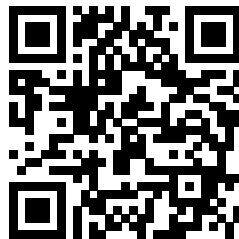


# Beginning with Christ

Heijkoop, Hendrik Lennert



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# Must a Man Be Converted?

Dear Friend,

The subject that you brought up is one that is well worthwhile, so I'll gladly go into it.

You write that in personal conversations and also in meetings you have often been told that you must be converted, but that you don't feel any need of this. You are absorbed in your studies and in your work. You have a good home and the best friends. You are hoping to have a good position soon and to see something of the world. You are quite satisfied with your circumstances and, honestly, you find this constant repetition that you must be converted to be most tiresome - you are fed up with it.

I can well understand this. There are people who are constantly minding other people's business, giving good advice all day long, or telling others of their faults. It's exasperating to have to hear this over and over again, especially when you think there's a chance they may be right.

And, to be sure, this is very important: Are they right or wrong? Must you be converted, or is this not so necessary? If it were only a trifling matter, then you could probably get by even if later you were proven wrong. You would know better the next time. But conversion deals with the question of where you will spend eternity. This is surely important enough that you want to be certain about it.

Have you ever seriously thought about what eternity is? I fully agree that we will never really comprehend it until we are there. Yet it's worthwhile just to think about it once, even to get a little bit of an impression of it.

I once read an ancient legend about a very intelligent boy. The king of the country wanted to examine him, and asked him to tell how long eternity would last.

"O King," answered the boy, "In a far off land there is a very high mountain made of brass, whose peak reaches far above the clouds. Once every hundred years a little bird comes and whets its beak on the mountain. As soon as the mountain has been so worn down by this that it entirely disappears, then one second of eternity has passed."

This answer gives you an idea of the endlessness of eternity, doesn't it? But it isn't even correct, for in eternity there are no seconds. There a thousand years are like a day and one day like a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8). Eternity has no end and no subdivisions by which it can be measured.

Yet this story lets us see the relationship between the length of time that we spend here upon earth and eternity which follows. What are ten years, fifty years, eighty years, or even one hundred years by comparison with eternity? Isn't it important then to know how and where we shall spend eternity?

I am reminded of another old story. You know that in the Middle Ages most

sovereigns had court jesters. They were usually deformed people who wore odd clothes and who had to cheer up their masters by their jokes and silly remarks. They were the clowns of their day.

A prince once gave his jester a fools' cap - a conical cap adorned with little bells - and sceptre as a symbol of the dignity of his office. He made the stipulation, however, that if the jester should meet anyone who did more ridiculous things than himself, then he must give the cap and sceptre to that person.

Not long afterward the prince became very ill. The jester visited him and asked whether he would soon be well. The prince answered that the doctor had said that there had been no improvement and that he would soon die.

"Well then," said the jester, "Doubtless you have made careful preparations for this great journey and have seen to it that all is ready for your reception."

"No," answered the prince, "That is just the tragedy. I do not know how I shall be received."

"But didn't you know that you would have to take this journey one day?"

"I knew it well, but I never occupied myself with it. There were so many other things to do."

"But," said the jester, "When you used to take a trip, a herald would ride ahead to see to it that food, drink, and other needs would be provided. If you went somewhere for a few weeks or months, everything was planned long before; various servants went on ahead days in advance so that all would be in order upon your arrival. And for this great journey to the place where you shall remain forever you have made absolutely no preparations! Here, take your fools' cap and sceptre back again - for I have never been that foolish!"

Wasn't the jester right? You have gone to school more than ten years, and now you are working days and studying nights and hope to get a good position soon. So you're occupied for twenty years so that during the next forty hopefully you can make good money; so that you can live comfortably from your pension and savings possibly another ten; and if you should live to be quite old, another twenty. What would you think of parents who would never send their children to school and wouldn't make sure they learned a trade because they were taking the attitude: "Just let them play. Children don't think at all of the future. When they get old enough to look after themselves, then let them see how they manage."

Now if you take such pains and sacrifice so many years of your life in order at best to live comfortably for fifty or sixty years, then isn't it unjustifiable to neglect eternity and not to occupy yourself with the question: *"Where shall I spend eternity?"* Besides, you are not even certain that you will get the good position. And furthermore, who knows that you won't get sick or perhaps even die before you get that far? *But you know definitely that eternity is waiting for you.* It is the portion of men once to die (Hebrews 9:27). No one, not even the greatest scoffer or the most hardened atheist, has denied this verse of Scripture yet. They cannot deny this.

Everyone would laugh at them, for who has not come into the presence of death?

And the balance of this verse - *"And after this the judgment"* - is equally true!

Isn't it unjustifiable folly then never to care, but just to wait for whatever shall come? Certainly, you '11 find out all by yourself then *where* you'll spend eternity. But then it will be finally settled forever! "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Ecclesiastes 11:3).

Now you will probably say, "Yes, but what's the rush? I'm so busy. And should I take up the little bit of free time that I have with such gloomy things as death and dying? I can just as well do that when I get a little older. I '11 have seen and enjoyed somewhat of life by then, and then I '11 have more time to think of dying."

Are you sure that you'll live another fifty years? Or thirty? Or ten? Or twelve months? Or even twelve hours? I recall a storekeeper in Friesland who stood behind the door of his shop listening to the gospel being preached on the street. When the message was over he went into his living room, sat down in a chair - and was dead!

And should you live for a long time yet, do you want to live for yourself as long as you still are strong and healthy, and then give the remainder of your life to God? And if you want to do this (assuming you live long enough to do so), will God still accept you?

Certainly, God "desires that all men should be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). He calls to all men: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). He received the murderer on the cross and thousands of others who have turned to Him on their deathbeds.

I personally knew a woman who was converted when she was eighty-five years old.

But *Job* 33 tells us that God speaks once and twice to man and if man does not pay attention, then He "sealeth their instruction." When Pharaoh had refused several times to obey, God hardened his heart so that after this time he could no longer be converted. And after the rapture of the church God shall send a working of error to all who have heard the gospel, but who did not receive it, *"That all might be judged who have not believed the truth"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12). God *can do this with you, too*, if you again and again refuse His invitation to turn to Him.

"God therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent, because he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed, giving the proof of it to all in having raised him from among the dead" (Acts 17:30,31).

Should you not be most earnest about this matter and go directly to God, confessing your sins and asking Him to receive you?

"We are ambassadors therefore for Christ, God as it were beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God. Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him" (2 Corinthians 5:20,21).

“Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7).

With warm greetings, your

H. L. H.

# Why Must a Man Be Converted?

Dear Friends,

You were just asking *why* a person must be converted and what conversion really is.

The simplest answer to your first question is: *Because God says so*. When God says something, that is the end of all controversy. Then we, His creatures, must bow our heads and obey. "Aye, but thou, O man, who art thou that answerest again to God? Shall the thing formed say to him that has formed it, Why..." (Rom. 9:20)? And we've seen in Acts 17:30 that God, "having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men that they shall *all* everywhere repent." Yes, there are some eighty passages in the Old Testament and some seventy in the New Testament which speak of conversion.

For God tells us clearly in His Word why He commands that man be converted. He is "longsuffering towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). And in Acts 17 He gives as reason for His command that all men should be converted, that "he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness."

The day will come when every man will have to give his Creator an account of his life. And God, who knows man in every respect, knows what the sentence of the Judge will be: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Therefore God wants men to be converted, for "Our Saviour God ... desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3,4).

Why does God command that man should be converted? Because man has not served his Creator, but is a sinner who shall receive the righteous judgment of God.

## MAN IS A SINNER

This is a frightful truth. It is true that many do not think of it, and there are even those who deny it. But are these latter people actually convinced that what they say is true? Can anyone who is honest deny that he often does wrong things?

More than once I have asked someone, who loudly proclaimed that he had always lived a good life and had treated others as he should, whether his conscience had never condemned him after some thought, word, or deed. Very seldom did such a one have the courage to maintain that this had never happened to him.

A sinner is someone who has sinned. He does not become a sinner only after having done many wrong things! *One sin committed makes a man a sinner*. In everyday life we all recognize this well. No one would say, "So and so is not a murderer because he has only committed murder once or twice." However, where it concerns his relationship to God, there man wants to apply another standard. *Otherwise he would have to condemn himself*.

## CONSCIENCE



God has given every man a conscience (Romans 2:15), which convicts him of certain wrong things, but conscience does not indicate all that is wrong. Conscience is influenced and formed by one's environment, for it always gives warning if one does something that is condemned as wrong in the environment in which he is or in which he has grown up. God has seen to it that all men - even those who have never heard of God and who do not know His Word - are warned when they knowingly do wrong, so that they may come to their senses and to the realization that they are wicked and guilty.

When you trace back your own life, how many sins have you knowingly committed already? You are now eighteen years old.

Let us assume that for the first eight years of your life you never *consciously* did anything wrong. This isn't so, of course, for you know very well that your conscience condemned you before this time. But how often has your conscience accused you since this time? Let's assume on the average once each day. That would be 365 times per year, and thus 3650 times for you. For someone 28 years old it would thus be 7300 times, and for someone 68 years of age 21,900 times.

Thus we can say that your conscience has told you up until now at least 3650 times that you have sinned - and hasn't it really been much more often than that? Can anyone who has committed so many sins maintain that he is not a sinner? Should a righteous God be able to acquit such a one?

Doesn't this fully demonstrate that every man deserves judgment and that he must recognize before God that he has sinned against Him and that he deserves to be lost forever?

## UNKNOWN SINS

But now comes another question. Is a man only guilty when he sins knowingly? Isn't he also guilty if he could have known that what he is doing is wrong? Doesn't any judge pronounce the verdict of "guilty" when someone violates the law, regardless of whether that person says that he did not know the law? He could have known it, for the laws are published. And thus we have the expression, "Ignorance is no protection from the law." At best the judge when meting out the punishment may take the transgressor's ignorance into consideration. A lawyer who transgresses certain laws will be punished more severely than a backward lad doing the same thing. However, in both cases the verdict pronounced is "guilty."

We find this principle in God's Word, too. "And if any one sin and do against any of all the commandments of Jehovah what should not be done, and hath not known it, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity" (Leviticus 5:17). This is perfectly clear.

Does a man, who as a creature is responsible to his Creator and must give an account of his deeds to Him, have the right to determine for himself wherein he is guilty or innocent? That surely cannot be! The Creator, who has made His creature and who has given him a charge, alone has the right to judge whether His creature has answered to his responsibility. God alone determines what sin is, and if we want to know what it is we must seek out His thoughts.

God's Word takes up this point very clearly. In Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 2:15-17 we find the charge that God gave man. He was to till and to guard the garden of Eden in dependence upon God and in obedience to Him. The sign of this obedience was the prohibition against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But what did man do? He used the first opportunity he had to show his obedience and dependence as an opportunity not to listen to God, but to be consciously disobedient. That was the beginning. Three thousand years later God had to write in His Word: "Jehovah looked down from the heavens upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. They have all gone aside, they are together become corrupt: there is none that doeth good, not even one" (Psalm 14:2,3). Another thousand years later God's Word says: "There is not one that seeks after God. All have gone out of the way, they have together become unprofitable; there is not one that practices goodness, there is not so much as one" (Romans 3:11,12). Isn't it perfectly clear that God's verdict must be: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)?

## WHAT IS SIN?

But you may say, "We must acknowledge that we sometimes do things that are wrong. But we just do not see that no man ever does anything good. There surely are many men who do good deeds. Just think of men who sacrifice their lives to help others, men like Henri Dunant, Albert Schweitzer, or others like them. And when I eat or drink, for example, or go to school or work, these certainly are not bad things, are they?"

Viewed objectively these things are not wrong, yet subjectively they can be altogether wrong. To eat an apple is not bad, but a child who eats an apple after his mother has forbidden him to do so is disobedient. Here we touch the very core of the question, "*What is sin?*"

Man was created by God and commanded to serve Him. All, therefore, that man does contrary to this position as creature and to this God-given task of serving God is sin. We find this principle in 1 John 3:4: "Sin is lawlessness." *Sin is any act that does not take into consideration God's authority over His creature.*

Thus, for example, eating if not done in dependence upon God is sin. The Lord Jesus would only eat if God told Him to (Matthew 4:4; see also John 4:34). Therefore God's Word tells us: "Whatever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

If we apply this principle to our lives, what do we find? Which deed that we have done, which word that we have spoken, which thought that has arisen in our mind has come about through obedience to God, through the question in our heart: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Don't we have to conclude - not one! Thus all that we have done, then, is sin!

This, too, is what God's Word says: "There is not one that practices goodness, there is not so much as one" (Romans 3:12). "And every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). That is why a righteous God must condemn mankind. That is why a merciful God calls upon all men to be converted,

so that He can save them from the frightful judgment that awaits them.

## WHAT IS CONVERSION?

Now we come to your second question - "What actually is conversion?"

This word is not easily defined, for the word "conversion" (sometimes translated "repentance") is not an exact translation of the Greek word "metanoia" used in the original manuscripts of God's Word. We have no one word that gives the exact meaning of this Greek word.

From 1 Thessalonians 1:9 it is evident that the thought of "turning" is contained in this word. Previously the Thessalonians had lived lives centred upon their idols. Now they had turned about, had turned their backs upon their idols, and had turned to God. But passages such as Acts 2:37.38; Acts 17:30.31; Revelation 9:20.21 and others make it plain that self-judgment and judging one's own life and deeds before God are also connected with this word.

Thus we can say that conversion is: going to God, condemning one's self before Him by confessing that one's life has not been subject to Him, - and that one is therefore wicked and guilty. Included in this is that we are sorry about it.

But even though it is not easy to give a precise philological definition of conversion, one who has come into the light of God and has seen what he is before God and what his sentence is has no difficulty about it. God looks at the heart and the conscience, not at the intellect. The publican simply cried, "O God, have compassion on me, the sinner" (Luke 18:13). But God who tries the hearts, and who is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12), knew that in these words everything was included.

No, not the words that we speak, but the condition of our hearts as we come to God determines whether conversion has taken place.

And now I want to ask you something. Are you converted? Have you gone to God with your sins and guilt, confessing your lost condition to Him?

Oh, don't wait any longer, but do it today. Tomorrow may be too late.

With warm greetings,

Your friend.

H. L. H.

# How Do I Obtain Peace with God?

Dear Friend,

I was very happy to hear that you have seen yourself to be a lost sinner who would be lost forever if you should now have to appear before God. You have confessed your sins before God, too, but still don't know whether they are forgiven. And now you're asking whether perhaps you feel too little repentance, or whether perhaps your conversion isn't deep enough. There are days when you do not think about it at all, or only very coldly.

I can well understand your thoughts, for I myself have experienced this. For years (I was still quite young) I knew that I was lost. During the day I didn't think about it so often, but at night in bed I would be afraid. "If I should die tonight, I'd be lost forever!" I would think. Then I would again confess my sins to God and would ask Him to forgive me. But I would never receive any assurance that they were forgiven. On one occasion an older sister of mine related that she had found peace. I inquired what she had done, and that evening I did exactly the same thing - naturally, without results.

When I was seventeen years old, sitting on my bed one evening, I was discouraged and thought, "All that praying doesn't help either. For so many years now you've asked God almost every evening to save you, and nothing has changed." At that moment God gave me the thought: "But doesn't it say, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9)! Isn't this true? Of course it's true, for God doesn't lie," I thought. Right then the Lord made it clear what this meant for me. It meant that my sins had thus all been forgiven the first time I had honestly confessed them before God. At that moment peace came into my heart, or rather, my conscience found peace. From that evening on I knew that my sins were forgiven. I have never doubted it again, for God has said it, hasn't He?

## HOW MUCH MUST WE REPENT?

Why was it then that it took so many years before I had peace? Doubtless one of the reasons was that my repentance was not deeper and my consciousness of sin not greater. Not that God sets a standard so that He will not forgive if one's consciousness of sin and repentance are not great enough! No man has ever felt a deep enough repentance and consciousness of sin at his conversion. Not until after our conversion can we learn how guilty we are in ourselves.

Yet God does want us to get a certain sense of our lost condition. The deeper this consciousness is, the more thorough will be our conversion, the better we will understand the judgment that we have deserved, the more honest will be our confession of guilt, and the deeper will be the rest and peace we shall have afterwards. Therefore the Holy Spirit works in the sinner's heart and seeks to bring his conscience into God's light. There He would have him to understand his lost condition and the multitude of his sins and to realize somewhat, the judgment a holy and righteous God must bring upon him.

But this is not really the heart of the matter. The main thing was that I was looking at myself and not upon God, and that the Word of God was not enough for me. When I had seen my sins and knew that I had ruined everything, I should have listened to the voice of God. And the Word of God is very plain: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins"! I was waiting for something in my heart or in my life that would give me assurance that I had received forgiveness. But I should have believed God's Word which gives every man who confesses his sins the assurance that they are forgiven.

## **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**

God is not like a soft-hearted earthly judge. It is possible to work upon the feelings of such a judge and get off more easily than someone else who can't do this so well.

But the love and grace of God can never operate contrary to His righteousness. That is the wonderful thing about the gospel. The same God who shall one day show His righteousness in the judgment of every sinner, now shows His righteousness by forgiving and remitting all the guilt of each sinner that comes to Him through faith in the Lord Jesus. "For righteousness of God is revealed therein, on the principle of faith, to faith" (Romans 1:17). And, "For the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

## **JUSTIFICATION**

Indeed, God can only act justly and in accordance with His righteousness. That is why man would have been hopelessly lost had not the Lord Jesus accomplished the work of redemption at Calvary. God's love wanted to save the sinner from eternal perdition. But this was not possible, for His righteousness required that the sinner be punished. And God's love can never act contrary to God's righteousness.

Then that wonderful event took place of which we read in Hebrews 10, Psalm 40, and other passages. The will of God was that all sinners might be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). The Lord Jesus became man and said: "Lo, I come to do, O God, thy will!" He went to the cross to settle the sin-question once for all. He was made sin there, and God's judgment for sin was poured out upon Him, and God's righteousness was fully satisfied by this judgment.

But the Lord did not bear this judgment for Himself. He was ever the Holy One, the Pure One, the One who knew no sin. He bore it as a Substitute for each one who by faith would receive Him as his own Saviour.

Now God can tell each sinner: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). And not only the love of God, but also the righteousness of God demands that each one who comes to God through faith in the Lord Jesus receive forgiveness.

## **THE RESURRECTION IS THE PROOF OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS**

But I would like to go into this point more thoroughly. The Lord Jesus went to the

cross, and there bore in His own body the sins of all who have received Him or who shall yet receive Him (1 Peter 2:24). There He was made sin, too, and judged as such (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:3). What then was this judgment? "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), separation from God (Revelation 20:14.15). The Lord Jesus had to endure this on the cross. During those dreadful hours of darkness He was forsaken of God, and at the end of those hours He died. But then He could say, "It is finished!"

But could the Lord remain in the grave after He had completed the work of redemption? The righteousness of God, which had brought judgment down upon Him at first, now demanded that He should remain dead no longer. The work was finished - God's judgment fully meted out and God's righteousness fully satisfied! Therefore God raised Him up from among the dead (Ephesians 1:20). This is the proof both to the world and to us that God has accepted the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus and is satisfied thereby (John 16:8.10). If the Lord had not risen, this would have been proof that the work was not yet finished. There would then have been no redemption for us (1 Corinthians 15:17.18). From this we can see that the resurrection is the central point of the gospel and that any attack upon it ruins the gospel.

That is why Romans 4:25 says: "Who has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification."

In this time of grace in which we live God says of every man: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But He also says: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:23-25).

This message is "towards all" but only "upon all those who believe" (Romans 3:22). Only those who receive the divine message that they are lost and then by faith receive the Lord Jesus participate in it.

Now the Holy Spirit has worked in your heart and you have seen your sins and your lost condition. You went to God, and confessed before Him what you are and what you have done. God pointed you to the Lord Jesus and said: "He died for sinners; if you receive Him I will put His work to your account." You received the Lord Jesus. You must now believe that what God says is true, and that your sins are forgiven. It doesn't matter whether or not your feelings tell you that all is in order. The only thing that matters is that God says that everything is in order. When the destroying angel went through the land of Egypt the night of the Passover, he passed over the houses where he saw the blood (Exodus 12). Whether or not the firstborn or the members of his family themselves saw it, didn't make any difference. If they did what God had told them to do, then everything was all right. To have peace, however, they had to believe that they were safe because God had said so.

The wonderful part of all this is that God is glorified in every respect when He receives a sinner. It is quite evident that His mercy, grace, and love are seen then. But this isn't all! When a sinner comes to God through faith in the Lord Jesus, God puts the work of the Lord Jesus to his account. Since the Lord Jesus has fully borne the judgment of sins, God sees the believer as without a single sin that has not



been judged. So God is righteous when He justifies him and frees him from the judgment to come. His righteousness and truth are glorified, for He has promised this in His Word, hasn't He? This makes clear to us the meaning of 1 John 1:9, that God is *faithful* and *righteous* to forgive us our sins if we confess them.

## **GOD KNEW WHO WE WERE**

Now you're saying: "But I don't feel any different. In fact I even sin more than before!"

I readily believe that you see many more sins in yourself now than you did before. That is how it should be, for the Holy Spirit has enlightened your eyes. But God knew you very well when you came to Him. He knew your heart, your life, all the sins that you had committed, and all the sins you would commit. He knows and knew more than you will ever become aware of upon earth. "The kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared" when we were "without intelligence, disobedient, wandering in error, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:4.3). "We being still without strength ... Christ has died for the ungodly . . . God commends his love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us . . . being enemies, we have been reconciled to God" (Romans 5:6-10; see also 2 Corinthians 5:20).

## **WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD**

And so, fully knowing who you were, God delivered up the Lord Jesus so you might have eternal life if you would believe on Him. He has said that you should be justified *freely* if you draw near to God through faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus (Romans 3:23-25). He said you would be acquitted of all guilt simply by coming to Him in this way, and that He would be righteous in so doing. Isn't it evident then that He has nothing more against you since you have come to Him confessing your guilt? From His standpoint all is now in order.

Do you, then, have something against God? Of course not. Didn't you go to God realizing that *you*, not He, were guilty, and that *you* needed to be forgiven?

Why, then, don't you have peace? Peace with God means that there is nothing more that has to be settled between God and you - that all is in order. God no longer has anything against you, for He has justified you because you have believed on the Lord Jesus and thereby have part in that eternal redemption the Lord has obtained (Romans 5:1; Hebrews 9:12). And you no longer have anything against Him; you are reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20). So you have peace with God! Romans 5:1 says you do: "Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God."

## **BUT I DON'T HAVE PEACE**

But now you are saying, "But I don't have peace!" That may well be, for you haven't yet accepted the fact that peace is already there. The Lord Jesus has made peace. He is our peace. And He preaches this peace to us (Ephesians 2:14-17). "Having made peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20). When you received Him

you had part in this peace. But in order to enjoy it, you must believe that it is true. You will have peace as soon as you believe that God is telling the truth when He says that the Lord Jesus has made peace upon the cross. You are acting like some Japanese soldiers on an island in the Pacific did. Five years after the war had ended they were still living in a state of war. They were on guard against enemy attacks, etc., just as they had been during the war. Why? Because they thought they were still at war, for they didn't believe the news that the war was over.

The real deep-down reason that you have no peace yet is that you have not unreservedly believed the Word of God. This is a great loss for you. But above all it is a great dishonour to God that you do not believe His Word. "God is not a man, that he should lie" (Numbers 23:19)!

As soon as you believe His Word as to this point too, you will be able to thank Him for all that He has given you, for His wonderful grace. Then you'll feel peace in your heart - but not before! Man says: "First see, then believe." God says: "First believe, then see."

With warm greetings,

Your friend.

H. L. H.



# Deliverance from the Power of Sin

Dear Friend,

So your conscience now has found rest in the finished work of Christ. You have confessed the guilt of your sins before God and have believed what He has said about the Lord Jesus and His work. Now you know that you will not come into judgment, and you can sing: "All my sins, so great, so many, in His blood are washed away."

In spite of this, I detect from what you say that you don't have real joy. Perhaps you did have joy at one time, but currently you don't. I don't really have to ask why. My own experience tells me, and God's Word confirms it.

You are very disappointed in yourself. You thought your life would be altogether different now that you were saved and had peace with God. But you've noticed that this is not so. The same sinful thoughts still cross your mind. The same faults evident in your character before your conversion are still there. You get just as angry and discourteous as before. You feel that this should not be (and you are right), for God certainly cannot approve of it. You don't want to do these things and you try not to. But nothing helps - things just get worse rather than better. And just when you think things are getting a bit better, you soon realize that they are just as bad as ever. You have prayed much that the Lord might help you to be victorious over sin, but that has not seemed to help. Maybe you've had the same feeling as a Christian lady who once told me, "The more I pray in the morning, the worse things go for me."

I experienced this in my own life. The first two years after I had found rest for my conscience I was in such misery that I didn't dare tell anyone that I was saved. In those years my mother, among others, often told me that I needed to be converted, but I didn't dare tell her that I was converted already. I felt she would not believe me when she saw how I acted.

How did this happen? Certainly it is not the normal condition of a child of God that his life is not changed by his conversion; that he, although he does not want to, still continually sins and as a result is deeply disturbed!

There are two reasons for this:

1. We don't know nor understand the full significance of the work of the Lord Jesus as God's Word explains it to us.
2. If we have this knowledge, we don't apply it to ourselves and make it a reality in our lives, thus - we do not believe that this too is truth because God's Word says so.

## MAN'S CONDITION

In my previous letter I showed you from the first chapters of the epistle to the Romans that all men have sinned and are therefore guilty before God. But it is also true that each person who receives the Lord Jesus receives forgiveness from his guilt - yes, God justifies him. Therefore the sinner who has been converted can say:

“Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). God has done everything necessary that guilty men might be saved.

However, beginning at Romans 5:12 another subject is taken up. Here nothing more is said about our sins, our sinful deeds, but about our condition. Why is it that man does nothing but sin? Because his nature, his heart, is evil. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and incurable; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). “For from within, out of the heart of men, go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickednesses, deceit, licentiousness, a wicked eye, injurious language, haughtiness, folly,” says the Lord Jesus (Mark 7:21.22). And in Titus 3:3 the apostle Paul gives us a picture of our condition: “For we were once ourselves also without intelligence, disobedient, wandering in error, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” No sinful deeds are listed here, but rather our disposition, our condition, our nature.

## **AFTER THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD**

Romans 5:12-21 tells us why we have this sinful nature. It is because we are all descendants of Adam.

Adam was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26; Genesis 5:1). “In the image of God” - this refers to the place he acquired in creation. As God’s steward he represented God upon earth, and as such he was head of the earthly creation. Although much has changed as a result of the fall and the confused condition that came about thereby, Adam, and man as his successor, is still the image of God in God’s creation (1 Corinthians 11:7).

“In the likeness of God” - this refers to the purity and innocence of Adam. There was a moral conformity of the creature to the Creator. But that, alas, did not last long. Adam transgressed the commandment of God, lost his purity, and became a guilty sinner. Never is it said of Adam after the fall, nor of his descendants, that they are after the likeness of God. This expression is always limited to the creation (Genesis 1:26; Genesis 5:1; James 3:9).

## **AFTER THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF ADAM**

Genesis 5 is very plain as to this point. In verse 1 we read that God created man in the likeness of God. But in verse 3 when Adam has a son, this son is “in his likeness, after his image.” After the likeness of a guilty sinner, of a creature fallen from God. And so every child that is born is already a sinful person at birth, because he has the nature of his parents.

Job expressed this: “Who can bring a clean man out of the unclean? Not one!” (Job 14:4). David says: “Behold, in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). And in Romans 5:12-21 this conclusion is drawn from this fact: Through Adam’s offense the many have died, for death reigned through Adam’s offense (Rom. 5:15.17); the consequences of Adam’s offense extend to all men to their condemnation (Rom. 5:18); and by Adam’s disobedience all his descendants have been constituted sinners (Rom. 5:19). In other words, the

condition of every man who is born is like that of his ancestor Adam after the fall - a sinner awaiting death, driven out of the Garden of Eden and out from the presence of God.

This passage thus speaks of man's condition and not of the sins he has committed. Before a man has committed a single sin his condition is that he is a sinner who will receive death to his damnation. It is not that he is guilty by birth. He only becomes guilty by his deeds, by the sins he commits. In Revelation 20:12 we find that the dead were judged according to their works, not according to their condition. But yet his condition makes him unfit to reach heaven. God cannot tolerate in His presence even one person who has a sinful nature. God who is holy must banish a person with such a nature from His presence forever. God, who "is light and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), cannot permit any who are "darkness" (Ephesians 5:8) in His presence. He must cast them "into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13). And so, if the Lord Jesus had not completed the work of redemption, no man could reach heaven - not even children who die immediately after birth and have therefore never committed a single sinful deed.

### **FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS NOT ENOUGH!**

From this it follows that it is not enough to have forgiveness of sins. If the Lord Jesus had borne all my sins upon the cross, but had done nothing more for me, then I would no longer be condemned on account of my sins, yet I would be eternally lost. God can forgive sins, but not an evil condition, an evil sinful nature. God has in every possible way given man the opportunity to show if there was something good in him. There was a chance before the flood, when God had not yet given a single command or prohibition and after the flood, when God had instituted government in order to curb evil (Genesis 9:5.6). Then He separated Israel to be His people, gave them His statutes and ordinances, and in His goodness came to dwell in their midst (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). After that He gave them judges, prophets, and kings. He brought them up under His discipline. And finally He Himself, "God manifested in flesh," came to earth in grace. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences" (2 Corinthians 5:19). And what happened? "He came to his own, and his own received him not." "And the light appears in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not." "And men have loved darkness rather than light" (John 1:11.5; John 3:19). Man was so completely evil that he even rejected God who had revealed Himself in grace, yes, that he led "God manifested in flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16) to the cross. At the cross it became evident that man was utterly ruined and evil, and that God could not do otherwise than condemn him.

This is why the Lord Jesus does not say in John 3: "Except a man's sins be forgiven, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But rather: "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God."

### **GOD'S ANSWER**

But in Romans 5:12-21 we find the divine answer to this difficulty. The first man, the first Adam, passed on the position he acquired after his fall into sin to all who

belong to his family (thus to all men who are born). Then God sent the Lord Jesus, the Second Man, the Last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-47), to the earth that He might give the life and the position He acquired after completing His work upon the cross to all who are united with Him. Now comes the question: What is this position?

The Lord Jesus has borne our sins upon the cross under the judgment of God (1 Peter 2:24). But this isn't all! Romans 8:3 says that "God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh." And in 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read: "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him."

These two passages do not take up our sins, our evil deeds, but rather sin - the evil principle, the source of sins, our evil nature. Romans 8:3 speaks of "flesh of sin" and of "sin in the flesh." These expressions are used in chapters 5 to 8 of Romans to designate our evil nature.

In these passages, then, it says that God made the Lord Jesus, when He was hanging upon the cross, to be sin. The Lord Jesus thus not only bore our sins there, but He was also made to take the place of our sinful nature there. And there God judged Him who knew not sin as though He had been a sinful man with a sinful nature. God's judgment upon both man's sinful nature and his sinful deeds was poured out upon the Lord Jesus. So the Lord died and was buried.

## THE LAST ADAM

But God's power raised Him up from among the dead (Ephesians 1:20). This is the proof that God's righteousness has been fully satisfied, both in the judgment upon our sins and upon our sinful nature. The Lord Jesus is risen and judgment is past. He stands before God in a new position, that of One who has fully undergone the judgment upon sins and sin, but who has been raised up by God Himself - proof that the judgment has been fully completed - and who now enjoys resurrection life. This was the position of the Second Man, the Last Adam, when He became the Head of a new family, the family of God.

Romans 5:12-21 tells us that everyone who is united with Him shares this position with Him. The grace of God and the free gift in grace, which is by the one man Jesus Christ, has abounded unto the many (verse 15). The act of favour is of many offences unto justification (verse 16) Those who receive the abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness, reign in life by the one Jesus Christ (verse 17). The work of the Lord Jesus results in justification of life, and by His obedience the many will be constituted righteous (verses 18 and 19). Grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life (verse 21). If we are become identified with Him in the likeness of His death, so also we shall be of His resurrection (Romans 6:5). Ephesians 2:5.6 goes still further. We have been quickened with Him, have been raised up together, and have been made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

So we know now that the work of the Lord Jesus means more for us than forgiveness of sins alone. When a sinner goes to God confessing his sins and believing on the Lord Jesus, God transfers him into the family of God; he then

belongs to the Lord Jesus. The whole work of the Lord Jesus is then reckoned to his account. This means that the punishment for his sins (his sinful deeds) has been borne upon the cross, and his sins have been atoned for. But his sinful nature was also judged and it died in the Lord Jesus upon the cross. Now he has part in the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus. The Last Adam (a Quickening Spirit - 1 Corinthians 15:45) has breathed into him and has given him His own resurrection life (John 20:22). He possesses eternal life, the Lord Jesus Himself is his life (John 3:15.16; 1 John 1:1.2; 1 John 5:11-13; 1 John 5:20).

## **DEAD WITH CHRIST**

When we have understood this we no longer try to improve ourselves. We realize it is impossible to improve that which God has given up as hopeless. We also know that God has brought us into death in the Lord Jesus upon the cross. We have confessed this in baptism, having been baptized unto the death of Christ Jesus and buried with Him by baptism unto death (Romans 6:3.4). (How this truth is obscured when one is not baptized by immersion, but rather is sprinkled!) We know that God only sees us in our new life, which cannot and will not sin. And we see ourselves in the same way - we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11).

We should not fight against the sin which is in ourselves. Nowhere do we find that the Christian should do that. Rather we should do just the opposite. We must reckon ourselves dead to it (Hebrews 12:4 does not speak of indwelling sin, but of sin in the world which is at enmity with us). Certainly the sin which is in us will make itself felt. It wants to show that it is still alive, but we must not permit this. We must not listen to it, but rather must look up to the Lord Jesus. When sin is at work in my heart and wants to attract my attention, I must not listen to it - I must turn my thoughts to the Lord Jesus. At the very moment I do so I will no longer be thinking about the sin. And by my gazing upon the Lord Jesus the new life can manifest itself in me. "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If I do these things the Holy Spirit, who dwells within me, will take the battle against the flesh (sinful nature) upon Himself (Galatians 5:17). That is not our task. "So also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11).

## **EXPERIENCE**

Why then do so many believers groan under the power of sin the way I described it at the beginning of this letter? And why isn't there one believer who does not know this condition and the battle connected with it from personal experience? It is not true, as is sometimes said, that this battle must last for the believer's entire life. Thank the Lord, that is not so. The Lord Jesus has gained the victory over Satan and sin. Every one who has part with Him then can stand in liberty (Galatians 5:1.13; Galatians 5:16) and can live a victorious life (Romans 8:1-4). Every one who maintains the standpoint of Romans 8:1-11 as a practical reality in his life is free from the power of Satan, sin and death. The fruit of the Spirit is found in him (Galatians 5:22.23), and the righteous requirement of the law will be fulfilled in him

(Romans 8:4).

But every one of us knows this battle because deliverance can only be known through experience.

When someone gets converted he sees his sins and is occupied with them, because the judgment of God is before him. He receives new life and has a renewed will that longs to serve God. He seeks out the will of God and wants to perform it as a law. Only in this way does he learn to know his sinful nature, his condition. Romans 7 describes this experience to us.

In the first four verses we see the teaching, the standpoint. We are dead with respect to the law, and are united to another man, to the risen Christ. Verses 5 and 6 bring us over from doctrine to experience.

The first experience is that the law has no power. It is holy, just, and good. It was "for life," for "the man that doeth them shall live!" But my experience is that it works death for me, for by its commandments lusts have been awakened in my heart, and the law forbids lust. Ultimately this brings me to a true understanding of my old nature - "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell" (Rom. 7:18).

However, the fact that I want to do the good, but yet I do the evil that I hate, leads me to differentiate between the "I" that wants to do good, yes, even delights in the law of God after the inward man (verse 22), and the power within me, sin, that nevertheless makes me do the evil (Rom. 7:20). And then I come to the realization that I am a captive to indwelling sin. It is a "law of sin," a set rule that I sin, and I stand helpless against it - I am its captive.

Then the Holy Spirit brings me to the desperate discovery that I am hopelessly ruined, and I cry out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). But then comes the answer from God's Word in verse 25: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

## DELIVERANCE

I am delivered out of this body of death! It has been judged in Christ upon the cross (verse 3). I no longer live, but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20). I am in Christ and so I am in the very same position which He has taken now after His resurrection. There is then now no condemnation for me (Romans 8:1). The Holy Spirit has worked a new life in me, one that is not sinful - no, it cannot sin - but it is in full harmony with its Author (John 3:5.6). And furthermore the Holy Spirit as a person lives within me and is the power that enables the new life to act according to its character (1 Corinthians 6:14; John 4:14; John 7:38.39). Also, He is the One who takes upon Himself the battle against the flesh (Galatians 5:17). So the law (the unshakeable rule) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2; compare with Romans 7:23). I am no longer in the flesh (my old nature), but in the Spirit. My position is characterized by possession of the life that the Holy Spirit has produced in me through the new birth (John 3), and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit Himself (Romans 8:9). At the same time this implies that I belong to Christ and am therefore a Christian.

This is the normal condition of the believer: Free from Satan, sin, and death, free to serve God, and free to have fullness of joy in uninterrupted fellowship with God (1 John 1:3,4).

May the Lord grant that you and I might constantly be in this normal condition.

With warm greetings, your brother in the Lord Jesus,

H. L. H.



# Has God Predestined Men to Be Lost?

Dear Friends,

You have been brought into a little confusion through someone who said that since you do not know whether you have been chosen, you could not know upon earth whether or not you are saved.

Well, you could have answered him very easily from the Bible. God's Word says, "That whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal" (John 3:16). If God then is speaking the truth, you can know it. And surely no one will deny that God's Word speaks the truth.

I once asked someone who was saying the same thing whether he thought that the apostle Paul had been with God and had there read the book of His counsels. He answered, naturally, that he did not think so. I then asked, "How then could he write to the Thessalonians, 'Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election' (1 Thessalonians 1:4)?" And how could he in all his epistles address the people to whom he wrote as saints?" He could not answer, but the following day he approached me and said, "Now I too know that I am saved."

Indeed, God's Word speaks very plainly about election. And what child of God has never reverently read such passages as Ephesians 1:4.5; Romans 8:29.30; 1 Peter 1:2; etc., and afterwards worshipped his God for such grace?

## PREDESTINATION

Unfortunately man has not stayed with that which is written in the Word of God, but has allowed his mind to go beyond it and to draw some so-called logical conclusions. The result has been that he has come to use some expressions that are contrary to the Word of God and that are, in fact, dishonouring to His name. The doctrine of the predestination of all men is a caricature of the glorious picture which the Word of God gives us to election.

The doctrine of predestination says that God has chosen some for eternal salvation, but says, seeking to use Romans 9:8-23 as proof for this assertion, that God has determined the rejection of others. We should, therefore, read this passage of Scripture once.

## GRACE - NOT ONLY FOR THE JEWS

In the first eight chapters of the epistle to the Romans we find the condition of man and God's answer to it described for us. Man is hopelessly lost. "For there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace" (Romans 3:22-24). But if all are saved on the basis of grace alone, then grace is not limited to the Jews. Grace is also for the nations then, for the non-Jews.

But the Jews would not have this. They had had a privileged place and wanted to keep this. That is why their great enmity was shown whenever the same gospel was



preached to the Gentiles - see, for example, Acts 13:45-50; Acts 15:1; Acts 17:5; and Acts 28:25-29.

In Romans 9 to 11 the apostle deals with the following question: Both the Jews and the Gentiles are in the same position with regard to the Gospel; yet the Jews had been accustomed to having a special place before God. How can these two positions be reconciled?

### **ABRAHAM'S SEED**

The very first fact the Jews pleaded was that they were the seed of Abraham. Good, said the apostle, but then you must also recognize Ishmael, for he too was a son of Abraham. And if it could perhaps be said that the mother of Ishmael was merely a slave, well then, take Esau, the Arabs. Jacob and Esau had the same father and the same mother. They were twins. Yet Esau, although he was the elder, did not become the ancestor of the people of God - and that not because Jacob was better. Before their birth God had already declared that the elder should serve the younger.

Thus it was not on the basis of any rights that the Jews had this privileged position, but on the basis of God's sovereignty. If they should want to invoke any rights, they must also recognize the Arabs as God's people, and this they absolutely would not do. But if they were the people of God on the basis of God's sovereign action alone, didn't God then have the right to admit others to blessing as well?

We can see then that there is no question here of election or rejection for eternity, but that it is exclusively a matter of a privileged position upon earth that is in question here.

### **I HAVE LOVED JACOB, AND I HAVE HATED ESAU**

These words from verse 13 have been used more than any others to support the doctrine of rejection. Those who do this are mixing up verses 12 and 13. God indeed said what we read in verse 12 when the children had not yet been born - but not before the foundation of the world, as we read about ourselves in Ephesians 1:4. Here it is a question of a position upon earth, and God said this shortly before their birth (verse 11). But verse 13 is a quotation from Malachi 1. God said this some 1400 years after the life of Jacob and Esau, thus He knew what kind of lives they and their descendants had lived. In Hebrews 12:16.17 Esau is called a fornicator and a profane person, who for one meal sold his birthright, and who found no place for repentance. Is it any wonder that God says of such a man that He hates him? "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psalm 5:5).

Then we come to verse 15 of our chapter: "I will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy, and I will feel compassion for whom I will feel compassion." This is a quotation from Exodus 33:19. The people had set up the golden calf and had rejected Jehovah (Exodus 32:4). They had merited judgment (Exodus 32:10) but Moses interceded for them. God then showed His grace and spared His people once again. Thus these words are the proof that God reserves for Himself the right to show grace even when judgment has been merited. It was thus on the basis of grace that Israel was the people of God. But how can these words possibly be a

proof that would support the doctrine of rejection?

Verse 15 affirms the principle of grace. There where all are under judgment, the mercy of God alone can give deliverance. What would it avail a man if he from this day forward should no longer sin - assuming, of course, that he could do this! He would still have to undergo judgment for the sins he had committed up to this day.

## **GOD HARDENS SOME PEOPLE**

Verse 17 is a quotation from Exodus 9:16. God is telling Pharaoh that He is going to harden his heart, in order that He might show forth all His might in him. First, however, we must read what precedes this. In Exodus 5:2 Pharaoh says: "Who is Jehovah, to whose voice I am to hearken to let Israel go? I do not know Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." He then increased the work required of the people (Exodus 5:7). In spite of all the signs and judgments that God sent, he would not obey the will of Jehovah. Then God said: "Now I shall harden your heart so that the full weight of my judgment shall fall upon you."

It is true that the Lord had said in advance that He would do this (Exodus 4:21), for He knew before that Pharaoh would not obey. He knew the heart of Pharaoh (Exodus 3:19). But only after He had repeatedly spoken to Pharaoh and had sent great signs and plagues, and Pharaoh had several times said that he would let the people go, but then each time had broken his promise, only then did Jehovah harden his heart (Exodus 9:12). And it was then that He spoke these words to him.

It is a solemn truth that God sometimes does harden hearts. He did it with Pharaoh. He sometimes does it now. And immediately after the rapture of the church He will do this to all who have heard the gospel, but who have not accepted it (2 Thessalonians 2:11). But God never does this before He has given people the opportunity to be converted (Job 33:14-30). This is something completely different from what the doctrine of rejection says.

## **GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN HIS DEALINGS**

In Romans 9:19-21 now the question fundamentally dealt with is, does not God have the right to do what He wants with His creatures? If God should want to make of one man a vessel to honour and of another man a vessel to dishonour, does He not have the right to do so? Can a creature call his Creator to account? As Creator God has the right to do what He wants with His creatures. He has the right to pardon the one and to destine the other to eternal destruction. But God has not made use of the latter right. God is Light and Love, and He never acts contrary to what He is.

It is exactly verse 21 that speaks of this. It is an allusion to Jeremiah 18. There God points to His right to do what He wants to do with Israel. The potter made a vessel of clay, but when it was marred he made of it another vessel. "And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, House of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:5,6).

But how then does God apply this right? "At the moment that I speak concerning a

nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy, if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, then I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at the moment that I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant, if it do evil in my sight, that it hearken not unto my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jeremiah 18:7-10)

If someone repents of his wickedness and is converted, God repents of the judgment He had thought to execute and shows grace. To this end God uses His sovereignty!

## **VESSELS OF WRATH FITTED FOR DESTRUCTION**

Romans 9:22.23 proves the same thing, although this passage is often cited as a strong evidence in favour of the doctrine of rejection. In reality it is a strong evidence against it.

Verse 22 speaks of vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. Who has fitted them? This is not told us here. But that God has not done this is very evident from the context. Could it be said that God endured them with much longsuffering if He Himself had fitted them for destruction? Notice too the difference between this verse and verse 23, where it is stated that He has before prepared the vessels of mercy. It is clear that they have fitted themselves. "But, according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5).

## **GOD'S WORD KNOWS NO PREDETERMINATION UNTO REJECTION**

No, there is not a single evidence in Scripture that God has made any predetermination unto rejection - in other words, that He has purposed that certain people should be lost forever. On the contrary, this would contradict what God has revealed about Himself in His Word.

He is our Saviour - God, who desires that all men should be saved, and He gave His Son, Christ Jesus, "a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:4.6), so that all might have part in His redemption. Could He then take a part of this "all" and determine that these should not have part, but should be eternally lost? We can name so many other such passages - just think for example of John 3:16; Romans 3:22; 1 John 2:2; etc.

No, thank God, there is an election that has destined poor sinners for eternal glory. But nowhere does God's Word speak of an election unto damnation. On the contrary, the Word of God says: "He that will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17), and "Our Saviour God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

And if we are not able to harmonize these two things one with the other - the election of some unto life and the invitation for all to come, then Isaiah 55:9 is for us: "My thoughts are higher than your thoughts." What man would dare to think that his mind is capable of understanding and judging the wisdom and ways of God? But the man of faith can say with Abraham, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do

right?" (Genesis 18:25).

With warm greetings, your brother in the Lord Jesus,

H. L. H.

# Election

Dear Friends,

Now the question How can I know that I have been chosen? can be asked.

First of all we must note carefully that the Word of God never speaks to unbelievers about election. Scripture presents the unconverted with their lost condition and the judgment of God, and with the call of God that they be converted; while the Lord Jesus and His work are then presented, so that they might believe.

Then when they are converted and believe on the Lord Jesus they are told that they are elect. How can they now know this? 1. Thessalonians 1:4-6 gives the answer. There the apostle writes: "Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election!" And then he gives the reason why he knows this: "For our glad tidings were not with you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; even as ye know what we were among you for your sakes: and ye became our imitators, and of the Lord, having accepted the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit."

They had accepted the Word - that was the proof. When someone receives the gospel and thereby has peace with God, this is the proof of his election.

## WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT ELECTION?

Although election is spoken of in many places in the Word of God (see, for example, 1. Pet. 1:2; 2. Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; etc.), this teaching is primarily found in Romans 8:28-30 and in Ephesians 1:3-14.

In Romans 8:29.30 we read: "Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified."

First of all we learn here that God has *foreknown* persons. It does not say that He knew their condition, how they would live, or whether they would be converted, etc. No, He knew the *persons*. And Ephesians 1:4 tells us that this "fore-" in "foreknew" was before the foundation of the world, thus in eternity past.

These persons - not one less - He has *predestinated* to be conformed to the image of His Son.

This is election! Before we were born, before Adam was created, yes, even before the creation of heaven and earth of which Genesis 1:1 speaks, God thought of us, and in His counsels determined that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. God's Word says of Christ that He is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Here we find that we shall be conformed to His image. He must be the firstborn among many brethren. Although He thus occupies the first place, yet we shall be like Him.

Here, of course, it is not the Lord in His eternal Sonship. As such He is the eternal God and He alone is that. Here He is spoken of as the Son of God born on earth, who has finished the work on the cross, and in whom all God's counsels are to be fulfilled (Colossians 1:19-21; Ephesians 1:10; Ephesians 1:20-23).

The origin of our blessing is here connected with its full outcome - eternity before the creation of heaven and earth is connected with eternity after the passing away of heaven and earth. The counsels in the heart of God are linked up with their complete fulfilment as it is presented to us in 1. John 3:2: "We know that if He is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." As "sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36) we shall be manifested as sons of God, when He shall "transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory" (Philippians 3:21).

### **CALLED, JUSTIFIED, AND GLORIFIED**

In verse 30 we have the connection between the counsels of God and time. When we were born, we turned our backs upon God; we were sinners, but God has called us. Here it is not the question of God's general call to all men that they should be converted. Here it is the creative act of God, who "calls the things which be not as being" (Romans 4:17). And those whom He has so called, He has also justified.

Here everything is seen from God's side and according to God's counsels. At the time the epistle to the Romans was written all the elect had not yet been called - actually only very few, for the subject is election from before the world's foundation, and this concerns the assembly alone. Israel, and also the believers after the rapture of the assembly, are elect from the founding of the world (Revelation 13:8).

And even now not yet all have actually been called. That shall only be when the assembly is raptured and thus is complete as to number. But according to God's counsel it is certain that this will happen. That is why in prophetic language it is spoken of as if it were already fulfilled. Even the glorification is presented as already accomplished, although Romans 5:2 says that the glory of God is still a hope, and Romans 8:11 that our mortal bodies shall yet be quickened. But it is certain that this will happen. All that is necessary to give us that place, which according to God's electing grace we are to occupy, shall be brought to pass by Him entirely without our help. That is our assurance.

### **OUR GOD AND OUR FATHER**

In Ephesians 1:4.5 we have further details. In verse 3 God is called the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Man the Lord Jesus spoke of "My God" (for example in *Matthew 27:46*). As Son of God he addressed God as His Father (John 17:1; John 5:17.18; etc.). After His resurrection, however, the Lord brought His own into this same relationship with God. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John 20:17). Certainly, a difference will always remain. He does not say "our" Father and "our" God. He remains the Firstborn among many brethren. But yet God has become our God and our Father through the Lord Jesus.

In Ephesians 1:4.5 this position which we have received through election bears the

same character. In verse 4 we find our place before God as God and in verse 5 our place before God as Father. And in order that we might possess this place in perfection we have been chosen in Christ. He has this place by virtue of His personal glory and His personal right. We receive it in Him.

## HOLY AND BLAMELESS BEFORE HIM IN LOVE

Look again at Ephesians 1:4: "According as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love."

Here we have the divine nature before us. God is holy in His being, blameless in His actions, and His nature is love (1. John 1:5; 1. John 4:8-16). We must correspond to His nature if we would come into His presence as He desires. How could men who have been disfigured by sin be with Him, who is too holy to look upon sin, and who shall one day cast all that is connected with sin into the lake of fire? He has therefore chosen us so *that* we should correspond to His own nature. But that isn't all. We must be able to enter into the feelings of His heart, into the thoughts of a God who is love. For this reason verse 4 says, "Before him in love."

By and by when we shall be with Him we shall be "holy and blameless before him in love." Then everything that is still a reminder of sin in us shall be done away - all our weaknesses, shortcomings, and sins. Then the flesh will have been abolished. But God sees us in this way now already. He sees us only in our new life which the Lord Jesus has given us. "Created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). "For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). "That even as He is, we also are *in this world*" (1 John 4:17).

What grace to us, poor, sinful creatures that we are in ourselves!

## FOR ADOPTION (SONSHIP) TO HIMSELF

But this is not all. We could have received all the above- mentioned things in order to be placed as servants before God. An angel, too, must correspond to the glory and to the holiness of God. "Having marked us out beforehand *for adoption* through Jesus Christ *to himself*" (Ephesians 1:5). There is a definite relationship: the relationship of a father to his children and of children to their father. The Son of God, after His resurrection, and on the basis of His work upon the cross has brought us into His own position: to be children of God. But here in Ephesians we learn that God marked us for this already - before the world's foundation. Then already God determined that we should have this position. And what reason did He have for this? It is "according to the good pleasure of his will." His own love alone is the origin of this blessing.

## CHRISTIANITY BEARS THE CHARACTER OF ETERNITY

But there is still one more important conclusion to be drawn from these verses. He has "chosen us in him (Christ) before the world's foundation." This election is entirely outside of time and for eternity, not for this earth. Verse 3 speaks too then of "every *spiritual* blessing in the *heavenlies*. " Israel is the chosen people for this



earth (Exodus 19:5; Leviticus 25:2.23; Deuteronomy 7:6). But the “sheep” in Matthew 25:31 ff. also are told: “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you *from* the world’s foundation.” These thus are earthly blessings (the kingdom) connected with time (*from* the world’s foundation).

From this follows the special position that we occupy. We belong to a system (Christianity) and to a body (the assembly) that exist entirely outside of time. Their origin is from before the foundation of the world when God established them in Christ. They are not of this world (John 17:14), and they shall go on after this world has passed away. They bear a spiritual and eternal character. This gives us a deep insight into the character of Christianity.

This is why Ephesians 1:3-5 does not speak of responsibility and all that is connected therewith. This only began after Adam was created and placed in the Garden of Eden, and will end after the Great White Throne judgment (*Revelation* 20).

Two trees stood in the Garden of Eden. There was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which represents the principle of responsibility, for “in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die”; and there was the tree of life, which represents the principle of life. Adam ate of the first of these trees and could no longer eat of the second then, for he received death as his sentence.

On the cross we find the two trees united. The Lord Jesus took upon Himself the consequences of the responsibility of all who believe, and as the Resurrected One has granted them life instead. He the Tree of Life.

But all this took place “in time” upon earth, and thus does not form any part of the eternal counsel of God. Yet it was necessary, and so the election took place “in Him,” in Christ; and the entire design and counsel of God was first revealed after the cross, when the last Adam had become the Head of the new creation, the Head of the family of God.

How wonderful it is to see the depths of the thoughts of God and to marvel at His wisdom - and at the same time to think that we were the objects of these thoughts!

With warm greetings, your brother in the love of God,

H. L. H.



# Christ, Our Great High Priest

Dear Friends,

When someone realizes what a believer possesses, then he may think that he stands in need of nothing more, for he knows that

His sins are forgiven and he has peace with God.

Through new birth he has received a new life, a new nature, a divine life that cannot sin.

God has judged his old nature upon the cross and has put it away, so that God now only sees the believer in his new life, and there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit dwells within him.

He has thus been set free from the power of Satan, the world, and sin - set free in order to serve God.

He is accepted in the Beloved.

He can now boast in the hope of the glory of God, because he *knows* that this has been made ready for him.

Now as far as eternity and heaven are concerned, it is true that he needs nothing more. But the child of God still has needs here on earth. Because he is a child of God and a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20) he is a stranger upon earth, and because he is on his way to heaven he is a pilgrim. But besides this he has been emancipated from the power of the devil and wants to serve God, for this is the desire of his heart. But because of this he immediately comes into opposition with the devil and with men who are unconverted. The work of the devil, indeed, is to keep men from obeying God. Therefore he uses all his power and all his cunning for the express purpose of seducing the believer to sin, to disobey God. This doesn't cause Satan any difficulty with unbelievers. By nature they don't want to obey God. Their hearts want to sin, and when they sin their hearts are satisfied (Genesis 6:5; Mark 7:20-23; Romans 3:10-20). This is the foundation upon which the world and society are built. Men have joined themselves together for the very reason that they might not be dependent upon God and that they might act according to their own thoughts (Genesis 9:1; Genesis 11:4-9). But because man cannot be independent he has taken the devil as his king, and after rejecting the Son of God man has also taken the devil as his god (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4).

The endeavours of the Christian, then, are directly contrary to the endeavours of the world. The worldling is therefore an enemy at heart to the Christian whom he regards as an annoying troublemaker. Speaking to unbelievers the Lord in John 7:7 said: "The world cannot hate you, but me it hates, because I bear witness concerning it that its works are evil." But of the believers He says in John 17:14: "The world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the

world.” And in John 16:33 He tells His disciples: “In the world ye have tribulation.”

A Christian will only be accepted by the world when he does not manifest himself as a Christian, but rather joins in with its endeavours and thus practically submits to Satan’s mastery. But to do this would cause him to be unfaithful toward God. Such a Christian is a real collaborator with the enemy.

This is where the battle begins for the Christian. Satan comes now and tries to get him to sin. He whispers unclean, sinful thoughts to him. He lets him see sinful things. He lets him hear ungodly words and tries to bring him to unclean places. And besides all this he lets the world show its enmity. All this grieves the new man. But the Christian still has his old nature, which would rather sin than please God. This is where Satan has a point of contact. There is great danger that Satan may gain the victory and induce him to sin.

But God’s love has made provision for this, too.

## **CHRIST, OUR HIGH PRIEST**

These things are presented to us in the epistle to the Hebrews. There we see the Christian as a pilgrim and a stranger. He is travelling to glory (Hebrews 11:40), for his is a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1). But presently he is still in the wilderness facing all the difficulties and dangers encountered here. Then our Priest is presented to us. The Lord Jesus in heaven is our Great High Priest who, with His eye upon our difficulties and dangers, intercedes with God on our behalf.

It is often thought that the priesthood of the Lord Jesus stands in connection with our sins. But in general this is incorrect. Certainly, the beginning of His appearance as High Priest was in connection with our sins. Hebrews 2:17 says: “That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” But Hebrews 10:12 says that “He, having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God.” Verse 14 continues, “For by one offering he has *perfected* in perpetuity the sanctified.”

The epistle to the Hebrews views the believer in his relationship as creature toward God. And since the Lord Jesus has completed a work upon the cross whereby God has been fully satisfied, the sin question is settled forever. He has “found an eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12). The believer has been “*perfected* in perpetuity.” Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26).

Never again will the question of sin be raised between God and the believer. Therefore, nothing more is said about it in the epistle to the Hebrews. The sins which a believer commits after his conversion are no longer an issue between God and His creature, but between the Father and His child. This we find in the first epistle of John.

## **PRIEST IN HEAVEN**

Although the first service of the Lord Jesus as High Priest thus took place upon earth, and was indeed in connection with our sins, the priesthood of the Lord now

no longer has this character. After having completed the work He *sat down* forever at God's right hand *in heaven*. "Such a high priest became us ... become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). "If then indeed he were upon earth, he would not even be a priest" (Hebrews 8:4).

So then we have a priest in heaven who as far as our sins are concerned has put everything in order, and who now ever lives to intercede for His own (Hebrews 7:25).

And who is this priest? *Hebrews 1* tells us. He is the Son of God! That is why He can always intercede for us with God. Who but God only could do this? But in order to intercede for men He must be man. And *Hebrews 2* tells us that He became truly man. He is the Son of Man. He is more truly man than was Adam, for He was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4).

What a wonder! God manifested in flesh! The Word became flesh! He who was Creator of heaven and earth, who had created man - He Himself became man.

*Hebrews 2* gives us two reasons why the Lord became man. Verses 14-17 tell us that it was to accomplish the work of making propitiation for our sins and to deliver us from the might of the devil and of death. But the remaining verses give us yet another reason: He must be a merciful and faithful High Priest. Doesn't this speak to our hearts in strongest tones?

The Lord Jesus knew what we would be like. He knew that there would be dangers and difficulties upon the way. Therefore He became man and entered into all our circumstances so that He might, from His own personal experience, know every difficulty, every sorrow, every temptation, in order thereby to be able to stand by us in the full knowledge of all that we should have to overcome.

## HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE

He knows what it costs to obey God while we are in an environment that is hostile toward God. Did He not learn obedience (*Hebrews 5:8*)? He had never obeyed, for He was God Most High. But as Man upon earth He learned what obedience was. "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed. The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not away back," He says in *Isaiah 50:4.5*. But He also experienced the consequences this brings in this world at enmity with God. "I gave my back to smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (*Isaiah 50:6*). He was smitten because He told the truth (*John 18:23*). What must it have been for Him, the Holy One of God, when they said to Him: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a demon?" and "Now we know that thou hast a demon" (*John 8:48-52*)? But He also experienced the power of God upholding Him. "But the Lord Jehovah will help me: therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me" (*Isaiah 50:7.8*).

We must learn obedience because we were disobedient, sinful creatures. He can understand us perfectly in our learning. When the result of our obedience is that men mock us and laugh at us or perhaps that we even suffer loss of earnings, of

opportunities of advancement, or of other things of life, He can fully sympathize with us. And in this perfect compassion He comes to our help and intercedes for us, in order that we might receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:16).

Obedience to God may make it necessary to separate from persons or things to which our hearts cling. Yes, perhaps from things which seen in themselves are good and which we have received from the Lord. Perhaps from those persons whom we love most dearly upon earth, because He takes them from us, or perhaps because we wish to be obedient to Him we can no longer walk with them. We may have to give up our sphere of activity or perhaps even a spiritual work that we would like to do for Him, one, in fact, which He gave us to do. The Lord Jesus knows all this from His own personal experience. He emptied Himself and became obedient unto death, yes, even to the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8). He wrestled in Gethsemane and prayed: "Father, if thou wilt remove this cup from me" (Luke 22:42). Should not His holy soul shrink back from the path which obedience to God dictated for Him? What a path, one whereby He, the Holy One, should have to bear our sins in His own body on the tree, yes, whereby He must be made sin (1. Peter 2:24; 2. Corinthians 5:21). A path that meant that God should forsake Him and that the judgment of God should fall upon Him (Matthew 27:46; Zechariah 13:7; Romans 8:3). Yes, He has walked a path of deeper obedience than any of God's children ever have had to walk or would even be able to walk. So for this reason, too, there can never be a "sacrifice of obedience" without His being able to understand the feelings of our hearts, to understand our conflicts. But, having gone the way of obedience to its end - "Not my will, but thine be done" - He knows from His own personal experience what God means to the heart in such circumstances, and what help God gives. "And an angel appeared to him from heaven strengthening him" (Luke 22:43). That is why He comes to our aid so that we may "find grace for seasonable help."

## **SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS**

Our hearts are grieved when Satan comes with his temptations. How that new life in us suffers when he awakens unclean thoughts in us, when he provokes our hearts to disobedience, when again and again he attacks us anew without giving us any respite, when he distracts our thoughts as we are reading the Word of God, when he awakens wrong thoughts in our hearts while we are praying or in the most sublime moments in the meetings.

The Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan as no one else has ever been. For forty consecutive days He was tempted (Luke 4:2). Satan tried all his might and all his subtilty against Him who is the Pure One, the Holy One.

After the fall into sin Satan had an easy task with man. He had a powerful ally in the sinful heart of fallen man, an ally which always has pleasure in sin. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).

This was not true of Adam before his fall. He had been created pure by God. But although Satan had no point of contact with Adam through his heart, one attack was sufficient for Satan's purpose. Adam fell and became Satan's slave.

Now there was a new Man upon earth who had no sinful heart. He knew no sin. Against this Man Satan directed his attacks also, but here the battle went differently.

Adam was attacked in the Garden of Eden where everything spoke of the greatness and goodness of God. The Lord Jesus was in the wilderness - that great mark of the curse upon the earth - where there was nothing for Him. Here Satan used all his might and all his subtilty to make a sinner of the Holy One, too. The battle raged forty days until Satan had used all his weapons and had suffered defeat. Satan went away, not the Lord Jesus. Who is there who knows all the temptations that the Lord underwent here? Who knows all the wiles of Satan, the whole armory of the prince of darkness? Only the last three are told us. What must it have been for the Pure One, the Holy One, who knew no sin, to encounter all these weapons of darkness! How His holy soul must have suffered. How He can understand us, sympathize with us, when Satan tries out his wiles upon us. Can any temptation come to us that Satan has not also tried out upon the Lord? That is why He can help us. He prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail. "For, in that himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help those that are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). "For we have not a high priest not able to sympathise with our infirmities, but tempted in all things in like manner, sin apart" (Hebrews 4:15).

### **HIS SYMPATHY IN DIFFICULTIES AND SORROW**

When loved ones are taken from us, who understands our heartache like the One who wept at the grave of a friend? When we are lonely, who was more lonely than He, the One who said: "I watch, and am like a sparrow alone upon the housetop" (Psalm 102:7)? When friends have forsaken us, who can understand us like the One of whom Scripture says: "And all left him and fled" (Mark 14:50)? When we are misunderstood, or when those to whom we speak of our difficulties show no sympathetic interest, who was more lonesome than He who cried, "I looked for sympathy, but there was none" (Psalm 69:20)? He was the One who, when He told His disciples that He would be betrayed by one of them and delivered up that He might die for them, they scarcely noticed, but disputed about which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:19-24). When we need light, who can help us more than He of whom it is said seven times in Luke that He went to pray, yes, that He spent the whole night in prayer when He had important things to do!

This is our High Priest in heaven, who is there always living to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25). He Himself doesn't meet with difficulties anymore - for Him the battle is over! But thereby He can devote Himself entirely to helping us, making use of all the knowledge that He has gained by His personal experience of the conflict and difficulties.

Do I encounter difficulties and oppression on my way? If so I can find help in the intercession of Christ. He intercedes fully knowing the comfort that God's grace gives, because He got to know this comfort when in the same circumstances here upon the earth. He knows how to comfort a soul in its troubles. He gives me everything that I need and pleads for me with God according to His own knowledge of my need. Do I need light? Do I need guidance on my way? God can give it. I shall receive all that God is for my need. All this is the result of the intercession of Christ.

Do I receive all this because I am praying for it? He prayed for Peter before Peter knew anything about the events which were to occur. No, we don't ask the Lord to intercede for us. It is the grace toward us in His own heart that brings this about. And He informs us of it, so that we might "approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help."

With warm greetings, your friend,

H. L. H.

# The New Birth

Dear Friends,

In a previous letter we have seen that a Christian is one who has died with Christ. The nature of the old man is so evil that God has nothing but judgment for it. In John 3 the Lord Jesus presents this latter fact to Nicodemus, but also presents to him the divine answer for it.

The passage actually begins at chapter 2:23. There we see the Lord in Jerusalem. When at the occasion of the Passover He was doing signs, "many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he wrought." But then follows: "But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men, and that he had not need that any should testify of man, for himself knew what was in man." And then when one of these men came to Him, the Lord spoke those crushing words: "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God!"

## THE SON OF MAN WHO IS IN HEAVEN

In the 11th and 13th verses of chapter 3 the Lord reveals who He Himself is. He is the Son of Man who is in heaven! Here we have the wonderful secret of His Person. John 1:1 tells us that He is God Himself, the Eternal One. But in verse 14 it says that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" - "God has been manifested in flesh" (1. Timothy 3:16). God and man in one Person! What a mystery!

The Lord Jesus is the Eternal God. He humbled Himself and became Man! But that does not mean that He was no longer God. That would be impossible. He took part in blood and flesh (Hebrews 2:14). He became true man (Galatians 4:4; 1. Timothy 2:5). But He who was Man was the Eternal God at the same time (Isaiah 9:6). When He lay as a babe in the manger He was at the same time the Upholder and Sustainer of all things. When weary from the journey, hungry, and thirsty He asked the Samaritan woman for some water, He revealed Himself as the Omnipotent One who gives the Holy Spirit and as the Omniscient One who could reveal her entire life to her. As true Man He fell asleep in the ship. Then He stood up and rebuked the wind and the waves. He uttered His name and the soldiers fell to the ground, but immediately thereafter they bound Him, spit in His face, and mocked Him.

While He was speaking with Nicodemus here upon earth He was also in heaven. He spoke what He knew, for God alone knows the full meaning of that word "know." No man had ever been in heaven; thus no one could tell of heavenly things. But He, the Son of Man, had come down out of heaven. Yes, He was yet in heaven. When He spoke of heavenly things, He thus spoke of that which He had seen and was now seeing, about that which He knew, for it was His heaven and His glory. In Him God and man were brought together, for He was God and Man in one Person. That is why the angels could say at His birth: "On earth peace, good pleasure in men" (Luke 2:14). He knew God and His glory; He also knew man.

## THE NATURE OF MAN

In John 2:23-25 we find His opinion of man. These were not godless people who



rejected Him in open enmity. They recognized Him, for they had been convinced by His signs that He was the Messiah. They believed on His name. A merely superficial reading might cause us to conclude that these are the people of whom chapter 1:12 tells us that to them gave He the right to be children of God. But of these in the end of chapter 2 it is said: "But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men, and that he had not need that any should testify of man, for himself knew what was in man."

These people were *convinced*, but not *converted*. They believed on His name, but they had not received Him (John 1:12). They had seen His signs and their minds and their feelings had thereby been convinced that He was the Messiah. There were many such people then, and there are millions of them now. They do not doubt the Christian truths. Their minds and their feelings cause them to sense what is logical und sublime in them. And in this way they have accepted Christianity. This is just what the natural man wants, for in this way he is *above* the truth and *above* God. He has believed that which his mind and/or his feelings have judged to be right.

How different it is when the conscience comes into the light of God. It sees its lost and guilty condition. Then it does not think of judging God or that which God has revealed. There is only self-judgment and a crying to God that He might receive the sinner.

The natural man will certainly accept the necessity of new birth for those who worship idols or for those who live in gross sin. But that *everyone* must be born again, this the natural man cannot comprehend. Here were Jews, and even Pharisees, and such as wished the Lord well, who believed in His name - yes, even Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a teacher in Israel, who gave the Lord Jesus the highest honour that can be given to a man, "Thou art come a teacher from God, for none can do these signs that thou doest unless God be with him" (verse 2). The natural man cannot understand that even *such* must be born again (verse 7). But He who says this is the One who speaks that which He knows (verse 11), for He is the eternal God. And doesn't the fact that He says this not only of His enemies, but also of those who acknowledged Him, doesn't this make us realize how totally lost man is, how completely impossible it is for natural man to come into the presence of God?

### EXCEPT ANY ONE BE BORN ANEW HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Lord is here speaking of the kingdom as it was revealed *at that time*. The whole earth shall see it when it shall be revealed in glory by and by. And today in the Christian character (if I may use this term) of this kingdom, a different condition prevails.

But when the Lord Jesus came to earth the kingdom came *in Him*. And only those who recognized *Him*, who saw Him as He truly was - as the Son of God - only these saw the kingdom. These were only those who were born anew.

Has it never struck us that the brethren of the Lord Jesus did not believe on Him? Yes, in Mark 3:21 it even says: "And his relatives having heard of it went out to lay hold on him, for they said, He is out of his mind."



Didn't they know the Lord? Hadn't they witnessed His perfect holy life all those years in Nazareth, day after day, hour after hour? Shouldn't Mary and Joseph have told them of the angel that had announced His birth and of all the wonderful things that we find described, for example, in Luke 2? Hadn't they heard what their cousin John the Baptist was testifying of Him? Didn't they behold His wonders? Especially considering that John writes: "And we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father" (John 1:14); and considering how the heavens opened above Him and a voice out of the heavens said to Him: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight" (Mark 1:11); His relatives said that He was insane and they wanted to lay hold on Him! What evidence this is of the truth of the words of the Lord Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God!"

## BORN ANEW

This does not mean what Nicodemus thought it did, or that which so often is found in pagan philosophies and myths: that an old man is born again as a little child or that he is rejuvenated so that he becomes a young man again. A newborn child has the same nature as his parents - not a bit better. Seth, the son of fallen Adam, was after the image and in the likeness of his sinful father (Genesis 5:3). Job already said: "Who can bring a clean man out of the unclean? Not one!" (Job 14:4). And Romans 5:19 tells us that all Adam's descendants have been constituted sinners by his disobedience. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). Even if Nicodemus would have been born again ten times in the same way he had been born the first time - of sinful parents - nothing would have been changed as far as his relationship to God was concerned.

A man must be born *anew*, or from above, in an entirely new manner, from a new source of life. [1] The Lord Jesus tells us in verse 5 what this source of life is. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except any one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In the Scriptures water is the well-known type of the Word [2] of God as it is applied to man by the Holy Spirit. *Ephesians* 5:26 tells us this expressly, and likewise John 13:10 together with John 15:3.

Water cleanses that to which it is applied. The Word of God applied by the Holy Spirit cleanses the inclinations, the thoughts, and the actions of man. And at the same time the Spirit is using the Word to work out a new life in him - a completely different life that does not bear the character of its natural parents, but the character of Him who has brought about this life. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

The fact that the new birth takes place through the Word of God is confirmed again and again in Scripture. Paul writes the Corinthians that he had begotten them through the glad tidings (1. Corinthians 4:15). In James 1:18 we are told that "According to his own will begat he us by the word of truth." And Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth . . . being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God . . ." In 1. Thessalonians 1:5 too we find the Word and the Holy Spirit mentioned together.

The Lords is speaking here of the necessity of being born anew in order to see and to enter into the kingdom, for He is speaking with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. But from the way the Lord expresses Himself it is clearly evident that this is a general principle, just as we find almost everywhere in the writings of John. From the fall of man on to the end of the world the new birth is a necessity in order to enter into relationship with God.

## THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP

But when from verse 12 on the Lord begins to speak of heavenly things, there emerges yet another necessity. The Son of Man who is in heaven knows the glory of heaven, the dwelling place of Him who "is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). And if men wish to enter into the glory, then the problem of sin must first be solved. God, who has been so affronted by man's sin, must be satisfied in regard to sin. And man must be, cleansed from everything that would make him unfit to enter into the glory of God. How should man, who has sinned a thousandfold more than at the moment he was driven out of the earthly paradise *because of his sin*, enter into the *heavenly* paradise, into the dwelling place of God Himself?

How could this be made possible unless He, who is God and Man in one Person, complete a work whereby all that is necessary would be accomplished? "Thus must the Son of man be lifted up, that every one who believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal" (1. John 3:14.15).

Isn't this the greatest thing that God could give us?

Oh, there are many other things connected with this. We can cry, "Abba, Father," because the Holy Spirit bears witness together with the new life within us that we are children of God (Romans 8:15.16). We are joint-heirs with Christ and by and by we shall rule and judge the universe together with Him (Romans 8:17; Ephesians 1:10.11; 1. Corinthians 6:2.3; etc.). 1. John 3:1 puts us on the same level as the Lord Jesus in not being known by the world. Verse 2 tells us that when He is manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 1. John 4:17 says that as far as judgment is concerned, we upon this earth are already like He is in heaven. In verse 19 we find that we love, because we have the divine nature which is love, don't we? We get the victory over the world (1. John 5:4). We soon learn that Scripture takes up so many things.

But isn't fellowship with the Father and with His Son the highest privilege of all? According to the words of the Lord Jesus in John 3 we could not even see nor enter the earthly kingdom. We were lost sinners who could only look for eternal perdition, enemies of God, hateful in His eyes. We *know* the Father and the Lord Jesus (1. John 5:20) - no longer as creatures know their Creator, but as They truly are. We have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This fellowship will not merely be enjoyed in heaven by and by. No, now already while we are upon earth, indistinguishable outwardly from all the others about us who are under Satan's power, we have this fellowship.

When we realize this and make it a practical reality in our lives, won't our joy be full?

With warm greetings,

H. L. H.

No.     Footnotes of last chapter

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- [1]     [1] The Greek words, GENNETHEI ANOTHEN used here are not the same as PALINGENESIAS in Titus 3:5, where we are told of the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

# Fellowship with the Father and with the Son

Dear Friends,

We have seen that everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus not only receives forgiveness of sins, but also receives an entirely new life through new birth. He is born of God (John 1:13), and thereby possesses divine life, the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). This life in its richest form is called eternal life, and 1 *John* 5:20 says of the Lord Jesus: "He is the true God and eternal life." The Lord Jesus Himself is our life.

This fact has endless results for us. We are taken into favour in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6), and have been translated "into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Colossians 1:13). We stand, then, before God in all the acceptability of Him whom God calls "*The Beloved*." We have been identified with the Lord Jesus. "The world knows us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1). We are in this world even as He is (now in heaven - 1 John 4:17). "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). Compare also 1 John 4:12.13 with John 1:18. And 1 John 5:20 says that "The Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding *that we should know him that is true.*" This actually includes everything.

At the time of creation God gave Adam understanding. Therein lies the difference between man and beast. But the understanding of man was earthly, and therefore he could only understand earthly things. The angels also cannot know God, although they belong to a higher order of creation than man. They are mighty ministers who always stand ready to carry out the will of God; but they long to look into those things which have been announced to us (1 Peter 1:12).

And now to lost sinners who were His enemies, but who have accepted the Lord Jesus, has God given His Son as their new life. At the same time, in and through Him, they have received an understanding with which they *know* God. We can see His revealed glory, as the world soon shall see it, when the Lord Jesus comes in the clouds from heaven to appear on this earth again, when every eye shall see Him. But we shall see Him as He *is* - not only as He reveals Himself. We can already understand His thoughts now. We see His inward glory and it fills our hearts. We have feelings and thoughts in common with God. He opens His heart to us and speaks to us about the things which occupy His heart, and we can understand His words and can share His feelings. We have:

## FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST

What is it that occupies the heart of the Father? Isn't it the Son and all the glory of His person and His work? When the Son was here upon earth "all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell" in Him (Colossians 1:19). At the beginning of the Lord's public ministry (Luke 3:22) and also near the end (Matthew 17:5) the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." And after this came the work upon Golgotha!

What must this work have been for the Father! "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again" (John 10:17). Yes, the Father loves Him the One who voluntarily went to the cross, the One who died to glorify the name of God and to do His will, who to this end "bore our sins in his body" (1. Peter 2:24), was "made sin for us" (2. Corinthians 5:21), bore the judgment of God and was forsaken of Him, and who in all this was perfect - "Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God" (Hebrews 9:14).

The Father tells us, "This is My beloved Son," and we respond, "This is our beloved Saviour." The Father says, "Out of love to

Me (Exodus 21:5) He bore all the suffering upon Golgotha and completed the work." And we answer, "Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:2). And I personally say, "The Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

This same glorious Person that fills the heart of the Father also fills my heart. The Father shows us the glory of the Son, and we speak to the Father about everything that we have found in the Son. This is fellowship - common feelings, common interests. The same Person fills our hearts with pleasure and joy.

And isn't it so with the Son, too? He has revealed the Father to us. We have heard Him say, "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36), and now we too say, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15).

Isn't this the highest of all privileges - to understand God, yes, to know Him! Not only to enjoy His blessings and divine things, but to enjoy God Himself! To have fellowship in this with God the Father and God the Son! There is nothing more sublime. If we make this a reality in our lives, our hearts will be perfectly happy here on earth already. That is why the apostle says: "And these things write we to you that your joy may be full" (1. John 1:4).

## **GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS**

### **AT ALL**

This fellowship with the Father and His Son must, of course, be in agreement with the nature of God. God is light, and we thus must be in the light in order to have fellowship. We who "were once darkness" are "now light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8). We walk in the light, there having fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son is there as the basis or foundation for our position and as evidence of its legitimacy.

In 1. John 1:7 the question is not how we walk, but *where* we walk. When we speak about a walk in *agreement* with the light, it is clear that it is a question of our practical walk. But here it is a question of *where* we are walking. And everyone who is born again, who has been delivered from the authority of darkness and has been made fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12.13), is walking in the light. And there, as a proof that I am in my place, is the blood that cleanses from all sins. To use an illustration: As long as I work with my hands in a pail of

soapy water, they cannot get dirty. The power of the soapy water, which made my hands clean in the first place, makes it impossible that they become dirty. How can they become dirty as long as they are in a liquid that has the property of cleaning everything that is dirty. So the power of the blood, which reigns there in the light, is the proof that I am in agreement with that light.

But this does not change the fact that my old nature is still there. If I deny this, and thus say that I have no sin, I deceive myself, and the truth is not in me. And if I say that I have never done wrong things, i. e. have never sinned, I make God a liar, for God has said: "All have sinned."

1. John 1:10 does not say, "If we say that we do not sin." It says, "have not sinned," using the past tense. Scripture never supposes that it is a necessity for a believer to sin. We have a new nature which cannot sin, and we have a divine power within us, the Holy Spirit, who makes us fit to walk according to the new life. Our walk is in the light, where we can see clearly all that is not in agreement with the light.

Sadly enough we must all say, "For we all often offend" (James 3:2). But there is no excuse for this.

I hope we can consider this point in the next letter, so that this letter does not grow too long.

With warm greetings,

Your,

H. L. H.

# Christ Our Advocate

Dear Friends,

I'll continue now where I left off in my last letter, and will take up the point:

## IF A BELIEVER SINS

If we as believers sin, what happens then? Can this change our position as children of God? Shall we then be put out from the presence of God?

We have the answer in Hebrews 9 and 10. Christ has found an eternal redemption. "For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Our relationship as creatures to God has been settled for all time. We have been brought into the relationship of children to the Father. This relationship shall nevermore be altered.

But does our Father, then, overlook the sins of His children? Our Father is the God who is Light and in whom is no darkness at all. He is too holy to behold sin. He must be hallowed in them that come near Him. He can put up with the sins of unbelievers, yes, with those of the God-hating world - but He cannot put up with any sins in His children. How should He, the Holy One, be able to have fellowship with sin or with someone who has been defiled by sin. This is why our fellowship with the Father and with His Son is broken off instantly by every sinful thought, by every sinful or idle word, and by every independent - hence sinful - deed. And this fellowship is not restored until the sin is put away in a godly way. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from

all unrighteousness" (1. John 1:9). Only through confession and self-judgment are we cleansed.

## SELF-JUDGMENT IS THE ONLY WAY TO RESTORE FELLOWSHIP

This is a principle which we find throughout Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments. Let us take some typical examples from the Old Testament.

In Leviticus 4 and 5 and partly in chapters 6 and 7 we find the instructions for an Israelite who had sinned. Here it is not a question of a sinner being converted, although an evangelist might well use these chapters to present the principles of the gospel. These chapters view Israel as a people brought to God on the ground of the offering on the great day of atonement (Leviticus 16), and in the midst of whom God was dwelling on the ground of the continual burnt-offering (Exodus 29:38-46). And yet now that they were brought into God's presence as His people and could rest in the consciousness that they had been taken "into favour in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6; Leviticus 1 and Leviticus 7:8); now that they had received an object for their hearts (The meal-offering in Leviticus 2) while on the wilderness journey: and now that they could have fellowship with God by partaking of and



enjoying the same object (The peace-offering of thanksgiving in Leviticus 3 and Leviticus 7: 11-34); now the question of daily defilement had to be dealt with.

Leviticus 5: 1-4 lists for us first of all the three major groups of defilements occurring in daily life. Verse 1, if one fail to witness either against the evil or *for* the good. Omission of something, too, can be sin. Verse 2 speaks of defilements through things coming from without, thus about the consequences of not being practically separated from the things of this world. Verse 4 speaks of the results of not being sober and of lack of self-control - the defilements that come forth out of our own hearts. Verses 15 and on add thereto disposing of something that God has reserved to Himself for one's own self. And *chapter* 6:1-7 speaks of taking away or keeping something that belongs to another.

If an Israelite had transgressed, how could he be cleansed? There was only one way, and it is mentioned in *chapter* 5:5.6: "And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these, that *he shall confess* wherein he hath sinned; and he shall bring his trespass-offering to Jehovah for his sin which he hath sinned. ..." Other things could be added to this, such as to *more* than make good that which had been taken from the Lord or from one's brother (5:16; 6:5). But the first thing, the fundamental stipulation, was to confess the sin and to bring a trespass-offering.

Self-judgment - declaring one's own sins and thus one's own failures - is a necessary condition for all forgiveness and restoration (see, for example, 1. Corinthians 11:31 and 1. John 1:9). God wants to bring us to true self-judgment; that is, He wants us to judge not only the deed which we have committed, but our condition, as David did in Psalm 51:5-7. So He turns our eyes to the cross, that we might there learn what sin is. It is not that the blood of Christ must be applied to us again. This has happened once for all. But we should recognize how terrible sins - even the one that I just committed - are, and we do this by seeing what the Lord Jesus had to suffer upon the cross *for our sins* (the trespass-offering). In Leviticus 1-7, then, we find not the cross itself, but a looking back upon the cross. The cross itself as the foundation of our nearness to God is found in Leviticus 16 and Exodus 29.

Yes, only by looking at what the Lord Jesus had to suffer at Golgotha for our sins do we learn how horrible sins are. He had to be forsaken of God there, had to bear the judgment of God, had to die, because He "himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1. Peter 2:24). In this way we come to a true judging of ourselves and sorrow for what we have done. Let us never pass over sin lightly. And let us never forget that confession of guilt is the *only* way to restoration of fellowship - confession before God, but also before men, when men have been affected by what we have done.

## UNKNOWN SINS

But now we come to a great difficulty. Often we commit sins of which we are not aware, and sometimes even when we think we are doing something good. But ignorance does not make us innocent! "And if any one sin and do against any of all the commandments of Jehovah what should not be done, *and hath not known it*, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity" (Leviticus 5:17). That is why David prays in

Psalm 19:12: "Purify me from secret faults."

If we are to confess these sins and thus obtain restoration to fellowship with the Father, we must first be made aware of them. Therefore in these chapters of *Leviticus* again and again it says,

"If his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge\_\_\_\_ "

But who should do this? Who should make us aware of thoughts, words, and deeds which others know nothing about? And who should convict us when we feel we are in the right? For this, too, God's love has made provision. "My children, these things I write to you in order that ye may not sin; and if any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). May we read this verse well and meditate upon it.

### CHRIST OUR PATRON

The Greek word "parakletos," here translated as "patron," is used only in John 14, 15, 16 and in this passage. In John 14, 15 and 16 it refers to the Holy Spirit and is translated as "comforter." The footnote in the translation of J. N. Darby informs us that this word means, "One who carries on the cause of any one and helps him." Some translate this word in 1. John 2 by "advocate" or "solicitor".

The Lord Jesus now carries on this service in heaven *for* us. He does not carry it on before God, but before the Father, for as far as God is concerned, our case has been fully settled at the cross.

In a previous letter we have seen that the Lord Jesus is our High Priest, who intercedes with God for us in view of our weaknesses and circumstances here upon earth. Here we find out what the Lord Jesus is in view of the sins we commit daily.

He is our Advocate, our Patron with the Father when we sin. He does not become our Advocate only when we repent and confess our sins. No, the moment I sin He is my Advocate in heaven who represents me and my cause with the Father.

And who did we say this Patron is? He is Jesus Christ the Righteous. He measures up to the righteousness of the Father perfectly, and at the same time He is my righteousness (1. Corinthians 1:30). But not only that! He has completed a work that is so perfect that He is not only the propitiation for our sins, but is also the propitiation for the whole world. Thus both as to His person and His work He is completely acceptable before the Father - and no less so when He is my Patron, when I have sinned.

But in the foregoing we have seen that there is forgiveness *only* after confession. Therefore the second part of the ministry of the Lord Jesus as our Patron is that He occupies Himself with us and brings us to confession of our guilt.

### FOOTWASHING

On that night in which the Lord was taken captive He introduced this service in a

symbolic act. He was wanting to institute His Supper, the sign of fellowship with Him, the Saviour who has died, and all the members of the body of Christ (1. Corinthians 10:16.17). But how could there be fellowship between disciples who were defiled practically and a Lord who died expressly to destroy sin! This could only mean judgment for the defiled (1. Corinthians 11:26-32).

And so, in the full consciousness of who He was, but because His love went to the uttermost and at the same time to the end, the Lord took the place of a slave and washed their feet. And God used Peter's lack of understanding (for he didn't understand that what the Lord does is *always* good, and that we must *always* submit to it, even when we do not understand it) to make clear the meaning of footwashing to us. The disciples were clean because they had been completely washed (bathed - the new birth). But if they wanted to have part with Him, to enjoy practical fellowship, they also would have to be cleansed from the defilements contracted in their daily walk (John 13:8-11).

## PETER'S DENIAL

The gospels describe for us how the Lord actually carries on this service toward us. We find this, too, in the story of Peter. Peter had lost his practical fellowship with the Lord. No gross event had taken place, for he himself didn't know it and no one had made him aware of it. But when the Lord had said that all would be offended in Him, it had become obvious that Peter expected something of himself. Yes, he was convinced that *his* love and faithfulness were greater than anyone else's. "If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended" (Matthew 26:33). Peter could not have said this had he truly been enjoying fellowship with the Lord, for there the flesh and pride have no place.

The Lord used these words of Peter to warn him, but also to let him know that He, the Lord, knew all things. Peter should be able to remember this when he should have denied the Lord. Then he might be encouraged by the thought that, although the Lord had known this, He had not disowned him, nor would He now do this either.

What goodness and grace! What love! What care! Before Peter had sinned, the Lord was praying for him. Not that Satan might be kept from tempting him - no, Peter needed this fall so that he might get to know himself. The gentle, kind words of the Lord had not achieved this goal, and even this straightforward statement from the mouth of the Lord had no result. Therefore the Lord did not pray that the temptation might not come to Peter, but rather that his faith might not fail. And in order that Peter might not be too greatly discouraged after his fall, the Lord already now gave him a commission for the time after his restoration.

But Peter was so occupied with himself that nothing reached his conscience. Doubtless he was pained by those words of the Lord Jesus to himself personally: "Thus ye have not been able to watch one hour with me" (Matthew 26:40). Nevertheless they did not bring him to judge himself, nor did the fact that he too fled and left the Lord alone in the power of His enemies (Matthew 26:56). Yes, even when he denied the Lord, when he began to curse and to swear, "I know not *the man*" - this Peter who had said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" even then Peter did not turn back. Oh, how utterly wretched the human heart is!

But oh, wonderful love! In that moment while the servants were striking Him, buffeting Him, and spitting in His face (Matthew 26:67), the Lord turned around and looked at Peter. This look at that moment, together with the words of the Lord which the crowing of the cock brought to his remembrance, opened the eyes of Peter. "And he went forth without, and wept bitterly."

## RESTORATION

But even with this the service of the Lord was not ended. As first thing after His resurrection He sent a message in which He expressly mentioned Peter (Mark 16:7), and after that he had a special meeting with him (Luke 24:34). Scripture does not share with us that which was then discussed. The Lord has His special words for each of His own, words intended for him to whom they are spoken alone. But after this we find that meeting which for Peter was both so painful and also so blessed, that meeting described in John 21.

Should we not have said that this open humiliation of Peter was no longer necessary? When we really think about it, don't we think it was somewhat unloving? Peter *had* come to himself, hadn't he? He *had* wept bitterly, hadn't he?

But He, who together with a perfect knowledge of the human heart also has a perfect love for His own, and who shows this in perfect wisdom, knew what was really best for Peter. And when Peter, then, truly came to the point of self-judgment, and not only judged his deed, but himself - when he recognized that it took the omniscience of God to discover love for the Lord in him - then the Lord could fully restore him and commission him to shepherd His sheep and to feed His lambs and His sheep.

This is the ministry of the Lord as our Patron with the Father.

Where would we be if we did not have *Him* as our Patron? Every sinful thought, every idle word, every independent deed breaks off our fellowship. And this fellowship is not restored except by confession of the evil and by self-judgment.

Our Patron prays for me before I sin so that my faith might not fail. He speaks to me through His Word that I might be brought to self-judgment before I have committed one sinful deed. He looks at me at just the right moment and uses brothers, books, circumstances - yes, a cock if necessary - to bring His words to my remembrance. He leads me to self-judgment and confession, so that fellowship with the Father and the Son may be restored. He is my Patron, my Advocate with the Father. He does not rest until I have been fully brought back, until a complete restoration has taken place. Even now in the glory He serves me and washes my feet, so that I may have part with Him, so that my joy here upon earth may already be full.

With warm greetings,

Your friend,

H. L. H.

# Sanctification

Dear Friends,

With pleasure will I now speak with you about sanctification. But before we discuss this it will first be necessary to examine what the Word of God means by this expression. In colloquial usage a saint is usually understood to be a person without sins or shortcomings, or at least without known sins or shortcomings. For this reason believers who are misled by the so-called holiness teaching sometimes claim that they have made real progress in sanctification because they have not fallen into known sins.

As regards this latter thought, Paul says in 1. Corinthians 4:4 that he was conscious of nothing in himself, but that he was not justified by this. And in Psalm 19: 12 David prays that he might be purified from *secret* faults. See also 1. John 3:20 and Leviticus 5. When the Lord shall come He will "also both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of hearts; and then shall each have his praise from God" (1. Corinthians 4:5). If we see nothing wrong in ourselves any more, this is no proof at all that there is indeed nothing wrong there. But who is it that does not see many, many wrong things in himself when in the light of God he tests his life by the Word of God?

But besides this Scripture lets us see that purity and holiness are not the same thing. In Exodus 28:38 we read about the iniquity of the holy things; in 1. Chronicles 23:28 about the purifying of all holy things; and in Ephesians 1:4 and Colossians 1:22 that we should be holy and blameless. Holiness and purity are thus expressly differentiated.

If we follow up the many passages in Scripture that speak of "holy" and "sanctification," I believe it will become plain that sanctification means separation. Applied to us it means separation from all things whereto we previously were bound in order to be consecrated to God. It also means that we must be willing to bear the characteristics of this relationship with God and consecration to Him. See, for example, Numbers 6:1-11.

Nor does the criterion for holiness lie with us. "There is none holy as Jehovah, for there is none beside thee" (1. Samuel 2:2). "Thou only art holy" (Revelation 15:4). "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1. Peter 1:16). The Lord alone is the standard for holiness. Whoever tests himself by himself is foolish, just as Scripture says: "These, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are not intelligent" (2. Corinthians 10:12). And it is plain that God alone can judge how far we come up to the divine standard.

In John 17:17 the Lord Jesus prays: "Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth." Truth is what God has revealed about Himself and that which results from this - what our relationship to Him is and must be! This is why the Lord Jesus said of Himself that He was the Truth (John 14:6). He declared God, didn't He (John 1:18)? And so too the Word of God, wherein God has revealed Himself, is the truth.

Through the truth - through that which God has revealed about Himself and His claims upon man - one becomes separated from all things with which one was previously connected in order to belong to God.

In the Old Testament we do not yet find the full revelation of God. There He revealed Himself as Jehovah, who had an earthly temple in the midst of His people, where He desired to dwell. And so in the Old Testament sanctification is in connection with this. The mountain, the city of Jerusalem, the tabernacle, the temple, the priests, the Levites, yes, the entire people, the vessels for the service, the sacrifices, etc. all were sanctified. All were

in connection with Jehovah as the One who dwelt in the midst of His people. "Holiness becometh thy house" (Psalm 93:5). "I will be hallowed in them that come near me" (Leviticus 10:3).

But now God has been perfectly revealed in the Lord Jesus God manifested in flesh. Although the Lord was truly man, yet His ministry upon earth was characterized by this, that He revealed God. But when He had fully revealed God upon the cross, and had thereby at the same time brought about an eternal redemption, He arose from among the dead and took His place at God's right hand. And - John 17:4.5 tells us that He did this as Man.

As God He possessed eternal glory ere ever the world was. But now, as the One who had completed the work on the cross of Golgotha and who had perfectly glorified God, He requested that He might also receive this glory as Man. And now as the glorified Man He sits at God's right hand in glory - a Man in heaven.

It was the eternal purpose of God that we should be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be the Firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29). Here in John 17:17-19 the Lord Jesus says that He sanctifies Himself for His own. He separates Himself in heaven, to be there entirely for God, and He does this "that they also may be sanctified by truth." There we have the standard for our sanctification, and at the same time the means by which we are sanctified. It is Christ in the glory.

## **SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT**

As we read the New Testament we see that our sanctification is spoken of in two ways. On the one hand it is said that we are sanctified (1. Corinthians 6:11; 2. Thessalonians 2:13; 1. Peter 1:2; etc.) Therefore we are called saints in various places - for example, in the opening words of the epistles. This sanctification has taken place through the new birth. Then the Holy Spirit separated us from the world to which we belonged by giving us a new life, the divine nature (John 3; 2. Peter 1:4; Ephesians 4:24).

On the other hand, it is said that we must be sanctified practically (Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 5:25-27; etc.).



Both sides are combined in Revelation 22:11: "And he that is holy, let him be sanctified still."

We find this principle applied in various passages of Scripture. As we have seen in Romans 8:29, God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. In Ephesians 1:4.5 we find the same thought expressed in different words. 1. Corinthians 15:49 tells us: "And as we have borne the image of the one made of dust (Adam), we shall bear also the image of the heavenly one (the Lord Jesus)." And 1. John 3:2 tells us when this shall be entirely fulfilled: "We know that if he is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

On the other hand, in other passages of Scripture we are already identified with the Lord Jesus. In 1. John 3:1 the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. And in 1. John 4:17 it is said that we are in this world now already just as He is in the glory now.

The explanation for this is that everything is based upon the work of the Lord Jesus. As regards our position we already possess all things now (1. Corinthians 1:30). Through the new birth we are separated from the world and possess eternal life. Through one offering we have been made perfect, and we stand justified before God. We are sons and heirs of God and are in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians 2:6). As far as our souls are concerned, we possess all things. But our bodies do not yet have part in all things, and our old nature is still present. That is why our practical condition is not yet in accordance with the position into which we have been brought on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus.

Exhortations all occupy themselves with this, and this is the goal of all ministry: That we should now already realize practically that which we one day shall be (Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28). And what shall we be? Like Him, the glorified Man in heaven! Thus He is the standard for our practical walk, too. Therefore: "And every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (1. John 3:3; see also 1. Thessalonians 3:12.13).

And how can we practically become more like Him? By practically striving after it? By occupying ourselves with efforts to change our lives and to live more holy lives? In Romans 7 we find someone doing this. The conclusion is that he cries out: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of this body of death?"

God's Word shows us a better way. "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (2. Corinthians 3:18). By looking at the Lord Jesus as He now is, glorified in heaven, by reading all that is written about Him in God's Word, and meditating about it, our lives are changed. Then we become morally transformed after His likeness. That object wherewith our hearts are occupied will leave its imprint upon our lives.

Thus it is with sanctification, too. That which we shall one day be - conformed to our glorified Lord Jesus - is the standard for our sanctification. And looking upon



Him produces this sanctification. Now holiness in its nature and character is that which is manifest in us when Christ is revealed in us.

This is why the Lord Jesus says: "And I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth" (John 17:17-19). He is now sitting upon the throne of God as the glorified Man, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26), that we might be sanctified by looking upon Him. The truth, the Word of

God, describes Him to us. It presents Him in the glory of His Person. Our hearts become filled with all His perfections and with everything that is connected with Him. Then there is no longer any room in our hearts for the world and the things of the world. Thus our lives become more and more conformed to Him morally, and more and more separated from all here below in order to be consecrated to God alone. This is sanctification.

And on this way we may count upon the faithfulness of God. "But to him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen" (Jude 24.25. See also Matthew 19:26).

With warm greetings,

Your friend.

H. L. H.

# The Value of Reading the Word of God

Dear Friends,

I would like to ask you whether you read your Bible regularly. I don't mean just reading the Bible together at mealtimes when the whole family is together, but whether you read it, too, for yourselves when you are alone. It is of greatest importance that you do this. When a believer does not do this he does not remain in intimate fellowship with the Lord and he will never be truly happy.

We can never overestimate the value of the Bible, for it is God's Word. Only through the Word do we get to know God and His thoughts. In the Old Testament God revealed Himself through the Word He spoke and gave to be written down. Therein He told who He was, what He had done, what He would do, and how man should serve Him. Then the Son came to earth and declared God (John 1:18). But we also know all things about the Son - His birth, life, and death, His words and deeds - through the Word *alone*. And God the Holy Spirit, too, who now is upon earth and who indwells all who believe, reveals all things to us through the Word.

So it is unnatural if a believer does not love the Bible. His growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is closely connected with his love for the Word and with his use of the Word.

## THE NEW BIRTH

When we read, for example, Psalm 119, we see that every phase of the spiritual life of the Psalmist is connected with the Word.

First of all we see that the new life is by the word (verse 93): "I will never forget thy precepts; for by them thou hast quickened me." See also verses 25, 37, 40, 50, 88, 107, 116, 144, 149, 154, 156, 159, and 175. This is also stated expressly in other passages. "According to his own will begat he us by the word of truth" (James 1:18). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God" (1. Peter 1:23). The Lord Jesus, too, says this in John 3:5: "Except any one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." From Ephesians 5:26 and other passages it is evident that water in Scripture is a picture of the Word applied to man by the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God brings the conscience of sinful man into the light of God. Through this man sees who he is and condemns himself, confessing his sins before God. That is conversion. But through this self-judgment the heart of man is cleansed and the Holy Spirit through the Word produces in him a new, a divine life.

It follows that when we speak to unbelievers to bring them the gospel, we must know the Word of God. Our own words will never bring a man to conversion. God's Word alone does that. "So faith then is by a report, but the report by God's Word" (Romans 10:17).

But the Word of God is also

## THE FOOD FOR THE NEW LIFE

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! more than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103). “Sweeter than honey and the dropping of the honeycomb” (Psalm 19:10). The Lord Jesus says: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God’s mouth” (Matthew 4:4). See also Hebrews 5:12-14 and 1. Peter 1:25 to 1. Peter 2:2.

The new life that exists through the Word needs a food that corresponds to this life. This food is the Lord Jesus as the Saviour who has died (John 6:56), as the One who walked here upon earth as a holy, true Man (John 6:33 – 35), and as the glorified Lord in heaven, the old corn of the land (Joshua 5:11). But we only find Him in the Word. In the Old Testament we see Him in all the types and shadows and in the prophecies of the prophets. In the New Testament we see Him manifested perfectly both in His life upon earth and His death in the gospels, the Acts, and the epistles; as well as the glorified Lord in the Acts, the epistles, and in the Revelation.

Is it any wonder that the spiritual lives of many are weak and sick, and that they can only stand milk, and no solid food (Hebrews 5:12-14), when they do not come to the ministry meetings nor to Bible readings, and when they do not even search the Word regularly themselves?

The only way we can grow and have a healthy spiritual life is if we have nourishment regularly.

## THE WORD OF GOD IS OUR GUIDE

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his path? by taking heed according to thy word ... Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee ... Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:9.11.105).

The Lord told Joshua: “Only be strong and very courageous, that thou mayest take heed to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart from thy mouth; and thou shalt meditate upon it day and night, that thou mayest take heed to do according to all that is written therein; for then shalt thou have good success in thy ways, and then shalt thou prosper” (Joshua 1:7,8).

In view of the great dangers threatening, Paul in Acts 20:32 commits the Ephesian elders “to God, and to the word of his grace.” To Timothy he writes of “the sacred letters, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation” (2. Timothy 3:15).

How should we know what sin is if we do not know the Word of God? Ignorance does not constitute us innocent (Leviticus 5:17). How can we know what we should do and what is according to the thoughts of God, if we do not search the Word in which He tells us everything? How should we know how to decide certain kinds of cases and what way we must walk if we do not know the Word!

“The entrance of thy words giveth light, giving understanding unto the simple ... Thy

commandments make me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed thy precepts" (Psalm 119:130.98-100).

## THE WORD IS OUR WEAPON

"The sword of the Spirit, which is God's word" (Ephesians 6:17), "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me" (Psalm 119:42).

How the Lord Jesus used this sword! Every attack of Satan was met with an "It is written" (Matthew 4:4.7.10). And the result was that Satan had to flee. He had no might against the Word of God.

But the Lord also used the Word against men: "Is it not written" (John 10:34)? "What then is this that is written" (Luke 20:17)?

"For the word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating to the division of soul and spirit, both of joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is not a creature unapparent before him; but all things are naked and laid bare to his eyes, with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12.13).

This is the only weapon that we have both for defence against Satan and the world as well as for offense. We must never forget that it is the Word of the living God, and that therefore it has power in itself. When we use it this divine power will be felt by everyone against whom we use it. Even if the individual against whom we are speaking should not own it, but should remain outwardly unmoved or inimical, yet his conscience will convict him that that which has been said is true.

Once, when I was still very young, I proved this very thing. I was distributing tracts on the train, and a gentleman began to attack me on the subject of Christianity. I took my Bible and read aloud a text that answered his assertion. When I had done this two or three times, he cried out: "Sir, I'm not debating against the Bible, but against you." I answered that the Bible was my sole authority. He tried again once or twice, then angrily turned around and began reading. No one is able to resist the Word of God.

About the same time a similar incident occurred. However that time I did not take my Bible, but began to debate with the man. It didn't take long before I felt that I had been beaten!

Some years ago I was standing on the platform of a very crowded train. One of the travellers was busy complaining about the hard times and maintaining that they would never get better. I joined the conversation and said that I knew for certain that a better time would come one day, and that I would experience it. Thereupon I read him a few texts of Scripture. He laughed at me and mocked, whereupon I read him a few more passages about the condition of man and of the world, but also about the salvation to be found in Christ. He turned around and began to chat with someone else. However, about fifteen minutes later he asked me to go with him.

And in a corner with tears in his eyes he asked me for a Bible - for he wanted so much to have that of which I had been reading.

## THE MEANS FOR CLEANSING

God's Word also is the only means by which we are cleansed and sanctified. "Even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it, in order that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:25.26). "Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Only by the continual application of the Word of God to our walk and ways are our lives cleansed, and only thus do we become separated from all evil. Our Advocate with the Father washes our feet through the Word (1. John 2:2; John 13); but it is our responsibility to allow our feet to be washed.

"Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). "Moreover, by them is thy servant enlightened; in keeping them there is great reward. Who understandeth his errors?" (Psalm 19:11.12).

Furthermore, the Word is also the only

## TOUCHSTONE FOR PRACTICE AND TEACHING

"I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all my ways are before thee" (Psalm 119:168). "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies" (Revelation 2 and 3). We must test everything that takes place in the assembly, both as to what is taught as well as what is practiced, by what the Spirit says to the assemblies, thus by the Word. "And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge" (1. Corinthians 14:29).

But we must also test our own walk and our own ideas by the Word. Our own thoughts have absolutely no value. That which God's Word says alone is authoritative. See, for example, Leviticus 5:14-19.

In Acts 17:11 the Jews at Berea are said to have been more noble than those of Thessalonica because they tested the words of the apostle Paul by the Word of God. In 1. Corinthians 15:3.4 the apostle himself declares the Scriptures to be the source of his teaching.

"Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work" (2. Timothy 3:16.17).

## OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION

"Thou hast enjoined thy precepts, to be kept diligently" (Psalm 119:4). "In keeping them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:11). "If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his

love" (John 15:10). "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous" (1. John 5:3).

We see from this what value God places upon the knowledge of and obedience to the Word of God. Should it not go without saying, then, that we should ask: "Lord, what wilt Thou that I should do?"

The first sin was disobedience to the Word of God. Yes, sin is doing something or failing to do something without thinking of the fact that God has authority over us. It is lawlessness (1. John 3:4). All that we thus do without inquiring as to the will of God and submitting ourselves to it is sin.

What a life of obedience we see in the Lord Jesus! He came to earth to do God's will (*Hebrews 10:7*). For this He had to learn obedience (*Hebrews 5:8*), for obedience was something strange to Him, the eternal God. But here upon earth He could say: "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (*John 8:29*). "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work" (*John 4:34*).

What must it have been for God to see in this world, where men did only their own will, this Man who did only God's will, although His own will was perfect and holy!

And what must it be for God when even now He finds men whose desire and joy it is to serve Him, and who therefore diligently search His Word in order to learn to know Himself and His will!

And what great practical value there is for ourselves in reading the Word and thereby learning to know it. Our hearts become happy as we see the glory of the Lord in it, along with all that which the love of God has prepared for us. We become better acquainted with it and thus learn to understand the thoughts of God all the more. And at the same time we receive an arsenal full of weapons which we can use in defending ourselves against the attacks of Satan as well as in making the attack ourselves - when we speak to someone about his soul's salvation.

And should someone complain that his mind is like a sieve, retaining nothing - well, although a sieve may not hold the water, in any case it becomes clean by the passing through of the water. The water takes away all the uncleanness. So it is with the Word of God, too. But don't only read the Word - *meditate upon it, too*. Gratefully use some of the good expositions that can be secured. But test everything by the Word itself. And never let a commentary take the place of the Word itself. That would be a very bad habit, indeed.

"My son, if thou receivest my words, and layest up my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and thou apply thy heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after discernment and liftest up thy voice to understanding; if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hidden treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of Jehovah, and find the knowledge of God" (*Proverbs 2:1-5*).

With warm greetings,

Your friend.

H. L. H.



# Prayer

Dear Friend,

In my last letter I pointed you to the reading of God's Word. Now I would like to ask how your prayer life is? These two things are of inestimable significance, especially since they are closely connected with one another. If one only reads the Word, neglecting prayer, then cold pride and conceit will be the result. If one only prays, neglecting the Word, then fanaticism and all the blindness that is ever connected therewith will be the result, for the thoughts of God will not be known. Indeed, the fact that one does not search God's Word is the evidence that one has no interest in the thoughts of God and in *His* interests. The prayer life will then be dominated by self-will, and the will be at the centre of all - be that "I" ever so piously disguised, as, for example, by being zealous for evangelism or for other things. Only when prayer goes together with serious study of God's Word will it be to the great blessing of the spiritual life.

In Scripture too, then, great emphasis is put upon prayer. The Lord Jesus began His ministry with prayer (Luke 3:21). The assembly was formed and three thousand men were converted after a ten-day-long prayer meeting (Acts 1:13.14). The great work among the heathen began in connection with prayer (Acts 13:2.3). And according to God's Word the entrance of the gospel into Europe was likewise closely connected with prayer (Acts 16:9-13). The twelve apostles gave up a part of the work they had been doing until then, that they might give themselves up "to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). When we read the Acts it seems as though Paul spent all his time preaching, but when we read the epistles it seems as though he did nothing but pray all the time. See, for example, Romans 1:9.0; 1. Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:16; Ephesians 3:14; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3.9; 1. Thessalonians 1:2. And God's Word tells us to be "praying at all seasons" (Ephesians 6:18), and "Pray unceasingly" (1. Thessalonians 5:17), besides what we are told in scores of other passages.

## PRAYER IS THE SIGN OF THE NEW BIRTH

Praying is not the same thing as "saying a prayer." Thousands of prayers are said daily - just as once there was an account of a worship service in an American newspaper which read: "His was the best sounding prayer that was ever directed at a Boston congregation." So too the Lord Jesus said of the Pharisees that they "as a pretext make long prayers" (Mark 12:40).

Only true believers can really pray. Prayer is the expression of the new life which is of God, and which is conscious of its dependence upon its Source. This does not mean that God never answers the prayers of an unbeliever! God hears the croaking of the young ravens and gives them their food, and so God sometimes also answers unbelievers if they are upright in their prayers. We have only to think of Genesis 21:17 and Jonah 1:14.

But, although Paul as a Pharisee had doubtless spoken hundreds of prayers, and had without doubt spoken them in uprightness, when he had been converted the Lord told Ananias: "Behold, he is praying" (Acts 9:11). That was the evidence that he

had been changed, the sign that he had received a new life, one that was dependent upon God.

The new life feels its dependence and expresses it just as a newborn baby does - sometimes in cries unintelligible and unattractive to its parents. But God understands the incoherent and often unwise pleas. To His fatherly heart they are the sign that this new life is conscious of its dependence, and according to the riches of His fatherly love He gives good things to the one praying.

## **PRAYER IS NOT ONLY FOR EXPERIENCED BELIEVERS**

But if young converts do not yet know *how* they should pray, or whether that which they ask for is good or not, should they not then wait before praying?

The Thessalonians had only been saved a few months when Paul wrote his first epistle to them. Yet he says therein: "Pray unceasingly" (5:17). More than that! He, the great apostle, through whose preaching they had been converted, and who was now instructing them in the thoughts of God, laid great value upon their intercession. "Brethren, pray for us" (5:25)!

From this we can see what great value prayer has and how much God appreciates it. Could there be parents who would not want their children to speak to them nor ask them for anything because the children had not yet learned to speak properly, or might sometimes ask for things which they as parents would not be able to give them, because these things would be harmful to the children? And so God is delighted when His newborn children approach Him in confidence to make known to Him all their needs. It is His joy to answer these prayers, and though His love will not always permit Him to grant every request, because things harmful to the one praying may have been requested, yet He does grant His peace to the heart of the one praying. "Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6.7).

## **THE CERTAINTY OF ANSWER TO PRAYER**

Romans 8:31.32 tells us that God is for us, and that He who has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, shall with Him grant us all things. And the Lord Jesus says in John 16:27, "The Father himself has affection for you."

If the Almighty God is for us and loves us and wants to give us all things, what a power prayer then is!

But this isn't all! In John 14:13.14 the Lord Jesus empowers us to pray in His name and promises also that He will answer such a prayer. In John 16:23 He adds, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he *will* give you." There is, then, not a single limitation, not one uncertainty.

This also is plain when we trace the life of the Lord Jesus in Scripture. In Psalm

109:4 the Lord said that in His life upon earth He was prayer. This characterized Him. He was true man, and true humanity is dependent upon God. God the Creator has not created man as an independent being. Thus, if man is not dependent upon God, he is dependent upon the devil.

In the Lord Jesus we find true, perfect humanity, and therefore, too, we find complete dependence. In Isaiah 50:4 He says, speaking of God: "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed." And in the gospels we find His prayer life.

In Luke the Lord is presented to us especially as the true Man, as the Son of man. In this gospel we find the Lord praying eight times, sometimes for a whole night (in chapters 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18.29; 11:1; 22:41; and 23:34). Seven times we see Him praying during His public ministry before the cross, and once while dying upon the cross. It is wonderful to consider the circumstances in which the Lord prayed. They are full of important teaching for us, and our hearts are filled with adoration. But I am not wanting to speak about this now. I only want to point out that the Lord Jesus, who prayed so much, could say, "But I knew that thou always hearest me" (John 11:42). Every prayer of His was answered - even if it was a question of raising from the dead one who had been buried four days already - and the Lord Jesus knew this beforehand.

Twice God testified of Him: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight," and both instances are connected with

the Lord Jesus praying (Luke 3:21.22; Luke 9:35; compare with Matthew 17:5). The Lord Jesus said, "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work" (John 4:34), and, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:29). This is why God could answer every one of His prayers, for everything that He requested was fully according to the thoughts of God and had the glorification of God in view.

When we, therefore, pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, it is certain that our prayer will be answered; for our prayer comes to God as if it were a prayer of the Lord Jesus Himself, and this is always answered.

## **WHAT IS PRAYER IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS?**

We might certainly well ask ourselves this question, now that we have seen what results such praying has. It means to pray to God in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Is this to say that we utter a prayer in which we ask for everything that we feel necessary, and then at the end say, "We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus?" Oftimes this is what people think and do, to be sure, but this does not make it right.

Praying in the name of the Lord Jesus means praying *in His place*, vested with His authority and His rights. But then our prayer must bear the characteristics of the praying of the Lord Jesus, too.

If someone goes to a bookseller and asks for a Bible in the name of someone whom the book dealer knows to be a devout Christian, the bookseller will at once be inclined to believe him. But if he should ask for a deck of cards or for some trashy novels, the bookseller would not believe him. Why? Because the bookseller knows the believer, he knows that he would not be ordering such things, and thus that the person making the request is not coming in the name of the believer.

Thus, too, prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus must bear the characteristics of the praying of the Lord Himself - perfect dependence! - and thus prayer that has the glorification of God in view and is in perfect accord with His will.

## CONDITIONS FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

In John 15:7 the Lord says: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall come to pass to you."

Here we find the broadest assurance that God will grant whatever is prayed for. No exception is made at all. Can there be more than "*what ye will?*" "Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall come to pass to you!"

But this assurance follows upon, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." That is thus the condition which must be met if we want to be certain that our prayers will be answered. If we abide in the Lord Jesus, we shall ever become more conformed to Him. If His words *abide* in us, our feelings, the things wherein we are interested, and that which we want will be in harmony with His feelings, His interests, and His will. And we know that these all are in perfect harmony with the will of God. And so this same promise is also given in John 16:23-27, "because ye have had affection for me, and have believed that I came out from God."

Hebrews 11:6 gives us yet another condition. "He that draws near to God must believe!" "But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting. For he that doubts is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed about; for let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord" (James 1:6.7).

God answers faith! How can He answer a prayer if the one praying does not even have enough confidence in Him to believe that God will do what he has asked?

In Matthew 21:21.22 the Lord says the same thing. But He adds that there must be evidence of faith. A tightrope artist once walked a rope which spanned the Niagara Falls. He went across again with a wheelbarrow and still again with a life-sized doll. Then he asked the spectators whether they believed that he could carry a living man across, too. They all cried out, "Yes!" But when he called for a volunteer whom he might carry across, no one had that courage.

This is why the Lord Jesus does not only speak about faith, but also of the *evidence* that one has faith, evidence manifested by *saying* to the mountain, "Be thou taken away and be thou cast into the sea."

## HINDRANCES TO ANSWERED PRAYER

How does it then happen that so many prayers are not answered? Scripture gives us various reasons.

Daniel 10 shows us that prayers which are good still are sometimes not immediately answered. The devil tries with all his might to prevent their being answered. Ultimately he cannot do this, but if God allows it he is well able to slow down a direct answer. And God sometimes permits this in order to put our faith and our perseverance to the test.

However there can be reasons that lie with us why God cannot answer our prayers. In Isaiah 59:2 Israel is told: "Your sins have hid his face from you, that he doth not hear." The Psalmist says: "Had I regarded iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not hear" (Psalm 66:18). And in 1. John 3:21.22 we read: "If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments, and practice the things which are pleasing in his sight."

Scripture mentions various things by name, things that cause our hearts to condemn us, and that keep our prayers from being answered.

In Mark 11:22-26 the lack of a readiness to forgive is mentioned (see also Ephesians 4:32). Our approach to God is based on the fact that God has forgiven us all our sins in Christ. How then can we have boldness if we do not from our hearts forgive *everything* that another has done to us?

James 4:3 says: "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask evilly, that ye may consume it in your pleasures."

If we ask God for things in order to gratify the lusts of our hearts, the desires of the old nature - how can God give us these things? God hates the old nature and has judged it upon the cross (Romans 8:3). He calls upon us to reckon ourselves dead to sin (Romans 6:11), and to put to death our members which are upon the earth (Colossians 3:5-17). "But they that are of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts" (Galatians 5:24). Doesn't asking for these things indicate already that the words of the Lord Jesus have not been abiding in us (John 15:7)? And doesn't it indicate that our inclination is completely contrary to that of the Lord Jesus and to the thoughts of God?

1. Peter 3:1-7 lists yet another reason. Relationships in the family life (between husband and wife, between parents and children, between the children one with the other) can be such so as to hinder the answering of prayers. How can we have boldness toward God when everything is not in order in our families, when there are still questions there that have not been settled!

## **PRAYING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL**

Yes, we must first judge ourselves in the light of God, and confess all that is not good to the Lord, and insofar as men also are concerned, before men, thus cleansing ourselves by self-judgment. Then we shall obtain boldness before God.

But then, if we want to be sure to receive that which we request, we must ask according to His will. And how do we know what the will of our Father is? He has shared His thoughts with us in His Word, and, when we walk in daily fellowship with

Him through the Holy Spirit we will get to know His thoughts from His Word. This is why daily study of His Word is so important. How can God, for example, answer a prayer in which something is requested that He has already given long ago - for example, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whereas Scripture expressly teaches that the Holy Spirit has been poured out and now dwells upon earth in the assembly and in each believer individually! Or if we should ask that He deliver us from indwelling sin, when He already has judged this in the Lord Jesus upon the cross (Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21)!

Through the Word and in daily fellowship with the Lord we learn to know the will of God. And thus we can pray according to His will, so that we can have the assurance that our prayers will be answered.

### **PRAY UNCEASINGLY**

But then, can only well-advanced believers who have thoroughly studied God's Word pray?

Fortunately not! Would parents tell their child that he might not ask them for anything until he were grown up, because the child still spoke awkwardly and sometimes asked for foolish things? Oh, no! They are glad when their child comes to them with his requests. That is evidence that the child is convinced that they are his parents, that he cannot do without them, that he has confidence in them, too, and that he is convinced that they love him and care for him - though perhaps not fully conscious of all this.

God our Father listens with deep joy to our voices when we come to Him. Are we not His children? Of Paul, who had just been converted, He said, "Behold, he is praying." He had the apostle Paul write to the newly converted Thessalonians: "Pray unceasingly!" And this great apostle, through whose preaching millions probably had been saved by that time already, and who had received special revelations by which the full counsels of

God had been communicated to him, yes, who had been in the third heaven and in paradise had heard unspeakable things (2. Corinthians 12:2-4) - this apostle was so convinced of the power of the prayers of these new converts that he requested of them: "Brethren, pray for us" (1. Thessalonians 5:25).

The clearest evidence that a believer is growing is undoubtedly when he sees more and more the importance of prayer - yes, that without prayer everything is worthless.

God our Father tells us: "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." And if we should perhaps ask for foolish things then, so that His love cannot grant them to us, yet "The peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ

Jesus" (Philippians 4:6.7).

May the Lord grant that you and I see the value of prayer more and more, and that we ever use this infinite privilege more and more. How happy our hearts will be then, and what a testimony will flow forth from our lives.

With warm greetings,

Your friend in the Lord.

H. L. H.



# Are You Baptized?

Dear Friends,

I had wanted to write you about the Lord's Supper this time but am thinking of something else yet that must come before the Lord's Supper: Have you been baptized?

This is a very important question! God's Word says: "He that believes and is *baptised* shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Thus he that is not baptized is not saved! This is also stated in other passages of Scripture. So, for example, in 1. Peter 3:21 it is said: "Which figure also now saves you, even baptism."

This thought perhaps sounds strange to you and contradictory to what I wrote in my first letters. This is because people often understand "salvation" to mean only "getting to heaven" or "being converted and having forgiveness of sins." But in the Holy Scriptures the word "salvation" is also connected with another thought. This can be seen very clearly in Acts 2:40: "Be saved from this perverse generation." Here it cannot possibly mean "getting to heaven" or receiving "forgiveness of sins." See also Romans 10:9.10.

Baptism has no bearing upon getting to heaven. Our eternal relationship with God and the place where we shall be for eternity depends upon whether or not we have confessed our sins before God and believe in the Lord Jesus. The murderer upon the cross never was baptized, and yet the Lord said to him, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." And thousands after this have been converted upon their deathbeds and have gone to be with the Lord Jesus without ever having been baptized. But baptism is of extraordinary significance for our position upon earth.

## WHAT DOES BAPTISM SIGNIFY?

Baptism was something generally known to the Jews. By what was known as "proselyte baptism" a Gentile separated himself from his people and took his place with Israel. We see this thought also with John the Baptist. He preached that judgment upon the Jews was at the door (Luke 3:7-9; Luke 16-21). Those who received his word were baptized and in this way separated themselves from the unbelieving people. The Lord Jesus let Himself be baptized in order to make Himself one with the believing remnant. He entered in by the door to the fold of the sheep (John 10:1-3).

This same thought we also find expressly in so-called Christian baptism.

In Matthew we find the Lord presented as the King of Israel. When He sent His disciples out to preach, He therefore said to them: "Go not off into the way of the nations, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

But Israel rejected its King. Then the Lord made known that the kingdom of heaven would not yet be established in its glory, but in an anomalous form - namely, that the King would be absent and that the enemy would still have power to be active in it

(Matthew 13). But at the same time the Lord now showed that the kingdom would not be limited to Israel alone. The field is the world and the sower sows in this field (verses 31 and 38). When the Lord, then, had definitely been rejected and crucified, He called His disciples together in Galilee, far from Jerusalem. There He commissioned them now to preach the gospel to *all* nations. Those who receive the gospel must no longer be added to Israel, but must be baptized to the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. For now that the kingdom has come in the person of the King, the triune God has been perfectly revealed, and there can be no other way but to come to *Him* - to the triune God. But because God is known upon earth only through the Lord Jesus, Scripture also often says that believers are baptized to His name.

## **BAPTIZED TO THE CRUCIFIED LORD JESUS**

1. Corinthians 10:2 shows plainly what it means to be “baptized to” someone. It means to be joined to someone, to come into the same position as this one. The Israelites were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. So we have been baptized to the name of the Lord Jesus, too (Acts 19:5, etc.). But we were not baptized to the living, glorified Lord in heaven. Certainly, we are linked up with this Lord. We can already have fellowship with Him now and in eternity shall share in His glory, in all that He shall possess in virtue of His work upon the cross.

But this world does not know Him as the Risen One, the Glorified One. It last saw Him when He died on the cross and was buried. For the world He is that One who died that despicable death upon the cross and was buried - yes, the One who was slain by the world.

Now, we have received this Crucified One. God has let us recognize that salvation can only be found in His name, in the name of this Rejected One (Acts 4:11.12). We have received forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Him. In eternity we shall share His place in glory. Now we want to share with Him, too, His place here upon earth - the place of rejection.

And this is according to the well thought out purposes of God. “If indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:17).

## **THE WHOLE WORLD LIES IN THE WICKED ONE (1 JOHN 5:19)**

God created Adam in innocence and purity. But Adam did not obey God and became a sinner. His descendants united together to become great, to have power against God, and to undo the results of the curse upon the earth. Cain built the first city. His descendants were inventors who made life more pleasant. And ultimately men joined together so that unitedly they might be great and mighty (Genesis 11:4). And so the world - society organized by man - came into being.

God occupied Himself with this world. He warned it through Noah. After the Flood He made a new beginning upon a cleansed earth. And when mankind anew turned away from God and turned to idolatry, He took Abram apart, spoke with him, separated his seed from all other peoples, gave them His laws and ordinances,

established a covenant with them, and brought them into His land, the land of Emmanuel.

We know the outcome of this. They too turned away from God, although God spoke to them through His chastenings, through judges, through kings, and through prophets.

Then God sent His Son. He wanted to forgive their sins, and offered reconciliation in the Lord Jesus. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences" (2. Corinthians 5:19). But the world, instead of accepting the outstretched hand of God, rejected the Lord Jesus. "We will not that this man should reign over us!" The reason He was condemned was because He was the Son of God. They crucified Him, and as far as their responsibility is concerned, they murdered Him in a cowardly way.

At the cross the whole world was united against the Lord. Herod and Pilate became friends. The high priest and the scribes, the highest religious power on earth, joined together with the Roman empire, the highest civil and political power. The superscription above the cross was written in the three world languages. And all accepted Satan's direction in their battle against God.

There at the cross the whole condition of the world became manifest, not that alone of those men who were present there, but that of humanly organized society. All the resources that society had were used in the battle against God. Now there is no more grace for the world. After the cross God has nothing more to offer. Judgment alone is this world's portion, and God will presently execute this unsparingly. The Revelation describes this to us in chapters 6 through 20.

If God has not yet executed this judgment it is because He is still offering His grace to individuals. He commands these individuals that they be converted, and calls to them, "Come, be reconciled to Me."

## THE CROSS OF CHRIST

At the cross God looked down upon the world in anger. How could He do otherwise when such contempt and reviling was being inflicted upon His Son! But there was one place upon earth on which He looked down with love and perfect pleasure. That was the cross with that One who hung thereupon. And there where the whole world with all its components united against that One upon the cross, God left no doubt that He was on the side of the Crucified One.

Such has been the situation on earth since the cross. On the one side is the world which has slain Christ and which does not know Him other than as the One crucified and buried; on the other side is the cross and those who are associated with it.

God still proffers His grace to individuals - but *only* through Jesus. God has raised Him up from the dead and has made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Only through faith in the Crucified One and through receiving Him as Lord is salvation, and thus escape from judgment, made possible. "We preach Christ crucified, to

Jews an offence, and to nations foolishness; but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks. Christ God's power and God's wisdom" (1. Corinthians 1:23.24).

Now you have received the Lord Jesus as the only basis upon which a sinner can approach God and receive forgiveness of his sins. But you have also received Him as your Lord. And you will be associated with Him forever, and will share in all the glorious results of that work upon the cross.

But what does this mean for your life upon earth? It certainly means that you recognize that the world was wrong when it crucified the Lord. It means, if I can so put it, that you have crossed over from the world's side to the side of the Lord Jesus, to the family of God. But this must be confessed openly. It is not enough that you have done this in your heart! It must also be outwardly manifested that you have openly parted from the world. This is why it was not enough that Israel took shelter behind the blood of the lamb. They also had to leave Egypt. And only after they had crossed the Red Sea does God's Word say that they were redeemed, that they were saved. And we have seen in 1. Corinthians 10 that the passage through the Red Sea is used as a picture of baptism.

So through baptism we must publicly take our place at the side of the Lord Jesus, that One rejected and crucified by the world. This is the individual's true confession of faith. For thereby we say openly that we recognize the crucified Jesus as our Lord, and that we choose His side over against the world. "Are you ignorant that we, as many as have been baptised unto Christ Jesus, have been baptised unto his death?" (Romans 6:3).

And God, then, in His government sees us as those who have crossed over from this world, which lies under judgment, to the Saviour who died, who for us endured the judgment. There is then no more judgment there, but rather deliverance from the power of sin, the world, Satan, and the law. This is why Ananias said to Saul: "Arise and get baptised, and have thy sins washed away, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

Were the sins of Saul not washed away then? As far as his eternal relationship toward God was concerned; they surely were. Had he died before his baptism he would certainly have gone to heaven. Ananias calls him brother, doesn't he? But as far as the government of God upon earth was concerned, they were not yet put away. Publicly he still belonged to the world which is under judgment

That is why it says in 1. Peter 3 that baptism, the counterpart of the water of the Flood, now also saves you. Just as Noah, through the waters of judgment, went over from the place of judgment to the place of God's good pleasure (the cleansed earth) (Genesis 8:21); so we go through the waters of baptism, which speak of the judgment of God upon sin at the cross, to that place upon which God's eye rests with pleasure, that place with Jesus who died. This is why Peter says in Acts 2:40: "Be saved from this perverse generation," and why those who had accepted his word were baptized.

And now I'll again ask you, Have you been baptized? If not, then you are not yet a Christian upon earth, for you have not yet publicly taken the Christian standpoint in the only way that God's Word recognizes. And since you have learned to know the

Lord Jesus as the One through whose death you have received forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and as the One with whom you will forever be united in the eternal glory, won't you then also confess publicly here on earth that you are associated with Him? - even though this is a place that is despised and hated by the world?

In what I have been saying, obviously, I have not dealt with every aspect of baptism. I have confined myself to the primary meaning, which, however, certainly is the most important one.

With warm greetings

Your brother in the Lord,

H. L. H.

# The Lord's Supper

Dear Friends,

As I mentioned last time, I want to write you about the Lord's Supper.

It is remarkable that the two great abiding ordinances of Christianity, baptism and the Lord's Supper, both point to our union with our Lord who has died. As we have already seen, baptism is connected with our outward position in the world. Therefore, too, it is strictly personal. Although, as in Acts 2, three thousand souls may have been baptized at once, yet for each one baptism still is a personal matter. They have no fellowship therein one with another. On the other hand the Lord's Supper, although it too, is for this earth, is connected with our inward position as the body of Christ. Therefore fellowship is an important characteristic here. It would be in absolute contradiction to the Word of God for an individual to take bread and wine to celebrate the Lord's Supper by himself. Then too, the apostle Paul, who was given the special commission to reveal the truth of the assembly and her oneness with Christ, said, "For Christ has not sent me to baptise" (1. Corinthians 1:17), although he himself was baptised and had occasionally baptized others. But in the same epistle he says that he had received a special revelation from the Lord regarding the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23), and devotes two chapters to this subject.

That which is personal has a large place in Scripture. Every man must be personally converted, must personally come to God, must personally believe on the Lord Jesus and His blood, and must personally take the place of rejection with the crucified Lord (in baptism). It is one of the great errors of the Roman Catholic church that she denies the personal aspect of things and makes everything a matter of the church - "the Church apart from which there is no salvation." However it is one of the great errors of Protestantism that it practically overlooks the collective aspect: it sees everything to be personal, and everyone must act according to his own thoughts together with those who think just as he. But in Scripture great blessings are connected with fellowship, too.

It was not a mere coincidence that the disciples were *gathered* when the Lord Jesus instituted the Supper. This was a *principle*. The object of the Lord's Supper is to proclaim the death of the Lord in memory of Him. But inseparable from this is that it be done by the body of Christ (1. Corinthians 10:16.17). And every attempt to celebrate it without allowing a place thereat to every member of the body of Christ walking as such, destroys the character of the Lord's Supper. At its institution the Lord constantly spoke in the plural, spoke to all the disciples jointly. And this we find likewise in 1. Corinthians 10 and 11, the only passages outside the gospels where the Lord's Supper is considered.

## THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22 describe this to us. The first two of these passages show us that it happened immediately after the Lord had spoken of how Judas would betray Him, and after this one had gone out. From Luke's account we could conclude that Judas only went out *after* the Lord's Supper. But Luke does not

give us the chronological order. In his whole gospel we find everything brought into its moral connection.

It is evident from all the passages that the Lord instituted it at the end of the Passover meal. The Passover was the reminder of the lamb that had once been slain (Exodus 12), by which the people had been secured from the judgment of God. Now the moment had come when the true Passover Lamb was to be slain (1. Corinthians 5:7), when His blood was to be “shed for many for remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). The Lord Jesus knew that on this night He would be taken captive and then would be crucified. He knew that He must bear “our sins in his body on the tree” (1. Peter 2:24), and that He must be “made sin for us” (2. Corinthians 5:21). He knew that this meant, too, that He must be forsaken by God. He knew the full price that He must pay for our deliverance. And we see what it meant for Him when a few hours later in Gethsemane Satan set all this before His eyes in order if possible to lure Him into disobedience even at this moment.

In these moments the Lord sought the fellowship of His friends. A little later in Gethsemane He would request them, “Remain here and watch with me.” And, finding them sleeping, He would lament, “Thus ye have not been able to watch one hour with me?” (Matthew 26:38-40). So He “in the night in which he was delivered up” (1. Corinthians 11:23) instituted the Lord’s Supper.

For the disciples it was nothing strange. The Lord took an existing custom, just as with baptism, and gave it a new, deep meaning in that He brought it into connection with Himself and with His death. From Jeremiah 16:5-7 we see that it was a Jewish custom to have meals of mourning, and that at these meals those present would eat and drink in memory of the deceased loved one. God too had Himself instituted the Passover meal as a reminder of the lamb that had been slain, and of Israel’s wonderful deliverance from the judgment of God and from the power of Pharaoh and Egypt by virtue of the blood of the lamb, hadn’t He? In the Old Testament we find no cup at the Passover meal, but the Lord adds this thereto (Luke 22:17). And when He thus had completed the type, He set it aside (Luke 22:18), taking over its form and using it for the new institution He now gives. “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after having supped ...” (verses 19.20).

## THE MEANING OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

“This do in remembrance of me!” Thus it is a reminder of the Lord. But it is not a reminder of His glory before He became man, nor of His walk here upon earth, nor even of His dying upon the cross, of all that He had to suffer there. “For as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce *the death* of the Lord” (1. Corinthians 11:26). The symbols used confirm this perfectly, too. The bread, which according to the Lord’s words represents His body, was *broken* when He gave it to His disciples. Afterwards, separately from the bread, the Lord gave them the wine as a symbol of His blood. Body and blood separated one from the other speak only of a Savior who has *died*.

Yes, this is the significance of the Lord’s Supper. It is a meal of fellowship in memory of Him who once was *dead*.



How simple are its ingredients! Is there anything more common than bread, a food eaten daily by everyone? Is there anything more common in southern lands than wine, a beverage which people there drink just as we drink coffee or tea? But what a meaning the Lord has associated with this meal!

It is truly a meal. We eat of the bread and *drink* of the wine. It is good to be aware of this, so that we may really eat and drink that we do not just take a couple crumbs of the bread and a drop of the wine! The bread is ordinary bread and the wine is ordinary wine, and they remain such. They are not changed by the thanksgiving offered for the bread and for the cup. It is evident from 1. Corinthians 11:24 and Luke 22:19 that "blessed" in Matthew 26:26 and Mark 14:22 means gave thanksgiving and praise (see also the note in the Darby Translation). We can see this, too, from passages such as Ephesians 1:3, etc. where the apostle Paul blesses God. The Lord blessed in Matthew 14:19 too, and surely no one will maintain that the five loaves and two fishes did not remain loaves and fishes.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (that is, that through the priest's speaking the sacramental words the bread and wine are changed into the actual body and blood of the Lord), and the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation (that Christ is bodily present in, with, and under the bread) stand in absolute contradiction to Scripture and in effect deny the work that has once been completed. In referring to Himself the Lord again and again uses pictures. In John 10 He says that He is 'the door of the sheep' and "the good shepherd," in John 14: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," etc. It is perfectly clear that the Lord is using pictures.

## THE DEATH OF THE LORD

Who can understand the significance of these few words? He, the Lord, went into death. What grace, love, and mercy! What counsels of God! The Prince of Life, the Source of Life, died and was buried! What proof this is that He fully took our place. Not only did He bear our sins in His body, but He was also made sin.

What feelings of thankfulness and praise - yes, of worship are awakened in our hearts when we see Him thus. It was for us that He went into death. His love toward us was so great that He wanted to pay this price for our salvation. "Love is strong as death; Jealousy is cruel as Sheol: The flashes thereof are flashes of fire, Flames of Jah. Many waters (of God's judgment) cannot quench love, Neither do the floods drown it: Even if a man gave all the substance of his house for love, It would utterly be contemned" (Song of Songs 8:6.7; see Psalm 69:1.2).

What obedience to God, rather to die - and what a death - than not to fulfil God's will. What a mind to take this place "even unto death, and that the death of the cross!"

To that end the Lord Jesus as Host invites us to come to His table and to announce His death there in remembrance of Him. No, we do not come there to receive anything. The Lord's Supper is not a sacrament, a means of grace. Nowhere does Scripture say that [1] the glorified Lord invites us to His table that we might think back upon His death suffered more than nineteen hundred years ago. In eternity we shall also do this. In Revelation 5 we see the Lamb "*standing as slain*" in heaven just

as the Lord was once upon earth. And just as the sight of the slain Lamb will then fill heaven with thanks and worship, so now the very same thing is produced in us when we announce His death here upon earth. Looking upon Him warms and fills our hearts. And in the hymns, in the prayers of thanksgiving, and in the quiet pauses between, our feelings of thanks, wonder, and worship rise up to Him.

Obviously, we can only gather there as Christians. Only those who *know* that their sins have been forgiven and who have peace with God can occupy this place. Do they not declare by their participation that they have part with Him and with His work (1. Corinthians 10:16)? And here especially, is not all unrest regarding one's own sins a denial of the perfect work whereby He has perfected forever those who are His (Hebrews 10:14)?

And doesn't it follow also that here in this place no gifts are exercised, but that we rather come together as priests alone that we might bring sacrifices of praise and thanks, "the fruit of the lips confessing his name" (Hebrews 13:15)? An apostle came here as a simple believer, and here he who might occupy the chief place in the assembly and he who may possess the greatest gift for ministry come together as worshippers among their fellow-worshippers.

Have you heard the invitation of the Lord already? Have you responded to it?

### **WHEN AND HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER?**

In eternity we shall ever praise and worship the Lamb. In those first blessed days of the assembly they broke bread daily in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46). But when circumstances later changed, so that they no longer could come together every day, then we find that they did it every first day of the week. And God, who wishes to make known to us His will about all things, had this written down in His Word in order that we might know it. Acts 20:7 says that the brethren were assembled to break bread. They had not come together to listen to Paul, although he was an apostle. They had gathered together for a higher purpose; yet in the meeting there was opportunity for Paul to speak. And from the manner in which these things are told us it would appear that it was their custom to come together for this purpose.

When we have understood somewhat of this wonderful privilege - to be permitted to take such a place and to carry on such a service: to "announce the death of the Lord, until he come" - and when besides we hear the invitation of our beloved Lord, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me," who requests, "This do in remembrance of me," do not our hearts then long to do it as often as possible?

And what day is more appropriate for this than "the Lord's Day," the day upon which He arose, and on which day two weeks in a row He came into the midst of His gathered disciples (John 20)!

### **PROVING ONESELF**

But in this connection Scripture summons us to self-judgment, to self-examination. It does not summon us to investigate whether or not we are worthy to take this

place. Every Christian is worthy as such. To doubt this would mean to doubt the value of the work of the Lord Jesus.

The question here is whether we take this place in a *worthy manner*. It is true that the Lord's Supper is a meal, and that we there partake of ordinary bread and ordinary wine. But it is the Lord's Table, and the Lord is the Host. The broken bread and the poured out wine are symbols of His body which was given for us and His blood which was shed for us. We must be conscious of this if we approach this place to render this service. For this self-examination and then self-judgment are needed. All that is not in agreement with this most holy place on earth must first be put away in self-judgment.

The Corinthians had forgotten this. They had not distinguished the body of the Lord, for they had acted as though it were their own supper. Therefore the Lord had intervened with His chastisement. "On this account many among you are weak and infirm, and a good many are fallen asleep" (1. Corinthians 11:30). When we do not think of the honor of the Lord, then He must maintain it Himself. This is a solemn thought!

With warm greetings,

Your brother in our soon-coming Lord,

H. L. H.

No.      Footnotes of last chapter

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- [1]      Usually John 6 is used as proof that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament, a means of grace. However, John 6 does not at all speak of the Lord's Supper, which had then not even yet been instituted. The Lord does not there even speak about His body and about the cup, as He does everywhere in speaking of the Supper, but rather of His flesh and blood. This is a completely different thought.

# The Lord's Table

Dear Friends,

In my last letter we saw what God's Word says about the Lord's Supper in the gospels and in 1. Corinthians 11. We saw that it is a meal in memory of the death of the Lord Jesus. Now I would like to speak of another aspect of the Lord's Supper which we find in 1. Corinthians 10 - fellowship.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians the apostle Paul answers various questions which had been asked him. One such question that had been put to him was whether a Christian could eat meat of animals which had been offered to idols. The apostle answers this question in chapter 8 and continues therewith then in chapter 10.

There were believers in Corinth who reasoned: "An idol is nothing but a piece of wood or stone, and therefore there is nothing wrong with eating things offered to idols. Indeed, why not go into the idol-temple and eat there? There is only one God, isn't there, and so idols don't even exist." Or, "What is in question here is only a meaningless outward form. Why not do it so as not to give offence to the heathen?"

The apostle recognized that an idol was nothing. But he pointed out that demons are hidden behind the idols, as God had already said in Deuteronomy 32:17. So the offerings then were actually being brought to demons. And then he demonstrates from the heathen as well as the Jewish sacrifices that a person has fellowship with the altar upon which he is offering, or from which that comes of which he is eating. One can participate in evil that one is not personally doing. True wisdom in such cases is to stay away. It is a misuse of one's knowledge to take part, or even just to appear to take part in things that are wrong in the religious sphere. It is useless to plead that one's heart is not in what one is doing outwardly. Not only should one stay away for moral reasons, but because Christ is belittled and the wiles of Satan are disregarded. Has not the Christian been freed from the power of Satan so that he should serve the living and true God? Has he not been bought with a price that he might glorify God?

The Holy Spirit uses this as introduction to speak of the Lord's Supper and to present an aspect of it which we do not find in the gospels. Nor could it have been presented there, because the assembly did not yet exist then, and the teaching about the assembly was not yet revealed.

The importance of the things here spoken of is shown by the fact that they are discussed first, and only afterwards in *chapter* 11 is the celebration of the Lord's Supper discussed. The order in which Scripture deals with subjects is always very important. If one does not know the teaching of 1. Corinthians 10:15-22 it is impossible to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the true way.

## THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BLOOD AND OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

"I speak as to intelligent persons: do ye judge what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ? The bread which we

break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ" ( 1. Corinthians 10:15.16).

Scripture first of all appeals to our spiritual intelligence. We have received a new life and an unction from the Holy One (1. John 2:20): the Holy Spirit, who will guide us into all the truth (John 16:13; 1. Corinthians 2:9-15). The Word of God supposes that each Christian acts with intelligence — that he knows what he is doing. It is completely contrary to the spirit of Christianity for a Christian to do something that he does not understand, or for him to act according to blind impulse.

Now, everyone who partakes of the Lord's Supper says thereby that he has part in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, of which the bread and wine are symbols. But that is not all. At the same time he is associated with all those who likewise have part in the same thing. In these verses, then, fellowship means partaking - to partake in all the privileges and obligations of the matter in question.

The blood and the body are separated, thus pointing to the Saviour who has died. And here in a departure from the order in which the Lord's Supper is celebrated, the blood is mentioned first, because the blood of the Lord Jesus is the foundation for everything.

Thus there is a fellowship which is made up of all people who have part in the Saviour who died. They have part in His blood. What a privilege! We have been washed in His blood (Revelation 1:5), redeemed (Ephesians 1:7), justified (Romans 5:9), sanctified (Hebrews 13:12), bought for God (Revelation 5:9), made nigh (Ephesians 2:13). His blood "cleanses us from all sin" (1. John 1:7). Through His blood we have "boldness for entering into the holy of holies" (Hebrews 10:19). With His blood God has purchased the assembly (Acts 20:28).

The expression "body of Christ" is used in 1. Corinthians 10:16; 1. Corinthians 12:27; and in Ephesians 4:12 as a designation of the assembly. It occurs, furthermore, in Romans 7:4 and in Hebrews 10:10. In these last two passages it is evident that it stands in connection with our having died with Christ; that at the cross man in the flesh has met with his end. All that we were by nature has come to an end in the death of Christ, as Colossians 1:21.22 also tells us: "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of his flesh through death."

It is thus a fellowship of people who all participate in the glorious results of the work of the Lord Jesus, but who have all also died with Christ, and now are associated together as new men. Though this fellowship is upon earth, the old man - that which we are by nature - has absolutely no place in it.

### THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST: THE ASSEMBLY

"Because we, being many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one loaf." Or, as it can also be translated, "Because the bread is one, we, the many, are one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1. Corinthians 10:17).

That which we have already found in verse 16 thus is expressly established here. All those who partake of the blood of the Lord Jesus and of His body which was given

for us form one fellowship - one body. In this portion the doctrine of the one body is not further treated, because the subject here is fellowship and its exclusive character. Chapter 12 of 1. Corinthians, Ephesians and other passages speak more fully about the one body.

In 1. Corinthians 12:13 we are told how this fellowship originated. The basis, the foundation, is the completed work of the Lord Jesus upon the cross. But it is formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us plainly when this happened. John the Baptist had announced that the Lord Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. And in Acts 1:4.5 the Lord Jesus told the apostles that they would receive this not many days thereafter - indeed when the Holy Spirit should be poured out.

Scripture speaks in two ways of the assembly as the body of Christ. Sometimes it views the assembly as it exists according to the counsels of God, thus as it shall be by and by in heaven. See, for example, Ephesians 1:22. In this way it consists of all the believers who were baptized into the one body at Pentecost (Acts 2), and of all those who were added after that time (Acts 2:47), up to the moment when the assembly will be taken up to glory. At that moment for one moment the whole assembly will be complete on earth. The dead in Christ shall be raised, and we shall be changed. But that is but one moment, one point in time, one indivisible moment. For this see 1. Thessalonians 4:15-17 and 1. Corinthians 15:51-54.

In general - and always when it is a question of our responsibility, of our conduct on earth - Scripture sees the assembly as the sum total of all the believers living on earth at a given moment. Those who are deceased, who are asleep in the Lord and need no more admonitions, they are no longer upon the earth.

1. Corinthians 12:27ff. presents to us very plainly the character of the body of Christ seen in this way. The Corinthians were told: "Now ye are Christ's body, and members in particular." From this we might infer that the believers in any given place together thus constitute the body of Christ. Then there would be as many bodies of Christ as there are places where believers live. From what we have seen in 1. Corinthians 10:16.17 it is clearly evident that this cannot be right. Verse 28 and the following verses in chapter 12 show us this very plainly, too, for we are told there about gifts which God has set in the assembly. Apostles are there mentioned first, and we know there were *no* apostles in Corinth. The assembly of God in Corinth, therefore, was only the local expression of the one body - just that part of the one assembly, the body of Christ, that was visible in Corinth.

But let us go back to 1. Corinthians 10:16 again.

## **THE LORD'S SUPPER IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE ONENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST!**

We have seen that the unity of the body was brought about by the baptism of the Holy Spirit - not by partaking of the Lord's Supper. Should it be the opposite, then the assembly would be made up exclusively of those who partake of the Lord's Supper. This is in absolute contradiction to the entire teaching of Scripture. But the verse which we are considering now does not say this.



Just as the Lord Jesus, when He gave the bread, said, "This is my body," and thereby gave a visible symbol, a visible representation of His body which was given for us; so Scripture here adds that the bread and the wine are visible symbols, expressions of the mystical body of Christ, the assembly. Each one who drinks of the wine and eats of the bread expresses thereby that he belongs to that fellowship that participates in all the glorious results of the shedding of the blood of the Lord Jesus and the giving of His body on the cross. He is a member of the body of Christ. Thus Scripture teaches us here in connection with the Lord's Supper *what we are*, while in *chapter 11* and in the gospels we find *what we do*.

Thus we do not celebrate the Lord's Supper personally, but collectively, as members of that one body. It is always we here, although in the context we again and again read of I. Moreover, this is exactly what we express in the breaking of bread - our oneness with *all* the members of the body of Christ. And so it is clear that *all* the members must be able to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but only the members! If unbelievers are admitted

- that is, if as a matter of principle people of whom one is not certain that they are members of the body of Christ are admitted, then it is not the *Lord's Supper*, but the Supper of that group of people who have instituted it. The same thing is true if one refuses believers who are indeed members of the body of Christ, when there is no reason that God Himself mentions as a hindrance - namely, a bad walk, false doctrine, or association with that which is unclean. As soon as we set other conditions
- for example, agreement with certain truths that are not fundamental - we make the Lord's Supper our own Supper, and we deprive it of its character as the Lord's Supper as Scripture knows it.

In contrast with this, Scripture sets forth very plainly the character of the Lord's Supper, as we have seen. It is a meal of fellowship with the Lord and with all His own. The participants in this fellowship have all died with Christ. They are new people who have received a new life which Scripture calls "spirit" (John 3:6), and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. "So if any one be in Christ - a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2. Corinthians 5:17).

The Lord's Supper, then, is not celebrated with the forms of the old man. It is the Supper of the *Lord*, of Him who died and rose again and then has been made 'both Lord and Christ' by God (Acts 2:36). Our risen Lord invites His own to celebrate His

Supper as His guests. He is the host, and thus too the only One who has anything to say. Could then a Supper where He is not given this place, but where fundamentally people arrange everything according to their own ideas, could such a Supper be the Lord's Supper?

## THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

We have seen that only true believers can partake of the Lord's Supper. In other passages, such as 1. Corinthians 5 and 2 John 1, things are mentioned by which even people who were known as true believers were kept from taking part.

But in our chapter in verses 18-22 the Holy Spirit emphasizes that unholy



associations are an absolute impediment, even when one does not personally have any part in the evil.

We have seen how some of the brethren in Corinth were reasoning: "Idols are nothing more than pieces of wood or of metal, for there is but one God. So it doesn't matter if we eat of idol sacrifices or eat in the temples of idols." But Scripture very earnestly points out that this reasoning was completely wrong. Worshipers generally participate in that which distinguishes them from everyone else. As far as the assembly is concerned, this is the blood and the body of Christ. To partake of these is incompatible with fellowship with anything which stands in contradiction to them.

Scripture then makes this plain from the examples of the sacrifices of the Israelites and of the heathen. The thank-offering of Leviticus 3 and 7 was the only sacrifice of which the ordinary Israelite could eat. Thus it is this sacrifice that Scripture alludes to, and it is quite remarkable that just this sacrifice is the most perfect picture of the Lord's Supper and of the worship of the assembly that is associated therewith.

It was a voluntary offering; nobody was obliged to bring it. But if an Israelite had praise and thanks in his heart (Leviticus 7:11, ff.), and therefore wanted to bring an offering, then there were divine instructions as to what he must bring in order to be acceptable to God. Moreover it was emphatically prescribed *where* he must bring it - namely, before the face of Jehovah, at the entrance of the tent of meeting where God dwelt and where the people could meet with Him, at the altar. And we see how the service could not be separated from the altar; yes, was one with it. The blood was sprinkled "on the altar round about" (Leviticus 3:2). After the worshipper had brought the breast to be waved as a wave-offering before Jehovah, the fat and the kidneys were burned upon the altar, and God called this His food or bread (Leviticus 7:29-31; 3:3-5.11.16). The priest who officiated at the sacrifice received the right shoulder of the offering; Aaron and his sons received the breast; and the one offering might eat the remainder of the flesh with all those of the people who were clean.

In Leviticus 7:19-21 we find important instructions about being unclean. The flesh that had touched anything unclean must be burned. There can even be something unclean at the place where we bring our offerings, something whereby the offering which is clean in itself can be made unclean, that it may no longer be eaten. But further, it was absolutely forbidden a person having personal uncleanness to eat of the offering. The same applied to a person who had no personal uncleanness, but who - knowingly or unknowingly - had touched the uncleanness of others. See also Numbers 19 and Leviticus 5:17. The sentence upon both is the same as if they both had done it: "That soul shall be cut off from his peoples." What a demolishing judgment of God upon the human assertion that association with false doctrine or with moral evil does not defile one, as long as he himself does not imbibe the evil.

But there is still more about the connection with the altar! In Leviticus 7:15-18 it says that the flesh of the peace-offering of thanksgiving could only be eaten the same day that the offering was presented to God (upon the altar). The connection with the altar could not be severed without losing its character as an offering. The voluntary offering and the vow might also be eaten the following day, as there is here a greater energy and devotion of heart, so that the connection with the altar

holds out longer. And in Leviticus 17 it is expressly forbidden to present a peace-offering of thanksgiving without bringing it to the tent of meeting and offering the blood and the fat upon the altar. Anyone violating this was to be cut off.

We find still plainer language in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus says in Matthew 23:19 that the gift is sanctified by the altar. So, not only is the altar more important than the gift, but the gift receives its character only by coming into connection with the altar.

## THE LORD'S TABLE

The altar upon which the thank-offering was brought is called the table of Jehovah in Malachi 1:7 and likewise in Ezekiel 41:22. From both these verses we see that "table" and "altar" denote the same thing. The term "altar" points to the sacrifice that is presented upon it, while the term "table" is associated with the meal and the fellowship connected therewith. The thank-offering was a meal of fellowship which God had with His people. God received His part; Aaron and his house (always a type of Christ and the assembly, viewed as a priestly family) received their part; and each one of the people who was clean received his part.

This is how we find it in the New Testament, too. Hebrews 13:10 says: "We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle" (i. e. those who belong to Judaism). And in 1. Corinthians 10:18-21 the words "altar" and "table" are used interchangeably.

The Holy Spirit adopts the term which He Himself had given to the altar of the thank-offering in the Old Testament, and connects it with the Lord's Supper, associating the term with the aspect of fellowship of this Supper.

What expressions these are: The Lord's Table! The Lord's Supper! It is *His* Table to which He invites His own to celebrate *His* Supper there with Him. Naturally, it is not the wooden table upon which the bread and the wine are set. It is the table of the Lord who died and rose again, where He invites His own who have died with Him to dine with Him. It is a spiritual table - the place in His spiritual house where He invites His own to come to Him and where they can be with Him. This is where His Supper is.

Can there be anyone still not clear that at the Table of the Lord there is but One who has authority? There is but One who can decide who may partake at the Table. There is but One who can say how the service must be performed. There is but One who may appoint *who* should be used in the service. The Lord alone has authority there, and He alone wants to lead everything by His Spirit. No man has anything to say there. No man has to do anything there unless the Lord wants to use him.

It is just here that the Holy Spirit emphasizes the exclusive character of the Lord's Supper. One cannot partake of the Lord's Table and the table of demons! Love is jealous. The Lord loves His own so much that He went down into death for them, yes, the death upon the cross under the judgment of God. He loves them so much that He is now living to intercede for them (Hebrews 7:25). He loves them so much that He has prepared a place for them, His Table, to which He invites them to come

to Him to celebrate His Supper. He cannot tolerate any indifference toward Himself, toward the claims of His love, or toward His holy fellowship. He has redeemed His own from the power of Satan and the world. He was made sin for them so that man according to the flesh might be brought to an end under the judgment of a holy and righteous God. How can He, then, tolerate in His own any connection with Satan or the world or with the principles of the natural man? And especially so at *this* place, where they are with Him to think of His wondrous act of love, of the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross; and where all this is presented to them by His giving them the broken bread and the outpoured wine, and saying. "This is my blood which is shed for you. This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me!"

Can a heart which truly loves Him be indifferent toward His rights at this place? Can it act without prayerfully asking, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Where is the place to which Thou dost invite me? Where is Thy Table where I can celebrate Thy Supper?"

But even if a child of God can do all this, the Lord is the Same. He refuses to have fellowship at His Table with those who are indifferent with respect to His rights. "He that is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30)!

"Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (1. Corinthians 10:22).

Do you take part at the Lord's Table, the only place where the Lord's Supper is celebrated?

With warm greetings,

Your brother in the love of our Lord.

H. L. H.

# Worship

Dear Friends,

Having considered the Lord's Supper in the last letters, I would like to write to you now about worship. Worship is closely connected with the Lord's Supper, but yet it is not the same thing. The celebration of the Lord's Supper as it is presented in Scripture will lead to worship, but is not worship in itself.

What is worship? We can perhaps describe it as being honour that is brought to God on the basis of what He is and of what He is to those who worship Him. The Hebrew word that is most often used in the Old Testament for worship actually means "to bow down oneself." This is how it is used, for example, in Genesis 18:2. The Greek word "proskuneo," the word most often used in the New Testament, is used to denote showing honour to God as well as to men.

It is clear that it is the duty of every intelligent creature to worship God. The angels worship Him (Nehemiah 9:6). His saints worship Him. In the eternal gospel men are called upon to give glory to God and to worship Him (Revelation 14:7). And by and by everything upon earth will worship Him (Zephaniah 2:11; Zechariah 14:16; Psalm 86:9; etc.).

But while angels honour God in truth because of what He is, men who are not born again will soon worship Him because they have experienced His power in judgment or because they want to enjoy life under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ. But God desires more than this outward worship. He desires the worship of the heart - the honour which grows out of man's feelings of love toward God. Now, He has spoken to us about this and has told us in His Word about the character, the power, and the true place of worship. In John 4, for example, the Lord speaks in plain words about it.

## THE TRUE PLACE OF WORSHIP

The Samaritan woman said to the Lord: "Sir, I see that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where one must worship" (John 4:19.20).

Like so many people in our day she sought only the opinions of people. "Ye say! " Not one word does she say about the will of God in the matter. It did not even occur to her to ask whether Jehovah too had made known His will, whether He perhaps had shown preference for the one place or for the other. Had He not expressly indicated Jerusalem? David had learned that, when Jehovah had accepted his sacrifice at the threshing-floor of Oman (1. Chronicles 21:28). Solomon knew God's choice when he began to build the temple (2. Chronicles 3:1). And after he had completed building it God assured him that he had done right, and that He had chosen and hallowed this house in order that His name might be there forever (2. Chronicles 7:16).

Apparently this woman was completely ignorant of the clear statements of Scripture! But whose fault was it? Perhaps the position in which she had been from

birth and into which she had come by birth explains her ignorance. But this was no real excuse! She claimed to be associated with the God of Jacob, but did not know nor inquire whether He had made known His thoughts about this matter.

She could refer to what “our fathers” had done. For centuries the temple upon Mount Gerizim had been the centre of worship for the Samaritans. But this fact could in no way support the claim that this temple was the true place of worship. Although she was walking in the footsteps of her fathers if she worshipped in the same way that they had done, yet the question remained: Is this the place chosen by God for His people to approach Him and to bring Him worship? A single pronouncement of God’s Word, “Thus saith the Lord,” wrecked all her reasonings, all her arguments, all her feelings.

And furthermore: Assuming that she was honestly ignorant of what was revealed in regard to Jerusalem, did the worship which she ignorantly brought on Mount Gerizim therefore have to be accepted by God? Undoubtedly there were many Samaritans who were uprightly convinced that theirs was the true worship. But did this mean that their worship was acceptable to God? Does the conscience of man stand above the clear statements of the Word of God? By no means! So the Lord Jesus then expressly rejected the claim of the Samaritans. “Ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).

Three things are clearly brought before us in this conversation:

1. It is dangerous and evil to make a matter about which God has made known His thoughts to us into a matter about which man may have his own opinion!
2. To worship God as our fathers have done is absolutely no assurance that we are worshipping in the right way!
3. If we do something with a good conscience, this is no reason for God to accept it. What God has said about a matter is the only thing that is of importance when a question arises. It is the simple duty of God’s people to adapt their thoughts to the thoughts of God. “And if any one sin and do against any of all the commandments of Jehovah what should not be done, *and hath not known it*, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity” (Leviticus 5:17).

The Lord did not speak further about Jerusalem. In a plain statement He established the truth, but then He made known something that was new.

Under the law Jerusalem, on the basis of divine authority, was the place of worship. But now the Son of God had come to earth - “God ... manifested in flesh” (1. Timothy 3:16) The Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, declared God (John 1:18). “Nor does any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27). Should this be without influence upon man’s worship of God? Is not worship based upon the knowledge of God?

## THE ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY

In John 4:10 the Lord Jesus in a few words gives all the characteristics of the coming age - the age of the assembly. "If thou knewest the gift of God. and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

"The gift of God!" Here we find the full revelation of God. God was not revealed as the Giver under the law. He was the One who demanded. He demanded that men should serve Him, and He gave His blessing only on the basis of obedience to His commandments. He dwelt in thick darkness (Deuteronomy 4:11; 5:22.23; Psalm 18:11.12); i. e., He did not reveal Himself, but hid Himself as it were. It wasn't that the law was wrong. It was holy, just, and good. But man was a sinner. And the more emphasis was put on the righteous demands of the law, the plainer the sins of man became. Had it been true, as some theologians say, that the law is the picture of God, then man would be hopelessly lost and forsaken! But this is not true. The law, although it is of God, is neither God Himself nor a true rendering of God. It is only the moral standard to show what sinful man should be in the presence of God.

God is light and God is love. When man is in deepest need, God gives freely and completely. He who perfectly manifested God on this earth said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35)! Should God be lacking in that which He Himself says is more blessed?

Under law if the law had not been broken God should have been a Receiver. But in the gospel He is a continuous Giver, and what is more - a Giver who gives the best that He has to such who deserved nothing other than eternal destruction.

In the epistle to the Hebrews the position of an Israelite under the law is compared with the position of a Christian. For the Israelite "the way of the holy of holies" had "not yet been made manifest" (*Hebrews* 9:8). The sacrifices which were brought could not take away any sins (9:9; 10:4,11). The high priest was clothed with infirmity and had to offer also for his own sins (5:3).

The Christian has been "perfected in perpetuity" (10:14), and has a purified conscience (9:14). Thus He has boldness to enter the holy of holies, and the veil has been rent so that the way to God is open. He has "a great priest over the house of God," One who is perfected for ever (10:19—22, 7:28). What a Giver God is!

But this was only possible through the glory and the humiliation of the Son of God, who came to earth and suffered to the uttermost for inimical sinners. The woman did not know Him. At most she saw in Him a friendly Jew. But she certainly had no thought that He was Jehovah Himself, the God of heaven and earth, the Only-begotten in the bosom of the Father. Had she but known some little bit of this, she would have asked of Him and He would have given her living water. According to *John* 7:39 living water is a picture of the Holy Spirit as the One dwelling in the believer.

Thus we have here the grace of God as source of everything, and then the glory of the person of the Son, and His presence in lowliness among men upon earth.

And finally we have the Son who in His own glory gives to thirsty souls living water -



the Holy Spirit. These things make up the necessary foundation for Christian worship.

## THE FATHER SEEKS WORSHIPPERS

“Worship the Father.” This must have struck the woman as something completely new. Israel was God’s Son, His firstborn (*Exodus* 4:22), sons of Jehovah their God (*Deuteronomy* 14:1).

Jehovah was a Father to Israel and Ephraim was His firstborn (*Jeremiah* 31:9). But never had they worshipped God as Father, for no one knows “the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him” (*Matthew* 11:27). Now an essential element of Christian worship is to know God in His relationship as Father with His people, who worship Him as such. But this revelation is a personal matter - “He to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him.”

So whoever has this knowledge has it from the Son. The Only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has declared the Father to us. And after His work was completed He brought those who are His own into His own relationship with the Father. “I ascend to my Father and your Father” (*John* 20:17)! This is the portion even of the youngest believer. The apostle writes to the babes in Christ: “I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father” (1 *John* 2:13). Compare with *John* 17:2,3.

The Father seeks worshippers. What grace! In Israel every man *had* to go to Jerusalem three times a year to worship there (*Deuteronomy* 16:16). In the millennium all the families of the earth must go up to Jerusalem yearly in order to worship there. Those who will not do this will be punished (*Zechariah* 14:1b- 19). But the Father *seeks true* worshippers. True worshippers are those for whom worship is not an outward form, but a matter of the heart. What does this seeking of the Father for worshippers mean to us?

## WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

“But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers. God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth” (*John* 4:23,24).

Here we find the character of Christian worship. It is no formal earthly worship service. It is in harmony with what God is, and thus presupposes that God has been perfectly revealed.

No unbeliever can worship in this way! For only through the new birth have we received that new life which Scripture calls “spirit.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (*John* 3:6; *Romans* 8:16). It is a spiritual worship according to the new man, in harmony with what God is.

But even believers can be unspiritual. The apostle Paul could not speak to the Corinthians as to spiritual, for they were fleshly (1 *Corinthians* 3:1). They were not



“in the flesh.” This they had been before their conversion. But although they were born again and thus possessed the new life which is “spirit,” they acted and thought according to the flesh - that is, as the natural man does.

The worship of Israel was earthly, natural. It was carried on at a definite geographical place, in a magnificent temple, and was regulated down to the smallest detail. Man could come, clothed in costly, beautiful garments, accompanied by wonderful music, and bring the highest and best that earth had to offer. There was nothing spiritual about it. There was not even an obligation that a priest, a singer, or a person who brought an offering had to be born again. And this was so instituted by God Himself, for it was the worship of an earthly people for a God who had not revealed Himself to them, but hid Himself in darkness.

At the cross, however, God put an end to the natural man. We who are born again, who have believed on the Lord Jesus, have died with Christ (*Romans 6:8*). We are to walk according to the new life which the Holy Spirit has worked in us. The Holy Spirit who indwells us is the divine power to carry this out.

So our worship *must* be spiritual. This is a moral necessity from which there can be no exemption. The words of the Lord Jesus in *John 4:14* make it very plain that the Holy Spirit is the power of all true Christian worship.

In perfect harmony with this not one single form nor ceremony is given to us for our worship. And this is all the more noteworthy because with Israel everything was regulated down to the minutest detail. We do not even know the words wherewith the Lord gave thanks at the institution of the Lord's Supper. We do not have any description of even one apostle breaking bread. We have not a single hymn that we know was sung in an assembly in the days of the apostles. We have no book with Christian Psalms. For we must worship by the Spirit of God (*Philippians 3:3*). If we go back to the forms of the Old Testament and fashion Christian worship in conformity to them, we lose the distinguishing mark of Christianity - namely, worshipping by the Spirit of God.

But worship must not only be “in spirit,” but also “in truth.” “What is truth?” asked Pilate. He did not know that the Thorncrowned One standing before him is the Truth. Truth is what God has revealed about Himself, and it is the Son who has revealed God.

In a certain sense Israel had also worshipped in truth, for its worship had been in line with what had at that time been revealed about God as Jehovah. But now God has been perfectly revealed, for “God manifest in flesh” was here upon earth, and by infinite grace we may know Him. “We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true” (1 *John 5:20*).

Certainly there is growth in the knowledge of the truth. The Spirit of God works in us to lead us into all the truth. But the difference existing through this among believers is negligible when compared with the difference between one who is not born again and the youngest believer. Man as such, not born again, is utterly incapable of knowing God. He is no more able to do this than a cow is able to understand science or philosophy. But through the new birth we have received a life that is spirit

and thereby in a position to know God. It is the “divine nature” (2 *Peter* 1:4). In this new life the Holy Spirit who indwells us is at work, and He is the divine power who brings this new life in connection with God Himself (*John* 4:14). The babes in Christ are told: “And ye have the unction from the holy one, and ye know all things. I have not written to you because ye do not know the truth, but because ye know it” (1 *John* 2:20,21).

So we may thus approach God our Father. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, who brings our new life into connection with God Himself, we see Him and enjoy Him. Can we see God as He is and not be filled with admiration nor have need to express this before Him? Every child of God that has not just stood still at the blessings he has received, but has looked up to the Giver Himself, knows from experience that this is impossible. The glory of the Father and the glory of the Son is so great that our hearts are too small to grasp what we see of it And how much less are we in a position to express this glory in words! But we worship “in spirit,” and thus our words are not our worship, but rather the spiritual feelings which rise up from our hearts.

Now there yet remains the question:

### **WHERE MUST WE WORSHIP?**

Unquestionably every believer should worship personally. How can we look upon the work of the Lord Jesus and upon the love and grace of the Father without rendering thanks and praise? But we have all these things in common with all the children of God. And does not this in itself lead to collective worship?

Where, moreover, are we led to worship more than when we are gathered to proclaim the death of the Lord Jesus, and to receive from His hand the broken bread and the wine which has been poured out? Then we see Him in the perfection of His work and of His love. The sight of the slain Lamb will lead to singing unto Him and worshipping Him in heaven (*Revelation* 5). And so it is on earth, too.

Yes, we come together to announce His death Celebrating the Lord’s Supper is in itself not a worship service. But when those who celebrate the Lord’s Supper are spiritual, then they will give thanks and worship. It cannot be otherwise. And thus celebrating the Lord’s Supper becomes a worship service.

For that matter, can one individual bring worship worthy of God? Before Adam fell he could thank God for His goodness.

But now God has been perfectly revealed in the Lord Jesus. Worship which reaches this height, if it is brought by a single person supposes that this person has attained a spiritual level which practically puts him on the same level as the One whom he is worshipping!

In 1 *Corinthians* 14 we find worship associated with the assembly. There we learn on what principles and by whom worship now is brought to God. This is an important addition to our knowledge of the will of God. We find that singing, giving thanks, and rendering praise have been a part of worship from the beginning. And

we see that these are not connected with any individual, but rather with the order and with the working of God in the assembly. Look at verses 12-17. The Lord looks forward to the intelligent worship of His people.

They come together in the consciousness that the Lord is the only One who has authority in their midst. He alone can determine whom He wants to use. And the Lord wields this authority through the Holy Spirit who dwells in the assembly. The question is not whether one man or ten or twenty will have part in the service, but whether the Holy Spirit has the liberty to use whom He will, regardless of whether He can and will use one, five, ten, or even more.

Do you personally know this worship from your own experience? It is not a question of the mind. But as we have seen, it is the response of hearts which are occupied with their Father who has given His only-begotten Son to die upon the cross for them, and of hearts which are engaged with their Saviour, the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them.

With warm greetings,

Your,

H L. H.

## Service

Dear Friends,

The life of a Christian is an even balance of taking in and giving out. It is like a reservoir with an intake on the one side and an opening on the other side for outflow. A Christian who only receives and never gives will sink to become a dreamy mystic. And one who is so busy giving out that he has no time to take in will go into spiritual bankruptcy.

As I have already pointed out in a previous letter, every service must emanate from sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus to listen to Him and to have communion with Him. We have seen this as regards worship with Mary. At the right moment she could anoint the feet of the Lord Jesus with precious ointment. Why? Because she so often had sat at His feet, and thereby knew His person and His thoughts. And with Martha, too, we find that she served Him, after she first had received of Him in her sorrow.

In these two examples we see the two aspects of the service of Christians - in Mary that aspect directed toward the Lord, the Godward aspect, and in Martha that aspect directed toward others. So in 1. Peter 2:5 we read that we are "a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" and just after this in verse 9 that we are "a kingly priesthood," that we "might set forth the excellences of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light." We want to occupy ourselves now with this latter aspect of service. The first aspect we have already dealt with in speaking of the Lord's Supper and of worship.

It is a fundamental principle of the Holy Scriptures that in this service we must be commissioned by the Lord and we must carry it out as responsible to Him. This is perfectly clear to anyone who thinks about it. He who ministers conveys a message from God to men. How then can it be otherwise than that God Himself should call such persons and give them the gifts that they have need of? Now Ephesians 4:7-12 together with Psalm 68:18 lets us see that the risen Lord has received these gifts and distributes them to His own. And all the other passages in Scripture which treat this point confirm this.

### HE CALLS THOSE HE HIMSELF WANTS

"And he goes up into the mountain, and calls *whom he himself would*, and they went to him. And he appointed twelve that *they might be with him, and that he might send them to preach ...*" (Mark 3:13.14).

In this portion the subject is the calling of the twelve apostles. The commission which they received cannot be compared to that which the Lord now gives to His servants. According to *Matthew* 10 they were to preach only to the Jews. Only after the Lord had been rejected by Israel, and after He had completed the work of redemption upon the cross, did He in Mark 16:15 give a new commission to go out into all the world. But the principles of His call are the same in both cases.

In these verses we find three important things. First, that the Lord calls whom He

Himself will. Then, that He calls them, so *that they might be with Him*. And thirdly, that He wants to send them out to preach.

The first is that principle that I have already mentioned above. The Lord calls His labourers according to His own free will. He said to Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I hallowed thee, I appointed thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). Much the same was said about John the Baptist in Luke 1:13-17. And Paul writes of himself: "But when God, who set me apart even from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me, that I may announce him as glad tidings among the nations ... (Galatians 1:15.16).

No man, no servant of God, and not even the assembly, has anything to do with the calling of a labourer of the Lord. The Lord has specifically reserved this right for Himself. As we see in Jeremiah and in Galatians in the passages referred to, the preparation for this calling begins already at or before birth and continues until that time when after one's conversion the Lord calls.

## TO BE WITH HIM

But to what does the Lord call? Does He call one directly after his conversion to do a great work? He called the disciples "that they might be *with him* "!" A necessary condition for any real service for the Lord is to have been with *Him* and thereby to have been taught of God. There was a long time between Mark 3:13 and Mark 6:7 when the Lord sent out His disciples. And when they had carried out their special commission, the Lord again took them to be alone with Himself. No service can be truly blessed if the servant does not come out from the presence of the Lord, and if after the service has been completed he does not return there. Do we do like the apostles? "And the apostles are gathered together to Jesus. *And they related to him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught*" (Mark 6:30.31). How blessed and how edifying it must have been for them when the Lord thereupon took them aside, so that He could speak with them in quietness about "all things, both what they had done and what they had taught." If we too would do this more, should then our service not be much more blessed?

We cannot be with the Lord physically any more, as the disciples once were, but we can be with Him spiritually. *John* 14:21 says: "He that has my *commandments* and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." And there follows in verse 23: "If any one love me, he will keep *my word*, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him *and make our abode with him*. "

Love to the Lord is shown by the keeping of His commandments! See also 1. *John* 5:3. What a contradiction it is for someone to say he loves the Lord, but at the same time steadily to act contrary to the commandments of the Lord!

But verse 23 goes even further. If one truly loves the Lord Jesus, he will not be satisfied merely to do what the Lord expressly commands! Then even a wish of the Lord's will be sufficient! Love longs to be well-pleasing to Him. There are not many specific commands in the New Testament But the Lord reveals His thoughts in His

Word in the expectation that this will be sufficient for His own, that they may now act accordingly. And where this is the case the Father and the Son will come to make their dwelling with that person. Thus we too can be *with Him* even today. And this is necessary in order to be truly made fit by Him for the service He wants to let us do.

## SENT OUT BY HIM

In *Mark 6:7* the Lord sends the disciples out. *He* had taught them, and so they were fit for the service with which He charged them. According to men's opinion this was not so. They found them to be "unlettered and uninstructed men" (*Acts 4:13*). And they were that according to human standards. They had not completed the theological studies of that day. They did not know how the various Rabbis interpreted the Bible. The Lord had called them directly out of their usual occupations. But they had been *with Him*. Even their enemies saw this (*Acts 4:13*). This is why the Lord could use them for the most important service there is. Through Peter's preaching three thousand people were converted in one day. And *their* teaching and *their* fellowship was the foundation of the new work that God began on that day - the assembly of the living God (*Acts 2:42*).

It was not that the disciples had not done anything before this day. From the first day they had been with the Lord He had had something for them to do. But it had been what we might call helping - simple tasks. They had shared in all the troubles and enmity on account of the gospel (*Mark 3*). They had rowed when the Lord wanted to cross the sea (*Mark 4:35-41*), etc.

From the very first day after our conversion the Lord wants to use us - *if we are with Him*. There is always something to do if we want to work for the Lord. We can distribute tracts. We can invite people to gospel meetings or to Bible studies. We can help in the preparations for these meetings, etc. If we *want* to work, if we are but ready to *serve Him*, the Lord will always give us work to do. This means that we must be ready to do *everything* that He commissions us to do. We must not expect that the Lord will begin by giving us great things to do.

In *Matthew 25* the Lord gives to each of His bondmen "according to his particular ability." And it is noteworthy that it is the servant with one talent - not the servant with five talents or the one with two - who does not work and whom the Lord must call a "wicked and slothful bondman." And because that servant had not made good use of his one talent it was taken away from him and given to the one who had worked so hard with the talents that had been entrusted to him. In his way this one received even more. The more diligent we are in the little activities which the Lord entrusts to us, that is, those He sets before us, the sooner He can let us do a bigger work - at least this is so if we do this little task in obedience and in dependence upon Him, too.

Some years ago there lived in a mountainous area of the United States a little servant girl who had not attended school more than three months. Her salary was four dollars, and of this she gave one dollar for the meeting hall, one for missionary work, and two dollars to her father who was poor and had a large family to support. She gave more than anyone else in that neighbourhood. In the evening often until



late into the night she did other work whereby she could earn money to buy her own clothes.

An earnest servant of the Lord visited this place. Because there were but limited facilities for lodging, she gave up her little room for his use. Her Bible lay upon the table, and on almost every page of it he found notations. But what struck him most of all was a note beside Mark 16:15 - "Go into all the world, and preach the glad tidings to all the creation." Next to it in large plain letters she had written, "Oh, if only I could do that too!"

The following day he spoke to her about this, whereupon she began to cry so hard that he could not get another word out of her. Later he heard her story. She had been converted when she was a fourteen year old girl. One day when she came home a paper was lying there with the heading, "China's Call for the Gospel." Where the paper had come from no one knew. From that moment on her thoughts had been filled with China. Day by day for ten years she had asked the Lord to send her to China. But a short while before a change had come upon her. She had come to the conclusion that she had made a mistake, and that the Lord had not meant her to be a missionary in China, but rather a missionary in the kitchen. From that moment on she had prayed, "Make me willing to be a missionary for Thee in the kitchen." And the Lord had answered her prayer.

For ten years she had longed for great things, although she had not neglected little things - her monetary contributions certainly testified to this. But now she had become willing to do the very little things - to shine as a witness for the Lord in the small sphere of a kitchen maid. *And now the Lord could use her for a very blessed work in China!* For this servant of the Lord became convinced that the Lord had especially sent him to this village in order to help this girl. And finally she did go to China. "He that is faithful in the least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

## DEPENDENCE UPON THE LORD

We have seen that servants of the Lord are called by Him, according to His own will, and that they are also sent out only by Him. But that is not all! The service must also be carried on in dependence upon the *Lord*. "There are distinctions of services, and the same Lord" (1. Corinthians 12:5). The bondmen in Matthew 25 had to render an account to their Lord. The disciples in Mark 6:30 came and "related to him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught." See also 1. Corinthians 3:10 to 4:5.

In order to be able to measure up to this responsibility we have received the Holy Spirit. He wants to lead us in all things, so that we might never do our own will (Galatians 5:17). This is especially the case in "service." "We . . . who worship (serve) by the Spirit of God" (Philippians 3:3. See also Acts 16:6-10). "But all these things operates the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular according as he pleases" (1. Corinthians 12:11). Thus in our service we are led by the Holy Spirit. But we perform the service dependent upon and responsible to the Lord.

This is of extraordinary significance. First of all it gives us great boldness. If a believer is looking at himself he never has boldness to do anything. He sees so



many weaknesses and shortcomings in himself that he doesn't have the confidence to do anything. Even when he knows very well that he has received a gift from the Lord and has been called of the Lord, he is deeply aware in himself that he cannot give a single blessing. Never has a sinner been converted through the words of a man, nor a believer blessed through human words. For how shall anyone know what the needs are of those to whom - or before whom - he is speaking?

But when we are used by the Holy Spirit the result will always be blessing. He knows what needs there are at that very moment and how to meet those needs. And to those whom He uses He gives spiritual words wherewith to communicate spiritual things (1. Corinthians 2:13).

At the same time this is a great responsibility. We must pay careful attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit, so that He can use whomever He will. For there is but One who has liberty both to lead in personal service as well as in the meetings of the assembly. It is completely contrary to Scripture and in fact is despising the presence of the Holy Spirit when we think we are able to determine who should minister in meetings of the assembly. This is equally true if we say that each one has the right to take part or if we limit this right to one or to a few persons. The Holy Spirit alone has the right to determine whom He wants to use. And this means that it is our duty to be ready in the meetings to be used by Him whenever He wants to do so.

It is clear that in the meetings in which someone speaks publicly the Holy Spirit will mostly use those gifts which the Lord Himself has given for this purpose. But He has the right, too, to use a lesser gift, even when greater gifts are present And as far as praying and giving thanks are concerned, or the giving out of hymns - for these things there are no gifts. What men speak of now and again as a gift of prayer is usually an expression of the flesh. For praying and giving thanks the Holy Spirit can use each one whose spiritual condition is such that he can be used.

What a responsibility it is, then, for *each* of us - the youngest as well as the oldest - to be such in the meetings that the Holy Spirit is able to use us, and to let ourselves be used whenever He so desires.

With warm greetings,

Your brother in the service of the Lord,

H. L. H.

# Our Place on Earth

My Dear Friends:

In my last letter I attempted to show you our place - as believers - before God; and now I desire to direct your attention to our place here upon the earth; and we shall see, I think, that this is also connected with Christ. Just, indeed, as we are identified with Christ before God as to standing, so also are we identified with Christ before the world. In other words, we are put in His place down here just as we are in Him before God; and I cannot but think that it would be very helpful to us all to have this truth continually before our souls. But there are two aspects of our place on the earth, both of which are important to be understood; the first in relation to the world, and the second in relation to the "camp"; i. e., organized professing Christianity, which has succeeded in this dispensation to the place of Judaism, as the professing witness for God. (See Romans 11 and compare Matthew 13.)

## OUR PLACE IN RELATION TO THE WORLD

The Lord Jesus, speaking to the Jews, said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23). Afterwards, when presenting His own before the Father, He said, "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*" (John 17:16); and you will see that, in the section from the 14th to the 19th verses, He essentially puts His disciples in His own place in the world, just as in the previous paragraph (from the 6th to the 13th verses) He puts them into His own place before the Father. And they have His place in the world, it should be noticed, because they are not of it, even as He was not of it; for having been born again they are no longer of the world. Hence He speaks continually of their having to encounter the same hatred, and the same persecution, as befell Himself. Thus, to cite an example, He says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:18-20). The apostle John in like manner indicates the utter contrast between believers and the world, when he says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" - or "the wicked one" (1. John 5:19).

But there is more than even yet appears from these weighty scriptures. Every believer is regarded by God as having died and been raised together with Christ (Romans 6; Colossians 3:1-3). He has thus been brought out of the world, through the death and resurrection of Christ, just as completely, in God's view as Israel was brought out of Egypt through the Red Sea. Hence he is no longer of the world, though he is sent back into it (John 17:18), to live for Christ in the midst of it. Paul therefore could say, while active in service for Christ in the world, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom" (or whereby) "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). By the cross of Christ he saw that the world was already judged (John 12:31); and by the application of the cross to himself he regarded himself as dead - crucified to the world - so that there was separation between the two as complete as death could

make it.

To sum up these teachings, then, we see that the Christian while in the world is not of it - he is not of it in the same sense as Christ was not of it, he belongs to another sphere - for if any man be in Christ it is a new creation; he has been, as already seen, brought entirely out of it through the death and resurrection of Christ. Hence he is to be wholly separate from it; he is not to be conformed to this world (Galatians 1:4; Romans 12:2) in spirit, habits, demeanour, walk; in everything he is to show that he is not of the world. Even more, by the application of the cross he is to hold himself as crucified to it; and there cannot be any attraction or assimilation between two judged things. But again, he is in the world in the place of Christ; i. e., he is in it for Christ, and as identified with Christ. Consequently he is to witness for Christ, to walk as Christ walked (Philippians 2:15; 1 John 2:6, etc.), and he must expect the same treatment as Christ. Not that we look to be crucified as Christ was; but if we are faithful we shall encounter the same spirit in the world as He did: indeed, in proportion as we are like Christ will be the degree of our persecution; and the fact that believers now meet with so little hatred from the world can only be accounted for from their being so little separate from it.

Before I pass to the other branch of the subject, I cannot but urge upon you the importance of breaking with every link that connects you morally with the world. It needs but little penetration to perceive that the spirit of the world, worldliness is creeping rapidly over God's assemblies, and vauntingly proclaiming itself even at the table of the Lord. What dishonour, yea, what grief, to Him whose death we are gathered to show forth! And what a call upon all the saints to humble themselves before God, and to seek anew for grace to be more devoted, and more separate, so that the world itself may see that we belong to Him whom it rejected, cast out, and crucified! How many of us have the spirit of Paul, who desired "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and to be made conformable to His death" in the view of a glorified Christ, the object of his heart, and the goal of all his hopes? May the Lord restore to us, and all His beloved saints, more of this devotedness to Himself in entire separation from the world.

## OUR PLACE IN RELATION TO THE "CAMP"

In the epistle to the Hebrews we read, "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. *Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach*" (chapter 13:11-13). Two things are very evident in this passage - the blood of the sin-offering was carried into the sanctuary, and the bodies of the beasts which were sacrificed were burnt without the camp; and the apostle points out that these two things have their correspondences in the death of Christ, the antitype indeed of these offerings. Hence we have the double place of the believer - his place before God being in the sanctuary, where the blood was carried; and his place on earth being without the camp, where Christ suffered. In other words, as before explained, if we are in Christ before God, identified with Him there in all the savour of His own acceptance, we are also identified with Him on earth in His place of shame, reproach, and rejection. *The place of the believer on*

*earth, therefore, is without the camp;* as the writer of this epistle says, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

You will perhaps ask me, What is the camp? In the passage which I have just cited, it is clear, from the whole connection, that it is Judaism. What, then, answers to it now? Judaism was of God, and occupied the place of testimony for Him on the earth. Judaism failed and was set aside after Pentecost, on the final rejection of Christ in the preaching of the apostles, and Christianity succeeded to its place, as is taught in Romans 11. So the camp now is organized Christianity, the outward professing church - which includes all denominations, from corrupt Roman Catholicism to the smallest sects of Protestantism. On what ground, you may further ask, are we called upon to go outside of this camp? *On the ground of its utter failure as a witness for God.* "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:11, etc.). This is our warrant for measuring all that claims to be of God by the written Word. And indeed we have a responsibility to do this. Testing thus all these denominations, we find they are all convicted of disobedience and failure. For the believer, therefore, who would act according to the mind of God, there remains nothing to do but to remove himself from all these, apart from the confusion and error of this evil day, and take his place with those who are gathered simply unto the name of Christ, in obedience to His Word. Exodus 33 is very instructive in this connection. When Moses came down from the mount (chapter 32), he found that the whole camp had fallen into idolatry, and after returning to intercede for Israel, he came back with "evil tidings" for the people. And he "took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp" (verse 7). Moses acted thus, because he had the mind of the Lord in the presence of the failure of the people; and hence it is that we find in this scene a moral picture of our own times. Let me commend it to your careful consideration.

Enough has now been said to enable you to understand the place of the believer on earth. On the one hand it is to be in separation from the world, and on the other it is without the camp. To occupy it will involve hatred from the former, and reproach from the latter. But if so, we are but more fully identified with our blessed Lord. In Hebrews it is thus called, "His reproach." May we neither shun the one, nor be ashamed of the other; nay, may we be enabled to rejoice when we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41).

Believe me, dear Friends,

Yours affectionately in Christ, *Edward Dennett*