did this move lead to success? The Scripture says of Ezra and his faithful: "He came to Jerusalem because the good hand of God was upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to inquire into the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach statute and judgment in Israel" (7:9 b. 10).

Because of three causes, the good hand of God was upon Ezra:

1. He had his heart set on *inquiring into the* law of the Lord;
2. He had a burning desire to live and *act* personally according to this law;
3. He wanted to *teach* the law of God to his poor, enslaved, erring people.

Where one is so disposed to the Scriptures that one wants to explore them, live them out, and pass on their treasures and blessings, God's good hand is upon us. But in his prayer of praise, Ezra does not boast of what *he* has willed or done, but testifies in humility and holy joy: "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who has put these things in the king's heart to glorify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem, and has shown me favor in the sight of the king and his councils and all the king's mighty princes!" (7, 27. 28 a.)

It will always be like this: Whoever insists on his achievements and his efficiency, his knowledge and ability and his good intentions, God will not grant him success in the long run. Only those who truly serve selflessly for the glory of the Lord will have blessings and success in the long run. Let us learn this and go our way and fulfill our mission without striving for honor and power, possessions and pleasure!

When Ezra gathered the returnees at the river Ahawa, among them were none of the sons of Levi! Finally, he brought together a number of Levites and those willing to serve; but by far the most of them, namely 220, were Nethinim, that is, former servants of the Levites. Truly, in all areas of human life, the poorest son is usually the most faithful! The poignant verses 21, 22 and 23 of our 8th chapter should be imprinted on our hearts for shame and encouragement. There Ezra reports: "I proclaimed a fast there, by the river Ahawa, to humble ourselves before our God, to ask of him a paved way for us and for our children and for all our possessions. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a host and horsemen to stand by us against the enemy in the way; for we had spoken to the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him for good; but his power and his wrath are against all them that forsake him. - And so we fasted and asked this of our God. And our God was entreated."

Then commissioned men pre-weighed the gold and all the treasures and delivered them to faithful hands with the highly significant words of verse 28 and 29: "You are holy to the Lord, and the utensils are holy. The silver and the gold is a freewill offering to the Lord God of your fathers. Be watchful and keep it until you present it before the chief of the priests and the Levites and the chief of the fathers of Israel at Jerusalem, in the cells of the house of the Lord." How comforting and promising to us, who also with entrusted treasures of God and kingdoms of heaven are on the way to the glory goal of perfection through a world full of contestation, enmity and darkness, sounds the account in verses 31-34 a.: "And we set out . . . and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and from him that lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem . . . and the silver and the gold and the

vessels of the house of our God were weighed by number, by the weight of everything." "Number and weight of everything" was true when the holy homecomers reached their destination! Spiritually, with regard to the entrusted property, the Lord's word also applies to us, "Be watchful and keep it!" (Ezra 8, 29 a.) So we too can and may and should keep faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1, 19) and God's commandment (commission, literally: inner purpose !) undefiled and blameless until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6, 14). - —

The Lord demands and expects from us that we, as weak, poor, challenged little people in a world full of temptation and challenge, not only keep ourselves chaste in the face of an almost overpowering enemy (1 Tim. 5, 22), but also preserve the good entrusted to us by Him (1 Tim. 6, 20; 2 Tim. 1, 14), which is nevertheless constantly made contemptible to us by the godless and pious world and which the enemy tries to snatch away from us in a thousand different ways.

And yet we know that we will reach the goal of perfection just as surely as the returnees under Ezra once did. Nothing will be missing from what the Lord has entrusted to us in spiritual treasures and goods. The enemy and the one lurking along the way (Ezra 8:31) must not snatch anything from us! Whatever these laurels on the path of faith may be called - the good hand of our God is over us and will be with us until we reach the goal!

But if God expects us to preserve what has been entrusted to us and to bring it happily and unabridged to the place of its destiny without the slightest loss, - how much more will he himself shape his creation, whose ways and goals he was already aware of from the foundation of the worlds, and lead it to where he wants it to go! For noble things which the Lord demands and expects from us, he himself does in infinitely higher measure and more glorious way. Who does not trust him, does not know him. Our Father of glory and God of all grace, who laughs from his high throne seat of his enemies and "mocks them, whom even the devils serve without their will and knowledge, - this Lord of all lords and King of all kings is infinitely greater in his power and wisdom, in his love and grace, than we even dare to suspect.

Also concerning all that he has ever promised - and how little we still know of the full extent of his holy promises of salvation and completion! The blessed creature, after the eons of toil and anguish, sin and death, will rejoice:

Everything arrived !

The poor man and the rich Lazarus (Luk 16, 19-31) [Th. Böhmerle].

19 Now there was a rich man, who clothed himself in purple and costly linen, and lived all his days gloriously and joyfully. 20 Now there was a poor man named Lazarus, who lay at his door full of sores, 21 desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; and even dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass that the poor man died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. But the rich

man also died and was buried. 23 And when he lifted up his eyes in the realm of the dead, suffering agony, he sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I suffer torment in this flame. 25 And Abraham said, Son, consider that thou hast received thy good in thy life, and Lazarus likewise evil; now he is comforted, but thou art tormented. 26 And to all this there is fixed between us and you a great gulf, so that they that would come over from here unto you cannot, neither they that would come over from thence unto us. 27 Then he said, So I pray thee, father, that thou send him to my father's house--28 for I have five brethren--that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; unto these shall they hearken. 30 And he said, No, father Abraham, but if one of the dead went to them, they would repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they will not hearken unto Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead.

Luke 16, 19-31

Author: Theodor Böhmerle (1870-127)

This is a strange parable, which takes its material from the invisible world. This makes it doubly valuable to us. Once again it gives us light about the Kingdom of God, but then we see into many truths of the hereafter. The Lord of the world now invisible to us, the Son of God, gives us the most wonderful insights in the parable. Of course, all this is known to him - it is his world, after all - but for us a whole new world opens up, which is usually closed to us after these special insights here. Let us first look at the parable as such and then take the revelations of the Lord about conditions after death into our hearts.

As a parable, the present Bible verses naturally speak of the Jews and of the position of the same in the promised kingdom. The two figures of the parable: the rich man and the poor Lazarus are both Jews. That is why Lazarus comes into Abraham's bosom. He belongs to the community of Abraham. But the rich man cries out, "Father Abraham!" So he also belongs to Abraham's seed according to the flesh. And Abraham says to him, "My son" or literally, "My child." Thus we have two Jews before us, and these represent two main directions of the Jewish people: the worldly direction and the law-abiding prophetic direction. Of the rich man it is said, "Now there was a rich man who clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and lived all his days gloriously and joyfully." This is the secularized Judaism of money and pleasure. These apostates lived paganly and in all pagan lusts. The calling of God, with which he had called Israel, these worldlings left behind. Law and prophecy were foreign to them. Life, earthly, sensual life was and is the main thing for them. For the actual calling of Israel they mean nothing. That is why they have no name. For the salvation goal of God in Christ with the Jewish people they are lost. That is why they are nobody. Rich people, enjoying people - that is their whole characteristic. Judaism always had and has such a

people part. Rich, nationly, worldly in merit and enjoyment. Highest luxury is found among them - purple and delicious linen - and highest enjoyment of life - all days glorious and in pleasures. These Jews have almost completely lost the connection with their poor, believing peoples, yes, they are ashamed of them. We have this Judaism also in our days of the approaching final decision in abundant numbers. On the other hand, there is a poor, miserable, swarming part of the Jewish people. He lies in the alley like Lazarus. He is homeless, chased from place to place. Those rich people go to the different nations and become citizens of the world. The poor part, the right Jewish, is hunted everywhere. He is also subjected to blows and persecutions - he is swarm-laden. He holds fast to law and prophets, he lives outwardly miserable, in the hope of Israel. We must certainly assume this about Lazarus, otherwise angels would not have carried him into Abraham's bosom after his death. This poor, persecuted and beaten part of the Jews, faithful to the law and the prophets, lies at the door of the rich man. It belongs to him. They are a people called by God. The rich man does not respect this. He leaves Lazarus lying there. But dogs lick Lazarus' sores. Dogs are the nations in the Scriptures. Let's just think of the Canaanite woman where the Lord says, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." Nation-representatives - let us think of the great labor federations - become Jew-protectors - lick their swarms. Or let us think of England giving Palestine to the Jews, of which the rich world Jews want nothing. This poor afflicted, lying on the alley, but Israel's hope preserving Jew's part, is called Lazarus. Lazarus can be called the "helpless" or the "Gotthilf" - whom God helps. Both is right and true. This part has a name - he is the "helpless one" as long as he lies in the street in swarms; he is the one who is helped when the Lord takes care of him.

Thus, the Jewish people are torn and divided. Both parts die. The whole Jewish people goes the way of judgment and death. This is again a terrible truth, which the Savior covers here in a parable. But Lazarus comes into Abraham's bosom. Under all sorrow, a community of God grows up in Judaism, which the Lord will need one day in his kingdom. But the secularized and sensualized direction goes into judgment. And there is no coming over and over again. These earth-pleasing Jews remain excluded from the promise. In the judgment and in view of the loss of their part in the

Promise remember - but now it is too late. The Antichrist and all his followers go to hell before the rising kingdom. Not the whole Jewish people, but a through-arranged one experiences the day. Then no father Abraham will help. They did not know Abraham in this world, now they do not know Abraham either. It is a pity to be a Jew and not to reach the glory of the Jewish people. But who did not want to be a Jew here, will not be one in the fulfillment either. The rich world Jewry is judicially excluded from salvation. The judgment begins at the house of God. Only a well-done Israel can enter into Abraham's promise and its blessing.

The rich man had five brothers. He lamented for them. Five is half of ten. Ten is the target number. Five is halfway and does not reach the destination. Five is the judgment number. Five cities perished in the valley of Sodom; five images the judged Philistines had to deliver. Five brothers has the rich man. It is a part falling into judgment in the people of the Jews. Only the Abraham part, to which Lazarus belongs, comes to the light. And Moses and the prophets are the educators to the light. There is no other way. Therefore, before the fall of the Antichrist and the Kingdom Day of the Lord comes, the two witnesses stand up, Law and Prophecy, in two powerful representatives. There all sincere Jews can hear. But the world Jews, the Antichrist at the head, will kill the two witnesses. But the murderers will fall and the witnesses, law and prophecy fulfilled in Christ, will rise again. The Jewish people have no other light than law and prophecy until the end. These are enough for the sincere.

Thus, in our parable we have the message of the disintegration of the Jewish people - of the worldly wealth of some, of the swarm-laden being thrown into the street of others. And we have the judgment of the house of God. But we also have the holy seed in Abraham's womb, which will burst forth in the first resurrection in the beginning of Christ's Kingdom. These are truths that the Savior had to put into the shell of the parable in his time - but now, especially in our days, when the shells are cracking and when we are approaching the revelations of the Second Coming - we see these truths fulfilled and fulfilled. Everywhere we see in the Jewish people the rich man and the poor Lazarus - we experience now in the parable how this way runs and runs out. We give thanks to the Lord.

But at the same time we receive from the Lord, who takes the parable from the invisible world, the most wonderful insights into the hereafter. It is delicious that these insights are not given with the intention of revealing otherworldliness, but in the course of a parable, which has a completely different meaning. This makes these openings much more natural. After all, to the Lord all that he opens here was also natural. Here he speaks of the world from which he came and into which he went. But we look into it with amazement, into a world which is closed to us according to nature, but which is nevertheless true and certain and into which we all enter sooner or later.

But if we now look into this invisible world under the guidance of the Savior, then we must not draw these truths into the present time without further ado and least of all into the congregation. The Savior is speaking here of the world invisible to us in a time when neither the atonement nor the redemption nor the resurrection had been. Since all this has happened, much has changed in the world over there, too, and especially the believers in Christ take a very special position to this world of the hereafter. But let us hear the Lord!

He first draws us a man without an afterlife. Rich, glorious clothes, all days glorious and in joys. There are many people without a hereafter. The soul lives and weaves, if it is not in God, in the manifold of this world. In thinking, feeling and willing, in

searching and researching, in work and light, a mass lives in the visible, higher or lower, nobler or meaner, but its sense is in the visible, in the creature. How do these people live on?

They continue to live. This is the first thing we see clearly from the Savior's words. They all live. Abraham lives, Lazarus lives, the rich man lives. It simply goes on after the laying aside of the corporeality. Everything else that people say is a lie or a deception. It is lived. It is the same today as it was before Christ. Everyone lives on as they should. And they all know each other. The rich man immediately knows Abraham and also knows Lazarus. And Abraham and Lazarus know the rich man. So it is a recognizable, spiritual continuance. And immediately with the closing of the eyes for this world, the opening of the eyes for that world begins. We also immediately enter into a community of life, which corresponds to our state in this world. Lazarus was immediately received by angels who carried him into Abraham's womb. In the case of the rich man it only says: "He was buried." Who received him? About this the Savior is silent. The Scriptures are very silent about the things of darkness. She is right. Either he had to go to his place all alone, because there is no life community over there for died egoists. Egoism is isolation. Or ugly, sinister spirits over there greeted him with scorn. Scripture lets it be, so let's let it be. It was enough for the rich man that all at once became truth and reality what he had not thought of all his life and had not wanted to think of. He stood in a world of horror. He had torment in burning flame. Spirit and soul full, overflowing with earthly thoughts and earthly desires - and nothing, nothing to satisfy. This was horrible hell. He wanted as he had wanted, and over there everything had been at his disposal, over there nothing. He had not even a drop of water and could not get it. He had had his good part in this world. But now this well enjoyed world life was his torment. Poor people of this world, who live without eternity, without the hereafter. What you had is gone; what you needed is not there. "In the realm of the dead and in torment" was the rich man. Let us hear well, he was not in perdition. He was not in the other death. All that comes only in the last judgment and after the last judgment. He was only transferred to the realm of the dead. But because he had only lived in this world, this realm of the dead was now truly death, namely misery and torment.

Lazarus was also in the realm of the dead. Elsewhere he could not be at all. The death was not yet broken through at his times. Abraham was also in the realm of the dead. But they were divinely minded on earth, as far as each one on his level could be. And this divine attitude they had to enjoy now in the realm of the dead as light and peace and bliss.

Lazarus was a man without this world at that time. He had nothing in this life but sufferings. But these drove him into the divine. There is nothing about it. It is only said that he wanted to fill himself with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. But if angels carried him into Abraham's bosom, there must have been a corresponding

attitude. There cannot be much talk about eternal inner life under law and prophets, but that he was a son of the promised inheritance, that obviously comforted him in his misery. And the contempt of the promise and the covenant by the rich may have made him all the stronger. He went to the realm of the dead, but carried by angels; he went to the realm of the dead, but in Abraham's bosom. So there are differences in the kingdom of the dead, and there were already before Jesus' redemption. The righteous were in a different place than the unrighteous. The people of the word blessed in the midst of death. The people of this world in death all around. And these differences were certainly not only among the Jews, but also among the nations.

Today, after Jesus' appearance and breaking through death, things are different in the realm of the dead than they were in Jesus' time and before Jesus' time. At that time everything went into the realm of the dead, the most pious as well as the godless. From Adam, death has broken through to all. The first fruits of the resurrection are Christ. But in the realm of the dead have been the most diverse divisions. Abraham's bosom was a very blessed department full of light and hope. And in Abraham's bosom sat a firmly established community. All believing, law-abiding Jews hoping for the Messiah. In great torment sat the Jews who were godless and apostate on earth. They did not realize their great loss until they saw the waiting ones in Abraham's bosom. Thus the dead lived in various departments, all waiting, some for bliss and glory, others for judgment.

Today there is a group of people who have nothing to do with the realm of the dead. These are the believers in Christ. They are already resurrected in the creation of the new man in them. The dying believers, when they pass over and when they stood simple-minded in their Lord, penetrate through the whole realm of the dead to him. "I desire to depart and be with Christ," says Paul. Believers are always with him. This is a great, blessed triumph of life. Born-again believers live, and if they die immediately, with the Lord. There with their Lord they mature toward the day of the gathering of the church.

Then Abraham's womb, to which probably the paradise corresponds, has also moved out of the realm of the dead. Many kingdom people have already risen immediately after the resurrection of the Lord. But the resurrection of the righteous from the Jews could not go on because of the unbelief of the Jewish people. Now these are waiting in Abraham's bosom for their day. This will be at the beginning of the 1000-year kingdom. The children of God are already rising continuously and have their day already at the time of the last trumpet. All others except the children of God and the Kingdom Jews gathered in Abraham's bosom are still waiting for their day today. This day these spirits will have, after they have still been preached to in the 1000-year kingdom, at the last judgment. There they will be resurrected, some to bliss, others to death. The latter will therefore go to the kingdom of judgment and death. Until the last day, many who have taken a position of subjection to the Savior on various levels will have

blessed places of waiting. Many again, who were purely on this side, will have quite unhappy ones. This is how it is now with the realm of the dead. Blessed is the one who is born of God and is allowed to pass through it in a growth of spiritual life. We therefore believe that the overwhelming mass of all those who have died from the nations, as far as they have not been born of God, are still waiting for their day on various levels in the realm of the dead, which Luther translates as "hell". Their resurrection day is just the last judgment.

The stay in the realm of the dead will already include a kind of just retribution for life in this world. Even if the judgment has not yet been pronounced, which will happen only on the last day, the coming fate will already have an effect in the waiting state as with the rich man and poor Lazarus in bliss or torment. It will be a waiting of hoping or trembling. Thereby it will go wonderfully. To the men of this world God gives this world. "You have had your good part in this world" - as he has wanted it - now he has no good part over there - he has never desired it. God often gives suffering and tribulations to the people on the other side. Under it they become more otherworldly and have joy and comfort on the other side.

In the realm of the dead over there, people will know each other and also talk to each other, as we see with the rich man, with Abraham and Lazarus. But they cannot help each other. The individual sections of the kingdom of the dead are closed off from each other like a chasm. In the 1000-year kingdom, all those who could not yet make up their minds in this world will be preached to by the resurrected Jewish righteous, and there are still decisions to be made. But everything must wait for this hour. So also the people of the Flood - that is the whole world before Noah - had to wait until the hour of the resurrected Lord, who then went to them and preached to them. In the divine plan, everything has its time, its hour of maturity and fullness. After the end of this evangelization period in the kingdom of Christ, the resurrection comes for the last judgment for the inhabitants of the departments of the kingdom of the dead.

There will naturally be great spirit movements among the death realm dwellers living in torment. We see this in the rich man. He is still in the very early stages of stirring, but it is stirring in him. The rich man of our parable will also be preached to again, because he lived before Christ. Just as the inhabitants of the realm of the dead know themselves, they also see into this world. This will either increase their bliss or their torment, depending on their inner state. To the rich man, the sight of his five brothers caused much anguish. Oh, how the spirits in the realm of the dead will torment themselves if they now see the course of things and persons in this world with an unconverted heart. There is nothing they can do about it. It is clear that the more blessed a person's state is in the realm of the dead, the calmer and more peaceful his character will be with regard to this world. Abraham and Lazarus also looked over, but they saw from a divine point of view, and there they were calm.

We believers in Christ also have a cloud of witnesses over there with the Lord, who follow our faith struggle, just as the angels accompany us with great interest. We often think too little about how closely the visible and invisible worlds are connected. There is no influence of those on the other side. Even the children of God who have gone to Jesus must first wait there with their Lord and mature fully. Their time of influence begins only after the completion of the church on the day of the Lord. Therefore, we do not call upon any saint, we live only from the Lord and his word.

No people of the realm of the dead are sent over either. No one can be quoted, i.e. called, to be with the Lord or in any department of the kingdom of the dead. Only in the Kingdom of Christ will the church exert a mighty spiritual influence on the entire creature from its location in the air.

Therefore, this creature also waits for the blessed freedom of the children of God. But we see that: the creature has to wait until the time is full, until the church is blessedly free. And in the kingdom of Christ, the resurrected righteous from the Jews will also have a great effectiveness, even in the kingdom of the dead over there. But before that, no one will come. Quite single exceptions the Bible tells us, e.g. Samuel - but to the heavy judgment of Saul. And Moses and Elijah to the discussion with the Lord because of Golgotha. Otherwise nobody comes. All spiritualism and what belongs to this area is deception of the angels and spirits of darkness and their lie.

The way to faith went with the Jews through law and prophets, with us it goes through the word of the gospel and through the Holy Spirit. In Christ we have the open door to the hereafter, in him we have a freely open access, in the Holy Spirit we have the incorruptible teacher who guides us into all truth. We have received the anointing through him and may grow through knowledge and experience of the divine life. We do not need any other way. All who open other ways than the Lord Jesus Christ are thieves and murderers; Word and Spirit are enough. He who is of the truth hears his voice. And what can people from the realm of the dead help us? He is the only one who has life and life itself.

We also thank him for these eternity insights. We may rely on them as pure truth, because they are from the Lord, who is the truth. But as much as we are grateful for such insights, we do not want to dwell on them. Only they shall warn us that we do not come to places of torment in the realm of the dead or even to the other death. And they shall encourage us to embrace the Lord himself in faith, so that we may penetrate to him through all dead spaces.

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!

The primeval creation (Genesis 1:1) [Th. Böhmerle].

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth

Genesis 1, 1

Author: Theodor Böhmerle

Man never had to deal with the original creation - he entered the fallen creation from his beginning. When man was created, Satan was already there, fallen angels were already there. When he was created, death was already there. According to the Scriptures, death was not introduced by man, but by Satan. Satan has the power of death. Man was originally placed in the mixed world where light and darkness fight. From the beginning he is not dealing with the creation but with the redemption of the fallen creation. Therefore also his book of God, which is handed over to him as a book of revelation, is a book of redemption. It is a unified book from the beginning to the end. The redemption struggle is its theme. The beginning of this redemption struggle is written in Genesis 1, the end, the victoriously carried out struggle, Rev 22. The creation, the actual, sinless primeval creation is only mentioned with one single short verse in the Bible, in Genesis 1, 1. Completely according to the rule of perspective already mentioned by us many times, the creation eon is written in most crowded brevity, likewise the eon of the fall of the primeval creation and the ruin of the earth. Only the new creation, the first redemption eon, is then reported in more detail; this already concerns us more closely. The first two verses of the Bible must report about the primeval creation and its fall, otherwise this would be told to us nowhere in the Bible at all. Rightly we will ask, when, where and how were the innumerable angel worlds created? When did Satan fall? And rightly we could ask, where does an earth come from, which is desolate and empty? Surely God did not create it that way. Where does darkness come from? God dwells in an inaccessible light. And with God there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). We could rightly ask, where does the horrible depth of judgment come from, which is mentioned in Genesis 1:2? For that is what the word depth means: an amazing depth of judgment. We would remain without any revelation about the most important things, if Genesis 1, 1.2 did not describe to us the primeval creation and the primeval fall. The Bible is immensely short on this. It gives only the most necessary things. People should not look too early into the mystery of wickedness. With the increasing revelation of the light, the view into the darkness also opens. And on the ground of the church in Christ, the mystery of Satan is also deeply revealed. Therefore, from our more filled ground of knowledge, we can understand those first verses of Original Creation and Original Fall more deeply and clearly. We also have the spirit that guides us into all truth.

In it, we approach the first verse of the Bible and also seek to understand the primordial creation. It happened in a beginning. It was unfolded from a beginning. The original creation did not come out of a nothing. The beginning was not a nothing, but a highly significant something. Yes, the beginning, in which and from which the

original creation happened, was the truly existing. In the beginning was the Word (John 1:1). The beginning is in the Word, which is concluded in the Son and His glory. Luther's translation in Heb 11, 3: *"...That all things which are seen came into being from nothing"* is incorrect. It must be translated correctly as follows: through faith we realize that the things that appear have come out of the things that have not yet appeared. The spirit-wrought faith sees the immediate world. Therefore, it also sees that which has not yet appeared and sees how that which has appeared has emerged from it. The appearing or the visible creation has its essence in the not yet appeared. In God the Father everything stands and goes essentially. And as we have already said in some places, everything passed from the Father-ground into the Son-ground. The Son had a glory given to him by the Father before the foundation of all worlds. All Father thoughts in their real, spiritual-bodily effect appeared before the Son and were taken over by the Son. What was taken over by the Son then formed the Son's glory. The Father has the great glory, the Son the given out-birth glory. All thoughts of God are spiritual-bodily realities from infinities. God cannot think purely formally like the sin world - its thoughts are hollow. God always thinks real; God's thoughts are spirit-bodily realities. In God, everything is spirit-bodily. And these spirit-bodily God-realities the Son has adoringly seen and taken over to carry out. In the Son they have passed over birth-like. In him they have already taken on a more external form and shape. The son is the word. The Word, however, is already an outward formation, let us say: an outwardly pressing formation of the spirit. This glory, full of faith, full of life, born of the Father and taken over by the Son, is the beginning of the creation of creatures. Here the whole creature is founded and weds. In this beginning and from this beginning it is created. The beginning is therefore not an empty concept of time, but a divine concept of fullness. Yes, the beginning came to its fullness. For the creations a divine filling hour was necessary. It goes with God everything in orders. This *"in the beginning"* is similar to when it says in another place: *"but it is gifted in time"* (Lk 2, 1). From the fullness comes the new. All seed is ripe fruit. And from the ripe fruit comes the new growth. Thus, from the beginning, from the Son-fullness-glory, creations came forth. In the beginning, God created. The new came into being creatively. From the Father to the Son it had gone procreatively and birth-wise. In God is the male and the female disposition, out of which the Son was begotten and born (Ps 2:7 and Jn 1:14). Also in the Son is the male-female. In relation to the Father, the Son is feminine. The infinite, spirit-bodily thoughts of God were all taken in by the Son, inwardly processed, in a sense received and carried out, and then came forth as His glory. But from the glory of the Son they could not be further born, for there was nothing there into which they could have been born. Out of the Son they were created. According to its basic meaning, the word "create" contains the concept of detachment. As a ripe fruit detaches itself from the branch, so the creatures detached themselves according to the will of the Son from the beginning of the creatures, from the glory of the Son.

Just as a creative artist pushes away his inner, born and matured glory from himself in his works and puts it out into the public - what we call creating - so the Son, according to his divine, always good and perfect will, pushed out his God's glory piece by piece in the most diverse formations. That was a willful creation. And the Son of God gave out his glories to a certain life of their own, although they all have their source of life in him. But after their creation they had their own life in many-formed glory. And especially the highest creatures, the self-aware spiritual creatures, had a free will determination to be in him or in themselves. To create means to detach from oneself and to give out. But the creature must know that it cannot be outside and cannot live without him, the creator. If it does not keep this line, then it must die. Thus in the divine filling hour creatures of the most different kind and without number came into being - a beginning.

And these creatures "*created gods*", as it is translated quite literally. The time word is in the singular, the word "*God*" in the plural: "*gods*". The God term "*Elohim*" is a plural term. We have already seen how a plural - "*gods*" - also comes into consideration. The creations went through the beginning. Christ, the Son, is the beginning of God's creation. From the Father all things proceed - there is the unground. Through the Son everything passes - there is the reason. In the Holy Spirit everything is worked out and completed; through the Holy Spirit everything is drawn together in the Father and in the Son. With the word Elohim, the Bible indicates the Trinity relationship. Gods are the ones who create, each part of the Godhead in its own way. The Father has his part in the creation in the hidden ground, the Son in the ejecting ground; the Holy Spirit has his part as a holding together bond. But the fact that the plural word "*gods*" *has the* singular of the time word, "*created*", points to the complete unity of the trinity. It is quite impossible to separate the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The Father does nothing without Son and Spirit; the Son does nothing without Father and Spirit; the Holy Spirit can do nothing without Father and Son. In the smallest as in the greatest, they always work as one. It is a ground of life and love without any disturbance or separation. Even the deepest satanic depths, into which the Son and the Spirit descended, could not have a separating effect here - these three are one. That is why it is said, "*Deities created*".

And there now "*the heavens and also the earth*" have been created. That "*the heavens*" are not the visible sky should be clear. "*the heavens*", that is the totality of all created worlds. God has never made anything individually, but always everything in wonderful, uniform multiplicity. There are many inhabited worlds. And there are many different, self-aware hosts of spirits. The Bible calls them angels. These angels form vast kingdoms under angelic princes. The Bible gives us several names of such angelic princes: Michael, Gabriel, Satan or Lucifer is also one. We are visibly excluded from the intercourse with these angelic worlds. We have enough to do with ourselves now. but we are still in close connection with them. In all greater times of revelation they come out. Every believer has his angel, who does all kinds of service for him in

the outer things. The children also have their angels. We are also in all kinds of relationships with the fallen spirits. The unbelieving people are under their influence. These spirits have their work in the children of unbelief. In nature and in the forces of nature they also still have great power. In testing and granting believers, they may challenge them externally and internally. The angelic worlds are now torn apart. One third has fallen to Satan. They are therefore all in need of redemption. They have also already received much through Christ, especially at his ascension. The angels are following the execution of God's marvelous counsel with the greatest suspense, which is now the council of salvation and on the final execution of which so much depends for themselves. Their own course is stopped by the fall or, better said, by the falls. Only after harmony has been restored can the thoughts of God continue to run in glory.

These are, drawn in short lines, the angels and their worlds, which together are called the heavens and which form the original creation. The Savior passed through these heavens at the Ascension, and all the good angelic hosts paid homage to him there. Nowhere in the Holy Scriptures is there a place for the creation of the angelic hosts, if we do not have it before us here in Genesis 1:1. In the conventional religious views the angels step back much too much, because just with most people, also with the religious ones, the invisible for us now comes much too briefly. The more alive and mature faith becomes, the more it lives in the invisible. The original worlds of creation were inhabited only by angels. Only these glorious, spirit-bodily light beings were represented in their diversity in the original creation. The human being is according to his basic determination and his basic knowledge something completely different than the angels and belongs from the beginning into the fallen creation - he had his position in the redemption council. According to the view of most of the people, also of the so-called Christians, God has made only human beings. The angels are something quite problematic for them. But it is the other way around, God has created first and foremost angelic worlds. These form the bulk of the creation. Man has a position above the angels, although he is for a time inferior to the angels only because of the seduction to which he succumbed, yes, he lives in the death world of the evil angels.

So the original creation is a creation of angelic worlds. One, however, comes according to the Holy Scripture still in addition - the earth. At the beginning or in the beginning "*God created*" the heavens and also the earth. Why is the earth especially mentioned? Doesn't it belong to the heavens, isn't it also a dwelling place of angelic spirits? Certainly the earth belongs to the heavens, certainly it has been inhabited by angelic spirits. The fact that it is called special indicates that it is something special and is destined for something special. When we look into the execution and fulfillment of God's counsel, we find that the earth is destined to be the revelation of God and the dwelling place of God. The tabernacle of God is with men, and men are on the earth. The Lord descends upon the earth in an eon of the consummation execution of the counsel of God, as the Revelation tells John at the end. The earth, in its present form the footstool of God, as heaven is His throne, becomes the dwelling

place of God. This is a great miracle of God. That is why it is also said: "*behold, the tabernacle of God with men*" (Rev 21,3). But if the earth becomes the throne and dwelling place of God, then it becomes the center of all worlds. Where the Lord is, there is the center. This is the present great disturbance among all worlds, among all heavens, that they have no center around which they can all revolve in praise in proper attraction and repulsion. The power of the Lord keeps them all together, so that they do not fly apart like atoms. But their real life and love center they do not have yet. That only goes through these depths, into which the Son, the man and the satanic spirits have to go, until the glory of God the Father shines completely in the Only Begotten Son. Love must first go through its whole and complete path of divestment and humiliation, then it can be and become the center of life, love and unity. But the deep paths, like the high paths, they go on earth.

That is why the earth is especially named, because on it the effect, i.e. the revelation of God is supposed to take place. But we have to consider that God has included sin, death, judgment and damnation in his plan from the very beginning. These are the negative depths of His positive revelation of love.

That is why the earth has been special from the very beginning. That is why it is called the heavens and also the earth. The scripture calls Satan the prince of this world. It is our opinion that originally the earth was his dwelling place. This dwelling he has made desolate by his fall, and into this desert the revelation of love of the Father in the Son now takes place. Vessels of this revelation of love are the people in whom, to whom and through whom the Lord makes himself known. Here the Son becomes man; here he suffers and dies; here he rises; here he returns transfigured. All worlds look to the earth in suspense. They experience what is terrible here, they experience what is divinely glorious here. If the worlds want to recognize their God and to know him more and more deeply, then they must direct their eyes eagerly to the earth, where God's living out of judgment and grace takes place in the Son. The earth carries the history of God, yes, finally God himself. That is why the earth is now especially named: "*the heavens and also the earth.*"

This whole original creation was now held together in the Son. He, from whose glory everything was created, he was the bond of perfection for all creatures. And he was to become it more and more. The original creation was created samewise on an outgrowth. God makes nothing finally fixed and ready. He puts everything on growth. That is the law of the life - and God is the life. With all life the first is the seed, and all fruit is seed again. That's how it goes: that's why we will also reap once without stopping. This is how the original creation was seeded. It was also laid out freely. The seed has its powers of outgrowth in itself. The self-conscious beings, the angels, also had the freedom that they could carry out their growth in their great One-Host, in the Son, or in themselves. Therein lay the possibility of sin. Satan made this possibility a reality, and now came the mighty life in the self-growth of the creature, which was in death,

but now came also the glorious self-revelation of the Son in his going into death and in his victorious bringing out of the overcoming life. Now the earth became the center of all experience - after the darkness - as after the light side - for all creatures. Now the earth emerged as the one on which the development to the dwelling of God proceeded through the most horrible depths to the most wonderful height. The Bible then continues to tell about this. It tells about the earth. It lets us participate in the struggles of God and man. It leads us to the transfigured earth. Once the time has come, the coming new stage can take up Genesis 1:1 and continue to carry out the plan with all worlds, which has rested until now. Genesis 1:1 has not yet reached full development - only in the fallen and renewed earth, in the fallen and exalted renewed mankind, in the humiliated and exalted Son lie the new seeds for the development of all creatures from glory to glory. The original creation is the basis of a present new creation, and the present new creation is the basis for the continuation of the original creation. Therefore, the creature is also waiting for the glorious freedom of the children of God. In the original creation, many things are still seed-like, even if some things have already grown after the darkness - like after the light side. The full development occurs only after the completion of the earth to the God-dwelling. Therefore: "... *The heavens and also the earth.*" and the earth has then in the Bible further the word. So we do not live now on a newly created earth. That would be a pity, if it were newly created as it is. Rather, we use to say that we live on the fifth earth. The first: the primordial one; the second: the one that fell to Satan; the third: the initial newly created one; the fourth: the one after the fall of man; the fifth: the one after the Flood; we are waiting for the sixth and the seventh; then comes a new one, because the eighth is the new one.

The Reliability of Biblical Prophecies (2 Pet 1:19-21) [K. Geyer].

"And so we have the prophetic word fixed, to which you do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of its own interpretation. For prophecy was never produced by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke, driven by the Holy Spirit."

2 Petr. 1, 19-21

Author: Karl Geyer, from GuH

The prophetic word is a lamp in a dark place. This dark place is our earth. According to the astronomers, it is located in the most starless part of the universe and is therefore already externally one of the celestial bodies that have the least light. Thus it is just the suitable residence for its present ruler, the prince of the darkness, the god of this world.

Moreover, the earth is the prison of the universe. As there are many dwellings in heaven, so also in the interior of the earth there are many dwellings one above the other floor by floor, chambers of death and the underworld, in which not only departed people stay, but also fallen angels (Jud. 6). Thus we live today on the roof of a penitentiary, which is at the same time the graveyard for humans and animals.

On this dark earth, the light shines brightest. Here Jesus came, the light of the cosmos. Here, God also lets His prophetic word shine as a lamp so that we do not miss the right path.

The prophetic word is the most sure and certain thing in the world. It is so firm and certain because it is spirit-breathed and God-breathed. No prophecy of the Scriptures is of its own interpretation. There are still innumerable other prophecies, which run through the countries, but are no prophecies of *the scripture*. For example, two years ago I was asked to comment on a small booklet in which one could read that according to the visions of a great Scandinavian seer, in the summer of 1953 the whole of northern Germany would be flooded by a great flood, a three-month war would break out, and so on. Was this a prophecy of the Scriptures? You can leaf through the whole Bible from the first book of Moses to Rev. 22; you will not find the thing. Therefore we always have to check in all chastity whether we have to do with prophecies of little men who had a face sometime or with a word of God. A face can come from the ancient man, can be a face inspired by angels or demons, and it can be a face from the Holy Spirit. But lest someone impute a false one to us for a genuine fifty mark bill, we have a sacred duty and obligation to examine where these things come from. And the Scripture tells us, "If the prophet speak in the name of Jehovah, and the word come not to pass, nor come to pass, the word is which Jehovah hath *not* spoken; with presumption hath the prophet spoken it; thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:22).

Also the Antichrist will have a false prophet with him one day, the second beast of Rev. 13. He does signs and wonders and even lets fire fall from heaven and brings all people on earth to accept the mark of the beast. And everything that does not comply with this will be wiped out with stump and handle.

When the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, once saw the mighty statue of the world empires in a dream, he had all his wise men summoned and wanted to learn the interpretation from them. But all of them failed, because they all wanted to have the dream reported by the king first. But Nebuchadnezzar insisted on hearing first the dream itself and then the interpretation from his magicians and dream interpreters. Only one could tell him both: Daniel, the true prophet of God. He told him the dream and also gave him the right interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar - the golden head; then the lesser Medopersian Empire - the silver breast. In it two powers were already effective: Medes and Persians. But also in another sense there was a division into two. There were already laws with the Medes and Persians, against which also the king could not rise. It was a power divided in two, half people, half king, a semi-democracy. Then followed Greece - the copper belly. "Cretans are always liars, lazy bellies," writes the apostle Paul to Titus (1:12), and in the letter to the Philippians, to whom he first brought the gospel on Greek soil, he speaks of those "whose god is the belly" (3:19). Then follow the loins, where the belly enters into the firm setting of the pelvic girdle. Thus Greek was outwardly taken into the tight discipline of Rome when Rome took over there, but inwardly it still asserted its spiritual supremacy. For a time the Greek language was still predominant. When the world empires in their development had come up to this place of the prophetic statue, where also the seat of the organs of procreation and birth is, the time was also fulfilled that Christ should be born. That is how accurate God's clock is. Then Rome divided itself into East and West Rome, into the two legs, which at last run out into the toes, the states of the Roman empire. But the latter is also still a prophetic picture for the end times and its ten-state confederation in the antichristian world empire.

Why can God proclaim the future in such a way? - Only because with Him everything is light presence. It is not difficult for Him to prophesy, because He is aware of all His works from the beginning. He sees all things ready before Him, ready to be revealed. We humans promise much and deliver little. God promises only what He can keep, because what He promises is already present with Him. It is no more difficult for Him to prophesy the future than it is for us to promise our children 14 days before Christmas something that we have already bought and have in our house. Our God had "millions of years of time" before the foundation of the world to become aware of all His works. Only then He begot the Son, designed in Him the plan of the eons and put all His fullness of God into the Son. And then, according to this plan of salvation, the Son could call the world into existence and act on the nations, on Israel and on the church. *God only promises what He has already done.* That is why we read at the beginning of Ecclesiastes that there is nothing new *under the sun*. "Is there a thing of

which it is said, Behold, this is new - long ago was it in the ages that were before us" (Eccl. 1:10).

God knows what He wants and knows what He can do and also knows that He does it. Out of this knowledge, He then lets it be proclaimed to us in the prophetic word. God Himself stands and falls with the fulfillment of this word. Biblical prophecies are not guesses, no guesswork, as we often find it in the newspaper, but sayings of God. The distinguishing feature of God's word compared to all the word-work of creatures, be it human or angelic words, is precisely this, that *God's word is a prophetic word*. It is prophetic through and through, whether it lets us look back to before the foundation of the world or forward to the completion.

We have now, according to 2 Pet 1:19, "*fortified* the prophetic word." What the prophets, through the spirit of Christ that was in them, were allowed to witness long before the Lord came, but did not yet see in full clarity, we, who have the full light of the gospel, may now see clearly.

All prophets from time immemorial have testified to the coming Kingdom of God, such as Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, etc. Then the Lord Himself came as the King of His Kingdom, but not as His disciples thought. When He announced to them that He would have to be killed, Peter, who had given the wonderful testimony in Matth. 16, 16: "You are the Son of the living God", was so upset that he said: "Lord, this will not happen to You! How shall the kingdom be set up, if the expected Messiah wants to die again! But the Lord must answer him, "Satan, get behind Me!" But then He gives the disciples the precious promise: "Some of those who stand here will not taste death until they have seen the kingdom of God come in power" (Mark 9:1)!

Six days later Jesus takes Peter and James and John with Him to a high mountain. And He was transformed before them. Moses and Elijah appeared and conversed with Him about the coming of the Kingdom of God. Then, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples received confirmation that what the prophets had said was coming to pass. They saw Him in His royal dignity and received the certainty: the prophetic word will be redeemed. He showed them that there is a Sonship and a Kingship, even if He is killed in Jerusalem and goes back to the Father. They were allowed to see Him already on this earth in His dignity. They also already saw the glory cloud in which He also returns, as the angels testified later during His ascension (2. Petr. 1, 17 with Matth. 17, 5; Acts 1, 9-11).

On the basis of this experience, Peter can say that the prophetic word had been strengthened or fortified for them. Now he could freely proclaim the return of the Lord.

Two things: suffering before, glory after, Peter could not distinguish before. Therefore he had to accept the rebuke: Satan, get behind Me! Our natural man rebels against nothing so much as against suffering. Nevertheless, God, the merciful, the gracious,

the kind, cannot spare us suffering for our sake. "He who suffers in the flesh stands apart from sin" (1 Pet. 4:1). God, if He wants to heal us, must also hurt us. If He is "the Lord our physician," He must also give us medicine, and if He wants to bring about the crisis soon, often a bitter medicine.

Every creature, left to itself, goes its own way, the way of detachment from God, the way of its own ego, the way of death; for every separation from Him, the life, is death, as every separation from the light is darkness. If God wants to heal us from this, He must make us aware, through the suffering that arises precisely from our own way, where the creature comes when it follows itself. He cannot spare us this. *The suffering in the world is a fundamental necessity.* Whoever has realized this, when he is in the deepest suffering, will no longer ask, "Lord, take it away from me!" - When Paul and Silas were in the innermost dungeon and their feet were screwed into the cane, at midnight they began to praise and extol and adore God. Then God was forced, as it were, to confess His word. Then the doors burst open and the prisoners were loosed from their bonds. What Paul later wrote: "Give thanks *always and for everything*", he did there himself.

It is also important for us to have a positive attitude towards suffering. On the one hand, we groan over our sin, wanting to get away from it - on the other hand, when suffering comes to break us away from it, we ask for the quickest remedy. - Paul not only praises and gives thanks in sufferings - he rejoices in sufferings, indeed, as he writes in Philippians (3:10), he wants to be conformed to His sufferings. And in the same letter he writes in another place: "It has been *given to you* with respect to Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him" (1, 29). Who of us can say: "Suffering is a gift to us"? - This is how we get on the path to which the last time pushes us much more than any previous time.

"Holy men of God spoke, driven by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:21). The Holy Spirit does a double work. As long as we are still standing in the world, He will first *convict* us. He will convict *the world of sin*, of righteousness and of judgment; of sin in us, of righteousness in Him and of judgment for those who do not accept this offered righteousness (John 16:8-11). But if we accept it, then we no longer belong to the world. Then, as God begotten, we are still *in the world*, but no longer of *the world*. Then He continues to speak to us and does His second work, which again consists of a triple: "He will guide you into all truth; the things that are coming He will proclaim to you; He will glorify Me; for of Mine He will receive and proclaim to you" (John 16:13,14). Receive of Mine, give to you, glorify Me - this means that the Holy Spirit never glorifies a circle, never a brother or sister. The Holy Spirit magnifies only one, that is Christ. From Him He takes and gives it to us. The coming He will proclaim to us. If, in the turmoil of the times, we are urged more to look out to see if the day will not soon dawn, it is a work of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who directs our gaze to what is coming.

"Holy men spoke, *driven by the Holy Spirit*." To be led or driven by the Holy Spirit requires an inner dedication. To be holy is to be withdrawn from profane use and consecrated to divine use. Saints are not sinless, but consecrated to the Lord. Separated from sin and devoted to the Lord. There is a double meaning in the word *sanctification*: separation from the old and consecration for a new use.

The more a believer is transformed into the essence of God, the more he becomes related to God, the more clearly everything divine is reflected in him, the purer he sees everything in the clear vision of eternity. He learns to look at things with the eyes of God, to look as He looks, to recognize as He recognizes. As a son, he will do what he sees the Father doing. This is also an approach to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Christ. Once we see the Lord, we do not need to arrive at one faith. We are to arrive at it here, progressively growing in the same measure as we approach the center, Christ.

The prophets are the foreknowers of coming events, the foresighted, the proclaimers. In contrast, the rebellious people of Israel saw only what had already been accomplished. "He made Moses know His *ways*, the children of Israel His *doings*." What is our concern with regard to the prophetic word? Do we always want to wait until God has done something again, so that we only realize afterwards that something has gone on, or are we concerned that we should be among those to whom God can make known His ways in advance? "For the Lord Jehovah does nothing unless He has revealed His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). From here we understand why it is once said of the gifts given to the children of God: "He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues" (1 Cor. 14:5). But then we also understand how necessary it is to be clear and sober in regard to prophecy, because there is a great danger of falling into the spiritual. Holy men of God spoke, driven by the *Holy Spirit*. Can we not see from our lives or from the lives of some movements how God was tempted by trying to get behind the secrets of the world's history with unchaste fingers? Has not prophecy been degraded to a kind of pious politics? But the Lord instructs the disciples, "It behooves you not to know the time and hour which the Father has reserved for His power." Every generation must be one of waiting, and no one can or should count. Nevertheless, there are signs that point to the end times. We can *see the broad strokes* from the prophetic word, *but we cannot calculate dates*. The coming will be proclaimed by the Holy Spirit. We want to be used to speak as holy people, as people of God, by being driven by the Holy Spirit. Then we will see things in the light of eternity, and the prophetic word will be the light for us in our dark place until the day of the Lord dawns.

The final goal of our hope: "Death will be no more" (Rev. 21:4) [K. Layer].

3 And I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tent of God with men! And he shall dwell with them; and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said to me, Write; for these words are true and certain!

Rev. 21, 3-5

Author: Karl Layer, from GuH

Introduction: Among the many reactions to the tsunami catastrophe in 2004, there is one sentence that makes one sit up and take notice. It comes from the mouth of the Catholic Cardinal Lehmann: "Even all-reconciliation has no answer to this event." - One can already ask why he connects the theme of all-reconciliation with this terrible event. Is it an admission of helplessness?

I do not want to conceal the fact that our topic is about the question of all-reconciliation, even if this does not seem to be the case on the surface. To put it more pointedly, one could ask in accordance with our theme: Does it mean all-reconciliation when death will be no more? - I have five questions:

1. What is death?
2. Who has the power of death?
3. What is the second death?
4. How does the overcoming of death happen?
5. What is the purpose of overcoming death?

1. what is death?

If we were to conduct a general survey (as is the case with many topics today), I'm sure many respondents would answer, "Everything ends with death."

Of course, this is not an answer for us. It is totally wrong and for many only an unfounded protection assertion. We ask the Bible dictionary of Rienecker. This speaks of a double meaning:

- a.) "the state occurring at the conclusion of human life"
- b.) "a power described almost in terms of a person that brings about that state".

(See the representation of the death as grim reaper or hollow skeleton in many pictures). This lexicon information requires of course a further explanation! We have to make an important distinction here: bodily death and spiritual death.

1.1 Physical death = act of dying = separation of spirit soul and body

This does not mean a cessation of our existence. The Bible speaks in many places as a matter of course about a continuation of life. For someone who takes the Bible seriously, this is not a question of doubt at all! We listen once to the Bible passage which throws a decisive light on this, to Genesis 2:17: "In the day that you eat of it (the tree of knowledge) you will die of death." One could also translate: you will certainly die a death". Satan, after all, immediately challenged this word of God: "You will by no means die a death" (Genesis 3:4). But wasn't Satan right after all with his ingenious dispositive threading? Adam and Eve "lived on" after the Fall! The answer lies in the distinction between physical and spiritual death.

Due to the Fall, a dying process occurred: All human beings were affected, the earth received the death curse, creation was subjected to impermanence, the whole cosmos was turned into a

Death prison brought, briefly: Everything visible dies since then a dying! - This is confirmed by the biological research. Every human being experiences a dying of cells immediately from birth. What we call growth, is only the still existing predominance of the building up cells opposite the degradation cells at the beginning.

The aging process, the decay of vitality confirms this "dying a death".

So what death did Adam die after continuing to live the life designed for death?

1.2 Spiritual death = existence in separation from God

This death occurred immediately with Adam and Eve: the loss of the community of God. The Bible shows this with the reference: "They became aware that they were naked" and with the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Billy Graham once spoke of "the garment of light falling off Adam and Eve" - an idea that is not in the Bible in this way, but certainly has biblical justification. Think of Moses' dealings with God, which resulted in his face shining!

Without a relationship with God, man is "dead in sins" (Eph 2:1). The prodigal son was "dead" and only became "alive again" by returning home to the Father.

Spiritual death is only cancelled by a return home to God. In Joh. 5,24 Jesus confirms this with the words: "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me... has passed from death to life." Or John 8:51: "He that keepeth my word shall never see death for ever." This does not mean that he will not die "bodily", but that he already has the "spiritual death" behind him. How can we understand John when he is amazed by this fact in his first letter and exclaims like a herald: "Life has appeared"?

Who has the power of death?

We start from Hebr. 2,14: "...that He (Jesus) by His death might take away the power of him that had the power of death, even of the devil".

2.1 Power of death - what does it mean? It is not called "power over death", but "of death". This helps us to understand it correctly. The devil exercises his power in such a way that he uses death as an instrument of his rule = exercise of power by killing. He plunges man into bodily and spiritual death. We have to die and are enslaved under sin, into God's remoteness; because "death is the wages of sin" (Rom. 6,23). Of course, Satan can only do this under the superior direction of God! One can absolutely regard the whole creation - with all beautiful and living - as a big graveyard.

2.2 Satan, the devil, a murderer from the beginning. - In Joh. 8,44 we hear this judgment from the mouth of Jesus. Satan uses death in insatiable lust for murder. The "killing" has been the order of the day since Cain! Also in the creation the principle rules "to eat and to be eaten".

The rampage in Winnenden, which stuns us until today, can perhaps be explained approximately, if we include a satanic external control. This does not excuse the terrible actions of man - but perhaps explains them a little.

The summit of satanic seduction makes itself known when the "killing" is religiously motivated. See the terror in our days! It is not for nothing that the Bible calls the present time an "evil eon" (Gal. 1:4), because "the evil one" still exercises his rule.

What is the second death?

3.1 This expression is found only in Revelation. - Rev. 2:11: "There shall be no sorrow to him that overcometh of the second death." In Rev. 20:6 and 20:10 it is simply stated as a fact. But is there any other reference to the 2nd death in the Bible? Yes! We hear from the mouth of Jesus in Matt. 25:41: "Then shall He say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." With the "eternal fire" is certainly meant the 2nd death.

3.2 The lake of fire - literally "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14,15). Death and Hades (realm of the dead) are thrown into the lake of fire. This expression is in any case to be equated with the 2nd death.

But what does that mean: "being thrown into the lake of fire" = having to experience the 2nd death? Jesus once spoke of a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous (Joh. 5,28 .29). Paul means the same thing before Felix and Drusilla in Acts 24,25 when he speaks of the "future judgment". The answer is: All the spirit souls (the unrighteous) still remaining in the abode of the dead will come with Satan and his demon army into the lake of fire at the last judgment = they experience the 2nd death.

So there is no disappearance, extinction or hiding! That is the big deception of all "with the death everything is over" - representatives! But what is the purpose of all this in the lake of fire? Is this then a final extinction after all? Therefore the question:

3.3 What is the purpose of the 2nd death? What is its purpose or what is its meaning? Endless torment? (Cf. Rev. 19:3: "Their smoke ascends for eternity.") Does this really mean endless torment, purposeless torment?

To support these questions, I quote Jude 7: "So also Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities round about them, which in like manner committed fornication, and followed after other flesh, are set for an example, and suffer the chastisement of everlasting fire." 2 Petr. 2,6 brings a parallel statement. It is hardly possible to announce a judgment more sharply! But is this the last word about Sodom and Gomorrah?

Already in the A1st Testament we find a prophetic reference in Ezekiel in chapter 16:55: "I will turn the fortunes of Sodom." Jesus also indicates that something will "happen" in the last judgment when He exclaims about Capernaum: "It will be more tolerable for the land of the Sodomites arri day of judgment than for you" (Matth. 11:24). We can conclude that there will be a different judgment in the last judgment and that in the case of Sodom there will be a "turn of his fortune". This is ensured by the divine "I will", which means as much as "I will".

We further conclude that the 2nd death is also designed for chastisement and correction. Ernst Ferdinand Ströter wrote at that time: "1n the pedagogy of God death has educational and judicial services." This sheds special light on the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Likewise on Paul's statements in 1Co 5:5 and 1Ti 1:20 where he "delivers men to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord." We hold that also the 2nd death has redemptive meaning. - But who is meant by the "last enemy" that Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 15:26?

3.4 The last enemy. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." This certainly includes the 2nd death!

The designation also of the 2nd death as "last enemy" has a relation to the ruler of death, the devil. When the last enemy will be abolished (destroyed, made ineffective), the devil's reign of death will also be abolished. The word that John testifies in 1 John 3:8 is fulfilled: "For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Let's listen to Ströter again: "Can there be a power of death against which the prince of life would be powerless?" Never! Paul answers in 2 Tim. 1:10: "Jesus has taken away the power of death." This leads us to the question in point 4:

How does the overcoming of death happen?

Overcoming death is the objective of God's entire plan of salvation.

4.1 It begins with the announcement in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:15: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent's seed. God immediately meets the beginning of the history of disaster, which occurred through the Fall, with the

beginning of His history of salvation. Overcoming death must mean that also the cause of death, sin as separation from God, is overcome. Thus, from the beginning, the fight against sin with all its effects has begun (see God's ordinances, legislation with the 10 commandments, atonement and sacrifice regulations, etc.). Everything always with the goal of bringing the human being home, i.e. the lifting of the separation from God. Thus, the prodigal son returns home and thereby passes from death to life (Luk 15:11-32). But the decisive thing happened through the coming and work of Jesus Christ.

4.2 The central event through Jesus Christ. Here I want to bundle the accomplished redemptive work of Christ with the reference to two processes:

a.) His death on the cross means: He took away sin and thus canceled the cause of death. Here are three central statements: 2. Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ and reconciled the world to Himself." - Col. 1:20: "God through Him (Jesus Christ) reconciled the universe, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace through His blood on the cross." ~ 1 John 2:2: "And He (Jesus Christ) is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

This also initiates the disempowerment of him who has the power of death; for where sin as the cause of death is removed, Satan's right to kill is also removed!

b.) His resurrection from death means: The overcoming of death is initiated; because the overcoming of death includes the resurrection of the body. "Jesus is risen from the dead as the firstfruits among those who have fallen asleep" (1Co 15:20). The following verse 22 says: "For as in Adam they all die, so in Christ they shall all be made alive _" It cannot be said more comprehensively! This refers to the righteous and the unrighteous, the last resurrection, and even the last enemy. Only when the last enemy will be abolished, death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:54, 55).

4.3 The elimination of the last enemy. The disempowerment that happened with Jesus' death on the cross does not yet mean his elimination. We still see this every day. This is also confirmed by Heb. 2:3: "But now we do not yet see that all things are subject to Him." The removal of the last enemy happens in the 2nd death. Here, i.e. in the lake of fire, death and Hades and the ruler of death are "killed" = made ineffective.

Pastor Otto Riethmüller titled a chapter of his interpretation of the events of the cross with the short phrase: "Death of death." This is an impressively apt formulation. Rev. 20:14 puts it this way, "Death and its kingdom (Hades) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." But what does this "being killed" in the lake of fire mean? For this we examine the term *katargein* in 1 Cor. 15:26. It is variously translated as "destroy, nullify, subdue, deprive of power, abolish, render ineffective." The parallel passages to this are Isa. 25:8 with the expression

"verschlingen", which means a quick consuming, a whimsical disappearing, a removing and overpowering, and Hosea 13:14, which says: "Death, I will be a poison to you. The Greek term katargein expresses a final cessation. However, this does not mean a total extinction, but an introduction in Rev. 21,4: "Behold, I make all things new". The answer to the question, what this "being killed" means, thus lies from the textual finding in the meaning and purpose of the lake of fire: it has a corrective meaning!

What is the purpose of overcoming death?

Now the goal of God's plan of salvation is reached: the marriage of the whole creation. 5.1 Death is no more. This is testified by Rev. 21,4 and 1. Cor. 15,26. Thus also the ruler of death is no longer effective; because also the 2nd death is "killed". 5.2 Now the way is free for the confession of all tongues: "Lord is Jesus Christ" to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2,10.11). Is this a grudging submission and confession? A submitting because there is no other way? This would not be to the glory of God. The confession is "a voluntary confession out of oneself", as the literal sense says.

Now the goal is reached that God is all in all (1Co 15:28). "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). Conclusion: This means the dissolution of all dissonance into harmony. See Mozart anecdote: The father solves still in the night the dissonance with which the young Mozart ended his Improvisation play. See poem by Karl-Heinz Waggerl. He dedicated this poem to the dead-nettle. It reads:

On the roadside, covered with dustBlossoms
a nettle, it is deaf
It blossoms in sunshine and frostTroublesome,
yet confidentOnce,
on the day of judgment
(she hears nothing of the trumpets)
God will send her a messengerHe
will pluck the deaf nettleAnd take it to the
seventh heaven
There she will also hear the angels singing

This is certainly not meant ironically, but opens us in the language of the poet the view on the correction of the whole fallen Schöpfung. What will it be when even the deaf nettle "hears"!

This view of the goal can and should relieve us in the whirl and tangle of our time and enable us to **serve** God's cause. And this leads us to the **worship of** the great Savior God! Happy is the one who already learns to sing the great Hallelujah that will resound in the consummation!

The Word of Promise (Genesis 3:15) [O. Vosseler].

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed: He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

Author: Otto Vosseler, excerpted from his article "On the Diversity of the Word of God (Acts 13:13-14:28)".

The four main promises (four the number of universality, according to all directions) were always addressed to individuals. People have gone the wrong way, as they always go the wrong way. They have fallen and everything is wasted. Everything goes to pieces. But it is God's concern that his creation becomes what he wants it to be; not as a wasteland as it is about to become in our time, far worse than we even assume. We just don't know it, how this world is already spoiled by the unreasonableness of men. And it goes on and on, both in the moral world and in the world of creation, as in general in the coexistence of people among themselves. It goes more and more into the mess. Is God now giving up this world?

The verse from Genesis 3:15 has been called the Urevangelium = Good News: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you, you will crush his heel." This puts us right at the end of God's salvation history. It is not the serpent who wins, but God who will win, because when the head of the adversary is crushed, his influence is no longer possible. The heel is one of the most vital parts of the body. It is called the Achilles heel, which is the place where the invincible Achilles was mortally vulnerable. "You will crush his heel", it will cost him his life. But the head is crushed, and a snake with a crushed head can do nothing.

But what do we say? Who will be the victor according to the general religious teaching? Who has taken away the greatest number of the people created by God as a prey? Satan, we say. What are the few hundred thousand pious people, and when you look at them, you have to ask yourself, "What, that's supposed to be them? Is that all that has come out? But the billions that Satan has taken away?" - This is how it is generally taught, both in paganism and in the church, which has sunk to half paganism. This has nothing to do with the biblical view. It is true that we sing: "The armed man breaks into Satan's house." But we do not believe it, but say, "He continues to keep his power." But the word of promise stands.

In the beginning - the word of promise: "He shall crush your head". And then this being, which always works contrary to God, is finally dismissed and must give up everything it has conquered. This word of promise now fills the Holy Scriptures. Everywhere we find words of promise in it.

The second promise in Genesis 8:22: "As long as the earth stands, there shall be no cessation of sowing and reaping, frost and heat, summer and winter, day and night," spoken to Noah, gives the assurance of the preservation of creation and the preservation of mankind. Creation cannot be destroyed, impossible, because God has committed Himself to preserve it. The rhythm of life will not stop and will always generate new life.

The third word of promise is to Abram. His name is called: "High Father". People had respect for him. With 318 servants, he defeated a couple of kings, which is saying something. He had strategy in his head and bravery in his bones. But he was not to be an authority-giving father, but to become "father of the multitude." From you shall come forth descendants like the stars of heaven, like the sand of the sea, like the dust of the ground. All this has its very specific meaning for the salvation and property people of God, but we cannot go into it here.

In southern countries, when all human lights are turned off, the starry sky is supposed to be something overwhelming. This was not a starry sky like in our cities, fading due to the many artificial lights) but radiantly bright. "So shall your descendants be." (Genesis 15:5).

This word of promise would always remain a sealed matter if Abraham were not presented to us as the model in the Epistle to the Romans. Only there we learn to understand this word. The Epistle to the Romans bases its statements on the promises given to Abraham. Romans 4, verse 18: "Who could hope" - where at least there was still a glimmer of hope? No, "where there was nothing at all to hope for." When he finally had his son and thought, well, if he is now treated with care, then perhaps from him can come descendants as numerous as the stars. But what does God ask of him? The sacrifice of his son. Here in the Epistle to the Romans a word occurs that is a typical Hebrew expression: "He believed the God who is a bringer again of the dead" (verse 17). He believed that he would bring Isaac back to life, even though he was sacrificed. What took place, and what cannot be said in many words, can perhaps only be appreciated if we imagine what it means for a father to sacrifice his son. Abraham had to go through the hardships of a father. Can I sacrifice my son? Can I still trust the God who demands such a thing? For the sake of this faith, he was righteous, because whoever can do this can trust God with everything else.

What, then, is our worst sin? I mean mistrust. Doesn't mistrust destroy everything among people, in marriages, in friendships, in work communities, in churches, among nations? It's not what God says we believe, that we can't quite follow, but what "reasonably" that clever serpent says: "You will be like God, that's what God wants to keep from you." And there came the distrust that destroys everything. Only trust can build. And what is faith, really? It is unconditional trust.

The word of promise, explained through Romans 4, shows us how God trembles inwardly: Will my beings trust me? I want the very best, I want to shape creation as it

was originally intended. How God strives to keep saying, "Behold, I make all things new!" All not 90%. Let us believe the word of promise of God!

The fourth promise also goes to a single person, that is the Christ. Who is this, then, when it is emphasized in this way: the Christ? Not only the person who came from Abraham and from Israel according to the flesh (Rom. 9), but the Christ who has now become such an outstanding personality at the right hand of the Father. The word of promise is so great and so manifold and of eminent importance to the church. For through whom will God redeem his promises? "As many as are the promises of God, in Him is the Yes, and in Him is the Amen, God to glory through us." (2 Cor. 1:20).

This word says more than "God said the great Amen," which we often read on tombstones and which is supposed to mean, "Now it's finished, over." And we mean when we say Amen, now my prayer is over. But that is not the meaning at all, neither of the prayer nor of the word Amen. It means in Hebrew exactly the same as the word *mama* = mother's breast, where the mother puts the child to the breast, nourishes and protects it and makes the first contact with it. This is where the child learns about security. Amen is nothing else, a primal word that should actually be paraphrased by a story: "I lay my requests on your heart, O God. Take them and keep them with you, for there is no other place where what I have said now is safe. Therefore, one should actually say Amen not at the end of the prayer, but at the beginning.

Jesus often brings his prayers with a double Amen. By this Jesus means: what I say now is the reality of God. Amen is more than a syllable that we say. We should become more aware of this.

Now who does "the Amen" (that is also his name, Amen = the reality of God) use to put his promises into reality? They become visible, tangible, and that through us. We are the executing body, because "You are the fullness of him who fills the all in all." (Eph. 1, 23). The Christ is completed through the congregation, brought to fullness, so that he can bring the whole universe to fullness, so that everything becomes as God determined in his own purpose before the foundation of the world.

How can you imagine that, then what would the church have to be made for? To the likeness of God. And Philippians 3:20 also tells us: "Our citizenship is in the heavens, from whence we also look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, who will transform our body of lowliness into conformity with His body of glory.

I am often frightened by this plan of God and say to myself: Look at yourself. But we can start praising and giving thanks when this becomes a necessity for us. The apostle Paul says it again and again: "Give thanks! Yes, even always and for everything."

This fulfillment of the promise by us shows us one of the last goals. Now some would like to say: "Now stop it, you are getting into fantasizing or spinting or even arrogance. You, what a miserable being you are. You say that we should become such that we fulfill all the promises of God? Surely He can do that Himself!" Is that true? Based on

the Word of God, I must say, "This is God's purpose and nothing else." And the enemy says, "Don't believe it. Should God have said? No, we will equal God by expanding genetic engineering, create a new man." Because that can be done, we've come that far. We don't know what already exists in the field of genetic engineering. "We will overcome death in this way, we will make a whole new humanity. W I R it is!"

When this I creeps in, the spark from hell is also already there. Georg Steinberger is right when he says in his "Little Lights": "The spark from hell, the little I." In a circle of brothers and sisters, there only needs to be one person who constantly puts his or her ego in the foreground, and distrust is already active and breaks up the community.

But we are to strengthen each other. The Body of Christ does not grow in a mystical way, nor through angelic ministries, nor through any other means that might develop on its own. But the Body of Christ grows by one giving a hand to the other and thus all grow down (not up) to the full stature of the Christ. The way is downward. It is written in the ministry chapter of Ephesians (chapter 4) and everyone can read it.

On the diversity of the Word of God (Acts 13:44-47) [O. Vosseler].

44 But on the following Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the crowd, they were filled with jealousy and opposed what Paul said, contradicting and blaspheming. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas said frankly, "To you the word of God had to be preached first; but since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For thus hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee for a light unto the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

Acts 13, 44-47

Author: Otto Vosseler, excerpted from his article "[On the Diversity of the Word of God \(Acts 13:13-14:28\)](#)".

1. a new way of proclamation²

- . The word of salvation for the Jews³**
- . The word of God for the nations⁴**
- . The word of the Lord for each individual⁵**
- . The word of grace for the believers**

1. a new way of proclamation

The read verses - they are exactly in the middle of the Acts of the Apostles - lead into a time when a complete changeover in the proclamation of the Word of God takes place. Until then, the people of Israel were addressed first and foremost, and the word was only addressed to individual Gentiles. In Acts 13 it now goes out into the Gentile world with the establishment of an Old Testament word.

The distinction A.T. and N.T. is not quite right. We have only one word and that is Old and New Testament together. The N.T. is based on the Old. The apostle Paul, in particular, always dares to develop the deepest truths only on the basis of the words of the Old Testament, so that he can say, "I have the ground of Scripture under my feet. Let's just read the Epistle to the Romans or the Epistle to the Ephesians. There he often quotes the Old Testament in order to say, that's how it is. And then the Holy Spirit unfolds it, what was hidden in these words.

Word of God is like the light that can be divided into seven colors, which we can represent with the help of a prism. Only in unison is it bright, white light. Scripture also speaks of a multicolored nature of God's grace. So also again and again is the representation of the word of God in its variety and multicoloredness.

In Acts 13 we read that the apostle Paul, on the first missionary journey (45 - 48), came to a Jewish colony in Cyprus to preach the gospel to Jews. A typical miracle happens there: not the Jews, but the proconsul, an understanding man named Sergius Paulus in Paphos, opened to the Gospel. Elymas, a sorcerer who tries to make the proconsul turn away from the faith, is punished by going blind and wandering around

looking for those who guide him by the hand. In this figure the whole Judaism is symbolically represented here, which is hardened by God and since then blindly wanders around. God shows now, now something else comes. From that moment on, the name of the apostle is also changed. Acts 13,9: "Saul, who is also called Paul", because now he gets the name he needs to go out to the west. No other of the 12 disciples went out.

Now, in the interior of Asia Minor, the switch in preaching happens, and it happens in Antioch in Pisidia.

By the way: Mark did not go with them, he departed from them. He was so bound to his Jewish upbringing and could not believe that now, before his own people had even grasped salvation, they wanted to go to the Gentiles and to this wild mountain country, where people lived whose language was defaced by Celtic sounds. In Cyprus it was something completely different. This was one of the richest colonies, inhabited by a great number of Jews, who were later completely exterminated because they revolted. The Gentiles, the ancients said, are already coming, but the people of Israel are the missionary people who will go out and bring the nations and command them: "Keep all that we proclaim to you in the name of Jesus, the Lord who was born in Nazareth and died and rose again on Calvary. He, Mark, could not go along with that. He could not yet understand that these people were now also included in salvation. Paul and Barnabas, however, went on to Asia Minor.

It was a completely new type of sermon and one of the longest sermons that Paul preached here in Antioch in Pisidia, the resurrection sermon. It had never been spoken of in such detail before. Let's pay attention to how many times resurrection is mentioned in this chapter 13. Something completely new. After all, Paul couldn't pull out his Bible and say, "Now I'm going to read from the Gospel what happened." That was not possible, because the first Gospel was not written until about 70 AD.

2. the word of salvation for the Jews

Let us now read the various designations that occur here.

Verse 26: "Brethren, sons of the lineage of Abraham, (that is, Jews) and who among you fear God," (these were proselytes, Gentiles who were convinced that only the one-God faith of Israel was the right one, and who had accepted circumcision; they too were considered Jews) "to you is sent the word of this salvation."

The word of salvation, of which the prophets and the Psalms spoke at length, is now explained because it had taken bodily form in Jesus. In this Jesus who had been crucified in Jerusalem and from whom the inhabitants there had turned away and initiated a persecution. Now the apostle Paul sought from the Diaspora to cause the Jews to accept this word of salvation, which in Jesus, the Risen One, had now truly come near.

In the Greek it says "salvation", starting from a Savior. This is the peculiarity; Word of God is never without reference to a person. All of Holy Scripture, from the first word to the last, is always tied to a person. With what does the Holy Scripture begin? "And God said." And the last words of Scripture are, "His name - His personal being - is the Word of God." A word of this salvation is never conceivable without one who brings salvation, without a Savior. In the world of that time, only one was allowed to call himself "Savior," namely the Roman emperor Augustus Octavianus. He called himself savior of all people. But here, at the moment when salvation is spoken of, the majesty of God confronts us. The word of salvation is sent to you, this salvation that I now tell you in the Risen One.

That is the starting point. And now it continues.

3. the word of God for the nations

V. 44: "But on the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of God." Neither radio nor television nor billboards had announced it, and almost the whole city came together. These must have been mostly Gentiles who had not yet heard of this message. And now it is said: "to hear the word of God"; no longer the word of salvation.

Why this different expression? To whom is salvation sent first? Only to the Jews, and only then to the Gentiles. They would not have understood it yet. They now heard the word of God. This came for them from a completely different world, which was not yet known to them. They were completely helpless in the face of this other world. What is the world without God? It is a world of demons that they worshiped. There were so many of them that they did not have the space to build an altar for all of them. That is why they had built an altar, "To the unknown God!" Out of this world the people came and now heard God's word. Here is not meant the word of any God, but of the one ~ whom they were looking for, and of whom they were convinced; for there could be only one personality, one God behind all the events as a meaningful power. It had become clear to them that we would get nowhere like this. They were tired of pantheism, which only produced fear and uncertainty. That was the misery of paganism. Hence the cry for help of the one from Macedonia: "Come over here and finally help us out of our fear of the gods. Bring us a message by which we can be glad."

In Canberra/Australia, at the World Conference of Churches from 12-19.2.1991, according to a newspaper note, the following was said and this was not contradicted: "God is not only present in the Christian churches, but also in other religions." With this statement, the World Council of Churches opposed Christian claims to absoluteness. Rather, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and others see truth from different angles, explained the director of the interfaith dialogue program at the World Council of Churches.

The Methodist theologian Wesley Aria Raja from Geneva, who comes from Sri Lanka / India, resolutely opposed the view that the Christian faith is the right one and the others are therefore wrong. This represents a false and unnecessary alternative. Aria Raja therefore also does not consider it the task of Christians to carry on their faith missionarily."

Let us imagine the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey in Troas (Acts 16:8). Wherever he wants to start evangelizing in Asia Minor, nowhere does he find an opportunity. And then God shows him a face: a man from Europe, from the countryside of Macedonia, calls him: "Come over and help us." If the apostle had reacted like this to the call of the man from Macedonia: "You also have gods, yes, you are religious beyond measure. There is no need to proselytize at all." What would have become of it? Europe would have perished!

August Winnig, the former chief president of East Prussia, a Social Democrat, came to faith in the early 1920s. He resigned from his work in the party and lived only as a writer. Hitler had tried to win him over because he knew what a valuable personality this man was. In his book "Europe" the sentence occurs: "Europe could only become Europe under the cross. Take away the cross, and it is no longer Europe."

The new Europe is no longer under the sign of the cross, but under the blue protective mantle of Mary with the 12 golden stars of the Queen of Heaven as symbol. (We think of the 12 tribes of Israel and the woman clothed with the sun according to Rev. 12,1, where the new Israel is born out and also persecuted). Europe, under the sign of Mary; what is to become of it?

God in his wisdom allowed the cross to shape Europe, sometimes by men who were quite unworthy of it, who sought only their own power, but who were nevertheless used by God to preserve this part of the world. It was from it that the Reformation, Pietism and the Community Movement were to emanate. We were all shaped by it.

The word "Europe" means "darkness. In this land of darkness, it became light only through the message of the cross.

Pantheism (polytheism) and the absence of grace spread a terrible darkness. In it, neither joy nor peace could arise.

In pantheism, people must live in constant fear of having overlooked a still possible god in worship, who would now take cruel revenge. To protect themselves from this, the Athenians also set up an altar to "the unknown god" (Acts 17/23). Nevertheless, they were not free of fear; for the dark powers were to be countless, which could strike mercilessly at any time. "Between the lip and the rim of the cup hovers the hand of dark fortune!" Have we ever realized what we owe to our Lord Jesus Christ for freeing us from these oppressive fears?

Thus, paganism is a merciless phenomenon. One knew courage, bravery, faithfulness, wisdom, but "mercy" was unknown: mercilessly the defeated gladiator was killed, mercilessly some of the prisoners of war were executed, mercilessly slaves were at the mercy of their masters, mercilessly children with a deformity were put out in the wilderness a scary world. - "Come over and help us!" - now sounds like a cry of despair.

In this darkness neither joy nor peace could settle, the most lovely fruits of grace. Gracelessness, joylessness and peacelessness characterize paganism. They also describe the darkness of Europe.

Now we also understand why all the letters of the apostle Paul begin: "Grace and peace be unto you...", because this is a message that Europe also needed. We do not have any other message.

Now in Antioch almost the whole city came together and heard this message as the word of God. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They rose up and mobilized all their forces against it. Abuses, slander and blasphemies came from the pious people to whom the word of salvation had been offered.

And now the apostle Paul tells them, "If you reject the salvation that is to bring joy, we turn to the Gentiles, who have all gathered here today to hear the word from the one God." He bases this on the promise of Isaiah 49/6, which **was to** come one day when the salvation people of Israel had fully opened up and brought the Good News to the nations. But now he knows: This is already valid now. It is a new attitude in the salvation-historical action of God, which is based on this word of Isaiah: It is easy for you, people of salvation, to bring back together and unite the exiles of Jacob. This is not a difficult task for you when the time comes. You are also the light for me for the nations beyond Rome, to the end of the known world. Now it is your turn, you Gentiles, because that is the goal. It shall not remain so: Always fear, always sadness and worry, always shadows of death.

4. the word of the Lord for each individual

Verse 48: "But when those from the nations heard it, they rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord." To them this word of God (verse 44) now becomes a "word of the Lord," in that their inner sense is opened to the rightness of this word of the one God, who alone can satisfy the heart and not the pantheism in the pantheon of the Greeks, where there are so many gods that one no longer knows at all to whom one should turn. The one God gives the peace and the security. That is why they rejoiced and glorified the "Word of the Lord".

What kind of word is that? Paul does not dare to say anything in this decisive moment but only in the word of God, and this word of God is called quite different here, namely "the word of the Lord". Is this then something different from the word of God? It is the same word in a different expression. There is talk here of the "Lord" Oh, there are so many lords, but what miserable lords they are! The lords of this world are only bringers of death and destruction!

Here speaks the **Lord**, who has absolute power over life and death and who uses this power sensibly; who says something and now expects that what is said will be considered and followed.

"Word of the Lord" is one of the most frequent expressions in the Holy Scriptures. It occurs even more often in the Old Testament (with 306 times) than in the New Testament (with 41 times), because there the foundation is laid for obedience. God's speech refers in the first place to obedience. This was the beginning of God's ways with man: This have I given thee in the garden; of it thou mayest live. And this you shall not covet, for otherwise you will covet something that leads back into chaos.

The "Word of God," on the other hand, is found only 6 times in the Old Testament and 43 times in the New Testament.

A word of God is to become the word of the Lord. The word of God always comes to us as the word of the Lord. "I am the Lord," it says in the Old Testament, nothing is taken back from that. The 10 Commandments are never taken back. When it says, "Christ, the end of the law," that does not mean the end of the 10 Commandments. They exist and apply to all people. It becomes the word of the Lord and says, this is how you shall live. And now I expect you to follow the enlightened mind.

"They glorified the word of the Lord" and did not begin to discuss and argue about the word opinions, but they rejoiced, and that is what our Father wants to have. I know what I have ordained in your life for your education. You can only become what I will make of you if you are led along the path that I have determined for you. Even if it is a difficult way. You can rejoice, because on this way I will reach the goal with you and with all the people you care about.

They knew that the speaker of this word of God does not want to face me as a stranger, but wants to be my Lord, i.e. he takes all responsibility upon himself. At that time, being Lord involved far more than is the case today. He alone had the responsibility, sovereignty in acting, in planning, in executing. The generally spoken word now becomes a personal commitment to the one who said it. This is the characteristic in all God's words: the personal bond.

We do not have a Koran like the Mohammedans, in which someone has said something, and now this word is always repeated. Our word is a person, and where this person speaks, we can receive this word in us. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14a). Jesus himself is this Word. What is Jesus Christ for us? He is the glorified Son of the living God. This was the message Paul had to proclaim. That he became man would not be enough for us. Not even the resurrection would be completely enough. "He entered into heaven Himself, that He might now appear before the face of God for us." Hebr. 9,24 says it clearly to the people who now needed patience for their life maturity because they had believed that now the kingdom of heaven must come after all. And it dragged on. - They had endured the robbery of their goods with joy, but now came the persecutions. And they asked themselves, is this the right way at all, have we not deceived ourselves? Now they are pointed to something new. This is the faith that no longer needs visible things, as it says in 2 Corinthians 5:7, "We do not live by sight, but by faith." And they look to the One whom God has glorified and who is presented to us in the Word.

The one who not only calls out his congregation, but accompanies them on the way, yes, even more, who brings them to the goal, because he has set out to nurture each one in such a way that he reaches the goal with the others.

The glorified Christ, we need him so much, especially when the lights go out, when we have to say: All splendor is extinguished, star after star is frozen and now I stand there, lonely in the darkness.

Otto Stockmeyer said, "Faith means to set aside the momentary situation, the feelings, whether it is light or dark; it means to go on with a word of God in your hand." The glorified Christ surrounded us in captivity, where there was no one left to give us a word. Earlier, Brother Borngraeber had written to me in a letter, "Now you must live on what you heard at the conferences." It was a good encouraging word: "Stick to what our teachers have said." And it was enough! "My grace is sufficient!" It is the grace of the Lord who works as the Beloved in my life - no! - as the loving steward, rebuker, promiser over and over again. Who paves the way, who leads the way, who has said, "I will bring you to the goal." Yes, let us rejoice that HE has taken everything in hand.

The Jews blasphemed and incited the people to take a stand against Paul. They aroused persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and they had to leave Antioch. Now they came to Iconium, the city of icons, where people bought the venerated images

of gods and set them up in their homes. They knelt before them and invoked the name of these gods, believing that here they would find help and protection.

5. the word of grace for the believers

Acts 14:1: "Now it came to pass in Iconium, that they went into the synagogue of the Jews, and spake so, that a great multitude, both of Jews and Greeks, believed." Verse 3: "They tarried a long time, speaking freely in the Lord..." and now a whole new expression comes for the first time in the gospel message: "who bore witness to the word of his grace."

Now they were believing people, they needed the word of grace, the overflowing grace that no longer knows barriers, that forgives sins. Not like in the Lord's Prayer, where we ask, "Forgive us our sins in proportion as we forgive." O, that would be a poor thing. No, according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7b). And how great are these riches? Perhaps we'd better not even start there? - It is inexhaustible and inexhaustible.

With this word of grace the apostle went over to Europe at the call of the Macedonian man and we see in two people how the word of grace began to work there. In a type of Judaism, that was a very pious woman (Lydia) and in a type of a man of action (the jailer), who never asked for God in his life, but only did his duty and always more than the superiors demanded. We know how often those who do their duty are worse than those who impose it. Even Dietrich Bonhoeffer, at a time when he no longer had to die, died of the wrong fulfillment of duty by a duty-conscious - shall we say official? - who worked his way to Flößenburg without means of transport, on a wheel without rubber tires, on the slippery rims, with the death sentence. Such a worn-out Roman veteran, who so faithfully fulfilled his soldierly duty that he was entrusted with the difficult post of jailer, was probably the jailer at Philippi. He was struck by the word of grace.

It is by this word of grace that we live, and it is this word of grace that is carried out by the apostle Paul on behalf of the Holy Spirit and unfolded in the light of this grace up to the word: "He will reign until he has laid all his enemies at the feet of his footstool." (1 Cor. 15, 25) A word from the Old Testament (Psalm 2 and 8), of which even today Catholic theologians say: There is no word stretched further. Neither the Jews nor the Church will bring all people to faith, and yet it remains: "He will reign until all enemies lie at the feet of his footstool, and God be all in all." The Catholic theologian Urs v. Balthasar, a Swiss who has his books published by Marian Publishing House in Einsiedeln, put it so clearly, adding, "How this will happen, no man knows, but that it will happen, for it is written."

When Paul returns with his companions on his first missionary journey to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, he fortifies the souls of the disciples and exhorts them to remain in grace. This is also related to the teaching. He explains it to them in detail so that

they could grasp it, what was actually given to them in the word of the Lord, which became the word of grace to them, so that they could do something with it and have a support in their daily life. That they did not just live religiously in general, showered with a new abundance of grace, but that they could live in praise of this grace. One must be taught about grace, because the content of what the word grace encompasses is not familiar to the natural man.

The Jew knew something about grace. In Psalm 32 we read in verse 1: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity..." This is, after all, how the Apostle Paul justifies justification by grace. "Gracious and merciful is God!" This is the cantus firmus throughout the Old Testament, the firm chant from the beginning of creation to Malachi, where once again grace is referred to, because after Malachi God was silent for 400 years. During this time, only what was already present in the Word could be passed on through the small flock, those in the silent land, who waited for the hope of Israel.

That we may understand and use grace correctly! It was a laborious ministry, this teaching ministry, and one needs long instruction to understand what grace wants. We can only try again and again to penetrate the depths of the Word and ask, "Lord, open my understanding, not out of a desire that I will then know more, but that I can be in my life something of what you have in mind." We should be something to the praise of His grace. That is why God takes out unworthy creatures, so that He can show in them what His grace is capable of. This word of grace should move us, and it seems to have a special power in it, because when the apostle knows he has to go a completely different way than before, he wants to go this way with joy. If he had been able to speak the gospel in freedom under the protection of the Roman state power, his path would now lead him into captivity, and he knows that tribulations await him. So he takes leave of the churches in

Asia, where he first began to work. In Ephesus he can no longer speak, where he taught for three years, night and day. In fact, the main work was done at night in one-on-one meetings, while he sat at his loom and procured a living for himself and his companions, so that he could live at all in the more faithful city of Ephesus. For three years he taught every day for at least 5 hours, from 11 am - 4 pm. That was the time when you can't work in the hot countries. That's when the slaves were free, so they came together. Some may have fallen asleep because they had been working since dawn, but they came. And Paul, as he said, withheld nothing from them, but revealed to them the whole counsel of God. Where then did he get the knowledge of the counsel of God? Certainly, God had given him special revelations. But he had to be able to say to his listeners, I have solid ground, and that was only the Old Testament on whose ground he spoke to them. The first writings of the New Testament were indeed the letters of the apostle Paul. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was the oldest at all,

about 20 years before there was a Gospel. The Gospel of Mark was written in the year 70 AD, and the Gospel of John dates back to the time 95 - 100 AD.

If the New Testament Gospels had become the basis of faith, then people at that time would have had to wait a long time for a scriptural foundation. God did it differently. It would have been good to arrange the books according to the origin, that would have been a great relief. Then it would become quite clear to one, God gives first the comprehensive, and then he goes into detail. What the Gospels tell us are details. But what we need first is the overview of the whole. The word of grace was so important.

Just before the apostle's journey led him into captivity, he was given the word of "sufficient grace," 2 Cor. 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is accomplished in weakness." It is powerful even in those who are in captivity. There he can do nothing else as Moses did in his 120th birthday speech. You didn't notice anything in that speech in Exodus 31 that he was 120 years old, it was fresh as in the beginning, that speech before the poignant song in chapter 32. He tells them, "I know you will turn away. Even in my lifetime it was difficult to keep you with God. What will it be like when I am gone?" Exactly the same structure has the speech that the apostle Paul gave at his departure, especially before the Ephesian church at Miletus, where he had sent for the elders. In Ephesus he could no longer be seen, they would have literally torn him apart, so he had attracted the hatred of the people there. He told them: "I know exactly, it will not remain like this. Take care that you preserve for the community what has been entrusted to you." Exactly what Brother Karl Merz used to tell us. "Take care that nothing is lost of what is entrusted to us." "For there will come dire wolves who will not spare the church, the flock. But also from yourselves will arise men who will bring perverse teachings."

Is there any protection for us there? Yes! "I commend you to God and to the word of His grace", because the word of grace has a preserving power; when one no longer seeks something in oneself and mobilizes forces in oneself. With our ability we do not manage, but the word of grace has the power to preserve and to keep the inheritance that is ready, that it can be taken over. Lean on the word of his grace alone!

Christ, a stream of Eden, watering the garden (Genesis 2:7-17) [A. Muhl].

7 Then the Lord God formed man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so man became a living soul. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and put there the man whom he had made. 9 And the Lord God caused all kinds of trees to spring up out of the ground, lovely to look at and good for food, and also the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 Now there went out a river from Eden to water the garden; but from there it divided and became four main rivers. 11 The first is called Pison, which is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where the gold is; 12 and the gold of that land is good; there also occurs the Bedolah resin and the precious stone onyx. 13 The second river is called Gihon; this is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. 14 The third river is called the Tigris, which flows to the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. 15 And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest eat as thou wilt; 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 2:7-17

37 But on the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood up and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his body shall flow rivers of living water. 39 Now this he said of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Joh. 7, 38

11 The Lord will guide you without ceasing, and satisfy your soul in drought and strengthen your bones; you will be like a well-watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters never fail.

Isa. 58, 11

Author: Arthur Muhl, excerpted from his lecture "The Gardens of God".

Our princes on earth and kings and emperors have, in addition to the so-called parks, also the large so-called winter gardens, entire garden houses. So we realize that we should not be bored for a moment this evening. We are led through the whole scripture and first open our bible at the very front.

May I just say in passing: before God is originally how He created the whole universe, as God's garden.

And now one verse after the other. I read from the so-called Elberfelder translation, a translation by the fathers of the world-famous Brockhaus publishing house; these were the Elberfelder brothers and still are, the Brockhaus people.

Genesis 2:7-17: And Jehovah-God formed man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And man became a living soul. And JehovahGod planted a garden in Eden.

So God introduces Himself so early as a gardener, or, even better, as a garden architect.

And Jehovah-God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east, and he placed there the man whom he had formed. And Jehovah-God caused to grow out of the ground every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food, and the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out from Eden to water the garden. And from there it divided and became four rivers.

Then the four names are given: **And the third river, its name Hiddekel** (note: Tigris), **and the fourth Euphrates.**

The Euphrates and Tigris are two of the great rivers that spread out from Paradise according to the four cardinal points. At that time, the geological and geographical conditions were quite different from today.

Verse 15-17: And Jehovah-God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden. Purpose: to cultivate it and to keep it. And Jehovah-God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest eat as thou wilt, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it thou shalt not eat, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Exactly it is said: you will die dying.

Obviously, in the eyes of God, the Creator, for the created man, whom he had created in his image, as his likeness, obviously, for this man, whom God has immediately determined to be the ruler over all previous work of the hands of God, that is, from the cherub, from the prince of angels to the worm, they are all created beforehand, obviously, in the eyes of God, for man the best environment is a garden, and a garden of God. The best environment!

The man is created, immediately God plants the garden Eden, puts the man there and gives him the task to cultivate as a gardener and to preserve. What is there in the preservation already!

And now: Center, central place in this garden of God, in this paradise which God had created for the human being, the center is represented by the tree of the life. But obviously immediately next to it a second tree, the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil, for the rest innumerable other trees. Instruction of God: you may enjoy from each tree its fruits, after heart desire, only you are not to eat from this one tree, nothing to take, nothing to enjoy.

Before we look at this in more detail, let us note: a stream went out from Eden to water the garden. The garden itself is called Eden, in which God placed man. So now

there is another Eden. A stream went out from Eden, which is the original Garden of God. There is a heavenly Garden of God, which we will hear about, that is in the heavens, and the earthly Garden of God, Eden. Paradise - let's start down there, an earthly one, Adam and Eve, a heavenly one, that's also still part of this creation, but the original Paradise, we'll hear about that towards the end, that's the Garden of God Himself, where He dwells as the original Man. From this original Eden or garden of God, a stream went out to water this garden that God had now planted anew for the created man. And now quite wonderfully: and from there, that is, from the garden in which God placed man, from there it divided, this one stream, and became four rivers.

So, the garden for man, man in there, from the holy of holies of God now goes out a stream to water this garden, these are great spiritual, divine realities, where we have a hard time today to get an idea. And from this Garden of Eden, which was given to man to dwell in, this one stream of God divided into four streams. These are called there with names and still details are put to it. And then the instruction: from every tree of the garden you may eat as you like, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, otherwise you would die.

A stream waters the garden. Now, when this garden is watered, when it has quenched its thirst, this stream splits into four rivers. Where to? Outside, outside the garden. What does this mean for us? Who now thinks of an exclamation of Jesus Christ that absolutely belongs here? Namely, on the last day of the great feast of the Jews, the Feast of Tabernacles, he stood up, crying out with a loud voice: **He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his body shall flow rivers of living water.** But he spoke of the spirit, which those should receive, who believe in him.

So, what is this stream now that goes out from the presence of God to water this garden, spiritually? Literally times actually a stream with water. The spirit of God, which now constantly flowed to the whole garden, of course, the inhabitants, the people, to supply the garden, in the main, the people, to quench the thirst in every respect, in terms of water needs overflowing, that is, now for us, the spirit of God.

And when then Adam had given in to the voice of the serpent and had given room to the doubt that Satan had sown in his heart, to this one in there, then Adam had cut off this stream of the spirit of God, of the power of God, which had saturated and watered him overflowing with divinity. But as long as the stream watered the garden from God, not only was the garden of God, which was the center on earth at that time, taken care of, but when the garden of God is saturated, watered, then all the rest of the earth is not to be watered directly from God, but only from the garden. Because God has set man to be the ruler of everything, God hands over to the ruler all the fullness center, actually from one stream. And now it is in the hand of the recipient, after being saturated and watered, to pass on the wealth that God has now handed over to him to those who are outside the garden. In other words, now we are

in the last chapter, that is, Revelation 22. Outside are those, but there is also a stream flowing out to those for the healing of the nations.

So there we have in front in our word of God even more powerful statements and promises to creatures who are outside than Rev. 22. If you trace here the individual statements it is even more wonderful. Jesus says yes, the New Testament is wonderful, but explosive, dangerous. Pours new wine not into old wineskins, but into new ones, but the old is even better, even milder than the new wine; with this he compares the Old Testament. And there we have now ample opportunity to know the words of Jesus in this regard as very apt.

If it divides to four rivers, from whose body rivers of living water will flow. In the course of this evening we will be able to see that the people of Israel, for example, were also allowed to be a garden of God, and as a garden of God they also have the promise to become that. And then we also know that one day, when all Israel will be saved, that God will then save all nations through all Israel. And when all mankind will be saved as the garden of God, then the whole angelic world will take its turn. And when all the angelic world will have entered into the salvation of God, then all the rest of the creature will still come to it, from the stone to the atom and whatever else there is.

He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, out of his body will come rivers of living water, that is, four rivers. Streams of living water will go out in all four directions. Where to? To the outside, to water those who are outside, whose God cannot help but have mercy on them.

And now: a stream went out from Eden. What about us? He spoke of the Spirit in terms of streams of living water. Paul writes, there is **one** Spirit, **one** God, one Lord, one Father, **one** baptism, there is **one** unity, that is the **one** stream of the Spirit from God for His firstfruits garden of the new creation, and that is the church of His body. We will see, we are not only the holy temple in the Lord, and not only the glory body of the Christ, he spoke of the temple of his body, but the body of the Christ, and the holy temple in the Lord is at the same time also the firstfruits garden of God, there is **one** stream flowing in that garden, **one** God, **one** Spirit, **one** Father, and so on. And only when we, the church of Jesus, are saturated, watered, are completed after the Rapture, then again this one Spirit, this one God, etc. divides out into all four directions into all his creation.

For as many of God's promises are, in Christ Jesus they are all Yes and Amen, that is, guaranteed to come to pass, but God to glory through us. Then, in all directions, the powers of grace, the powers of blessing, the powers of rescue and salvation flow out into all creation, through us, the firstfruits of God.



Gardens of God (Gen. 13:10-11, Jer. 31:12-15) [A. Muhl].

10 Then Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the whole Jordan plain, for it was watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, down to Zoar, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. 11 Therefore Lot chose for himself all the Jordan and went eastward. So one brother separated himself from the other.

Genesis 13:10-11

1 When Jesus had spoken these things, he went out with his disciples over the winter brook Kidron; there was a garden there, into which Jesus and his disciples entered.

Joh. 18, 1

41 Now there was a garden in the place where Jesus had been crucified, and in the garden a new sepulcher, in which no one had yet been laid. 42 There therefore they laid Jesus, because of the preparation day of the Jews, because the grave was near.

John 19:41-42

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. 14 And when she had said this, she turned, and saw Jesus standing there, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? Thinking it was the gardener, she saith unto him, Lord, if thou hast carried him away, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will fetch him.

Joh. 20, 13-15

12 And they shall come and rejoice in the high place of Zion, and shall flock to the goodness of the Lord, to the grain, and to the must, and to the oil, and to the young sheep and oxen; and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall faint no more. 13 Then shall the virgin rejoice with the dance of the vine, even young men and old men together; and I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort and gladden them according to their sorrow.

Jer. 31, 12-15

Author: Arthur Muhl, excerpted from his lecture "The Gardens of God".

We have seen, garden: best environment for man, tree of life: Christ, a stream from Eden to water the garden, four streams from there to outside, then the serpent, Eve, and then the voice of the Lord in the garden after the fall: Adam, where are you? And then, lest he eat of the tree of life: sent out of the garden, the cherubim guarding against it.

Let's make the jump to **Genesis 13:10**, a quick look at a side valley.

It is the situation: Abraham and his nephew Lot had huge herds of animals, and because of the pastures in the land of Canaan, the servants of the two masters always came into conflict. Abraham wants to avoid this and tells his nephew: Lot, please choose a special area where it suits you for your servants, I will then go somewhere else.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was all watered before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Jehovah, as the land of Egypt even unto Zoar. And Lot chose the whole plain of Jordan, and Lot went eastward, and they parted.

Lot in the direction of Sodom - why? The whole area was like Eden, the Garden of God. And then - Dead Sea, desert, river of death, Jordan. We only pay attention to that on the way at the moment.

I still have to say that there is a promise that even Sodom and Gomorrah will return to their former state after the judgment God has given them. Is that a promise? What is the name of the former state? Garden of God. Hallelujah, these are thoughts of God, not pious thoughts, much too wonderful.

Now we have seen a garden of God still on our earth. Now we look into the heavens. Ezek. 28 is the chapter where God puts the king of Tyre as a human model to explain to us the creation of the angelic prince who later became Satan.

Ezk 28:12-16: Son of man, raise a lamentation against the king of Tyre. Thus says the Lord Jehovah, you who were the image of perfection. The king of Tyre - only model. Satan was the firstborn creature of God and surpassed all others to come in glory. Just a few key words: when we still read in Hebrew: not: who was the image of perfection, but: **who sealed perfection**, much more mighty, much more mysterious, **full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in Eden, the garden of God**, and that in the heavenly Eden, the garden of God. And then the precious stones as on the breastplate of the high priest. **In the day you were created, they were prepared. You were a shielding, anointed cherub, and I had made you so. You were on God's holy mountain, you walked in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created.**

The king of Tyre was not created at all and he was never in the garden of God in heaven and was never a shielding, anointed cherub. But as a man down there, God took him as a model to introduce and make us understand the invisible being.

And then: **Until injustice was found in you, by the greatness of your action your inside was filled with violence and you sinned.** There we have the origin of how sin came into the world, from the heart of this glorious firstborn creature. Where were you? **You were in Eden, the Garden of God**, not on earth, but up there.

In Ezk. 31 the king of Egypt is described, again as a model for Satan, illuminated from another side. **Ezk 31, 8-9: The cedars in the garden of God did not obscure him, cypresses did not equal his branches and sycamore trees were not like his branches. No tree in the garden of God was like him in beauty. I had made it beautiful in the multitude of its shoots, and all the trees of Eden that were in the garden of God envied it.**

What kind of language is this? So we understand, if our God honors the firstling of God's creation, who now became Satan and the dragon and the serpent, if God still honors him until today with the name "he is the god and prince of this evil age", exactly the Greek. Word like our God, our theos, he is the theos: so he still puts him beside himself. If God still honors him as God, then he still leaves him all the powers

that a God has. And that's why it looks the way it does, not only on earth, but also in the whole universe.

Now **Luke 13:18-19**: Another parable - **But he said, To whom is the kingdom of God like, and to whom shall I liken it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew and became a great tree, and the fowls of the air alighted in its branches.** Then comes the parable of the leaven in Luke.

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. Jesus declares which is the smallest grain of seed, not by measurement in fractions of centimeters, but whoever wants to be the greatest among you - how is that meant? - Let him be the servant of all, the least, the smallest, in that sense.

A hint in the parables: when a man appears it is always the Son of Man, or the Father, God. And when Satan appears, it is a hostile man. Then Jesus says, this is the hostile man who sowed the tares, this is Satan. And here it is God who throws a single seed into his garden.

What does mustard seed mean? Unfortunately, this is usually misinterpreted because no attention is paid to the Scriptures. With what else does Jesus compare a mustard seed? If you had faith like a mustard seed, i.e. like the most despised of all men, Jesus Christ. Does he have faith? He has all faith! If you had faith like a mustard seed, like Jesus Christ, then you too would speak to the mountain, etc. So, mustard seed: Jesus Christ.

We have learned that the original man is God and Adam is only the statue, an image of the original man. So, God threw a mustard seed into His garden. What is the garden called now? His whole creation. And what happens now? That a mustard seed becomes a plant that overgrows and dominates all, that is quite unnatural, one must say supernatural.

Because of this one mustard seed, his son, despised by all, the least, the smallest, which has now died in the garden, God is now making the kingdom of God grow, supernaturally surpassing everything else and one day dominating everything else. And who will find refuge and dwelling and food there? All the birds of the sky. However, we must not say at all whom the scripture means there. There we must ask only the scripture again.

And then we have in the OT also a parable of a tree that became mighty, in which also all birds of the sky and animals of the field nested and found refuge. But there then holy guardians say, angels, cut down the tree. That was the world empire of Nebuchadnezzar, so now then the world empire of the Antichrist. And in this place, it is said, I have taken a least seed and planted that and from that now becomes a great tree, a tree of God, in which now also birds and animals find place and food, but now in a divine way. So now we have a mustard seed in his garden.

And now comes **Joh. 18,1**: now it becomes tragic.

When Jesus had said this, he went out with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, into which he entered, he and his disciples. But Judas, who delivered him up, also knew the place. What kind of place? A garden. So Jesus, the original Son of Man, always withdrew to a garden. That's where he was at home with his disciples. Judas knew that. In a garden the fall of the first man took place. Jesus is once called the second Adam or the last man. As the second Adam, he came to lay the foundation for what the first Adam had done, sinned, that not only is there hope again to restore all things, but the guarantee to lay the foundation that God can make all things new. Behold, I make all things new. A garden!

Joh. 19, 41-42: Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb, a tomb in which no one had ever been laid. There now they laid Jesus because of the Jews' day of preparation, because the tomb was near. There was a garden and in the

Garden a new grave. What is a grave, a tomb? The opposite of the fragrance of life, the smell of death. That is where they laid Jesus. So instead of resting in the heart of his beloved people, he now rests in a tomb that normally spreads the smell of death - the prince of life! - As for the body, in the place where the body decays, passes into death pangs and smell, there his body now rests.

Now we have to read the verses before, **Joh. 19, 38-40: But after that Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but a hidden one because of fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate allowed it. He therefore came and took away the body of Jesus. But there came also Nicodemus, who had first come to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. They then took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in linen cloths with the fragrant oils, as is the custom of the Jews for burial.**

Of all things, the two cowards mentioned in the New Testament - Joseph of Arimathea, who did not dare to confess Jesus for fear of the Jews, and Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, who comes at night, where no one notices, of all things, these two cowards, as the pious say, accomplish what? These two most marvelous acts: the one asks to be allowed to remove it; it is said in another place: this Joseph of Arimathea was a councilor in Jerusalem respected by all, one of the elders. Now he goes, Pilate allows it, takes the body of Jesus down from the cross and lays it in the tomb that he has spread for himself. Touchingly beautiful. And Nicodemus comes with 100 pounds of ointment, of all things myrrh and aloes, what that means!

Then **Joh. 20, 13-17**: Easter morning, Mary Magdalene wants to go to the tomb, Jesus meets her after the resurrection. **And they say to her: Woman, why are you weeping? She says to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. When she had said this, she turned back and sees Jesus**

standing there, and she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus says to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek? She, thinking it was the gardener, says to him, Lord, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have laid him. And I will take him away. She thought it was the gardener. She will be amazed one day what a prophetess she was. This is the gardener all gardeners, he has prepared the garden, to find one day in a garden his grave.

Jesus speaks: Mary. She turns around: Rabbuni, that means teacher. Jesus: Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. etc.

Now we take the promises that we have noted elsewhere, that God promises Israel that He will transform the desert lands in Judah and Israel, the steppes to the Euphrates, into a garden of God. Like Eden, the garden of God, the deserts and steppes will become: Promise to the present state of Israel even before the great tribulation. I may only testify to this as it is evident from many biblical passages.

One more word about what the Scripture says of Solomon, he was a mighty ruler.

Ecclesiastes 2:4-6: I undertook great works: I built me houses, I planted me vineyards. I made me gardens and parks and planted trees of all kinds of fruit in them. I made me ponds of water to water from them the forest sprouting with trees. etc. So Solomon as a model for Christ.

Now a look at Israel, how God let proclaim this by the prophet Balaam: So God looked there Israel and brought to the representation what will be. **Deuteronomy 24:4-7:** Thus says he who **hears the words of God, who sees a vision of the Almighty, who falls down and is unveiled. How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwellings, Israel!** So the view from the mountain falls on the huge camp of Israel, arranged by God according to the 12 tribes, according to the four cardinal points, quite wonderful.

How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwellings, Israel! Like valleys they spread out. According to the four cardinal points, southeast, northwest, etc., thus diagonally, were large roads, free areas, up to the tabernacle, and always in a quarter sector, one stored to the east, 3 tribes, and then again a large road, and then the sector stored to the west, thus four such starting roads, and in the middle the tabernacle. Now we understand: the roads were then like valleys, up to the tabernacle of God. **Like valleys they spread out, like gardens by the river.** Yet everything was in the desert. This is how God opened the eyes of the prophets to what Israel will be one day. There we already have the four outlet roads. Israel as the garden of God is looked at here, and the exit roads from the center of the tabernacle out for all who are outside.

Like valleys they spread out, like gardens by the stream, (the one stream again), like aloe trees which the Jehovah has planted, like cedars by the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in great waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. etc. So Israel as garden of God,

in splendid park seen, exactly what Israel will experience in a first pre-fulfillment now then.

Another look at **Esther 1:5-6**:

Ahasuerus represents the kingship of God and Christ. **And when these days were fulfilled, the king made a banquet of seven days in the court of the garden of the royal palace for all the people who were in the castle of Susa, from the greatest to the least. White, purple, cotton curtains were fastened with cords of byssus and purple to silver rings and white marble columns. Cushions of gold and silver lay on a pavement of green, white marble and mother-of-pearl stone and black marble.**

I say to us pious people, dear ones: Prepare yourselves for when we are with the Lord and he then orders us, so now let us finally rejoice and be happy, that it will be high and to the hilt. So, don't let it happen to us that we can't even participate because of all the ice holiness, because it will be too wonderful, too high for us.

We have now already been able to notice in the whole consideration of the contexts what our God is then actually about once he rules, and not angels and men rule, they can be as holy and pious as they want.

We now understand: **Verily, verily, I say unto thee**, (Luk 23:43), **Today shalt thou be with me in paradise**. This was true of the spirit of the Shechard. The spirit of man returns to God. And the person who holds on to Jesus Christ, his spirit is already made alive and knows about everything that is in God.

Then Apostle Paul: **I planted, Apollos watered**. Is Paul also a gardener? His whole effort is planting. **But God gives the growth**. What good is all the planting and watering if nothing grows?

Now a second last look into **Song of Songs 4, 12**, into the Song of Songs of Solomon: **A closed garden is my sister, my bride**, Solomon says to his bride, **a closed well, a sealed spring. What springs from you is a pleasure garden**. Who is his beloved? Solomon is the model for Christ and Sulamith is the model for every single soul who believes in Christ. Solomon means Prince of Peace, and Sulamith, the name is related to it, means "the one brought to peace", thus brought to Christ, brought to peace either soul, or congregation, or whole healing body, or whole mankind, and finally whole creation.

A pleasure garden from

1. **Grenades with noble fruits,**
2. **Cyprus flowers,**
3. **Narden**, (Narden is called twice)
4. **Saffron,**
5. **Seasoning tube,**

6. **Cinnamon,**
7. **Incense,**
8. **Myrrh,**
9. **Aloe.**

Nine most delicious fruits in this pleasure garden of Jesus Christ, which consists of what? His church, in which those brought to peace by Him are, these are all Sulamiths. So every single human soul is a pleasure garden for God, where what kind of fruits should grow? **The fruit of the spirit consists of** how many parts? Three times three, nine parts:

Love, joy, peace,

Long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, abstinence.

Nine fruits of the spirit, and here are exactly nine wonderful spices, which in the OT is to represent the pleasure garden of God, what fruits of the spirit are with Paul in the NT. And now the wonderful thing: in Paul the first part of the fruit of the spirit is love, and here (in the Song of Songs) garnet. And what do we read there? It says: Let us set out early for the vineyards, let us see if the vine has budded, if the vine blossom has opened, if the garnets are blooming. There I will give you my love. So grenades: Love. And then in Paul comes joy, and here in the Song of Songs comes the cyper grape, that's joy, and the twice repeated 3): Nard, means love, joy, peace. And every time Jesus speaks of peace, he repeats the term peace twice.

My peace I give you, my peace I leave you, not as the world gives.

And Paul: **And the peace of God will fill your hearts**, and just afterwards: **And the God of peace will be with you**. As narde comes here twice, peace is always double in the NT. And the most touching thing now: the last two parts here are called myrrh and aloes. We've already heard something about that tonight. What then did Nicodemus bring? Of all things, the two last fruits of the spirit, fragrance calls myrrh and aloes, spiritually means meekness and abstinence.

Jesus' meekness on the cross: **Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do**. And his abstinence? Could he have come down from the cross? Could he have used more than 7 legions of angels to save him? He abstained from everything, even unto death. We see movingly, this one coward, Nicodemus, according to his heart he was still allowed to bring the last fruits of the spirit of his love for his Lord.

And now in conclusion: Of the house of God as the garden of God, we now have no time, only for the one thing, and that is exceedingly precious.

Isa. 58, 11: And continually shall Jehovah guide thee, and he shall satisfy thy soul in times of drought, and make thy bones strong. And thou shalt be as a watered garden, and as a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

Jer. 31:12-13: And they shall come and rejoice in the high place of Zion, and shall flow unto the goods of Jehovah: to the corn, and to the wine, and to the oil, and to the young sheep and oxen. And their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not faint henceforth. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the round dance, and the young men and old men all. And I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and will make them glad by delivering them from their sorrow.

As far as: Gardens of God.

All our springs are in God (Jn 4:14, Phil 1:8) [A. Heller].

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall not thirst for ever: but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

Joh. 4, 14

8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all in the heartfelt love of Jesus Christ.

Phil 1, 8

Author: Adolf Heller, excerpts from his lecture of the same name

I will first read one Old Testament word and then two New Testament words. Then I will begin to deal with my subject right away. Point by point, source by source, which are in God, but which are our sources.

I read first the last verse of the **87th Psalm**, which is a Korah Psalm. You know that the Korah pack were rebels, revolutionaries who wanted to overthrow Aaron and Moses in order to put themselves in their place.

You know that God passed a severe judgment on them, the earth opened and they went down into the depths alive. Only their children and grandchildren did not, but the rest of the living who had made a decision against God, against Moses and Aaron, the leadership, they went down into the depths alive. And what they experienced in these depths, the children and sons of Korah who stayed behind sing about it. They experienced this somehow, because there are bonds and ties of soul-spiritual-spiritual kind between the living and the dead, of which we still have no idea, of which our medicine and our psychology and also our theology know little. And there those here on earth have experienced and re-experienced what their parents and grandparents or also brothers and sisters experienced down in the depths. That is why the Korah Psalms, there are 11 in all, are a harrowing portrayal of what one can experience when one leaves the earth. We should take that much more seriously, much more seriously!

I read the last verse: **Singing and dancing the dance of joy they will say: All my springs are in you!** This does not sound like the realm of the dead and hell and punishment and Tartarus and Gehenna and how these places are called. It sounds very positive and joyful. **All my sources are in you!**

And now two more words of John: **John 7:38 and 39a:** Jesus stood, stood, arose, and cried, saying, **If any man thirst, let him come unto me.**

The need of the present age and the present people and the present youth is the deep thirst for life, joy, peace, purity, power, authority, glory. A deep thirst. Our greatest enemy, that is boredom and idleness and pleasure addiction, that is our greatest enemy. A lot of time and a lot of money is the worst thing a young person can have

today. But that's what the government wants, to get them on its side. We don't talk about that, we have higher politics.

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink! He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, from his body will flow rivers of living water. Streams of living water - this is what he said about the spirit that those who believed in him should receive.

And on top of that, **4:14** from the same **Gospel of John, which** is the 3rd and last word I read by way of introduction:

Whoever will drink of the water that I will give him, whoever is really in life relationship with Jesus, in love unity, in total gift, **whoever drinks of the water that I will give him, he will by no means thirst in the coming eon, in the 1,000-year kingdom,** because that is first of all the high goal for the whole of Israel. For a selection from Israel, the body of Christ is the high goal. I say this by way of indication, I will have wonderful things to tell you about this today and tomorrow - he will by no means thirst in the eon, **but the water that I will give him will become in him** who believes, in him, in your heart, in my heart, a **spring that wells** up into eternal life, i.e. we are to become spring people when we drink of the water of Jesus.

There we not only have the water from the highest source, from the heart of God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, from the Scriptures, but then we ourselves become source people, that something, often without our knowledge and will, flows out and people notice it: He or she has something, an inner strength and joy and trust, and that is something wonderful.

People notice that, people feel that, and that is the secret.

Not that we will get to heaven and escape from hell by the skin of our teeth, that is a cheap gospel for little children; it is also a gospel, but we want to become spring people ourselves, from whose hearts, from whose spirit and life and being rivers of living water flow. And then we too will dance the round dance and sing in spirit and in truth, and will say: All my springs are in you. Then we will live from the heart of God, fed by the springs that are in him and that renew the universe. And this is the high goal for the believers.

I will now try, my dear friends, my brothers and sisters, you saints and beloved and desired of God, I will try, now, in this hour, to name to you 12 of these sources that are in God and that flow into us, so that we ourselves become source people, so that the forces that continually come from His heart into our heart, that these in turn also become sources that flow into the invisible upper and lower or also to a certain degree into the environment that surrounds us. It has always been like this. There have always been few source people, but they are there, are also among you here.

And of these 12 springs that come from the heart of God, flow into our heart and make us spring people, these 12 springs I want to tell you about now. They are wonderful and powerful.

I first read **2 Cor. 11:2** and give a testimony to my 1st point about the holy zeal of God. The zeal is something that drives us and matures us and delights us and enables us to make sacrifices, to forget ourselves, to practice love, to spread salvation and life - the holy zeal, I want to express it psychologically as a whole, the holy emotion that something moves us, something makes us happy. The pagan man has nothing more, what makes him deeply happy, fulfills and delights him, he has tried it with everything, with food and drink, with carnality, with pleasure poisons, with all kinds of things, up to the conscious demoniac. They want to have something, they want to have life, they are not satisfied with that, they want more than what is now in their possession. Many of them, they have also received it, through faith, through the beginning of a life of faith. I know such people. You can't condemn them all.

1.) So now **the 1st source that** I call to you is the **zeal of God**. And now you immediately understand what I want to say when I read to you **2. Cor. 11, 2**. Paul writes: I am zealous for you with all the zeal of my heart. Is that how he says it? No, he does not say it like that. He does not say: I am zealous for you with all my Pauline zeal. He says, **I am zealous for you with the zeal of God**, with God's zeal. So what Paul has here in enthusiasm, in willingness to sacrifice, also in insight, in glory, in ability to suffer, he did not have that from himself, in himself Paul was a zero.

If I am also nothing, he said, he said he was the greatest of all sinners, he also said he was the least of all saints. So now he says: if I am also nothing. In himself he was nothing. But because he had connection to the divine sources he could now zeal with God's zeal. What strikes us in the Pauline epistolary literature, what makes this man so wonderful and great in his vision, in his love, in his devotion, in his zeal, that is God's zeal. I am zealous for you with God's zeal. So who is the one who has all the zeal, all the devotion, all the agitation, all the power and bliss of all the delights? That is God. And whoever finds connection to this center, he also gets this in himself, he carries God's zeal in himself. **That is the 1st source**, which flows out of God, into you. And if you open yourself completely, if you let yourself be filled by this zeal of God, then this source will flow out of you, then you will become a person with the luminosity of Christ, which expresses itself in joy and confidence and testimony courage and recovery of spirit, soul and body, which will flow in you and through you.

If this were not written, as I testify to you in these three words, the Old Testament and the two New Testaments, if I were not allowed to experience this up to this hour in my poor life, which in itself is weak in faith, but which is filled to the brim with bliss, I would not tell you this. I only want to point out something to you, which I have already told you once or twice. But I'll tell you now, too. I never leave the train without having said to my fellow passengers, I wish you a pleasant journey and I wish you -

and then I stop to increase their tension, as an old schoolmaster you know how to do that, to increase the tension - and I wish you that your last journey, which you undertake, which you cannot avoid, will not be a journey to hell, but a journey to heaven. That is the most important thing in life. That's what matters. Whether you are a millionaire or a poor person doesn't matter, but that your last trip will be a journey to heaven. That is the most important thing. Everything else is worthless.

I am, although I have been going out with this greeting for several years, - before I had other words, and perhaps in a quarter of a year I will have other words again, I let myself be guided by God there, - I have not even been laughed at. But I have seen many tears, tears of emotion, tears of joy, and many words. "Yes, yes, you should know whether you will go to heaven or to hell. You would have to know that," many told me. I said, you can know that. You can know that. Look me in the eyes, I know it too. "Yes, you can tell," many of you then said. I have had wonderful experiences with this word.

So once again: we may and can zeal with God's zeal, because our own zeal is not there at all, or if it is, it is so small and inferior. We are tired wimps, we tired people, we tired guys, Pastor Läppisch, the Catholic, the Jesuit priest, called out to us in Worms on the marketplace. He held a meeting, 30000 people came. And then the SPD held a counter-meeting, a general meeting, and 30 people came; with Father Läppisch it was 30,000, I was there. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to speak a few words with him before the beginning and to shake his hand.

My friends: God's zeal!

2.) The 2nd source: the longing of Christ. Does the Christ have longing? Just as we have a longing for something? I read **Phil. 1, 8: I long for you all**. And now he doesn't say: with my whole heart, he says: **I long for you all with the heart of Christ Jesus**. So who is actually longing? Does the man Saul of Tarsus long or does the Christ, God's Son long? The Lord Jesus Christ longs for all of you.

And now I can imagine that one or the other says: "but not for me, I am such a poor wretch, he does not long for me", I could think. I tell you, Jesus Christ longs for all of you.

I had a little experience half a year ago: sorry, I don't know if I've told you yet, a very small experience:

There's a little bookseller on my street, a little guy with a little bookstore, a little saddened and depressed. I hardly knew him, only greeted him. One day I went to see him. We were having a conversation, talking about the sin of the world. Then he said - he knew me, I don't know how, but I am known in Worms - he said: Mr. Heller, I am a poor sinner, I know that, but you, you are a saint. The most wrong and terrible thing would have been if I had said: yes, I am. Then I would have been immediately finished as a Pharisee.

Then I said, listen, I am not better than you, I am not different from you, I am like you, in me a sinner, capable of all evil, incapable of all good. But between the two of us there is a difference, but it is not because of me or because of you, it is because when the Lord Jesus Christ reached for me, he took hold of my hands, he took me into his hands and got me, and I let go of all the earthly filth, the sin and the sorrows, the longing and the fear and the misery, and I smote into his hands of salvation. That's the only difference, and you see, that's what he wants with you too. He reaches out to you as well. The Lord Jesus loves you as much as He loves me. Reach out, let him take hold of you. I don't know how far he did it. He just always greets me very, very sadly and God will grant that I have a conversation with him. So I have quite a number of candidates on my list like this bookseller.

My friends, Christ's longing is for all his creation, but the greatest longing is for the firstfruits who say "yes," whom he needs, as his body, as his organ, as his instrument, through whom he wants to bring creation back to God. This is the strongest longing. Here is not a person for whom Christ does not long.

Yes, you will say: but I am a sinner. Yes, Jesus accepts only one kind of people. Who, the pious? No! The Pharisees, the scribes? No, Jesus accepts sinners! Say this word of comfort to all who are on the wrong track, on the wrong way. Jesus accepts sinners, here is what can save us. This is the longing of Christ.

We pray: You great, you wonderful God of all grace, Father of mercy and glory, we thank you that you are as you are, that you never, ever change. All your ways are judgment, but all your purposes are glory. Let us never forget that. When times become more pressing, more serious, more burdensome, and they will according to your word, let us stand firm. Let us look up to you with joy and take all the many good things, from your Word and the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of believers and saints, that you want to give us. Lord bless us all. Bless us now. Hallelujah. Amen.

God is love - the nature of love according to Scripture (Rom. 5, 5b-10) [A. Heller].

For the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. For Christ also, when we were yet weak after the time, died for us ungodly. Now hardly anyone dies for the sake of the righteous; for the sake of the good, perhaps someone might die. Therefore God praises his love towards us, that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. So much more shall we be saved from wrath through him, having been justified by his blood. For if we are reconciled to God through the death of His Son while we were still enemies, much more shall we be saved through His life, if we are now reconciled.

Romans 5, 5b - 10

Author: A. Heller, 1971, based on his lecture of the same name.

The opening prayer is offered by Otto Vosseler.

We become silent for prayer:

God and Father, these words overwhelm us again and again. It was a risk for you to give the Son for enemies. And there is no one who could say he was a friend. We all went astray, each one looking to his own way, and we worked ourselves to pieces in the multitude of our ways, and our defiant heart rose up and it sank back into despondency, and our end would have been in night and horror, for all attempts had to fail. In no case did they reach beyond us and beyond the human. We remained entangled in bondages, in anger, in doubt, in discord, in impurity, in falsehood and in hypocrisy. And then you, Lord Jesus, came and entered into this world without sin and let us beat you. And we were so foolish as to go against thee, yea, we were dead in sins and transgressions. And you appeared with your life and now live with the Father. And this sacrifice on Golgotha, the shed blood is so esteemed in your eyes, O Father, that you were able to snatch us out of death with you. Yes, if you already showed so much love to us when we were still enemies, how much more will we see, now that we are reconciled and may call you Father, and you, Lord Jesus, are not ashamed to call us your brothers and to present us to the Father.

We thank you for allowing us to hear of this love this afternoon. Again today, give the brother a testimony in the authority of the Spirit, in the joyfulness of opening his lips to a testimony that reaches the hearts, and authenticate this testimony in each one of us, because you know each one of us, and know what we carry around with us, how we struggle, how we are often occupied by worry and by many things that want to hold back the light, and do not see how you are waiting to show us love. Have heartfelt thanks that we may come together in peace, in freedom, and in health. Enclose us with your peace, O Father. Let your name, Lord Jesus, be magnified among us as the name of the Savior and the Finisher for the glorification of your work.

Amen!

My brothers and sisters, beloved and sanctified and desired of God!

Our theme can be read here with gold on white. I stand here before you with an emotional heart to tell you such a great, mighty word that cannot be spoken any greater:
God is love!

I will try to tell you today what is imperishable, what will be eternal and never cease, into your heart, what is imperishable, what never ceases: love never ceases. Sorrow

and cry and pain and night and horror and sin, and death and damnation have a beginning and have an end. For everything that has a beginning has an end. But God, who is love, has no beginning and has no end. Just as little as God ceases, so little does His love and loving ever cease. Let this flow into your heart this afternoon like a warm, gladdening stream, that your fears and your troubles, your self-torment and self-torment may finally cease, and you may praise and thank and extol and adore, brimming and overflowing with the love of God. I don't need to talk about the fact that in Greek there are three words for love, or three kinds of love. We are familiar with that:

The **carnal love**, at the bottom, trampled into the dirt, degenerated. And yet, in its degeneracy, in its filth, still an example, full of foreboding longing for true and guiding love. If you knew how many young people, and I have had a lot to do with young people for decades, mostly students between the ages of 10 to 17, how many young people are disappointed and embittered against life, with sunken cheeks and hollow eyes and a trampled, cramped heart, wondering when they have lost their innocence: is this all, is this supposed to be love? That is cruel, that is disgusting.

I could read you letters from bums, I don't do it. They suspect that there must be something so great, so delightful and so blissful, as no human mouth is able to express, that our life is so fulfilled, that we are simply transformed into other beings, that we are placed in a light, in a radiance, a beauty and purity such as cannot be described. That must exist and that does exist. Your ancestor did not deceive you, brother and sister. There is something that satisfies and satisfies the last, deepest, most secret, burning longing far, far beyond our boldest imaginations and expectations, and remains eternally. There is! And about it - where do I get the courage? - I want to talk, to stammer. I want to cry for joy that there is such a thing. **God is love.**

I have often seen old and young people take my hand with both of their hands and say: thank you for saying this, that there is something like this, which I would never have thought possible. That one day this life full of hardship and disappointment and misery and dirt and misery and despair, that one day it can be completely erased and forgotten and a new one arises, an ocean of stream of love and goodness and bliss, full of delights that are unimaginable. One must see such eyes, one must have seen such tears of joy once. That exists and that takes place every day and every hour as long as the earth stands. And this will be fulfilled, greater, more beautiful, than a human child, a mortal, an earthly could imagine. And I want to say something about it, not from my sensations, feelings, experiences, longings from the deep secret glow of my heart. No! That would be a wrong source. From this book, which will remain when

heaven and earth pass away! **Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.**

That is the abiding. One talks in art and also in philosophy about the lasting. There are things that pass away, there are things that blow away, that are restructured, transformed, either by violence or crime, or by noble efforts of human soul and spirit through art, through everything beautiful that the earth offers. Yes, there are, but they pass away.

But there are imperishables, and that which is imperishable, **the imperishable, is God Himself**, who is nothing but love. God is love. And he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. And whoever enters into love, whoever sacrifices himself to love, whoever lovingly gives himself to love, is filled with this all-soothing and transfiguring, all longing-satisfying love of God, the everlasting. Faith stops once. The moment we see something, we no longer need to believe. The hope is fulfilled once. And then this tension has given way to hope and no longer has the value and hidden energies that it had. **But love never stops.** Love loves on and on. Love always reproduces itself. And we will one day, when we start to let ourselves be loved - please, I'm not saying when we start to love - *when we start to let ourselves be loved*, we will one day reap love without ceasing. It is written: **they will reap without ceasing.**

My brothers and sisters, open your hearts wide so that the Lord can speak to all of us. I thank you for your numerous visits this afternoon. I was a little sad and saddened yesterday, I say it openly, because the attendance was so poor. But now I am happy to see that the hall is well filled again. Not because of me, but because of this great and glorious message, such as there is no greater. There is a living, all-impacting, directing, guiding, governing and accomplishing God of love. And this love is the abiding thing and never ceases, because this message is so great and because this longing for joy and love in old and young, in old often almost more than in young, is so great, so deep, so painful: is there any value in living at all, are we not deceived and disappointed, would it not be better to throw life away? This need does not only occupy the addicts, this need lives also in many old people. To them I call out: it is never too late to start over. I know people who have started a new life at 80, at 85. Of course, it is much more delicious when it happens in youth. I know girls, young dolls, from 8, to 10, to 12 years old, you can see in their eyes: they are filled with the love of Jesus.

The essential, the abiding thing is love, is God Himself. Now, my dear brother Otto and I want to tell you a word about this.

The **love according to the Scriptures**, that is, we do not ask the art, not the science, not the psychology, we do not ask all the peripheral areas that are stored around this

great concept. And the degeneration of love, we do not talk about that either. We talk about love according to the Scriptures.

What does the Scripture say? Not, what have you experienced, where have you been disappointed? How have my hot desires been trampled into the dirt by a cruel fate? We don't want to talk about such things. We don't want to press the tear glands that we all cry, and that we are so stuck in dirt and misery and wretchedness that no one can save us. No, that is not true.

Love according to the Scriptures.

The original relationship between two, which ever existed in this creation, was and is and will be eternally the relationship of the Father to his Son. This is the original relationship, not enmity, not indifference, not hatred and malice, not a cold, hollow coexistence like so many, many marriages are today, even those that seem to be okay on the outside. Not that, but the original relationship is in the Father - God is love - and in the Son, the Son of love. That was the original relationship, the first relationship that existed between two living beings. That was love.

And now I make a giant leap into the infinities and say, this original relationship will be the final relationship of God, who is love, to all his beings and worlds. Nothing what he has ever created, he lets sink endlessly and eternally in the dirt and misery and wretchedness and be tormented in dead damnation. Nothing but God is love and can love nothing else. Now I make an intermediate remark, so that you do not say, I cannot imagine that at all.

And everything that happens from the original relationship to the final relationship in the whole creation, that is aeonic, is temporal, temporary, that is judgments, punishments, disappointments, hardships, and so on. All these things are nothing but auxiliaries of God's love. That is why Paul also writes to the Corinthians, who were living in all kinds of serious, massive sins: **let everything with you be done in love**. And when Paul demanded of these poor Corinthians, these miserable dock workers, some of whom were illiterate, i.e., If he demanded of them that everything they do, even if they punish, even if a sinner is thrown out of the congregation, or if parents punish their children, or if some brother is called to account with harsh words and is excluded for a time, all this be done in love and be done towards love, into love, if God demands this through the pen of his commissioner, the apostle Paul, then he himself must also do this. God cannot demand that all of a person's actions come out of love if his actions - and he causes everything, even punishments and judgments - do not come out

of love and lead to an unfolding and being caught up in the overflowing love for everyone and everything. I hope that these three preliminary remarks have come to your hearts. Who knows this, can only give thanks for everything at all times. Because everything comes from love, is born from love and leads into the completion of love, forever into the lasting.

What a program! This is only possible of an infinite, a loving, almighty Father of love. But the ways we go now: is not written, all his ways are right, so Luther translates, but the original text says: **All his ways are judgment.** We go through continual judgments. Either we judge ourselves, saying oh God, keep me from wrong thoughts, keep me from folly, keep me from sin and wickedness and hypocrisy. We have heard earlier in the few words of our dear brother about such a small catalog of burdens.

Dear ones, all his ways are judgment. We are standing in the most evil and worst of all eons or eternities, and that is at the end of this bad eon or this evil eon, we are standing in it. We therefore feel much more strongly the resistance of the dull world, the hatred, the malice, the stupidity, the crime, the horror. We feel and sense it much more powerfully than previous generations. Everything was much more comfortable then. The coziness has stopped. Today we live in a shocking world that brings us new tensions and shocks every day.

All his ways are judgment, but all his goals are glory and love. Whoever has grasped this can breathe a deep sigh of relief for once and can say: oh God, if your word says this, in innumerable places! Just now my dear friend and brother and I had briefly compared our notes. He also read the subject, put together a number of wonderful connections from the Scriptures. I have done the same. He has quite different sources, he drew more heavily from Paul, I drew more heavily from John. Now which is right? Both! Because both represent in a special way the inwardness, and the other gospels, they show the outward course.

Every outer course, created things, is connected with agonies, fears, hardships, disappointments, sorrows, worries, despair, every outer course of things, also your and my life. Scripture says the same thing. The man who could afford everything, the man who stands unique in all the history of the world in terms of wealth, ingenuity, possessions, enjoyment, do you know who that is? Yes, that is Solomon. He says, I have made gardens for myself, pleasure gardens, I have had everything, I have made inventions, I have built myself great aqueducts, I have done this and that, this delight of delights, I have had wives and women, a thousand. I had everything, everything. It's all a matter of catching the wind.

There is no greater happiness than eternal love, as the Word of God says, as it became person in Jesus, because he is the Son of love, and as it communicates to all creatures who open themselves to this love, and who renounce hatred, filth, malice, rebellion, transgression of the law, disobedience, - that is our business, however, - as it communicates to that, that is the greatest thing there is on earth, this happiness of love. And this is what I want to talk about now, according to the Scriptures.

My first thought was the original relationship that existed in the first place. That was love, not hate. Hate was born much later. And that is why hate will be eliminated one day. But love was first of all primordial beginning. That was God himself. It never stops. Never can this love, because it is invincible, break. It is indestructible. It is the essence, and whoever has the essence is infinitely richer than whoever strives for wind, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and arrogance, for the things that the great deceiver, the great liar and murderer, that is Satan, who wants to play on us, play up, offer us. This is advertising and propaganda: well shaved, in a good mood. So if you want to be in a good mood, you just have to buy the right razor blade or the right razor.

When you see the people on the big modern billboards, young people, radiantly beautiful young people, smiling, with elegance and ease, balancing on a tree stump or sitting in a boat with the burning cigarette. Such a fraud and deception. The opposite is true. How many people have told me I have a hatred and disgust for the cigarette, but I can't help it. How many!

In the East Zone, cigarette billboards are banned because they are a temptation for young people. There we can learn something. I am not an East Zonal, I am a supranational, my heart is up there with him. But we can learn there. There are also really dirty things that are allowed in our country. But I don't want to talk about that, I want to talk about something bigger.

Let's keep the first thought: the original relationship that ever existed, that one related to another, that is the Father and the Son. By the way, the whole Psalter is more or less a dialogue, i.e. in German a dialogue between the Father and the Son, in which we are built as believers and participants. We participate and live from what the Father and the Son mutually decide and plan and carry out. This is our life, this is infinitely greater than all the human politics that is being carried out, a thousand times more important! And this primal relationship will one day be the final relationship of God to all creation, and all the other tensions of hatred, defiance, disobedience, punishment, judgment, death, damnation - all these things will be no more, because love is stronger. They will be no more. This is what the Scriptures teach, I can give you hundreds of passages for this. You can find them yourself in your Bible.

For this purpose, I will now read at least four scriptural passages to you, how this love, which is God, expresses itself, how it works, by what we recognize it, by what we can and may set a testing standard of our reflection:

First I read **Joh. 3, 35: The Father loves the Son**. And now I translate the little word kai, as it can also be translated in Greek: **The consequence is that he has given everything into his hand**. Love consists in the fact that it can give away all that it has and is, and thereby becomes not poorer, but even richer. This is not the case with earthly bank assets. The Father loves the Son and proves this love by the fact that everything is given to the Son. There is nothing in function, in possession, in enjoyment, in strength, in power, in glory, in splendor, in beauty, in wealth, in dignity, in delights, that the Father has not given into the Son's hand, because he loves him, because he is love.

Don't you want to be included in this circle of relationship? And when I read to you later that God loves each one of us with the same love with which he loves his own Son, it follows that everything that exists, except sin, death, dirt, misery, sorrow, deceit and despair, - everything beautiful, great, good, shining, happy, is also given to us in the Son and through the Son into our hands, into our hearts, into our lives. What a message! Where is this proclaimed to such an extent according to the Scriptures?

We always remain rippling on the surface, in the gypsy child, what that has experienced, etc., all well and good, but that is not the essence. We must go into the ultimate ground of all being. We must enter into the full development of the innermost being of God, and that is love.

This is the 1st passage: **Everything has been given by the Father into the hands of the Son**. Why? Because he loves him.

2nd passage: **Joh. 10, 17 + 18**: a very powerful word from the so-called shepherd chapter, Joh. 10: **Therefore the Father loves me, because I let go of my soul**, also the body, also the spirit, give it away, do not keep it for myself as a possession, which I do not let touch, but give it away. God wants your heart, your soul, your deepest innermost longing for love, which is not a sin. The love of the sexes for each other is also not a sin. That is God-willed. But the degeneration, the deformation, the Satanization, that is sin.

Once again, **this is why the Father loves me, because I let go of my soul for the purpose of taking it again**. Everything that we let go of, everything that we give away

here, now, here, in our lower life, in time, in strength, in money, in love, in interest, what we give away we may take again transfigured and increased.

Please, I read it out, you don't have to believe me, but believe the word! **That is why the Father loves me, because I let go of my soul for the purpose of taking it again. No one takes it from me, but I release it from myself. I have the authority to let it go, - there is an authority that can give all of itself, - and have the authority to take it again.** Only that which we take again will be much more powerful, greater, more comprehensive, more beautiful and more glorious than that which we let go.

We let go of our little bit of earth dirt and in return we get eternal happiness, shining beauty, love that overflows everywhere and transfigures everything. What an exchange! This is faith. Faith lets go of itself. Take me and let me be uniquely, eternally, completely yours. Whoever can and does pray this from the heart, whoever truly surrenders himself, experiences in this moment delights that cannot be described. I have experienced this hundreds and thousands of times in my pastoral talks for 53 years. It is wonderful. Whether it is a high academic with three doctorates or a simple illiterate in the auxiliary school, it doesn't matter at all. Only the stupid one has it easier than the clever one, he does not need to sacrifice so much.

I leave it, the soul. Here it says life, but there it says psyche / soul, nefesh in Hebrew, psyche in Greek. **I leave my soul for the purpose that I take it again. No one takes it from me, but I release it from myself. I have authority to let it go and have authority to take it again.** Everything we let go of, we get back multiplied and transfigured. I know I repeated myself, I know I said this three minutes ago, but this is so important and fundamental.

Then it continues: **I received this internal goal from my father.** Inner goal! You will say that I have a commandment. Yes, it says commandment, but it means "entoleh", which means inner goal.

God has external targets: Those who disobey will be punished. That is an external goal. But it is all for your good. Take the punishment. It is for your salvation. You will become much happier than before. That is an internal goal. After all, there are foreign policies and internal policies in a country. And so there are tremendous internal goals. The brothers and sisters who know Greek, they need to look up the word entoleh - inner goal after a concordance to read the passages. You will feel as I did. It is as if curtains were falling, as if we were looking into a land shining far away, as if a new world were rising above us. **Jesus in us, Christ in us - the hope of glory.** This is the inner purpose of God. But I have more to tell you:

Joh. 15, 9: As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. And now, if we had the Bible to write, we would have written: And now you also love me. That's not what he says, we can't do that at all. We are far too weak and poor and powerless to love him as we ought. But he says something else: And now, **abide in my love**. Abide with Jesus. Pray every day before you go to sleep, "Lord Jesus, I am yours, for you have bought me with your blood. You paid for my sins and made me a new, redeemed person." So pray. And then fall asleep during your prayer.

Have you already fallen asleep during your prayer? Don't pretend, I did too. But I was like David, who said: **I awoke and am still with you**. And when you wake up, let it be said to you: what a miracle that you are a saved, redeemed person, free from the filth of sin, free from the self-deception of the ego life, free from all the misery and misery into which blind people get lost without God, because they do not receive the splendor and the beauty and the light of His redemption and His love and are simply transformed inwardly by it.

Gee, what's the matter with you? You're a new person! Guys, what's wrong with you, some people say to me who were with me in the first years of elementary school. What's the matter with you? You used to be such a poor, scared little guy, and now you're beaming with joy. What's the matter with you? Yes, you, I have found Jesus. No, Jesus found me. And he wants you too. There's already a conversation going on. That is so wonderful. That was the third passage.

Now I give you to this 1st point of the original relationship, what becomes the final relationship, a 4th passage, a 4th proof: **Joh. 17**, that is **the High Priestly Prayer**, that is one of the most glorious

Pieces of Scripture. Next to the Pauline Epistles, John 17 is one of the most beautiful pieces of Scripture. Through great popular surveys in America, where they asked tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of people what was the most beautiful chapter in Scripture, that has been in the first three. The first and second were Pauline testimonies, and the third was this testimony, John 17.

Joh. 17, 23 - 24: I am in them, namely his disciples, Jesus prays to the Father, **and you are in me, that all may be one**. If we are in God and in Christ, we are one. Then we no longer call each other names, then we no longer discuss. Most young people discuss things they don't know anything about, but they have to discuss, you can't change that, it stops, they become reasonable.

I once saw a picture, two gentlemen, directors, secret councilors, elegant and wealthy. They were watching a group of bums who were raging and shouting, and so on. Then they said: once they are in our pay grade, they will be quiet and be like us.

So, wait and see, have understanding. I told many a boy: you know, when I was your age, I also thought like you, not quite as sharply and fanatically. At that time this evil spirit was not yet unleashed on people, but I was also without God and without Jesus in the world, idealist, but no matter whether idealist or materialist. And what you think and feel now, and your turmoil, I can guess and understand. I put them down in verses when I was 16 years old, they were printed in the newspapers. But when you are as old as I am, you will also think like I do, if you open yourself to truth and love. I can tell you, there was a devout silence in a church. Enough of that, I'll finish reading my word:

I in them and you in me, that they may be perfected into unity or into one, and that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me. God loves us as much, I hinted at this earlier in a subordinate clause, as He loves His only begotten Son. The same fervor and affection that gives itself, I put all things into your hand, God has for everyone who lets Christ take hold of them. If I were 20 or 30 years younger, I would do something that I did then, in Vienna, in Berlin, in cities and villages, there and there, I would say: please clear the first two benches, there are still seats in the back, you go there. And now all those who are willing to give their poor, tormented, senseless lives full of disappointment and envy and strife and bitterness and disgust to the one who loves them, who wants to make them glorious. Let them come here, let me talk to them, let me pray with them. I never experienced that nobody came, but often a few rows full of people came. Today I don't do that anymore, the old man is mellowing. I don't want to get your emotions up for a moment. I want to lead you to Jesus, forever, lasting, not by feelings, but by the Word and by the Holy Spirit. That lasts, our feelings do not last. Because many of them then went back. The first cigarette, already that was gone. Not completely, because **my word will not come back empty, but will accomplish what I sent it to do.** But the methods are just different. We have the Word and the Holy Spirit, the message and brotherly love, these are the strong weapons of the divine power that enable us to run according to his purposes and to go his ways.

The attitude that God has toward his Son, and that God has toward those who believe in his Son, he has toward the whole world and toward all people. I say it again: the attitude that God has toward his Son - he loves him - and that he has toward those who consecrate themselves to the Son, who believe in him, who become one with Jesus, that he has toward us - he loves us, after all, with the same love with which he loves the Son - with the same love he loves all people. What? The godless scoffers and the godless deniers and the criminals, does he also love them with the same love? No, he loves them in a certain sense, I say in a certain sense from one side, with

greater love, although the other side is also true, that God loves his own, who are his own, more than the others.

I loved my schoolchildren, they felt that too, but I loved my own children a little more. I treated my own children a little more strictly. My youngest daughter was in middle school with me for a few years before she went to high school, she was then my student. One day she said to me, "Father, that wasn't fair of you, you gave me a C for 2 ½ mistakes, and that one got a B for the same number of mistakes.

So, I said, would you rather I treated you more mildly, giving you a good grade and the others, who are not my biological children, a worse one? No, father, I don't want that! Then I said, well, there you have what you want. We were in agreement. These are such small personal experiences, through which I learned to look into the heart of God and Christ. Because everything that is transient, even these little experiences with the notes, everything that is transient is a parable of the eternal and imperishable. God takes it with his believers, with his saints much more exactly than with a sinner and a man of the world. He lets them go for a while, but with us he is more accurate. Is that right? It is more than right, it is grace and goodness. He wants to perfect us first, as firstfruits and bearers of salvation, and that is why he takes us more sharply and demands things from us that he does not demand from others. **From us he demands that we give thanks always for everything.** He does not demand that from the world, they cannot do that. They can't give thanks for their suffering and misery and despair in which they sit, they can't do that. God does not ask that of them. He says, **call upon me in trouble, and I will save you, and then you shall praise me.** But he demands that we give thanks for everything at all times, even if some things taste bitter.

These are wonderful things, born of love.

Now I want to prove my 2nd point with the help of four scriptures, that God has the same love for the world, for the cosmos, that is the world as it is now. This world is ruled by cosmocrats, whose head is Satan, the prince of violence in the air, who has his work in the children of disobedience, rebellion, defiance, wickedness, sin, violence, shame. This is the world. And what is God doing with this world? That's how much God, it says: the cosmos, loved this world, as I just described it in a few words, or we can also translate: **So much God loves this world that he gave his only begotten Son, for the purpose that all who believe in him may have eternal life and not perish.**

You would think that when this message resounds, that people would want to convert en masse to this God, and call upon him with tears and rejoicing, and consecrate

themselves to him, you should accept. And this is also happening in many countries of the Far East. You only have to read the books of Dr. Krupp, who experienced and described this; or of other great witnesses and missionaries. And when the message is proclaimed from mouth to mouth, from eye to eye, from heart to heart, then it also has such an effect that people then cry and say: oh yes, please help me, I cannot. I had students, dirty, filthy, stupid guys of 10 years, in the first 10 years of my teaching, who said, with tears in their eyes: Teacher, I want to be good, but I can't do it. The class was quiet as a mouse. So I said, I believe you. I want to be good, too, and I can't. They looked at me like that. The teacher, our pious teacher, who prays with us, who gives us gifts, who loves us, who doesn't smoke during the breaks like the others, who doesn't scold and curse and hit, our teacher, he can't, they said. I said, yes, I can't, but the Christ who dwells in me, to whom I have opened and given my heart, he can. I can't, I am by nature just as naughty as you are. I have often told my 16-year-old boys, you are fidgety fellows, be a little bit polite and friendly and civilized, as you should be. You are guys, I was also once as old as you, but you can believe me, when I was as old as you, I was quite the same. There was laughter and amazement and I had the heart of those kids. But if I had stood there as the Pharisee, oh my!

So now I want to show you that the same attitude that God, who is love, has toward His Son and that He has toward all those who belong to His Son, that He also has this attitude toward the world, toward the cosmos. The cosmos is everything that exists, which is now still enclosed in a great universe, and outside of this cosmos there is nothing until now. There we will one day create, beget new life in this unimagined vastness of space and time, all without sin and guilt, because Golgotha also applies to the future and to infinity. What a message of the cross and of the resurrection!

Now I give you the four proofs that God has the same attitude toward all people as toward us. I have already mentioned the one: **Joh. 3,16**: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, for the world! that whosoever believeth in him out of the world should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the 1st passage, this is the so-called gospel within the gospel. The word has a tremendous penetrating power for the one who hears this for the 1st time and gets it explained, to whom it is said into the heart.

Rom. 8, 36: Now let us go to our great brother and teacher, the apostle Paul: **For your sake, for Christ's sake, we are killed all day long. Like sheep for slaughter, we have been logically judged.** The world takes us for those who allow themselves to be killed, who do not put violence into life, but who put up with everything and take it from God's hand. I say again: we do not let ourselves be made into buffoons, but we

consciously go the way of the lamb. The Lord Jesus did not let himself be made a buffoon either, and neither did Paul. You only have to read how they talked to their opponents many times. But the opponent was then overwhelmed by the power of the spirit and had to keep silent and flee. That's just by the way.

Rom. 8, 37: But in all this, that we are counted as sheep for the slaughter, we are overcomers, more than overcomers, through Him who loved us. The love of God makes us victors and overcomers over all, and this message applies to all, even to him who has continually succumbed to his sins and lusts and passions and desires, be it alcohol or nicotine or sexuality or intoxicants, and has wept and shaken the iron chains and wanted to become a new man and could not, despite the deepest and strongest efforts. God loves him just the same.

Now comes the 3rd passage: **Eph. 2, 4:** So we prove that God has the attitude toward all men that He has toward His Son and toward us His sons, for we are sons and daughters of the living God. Listen with the heart:

God, who is rich in mercy, because of His many loves with which He has loved us. God is merciful because of this, and is so rich in mercy and goodness because He loves us with so much love. God loves the world. But there are also certain people and groups of people with whom he not only has love, with whom he has much love. Who can name me a prophet who is addressed by the angel of God, by the representative Gabriel: you much beloved. Yes, Daniel was a much loved one. But besides Daniel, we, you and I, if we believe, are many-loved ones before God and with God. That is why it says here: because of his many loves with which he loved us. He loves the world with his love, with all his love.

And now you could, if you can think sharply, logically, fortunately most people can't, you could say: yes, the love of God, isn't that already something so comprehensive that it can't be increased at all, so much love and even more love, we can ask. But the question is not justified, because we cannot approach divine truths with earthly standards, our thinking machine, our ideas, our standards of quantity and quality. The Word of God is there to be believed, and it is true, and we experience the truth of the Word. This is much truer and much more real than anything external. It is much more certain, much more joyful and much more satisfying that God is love, because of His much love with which He has loved us. When? We heard it before: when we were still sinners. We think that if we are good, then we will be loved. No, when does a father love his child, if it is a naughty eavesdropper or if it is a fine student who has converted and is a believer? Who does he love more, the naughty 12 year old or the 20 year old student? They are the same person, he loves them both with all his love. Of course he is happy that his son now also belongs to Christ, and prays that this young lad will come alive one day and also come to Jesus, of course. But it is the love of God.

One last word: **1. Joh. 4, 9: In this God's love for us has been revealed**, unveiled, made visible, **that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him**. We do not live from ourselves, from our powers, from our talents, from our intellect, from our heart resolutions, from our natural dispositions, we do not live from these, they are all poisoned and contaminated. We live out of him. We live a life out of God. We live out of the Christ of God, in whom all the fullness of his love and faithfulness and wisdom, his power and might and glory, offers itself to us and wants to fill us, to the brim, that we overflow with it, without our noticing it. Yes, that is really so.

1 John 4:10: In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. God is love, he is wonderful. It is worth breaking with sin and the devil and lies and the world and self and, instead of thinking of self, to sink into the sea of love. Hallelujah! Amen.

Concluding Words: Freedom as the Perfect Order of Life [K. Geyer].

"But he that looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and abideth therein, and is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, the same shall be blessed in his doings."
(Jam. 1, 25.)

From Karl Geyer

All natural life is under cosmic orders and laws. They limit the existence of all creatures and constrict it in bonds and inhibitions. The life of man is also subject to such limitations, beyond which he is not able to get. The last barrier that is set for him is death, and we possess from ourselves no possibility to overcome it or to eliminate it completely. But also what we call life cannot take effect according to our own wishes, but runs in procreation and birth, in growth and passing away according to eternal laws, which it is not in our power to change.

Man feels these restrictions and ties all the more as compulsion, since he should be a master of all things as the crown of creation. However, he is not this, at least not yet, even if the longing for it is present in him and God himself has put him on it with the creation to rule over everything. Yes, man is not even master over himself, but more or less enslaved under his own urges and inclinations. He may falsely boast of his freedom, but he is still a slave, because free is only he who no longer has to do what his flesh wants, but not he who would like to do what his urges demand and what his flesh lusts for.

The misery of the lack of freedom is intensified for every human being by the fact that apart from you and me, all others want to live out their lives somehow, whereby one often restricts the other and prevents him from fulfilling his wishes, thus already by his very existence curtailing the desired gain of pleasure and thus depriving him of the freedom of action.

The resulting tensions lead to envy and strife in individual lives and to wars and oppression in the life of nations (Jam. 4, 1).

Man is thus in constant conflict between two principles. In order to be able to fulfill himself and to live out his life (also in a good sense), he needs freedom. If he uses it without consideration for the other, he restricts his freedom and forces him to defend himself. In the dispute thus arising, the weaker in strength or spirit is defeated and comes under the power of the stronger. Now the freedom striven for is all the more gone, and that for both, because not only the inferior must act compulsorily, i.e. first of all: submit and obey, but also the victor must have to, i.e. he must protect himself from the revenge of the inferior and must thus permanently

The people have to use coercion and force in order not to let it come to the unpleasant change. Evil must give birth to evil, and in the application of such wrong means and methods, which are the very opposite of freedom, true freedom can never be achieved. As long as there are still unfree in the world, i.e. people who somewhere and somehow are hindered in the freedom of their decisions and actions, one should not speak of freedom as if it existed.

In the end, only God possesses freedom in an absolute sense. No single creature can determine for itself in advance the day of its birth, nor the environment desired to it, the milieu in which it would like to grow up, nor being free and remaining free from illness and death. And if Nietzsche presents suicide to man as the only freedom, this is unfortunately a freedom with a negative sign, i.e. a possibility. To shorten and to destroy life, but not as in the resurrection, a positive power for the rescue and liberation of the creatures from the tyranny of death. But to destroy life is devilish. The spirit, which always denies, is the destroyer of the first-born, the Satan, and his supreme warrior is the death, which is once put away at the true liberation of the cosmos as the last enemy of everything created.

As long as sin and death rule and limit all creaturely existence, there can be no talk of true freedom. At this limit it becomes clear that those who are bound in these limits are not able to break the fetters by themselves. None of them is able to break through the barriers and achieve freedom for himself and all his fellow prisoners. Salvation can come only from one who is not himself bound in these bonds. Only one who is free himself and is greater than everything is able to help those who are imprisoned.

Therefore, Christ's act of salvation began by taking away the power of death and its overlord, the devil, and freeing all those who had been subjected to bondage all their lives through fear of death (Heb 2:14, 15).

That is why the first three words of the Gospel are: "*Do not be afraid*". And the continuation is: "Behold, I proclaim to you great joy which shall be to all people!" And further: ...For all flesh shall have salvation

God's see."

Therefore, he took away the power of death and freed us from the tensions of fear and the fear of death, and gave us the spirit of sonship, so that we need not fear again, but stand in our filiation and sonship only in the voluntary bond of love to our God and Father'.

In the world, however, all the efforts of man lead to the fact that mankind comes under stronger and stronger fear burden, so that the people pine away from fear and

expectation of the things which are to come. One only needs to think of prisons and penitentiaries, of rubber truncheons and

To think of forced labor, of internment camps and terror, of mass expulsions and forcible deportations, of torture chambers and tacit liquidations, of "cold war" and of the atomic bomb used to liberate for freedom, and of the even more effective means of liberation held out in prospect, to comprehend mankind's growing fear of impending annihilation. At the same time the strongest objections and misgivings against these "advances of culture" are raised just by those who have the most insight into this development and were partly as experts decisively involved in these methods for the attainment of the freedom of man or still are The human "liberators" have sacrificed uncounted millions of their fellow men to this "progress". Thereby the forthcoming events cast their shadows, and "the cold war" continues with all means, so that every halfway reasonable person suspects the extent of the coming conflicts.

All retaliatory measures, however, without any exception, generate new hatred, which increases the speed of the approaching avalanche of destruction and its destructive energies more and more until the terrible end.

Evil can only be overcome with good (Rom. 12, 21). Only goodness leads to repentance (Rom. 2, 4). Only love holds the truth and only the truth makes free (Joh. 8, 32).

Therefore the deliverance from fear and guilt and suffering and distress was only possible because God Himself was in Christ and reconciled the world to Himself, and because the Son of God perfected His love in sacrifice and fulfilled all righteousness (Matth. 3, 15; Joh. 17, 4: 19, 28. 30).

Love - justice - freedom, that is the Godly way!

The driving force for the Son of God's self-giving and self-sacrifice was love, both His and His Father's. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Love fulfilled all righteousness and brought freedom.

This is the perfect method of God by which He raises the creature to its own divine freedom.

This is how it corresponds to His God nature, and only in this way does He act in accordance with it and in loyalty to Himself. God is love, that is, His nature is love.

God does justice, that is, all His actions are right and just and right.

God gives freedom, i.e. He imparts the highest bliss of creatorship to the creature by letting us carry out and complete the greater works planned by Him in the coming eon in creative freedom (Joh. 14, 12; 2. Cor. I, 20; Hebr. 2, 5-8; 11, 39. 40: Rom. 8, 18-23). What this elevation to divine greatness means for the creature never entered the

heart of man, and even the believers can only be led into this wonderful mystery step by step by the Spirit of God, who searches all depths of the Godhead and opens them to the loving beloved (1 Cor. 2, 6-16; Joh. 16, 12-14). See also Col. 1, 24-29; Eph. 3, 19; 1.

3, 2.)

Freedom is participation in the nature of God (2. Petr. 1, 4), is being led to full manhood in Christ (Col. 1, 27. 28), is being lifted up into the state of glory (Rom. 8, 21), is being made one with the light and glory of God Himself, with His doxa, His everlasting clarity and light nature.

What freedom of the will! What a glory of the ability!

What a freedom of glory!

And for this freedom Christ has set us free (Gal. 5, 1).

In order to be able to act according to God in divine freedom, all creaturely bonds must first be loosened. He who wants to cast out devils must himself be free from devils. Whoever is still entangled in sham and deceit, in instinct and greed, is not able to develop freely and cannot act in spiritual power divinely great in freedom and glory. Only the one who overcomes sin in the flesh can later, freed from the flesh, act as a royal priest in the freedom of God's doxa, without again being in danger of exalting himself like the devil and falling into the same judgment (1 Tim. 3:6).

Therefore, God first gave us only *redemption through His blood*, namely the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1, 7). *The redemption through the Spirit*, who will transform our body of lowliness and humiliation, so that the corruptible will put on incorruption and the mortal will put on immortality, is still pending (1 Cor. 15, 53. 54; Rom. 8, 23; Phil. 3, 20. 21).

Until then we carry *the Spirit as a pledge*, as a guarantee for the full redemption of all promises and the full possession of our inheritance as sons of God (Eph. 1, 13. 14; Rom. 8, 9-17).

Only then, when we have experienced the transformation of the body through the Spirit, which makes the body of lowliness, the earthen vessel of weakness and humiliation, become a vessel of power and glory, so that the *Spirit of glory*, which we already carry today in this earthen vessel, then also has a *body of glory at its disposal*, do we stand in the *full freedom that* God has intended for us.

Until then, after we have experienced the forgiveness of sins, we have to prove step by step in the obedience of faith that we do not sacrifice the divine capital given to us to selfishness and thus live anti-divinely, i.e. without love, but that we allow ourselves to be sprinkled as a drink offering over the service of the brothers. For he who

has died is absolved from sin (Rom. 6, 7). Therefore our being grafted into Him is being made one with the likeness of His death (Rom. 6, 3). In other words, the members are led the same way to full freedom that the head himself led us (Hebr. 5, 7-9). Whoever suffers in the flesh stands apart from sin (1 Peter 4:1), and whoever has died to sin is essentially free.

When our sins were forgiven, we were absolved. Insofar as we die to it, we are absolved.

In so far as we experience this essential liberation here, in so far we are used there for the liberation of others.

In order to be saved once like a fire from the fire, it is enough to have achieved the acquittal. However, this is not enough for the service of the fullness-Christ in the coming eons. There applies: „. . . if we suffer with others, that we may also be glorified with them (Rom. 8, 17), and: "if we endure, we shall also reign with them" (2 Tim. 2,12).

One becomes a citizen of an empire on the basis of his birth, without having to perform anything. An appointment to the service of this empire, however, is given only to those who are eligible for it on the basis of their probation. For envoys are representatives.

For the ministry of the fullness of Christ in the coming ages, unproven beginners are not enough. There is a need for guidance to spiritual maturity (Col. 1, 27. 28) and completion according to Eph. 4,12-16.

Only he who does not abuse the powers conferred upon him can be endowed with more extensive liberties and powers. He then uses his freedom to serve others with it and lead them into the same bliss of essential freedom.

For freedom Christ has set us free (Gal. 5, 1).

The whole creation longs for the same freedom of glory and looks for it with stretched out neck (Rom. 8, 18-25).

True freedom exists only where man's divine destiny is no longer inhibited by any ungodly compulsion, be it the inner compulsion of instinct or the outer compulsion of injustice.

Only love can exercise justice and righteousness. Hatred rapes the neighbor and ruthlessly advances beyond all values of the personality.

But God, who alone has immortality and in his perfection and unlimited inner and outer freedom is the only personality in the full sense of the word, respects nothing higher in us than personality. We are created in His image and likeness, and when it will be revealed what we will be, then we will be like Him (I. Joh. 3, 2). Joh. 10, 34. 35:

14, 12: Ap. 17, 28. 29: 2.Petr. 1, 3. 4; Eph. 3, 19 and others. Therefore He does not despise His prisoners who are locked in the depths of the underworld and Tartarus (Ps.69, 33; Luther verse 34: Ps. 68, 18: Luther 19: Ps. 107, 10- 16; Eph. 4. 8-10). See also 1 Petr. 3, 18-20; 4. 6; Zech. 9, 11. 12 and others - And from us He expects accordingly that we as brothers respect one another higher than ourselves (Phil. 2, 3). But this can only happen out of the spirit and the attitude of Jesus Christ, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Only out of this spirit comes the right courage to serve, the courage to serve, the de- courage.

The creature goes the opposite way by itself. It does not give, it demands. That is why the slogan of the natural man is freedom - equality - brotherhood. Here that is put as a demand at the beginning, which can be only the result of the reverse order born from the love, the love which completes itself in the sacrifice and avoids thereby the injustice and penetrates so to the true internal liberty, which it grants then also to all and gives, i.e. practically presents. Therefore also the creaturely demand of freedom lacks the eternal divine foundation and the moral substructure. Without this foundation, therefore, it can either lead only a sham existence in hypocrisy and lies, or else, where it is to be practically realized, it must become boundlessness, lawlessness. But this is sin, because sin is lawlessness, the stepping out of the eternal orders of God (1. Joh. 3, 4). It causes the disintegration of the cosmos, because cosmos means system. Order, ornament. Lawlessness dissolves everything, turns order into disorder and ornament into garbage. That's why behind this freedom with the negative sign soon stands the guillotine. Equality has its effect in the suppression and liquidation of everything superior and sublime and thus in the destruction of everything that could be a model of true humanity and a bearer of healthy progress and a performer of the highest personality values. - And the brotherhood sinks on the way with the negative sign down to the criminal community of a terror group.

This process repeated itself again and again in the course of the many thousands of years of human history. Each new case only confirms the old rule.

No one is absolving himself of this!

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer of men (1 John 3:15), and whoever despises his neighbor is guilty of judgment with God (Matt 5:22)

Have we both, you and I, yet despised no one, yet elevated or thought ourselves above no man?

And have we never asserted our head in self-will? Yes, we even thought this was strength of character. In reality, every time we raise our "I" to the throne, we are committing idolatry and idolatry For disobedience is sorcery sin, and self-will is idolatry and idolatry (I Sam. 15:23).

And have we never spoken a word about those who are absent that sounded judgmental or disparaging or condemning, or unloving and perhaps even slanderous? - Have we never passed on unchecked rumors that afterwards turned out to be false and untrue? - And then, every time such a thing happened, did we of our own accord set everything straight in a completely truthful way, or did we prefer to let the grass grow silently over it? - —

Have we never looked after our neighbor's wife in secret desire or anything else that is his? - —

Perhaps we have also passed on someone else's intellectual property without noting it, so that others have had to take it for our own. Was there never a situation in our lives when we did more of ourselves than was right in front of others? Did we not sometimes flatter ourselves or allow ourselves to be flattered? - And did this not make us feel good? - Even when the honor actually belonged to God or to someone else? - Did we never "get out" of an unpleasant situation with a flimsy excuse? And have we not thereby become *unfree before our conscience*, and will not the *excuse* one day become an accusation for us? - Not to mention "white lies"! For their judgment it is not our shallow excuse that is decisive, but the holiness of God and his incorruptible justice. And on such a foundation, which is perhaps still camouflaged as "Christian," is the dwelling of God in the spirit supposed to rise, that holy temple in which the spirit of God reigns, in which he, out of love and in love, holds the truth and practices justice and leads people to the *inner freedom of the spirit* and to the *outer freedom of action*? - —

And people who cannot even strip off the thin silk threads of conventional hypocrisy, much less the mooring ropes of impulsiveness, want to lead others into freedom? - Not to mention those who approve of their own life of sin and openly proclaim lawlessness, starting with "free love" and ending with the liquidation of all dissenters...!

In the end, everything goes back to the same root, to lovelessness, but this is godlessness, because God is love and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. But whoever does not remain in love, does not remain in God either, and is thus detached from God, is godless.

The most diabolical form of unkindness, however, is the oppression of others for so-called religious reasons "They will put you under ban. But the hour is coming that everyone who kills you will think that he is doing God a service" (Joh. 16, 2) See the "Grand Inquisitor" by Dostoyevsky!

Divine fruit can only grow from divine root Therefore, divine freedom exists only on the ground of divine justice, and this grows from the root of love because this is the very essence of God.

Where this love is poured into a human heart through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5), God dwells in the heart and reveals himself anew in the flesh, as he did for the first time and perfectly in the Son of love. (1 Tim.

3:16; Col 2:9; Eph 3:19)

From such a human body flow streams of living water

(Joh.7.37 - 39) The spirit enables and guides us to a walk in the spirit, to a walk in the light and to a walk in love. But love does no harm to the neighbor, because it does not rejoice in unrighteousness but in the truth.

But the truth makes free!

Thus, from love grows truth, right and goodness, and from right and truth grows freedom.

Therefore, one can only start with the root with love, but not vice versa with the fruit: freedom. It is also not possible to start halfway and try to do justice without renewal in the spirit. At best, this leads to a moral armament, which, however, must wither without the divine root.

In this world, there are only *people with God* and *people without God*. "Whoever is not for me is against me. And according to the testimony of him who is the truth, it always remains *"Unless someone is born anew, otherwise he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

All attempts to improve man by improving circumstances and conditions fail because of the egoism and ingratitude inherent in all fleshly beings For: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6) In the Millennium, people will enjoy the blessings of the personal rule of Jesus Christ for a thousand years. All social issues will be resolved. Everyone will dwell under his vine and under his fig tree. The whole earth will be like the Garden of Eden, *like Paradise*. The sun will shine seven times brighter than now, and the moon will shine as brightly as the sun. The fruit trees and vines will bear fruit twelve times a year. No man will die of disease; only the rebellious will be put out. And yet, at the end of the thousand years, Satan, once he is let loose for a little while, will deceive people from one end of the earth to the other. *This is the final result of the highly improved circumstances and conditions!* Where man is not renewed from the bottom up, even morality *and socialism do not change his nature*. One can labor to cultivate thornless thistles and thornless briars, but even then one does not pick grapes from thistles and figs from thorns. *Man remains an earthling unless he is born anew and thus becomes a man of God.*

But the God-man grows the growth of God, and increases in age, wisdom, and grace, like his Lord and Head Christ, until he is fully skilled in every good work (2 Tim. 3, 17)

Whoever loves the one who gave birth (that is God) also loves the one who was born of him, i.e. the brother (1 John 5:1). And he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and giveth and taketh no offense (1 John 2:10).

Only such a walk in the light remains true fellowship (1. Joh. 1,7) Everything is brought into the light of God, and what is not pure is discarded and removed.

Communion of saints grows out of the Holy One, out of the Head, the Christ.

That is why hypocrisy is such an abomination before God, where only truth is valid, i.e. beingness (2.Tim.3,5).

But where the spirit of love drives all, freedom reigns (2 Cor 3:17) And for this Christ has set us free

Thus, love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:10). Therefore, the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Whoever loves in this way practices what is right from within and stands in the essential freedom of the children of God.

He has come from the royal life order of love (Jam.2,8) to the perfect life order of freedom (Jam.1,25).

Concluding words: The danger of "holy" days and times [E.F. Ströter].

"The dangerous tendency of the Galatians was to return to meager beginnings. 'You observe days, months, (holy) times and years,' the apostle writes to them {Gal. 4:10}. According to this, these things cannot be so harmless and innocuous as they are often made out to be in our days, when Christianity is saturated with holidays and holy times of its own making. What a sharp light falls from this Pauline word on the Christian practice of our time, not excluding the decidedly devout circles!

All the same things that Paul mentions here, we have with us in great numbers and consider them to be one of the most delicious treasures of the "Christian people's life" 1. Whoever would preach that they are clear signs of a relapse into unconquered paganism in Christian garb would be looked upon with wide eyes. For the 'Christian people' have been taught, and persistently continue to be taught, to hold these things very sacred and high,

But when then the emissaries of Sabbatism enter the churches, who teach the poor people to consistently walk on these lines, to seek their salvation in the legal

observation of the seventh day (only not to accept the 'mark of the beast', the Christian Sunday celebration), then one naively wonders where these people find such a well-prepared ground for their 'poor initial grounds (Gal. 4, 9; Col. 2, 20-23) and human statutes. One does not even notice that the believers themselves have been taught to attach great importance to the observation of the Christian (?) feasts and days and times. One only reaps what one has sown."

From E. F. STROTER: *Der Galaterbrief*, 2nd edition 1923, currently out of print.

You are a god...

You are a God of strength,
Through which the universe was created,
The His marvels
gar splendidly stretched.

You are a God of grace,
Who seeks every sinner,
Even if on a dark path
He curses his creator.

You are a God of joy,
He who reconciled
His vain deeds repented,
With rescue jubilation crowns.

You are a God of goodness,
Who brings home those who stray,
That once His holy peace
will dwell in them.

You are a God of faithfulness,
Who fulfills His Word to us,
That He may renew the world in
His image.

You are a God of truth,
Who reveals everything,
Until He only
sees brilliance and clarity in
the whole universe.

You are a God of love,
Who gives Himself to everyone,
Until He
sinks His
own shoots
into everyone.

Adolf Heller

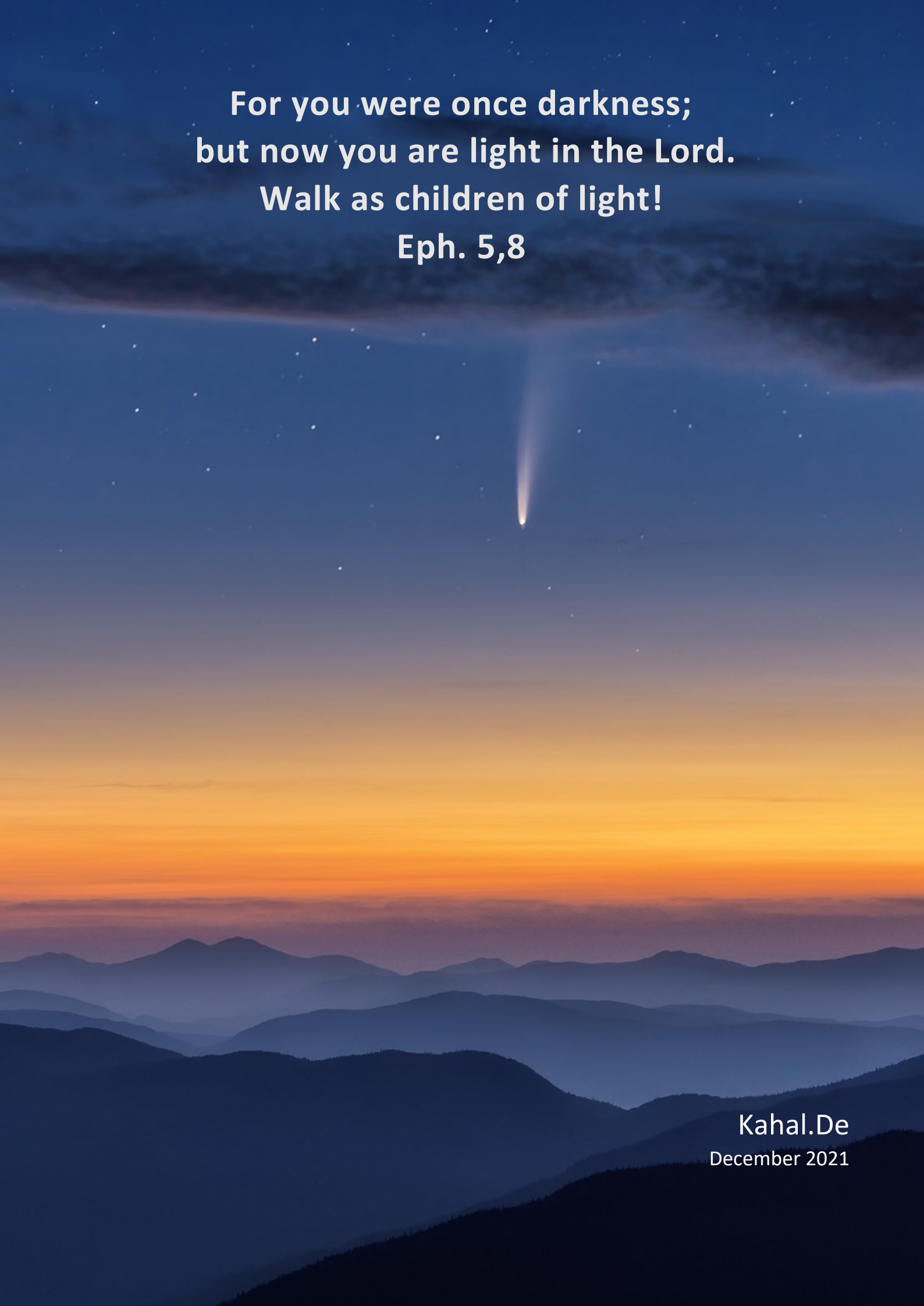
On all steps of my ways
Your love watches over me.
In Your faithful shepherd care
all my life here takes place.
You do not waver for a moment,
and never does a foreign fate strike me.

Only unparalleled love
flows into me forever.
There the fear of life must give way
and God's peace move in. The
heart becomes quiet in battle and strife,
and eternity fills the time.

You are as close to me as no one
on this dark earth here.
And your closeness makes me purer.
My nature is transformed by You.
I become free from myself,
and You make everything in me new.

I stand before Your face
and look into Your glory,
and every ray of Your light
transforms my being
until I am like You in everything
and bear Your image purely on me.

Karl Geyer

The background of the image is a composite of two scenes. The upper half shows a night sky with a deep blue gradient, dotted with stars. A bright comet with a long, white, tapered tail is positioned in the center of the sky, pointing downwards. The lower half of the image shows a sunset or sunrise over a range of mountains. The sky transitions from a warm orange near the horizon to a pale yellow and then to a soft blue. The mountains are silhouetted against the bright sky, with the closest peaks in the foreground and more distant, hazy ranges in the background.

**For you were once darkness;
but now you are light in the Lord.
Walk as children of light!
Eph. 5,8**