



**Only one thing
is needed**

Hans Erik Nissen

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Preface

The aim by this book is to preach a simple, clear and life-giving word about Jesus. We all need such words. Several of the daily readings point at that one needed: **Jesus Christ as Saviour and Reconciliator for lost sinners.**

This is my prayer that these daily readings may not only help someone to believe but also to remain as a Jesus-Christian. All your sources must be in him. Jesus is all that you need. In yourself you are poor - in him you have plenitude. When the Holy Spirit reveals blessing in Christ we are sanctified in our innermost and shall carry fruit for God. In our hearts we are given praise and victory and for better or for worse we see our lives as walking in the triumph of Jesus Christ.

Therefore in this book I forward to others, what has enriched my life. May God meet every one with blessings through the word, which stands, when Heaven and Earth will vanish.

Copenhagen 2012

Hans Erik Nissen

1 April

Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

Proverbs 17:9

Strife and discord among Christians wear down confidence and joy in many congregations. This can be reflected so that we do not have the courage to reach for outsiders to come to Christ, when the conditions are as they are in the congregation.

After strife and discord many have asked themselves: Couldn't we have prevented this?

It is useful to think of it, in time, that we also have to live well with each other, when what we disagree about no longer occupies the minds. It helps one to stop before strife breaks out. It is important that it doesn't have the result that we give each other incurable wounds.

However if the harm has occurred already, and we cannot come to an agreement, then it's right to cover over the offence. It must be done by love. Love covers over a multitude of sins.

To rake up a matter only makes everything more difficult and we come even farther apart. No, the solution is to show each other love and kindness.

Haven't you yourself experienced how good it is to meet warmth from someone you have disagreed with? Then you are not to rake up the matter. No, hide it and show love.

Perhaps you are the one who should take the first step. Take it not only with words but through deed. Love has reconciled many brothers in spite of the fact that they didn't agree!

There is an agreement that surpasses everything else. It is the love which unites us by the throne of grace. There everything is left to the Lord who knows our hearts completely. There nobody gets a different right than the right of grace. It unites us with our fellow-Christians. All of us must live on the Lord's grace.

Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.

John 19:19

The inscription Pilate placed above Jesus on the cross read like that. No one was to be in doubt about who he was. The inscription was, therefore, written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek.

The Jews tried to alter the words, but they didn't succeed. Without knowing it himself Pilate had written the truth.

Jesus is king of every single person. He isn't king only of those who choose him. In eternity, therefore, this accusation will be heard by many. You have rejected him who should be king of your life. That is the biggest sin a person can commit.

To reject Jesus is to reject God. No one does so with impunity. They will spend eternity without him under his wrath and judgment.

If you belong to Jesus, you have acknowledged him as your king. It is wrong when somebody thinks that one is to accept Jesus as Saviour and after that as Lord.

No, Jesus is king of a Christian. Therefore, make room for the king. You don't belong to yourself but to your king who lives in you.

That you associate with him makes your life different from what it usually would have been. He is the one who has the power, and it is your blessing in life to be in his service.

A disciple shares circumstances with his master. Jesus is dishonoured by many. Every Christian will feel that. However, it is an honour to share circumstances with him.

You think with wonder of the fact that your king ended on the cross. Jesus humbled himself and became a servant. Yes, he became your substitute in his death.

Must I love him less because he humbled himself so deeply? Mustn't we instead praise and elevate his name?

We do so by crowning him as king of our life. He must be master. He must be Lord. We will follow him.

Jesus said to her, “Mary”

John 20:16

If somebody mentions your name, you don't doubt that it concerns you.

Perhaps you were brought up in a Christian home. You may know a lot about Christianity. Yes, perhaps you are longing to become a Christian. All that won't benefit you, if you don't believe that it was for you Jesus died and rose from the dead. If you haven't heard Jesus say to you, in your heart: “You are mine!”, then you are outside God's kingdom.

But the Lord calls you by name, the way it happened when he revealed himself to Mary. That is the greatest and richest thing in a human life.

When it happens you won't be occupied with all that you receive from Jesus, but with himself. It is him you think of. You are drawn towards him. He has become your all.

An old servant of the Lord said, “For me, life is Christ.” When the accounts had to be made up, he was occupied with Jesus alone. Will it not also be like that in eternity as well?

A lot of Christians think of whether they will get their earthly riddles solved in heaven. But the question is how much those riddles interest you when you stand face to face with Jesus. Then you are probably so occupied with him that you forget anything else.

Imagine being known by Jesus! Imagine it being so on the day when it means everything for you. Imagine hearing Jesus calling you by name, when it has the result that you will inherit the kingdom which the Father has intended for you from the foundation of the world.

Jesus calls you by name.

He does so today. Perhaps you feel broken, cold, dead and empty. Mary did so too when she thought she had lost everything. Nevertheless, it was just that day when Jesus came to her. He knows that you need to hear him calling you by name. That is why he says to you, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”

“Sir”, they said, “we would like to see Jesus.”

John 12:21

Some Greeks came to Philip and said that they would like to see Jesus. Many have followed in their footsteps, some out of curiosity and others to learn a thing or two from him. Some came because they knew that Jesus was the only one who could quench the thirst and satisfy the hunger of the soul.

The only thing that is able to help you is to see Jesus. You are surrounded by temptations and dangers in all directions. It is no use turning your glance towards all the horrible things. It's no good either to look into yourself and realize once again how weak and helpless you are. No, you are to go to Jesus. He is the one your heart's eye must be opened for.

How does it happen?

It doesn't happen because you work with your imagination, and try to identify yourself with Jesus' suffering. Neither does it happen because you look into yourself in order to come into contact with Jesus through mysticism and ecstasy. Neither does it happen by singing the same choruses again and again.

You find Jesus in the Bible. God's word portrays him before your eyes. You meet God's Son by whom all things were created. You meet him as a human being. You meet him on his way to sick, helpless and exhausted people. You also meet Jesus as the slaughtered Lamb of God, who has bought all of us to God with his blood.

In God's word you meet him whom you will one day see face to face in glory. He enters your heart with his power of grace.

Then you gain the same experience as the disciples, when after Jesus' resurrection they were behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. Jesus came to them and appeared to them. Then the disciples were glad because they saw the Lord.

To see Jesus is the only way to lasting joy. It is also a safe way. Go that way, no matter how your conditions are! Perhaps you will see him through tears; still it is true: if you see Jesus, he gives your heart a deep and quiet joy in the midst of your distress, sorrow and strife.

Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Matthew 8:2

There will be many defeats before the moment arrives, when a sinner says to Jesus: Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

First you try to explain away the sin. You put it on to others and compare yourself with them. You think that you aren't worse, than they are.

However, before God's face, you cannot explain away the sin. He sees through you. He knows the inner recesses of your heart. Everything unclean which is there isn't hidden from him.

When a sinner realizes this, the fight starts in order to be free from the sin. But it cannot be washed off. It is like leprosy. It comes from within, from deep within. No matter what you do, you cannot reach the root of the sin. It shoots up from your heart, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another way.

Therefore you end up as a lost person. One day you will have to stand before the face of the Lord and say it point-blank: I want to be a Christian but I can't cope with it. I cannot make myself clean.

Can you see that you look like the leprous man?

Our fight, wishes and efforts don't help. There is only one who can save, and that is Jesus.

Lord, if you are willing, you can save me! It can seem horrible to have to say it, but it isn't. Basically, it is the only a blessing for you. Realization of one's own distress and wretchedness prepare the way for Jesus.

Jesus can only be seized with empty hands. As long as you fight your way on the way of self-improvement, you are deaf to the voice of Jesus. But when you are helpless, you can hear the blessed words of Jesus, "I will, be clean!"

Four small words but all the riches of salvation are hidden in them. Just imagine - Jesus is willing! Not only is he willing, he also holds out his hand towards you and touches you.

It is like that to be saved. Jesus comes to you. He lets his blood cover you and cleanse you. You become white as snow. Then God sees you without sin. You are Jesus' pure and holy bride.

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

John 20:20

One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy, but it is another sort of joy than the one we knew before we became believers. It doesn't disappear – even during hardship, distress and sorrow. Yes, in the midst of despair, a Christian owns a deep and quiet joy.

There is a close connection between this joy and our faith in Jesus. When the eye of the heart is turned towards him, joy is great. In periods when the sinful things have got power over our minds, Christian joy is forced into the background.

After Jesus' crucifixion the disciples lived under great strain. They couldn't know how Jesus' enemies would relate to them. That is why they locked themselves up for fear of their fellow-countrymen. Apparently it didn't alter a lot that Jesus came to them. Their safety was still doubtful. Nevertheless everything had changed. They had seen him. That is why joy had got room with them. Their meeting with the living Saviour had changed their subject of conversation. They had discussed the dark and ominous future; now they had to repeat to each other that Jesus was alive.

They were to meet the coming days and difficulties with a living Saviour!

They were to go through hardships, of course, but Jesus would be with them under all circumstances.

How we need to get our eyes opened and look towards our risen Lord and Saviour! Constantly looking at our own and other people's powerlessness only leads to increased despondency. But if faith in Jesus is allowed to grow, we can face the future with confidence because God is with us.

Many Christians think they have understood the gospel of the resurrection of Jesus. They have understood that Jesus rose from the grave on the third day. They haven't realized that Easter morning must reach into the heart. When that happens, their sun has risen and your heart brims over with joy.

We don't know what the future will bring. However, we know the most important thing. We are not to meet the days to come by ourselves. We are to go into them along with Jesus. If we are going to meet big difficulties, we can still be certain that they will never be such that Jesus cannot go through all their closed doors.

The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:6

It's difficult to believe that truth when one is in need, because of one's sin. Then one feels that the holy eyes of God are watching. I have nothing to answer. My mouth is silenced and I await God's judgment.

Then God comes in his Word and says that he let the consequence of all my sins strike Jesus. I was the one who sinned, but Jesus bore the blame.

Jesus knows our inner man. He knows that it's difficult for your depressed heart to believe that precisely all your sin has been atoned for. You can believe that it concerns everybody else, but not yourself.

That is why God says that it was the iniquity of us all, which the Lord has laid on Jesus. When it says all, then it means all. Your iniquity is included.

You are to know that your iniquity cannot simultaneously rest on your shoulders and on his shoulders. When God has taken it away from you and laid it on him, then it no longer lies on you.

The Lord himself finished this wonderful work of salvation. The only thing you had to contribute was sin. But God took what you were able to give, and then he sacrificed his Son in your place.

It is as if one senses the significance of all the sin in the world in the word, "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." The burden in question here must be considerable! Therefore, can you be surprised at the fact that the Bible says that Jesus was crushed?

We don't grasp the price of salvation. Our earthly measures cannot measure it, but God's word gives us to understand that there is a connection between it and God's infinite love.

God so loved!

He found every single human being guilty of sin. There has never been anyone on earth, and never will be, whom God has not found guilty. However, God didn't place the iniquity on you. No, he laid it on his own Son. You aren't the one who will be accused. The Son was accused.

God did this in order to save lost sinners. Are you among those who have received his grace? If not, you should do so now. God has made everything ready.

**Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.
Hebrews 5:8**

Many think that the disobedient person is the only one who can learn obedience. If that is true, Jesus must have been disobedient. He never was. He was obedient towards his parents and he was obedient towards God.

When a Christian is in God's school and experience his disciplining hand, it is natural to ask: What have I done wrong?

That question can be legitimate. Sometimes there is a connection between our trials and our sins, but it is not always the case.

We do not send the children to school because they have done something wrong. We do so because they are to learn more than they already have learned.

God wants his children to grow in obedience. They are to follow in the footsteps of his Son. They are to be brought up through suffering.

In suffering one looks for a firm and unshakeable ground, where one can drop anchor. Jesus was united with God's will, which was his guiding star and firm ground.

When you come into suffering, you often feel as if the ground shakes. Then you must seek firm ground. He who has fulfilled God's will in your place, he is this firm ground.

God will, first of all, teach you the obedience which is to believe in Jesus. Jesus is to be everything for your heart. You are to cling to him.

It seems as if God makes us poor through suffering. It can appear like that, on a superficial examination. Life loses its worth.

However, the profound truth is different. Through suffering God teaches us to know real life. Everything on earth is subject to mortality. That is why the whole creation moans. God's children also moan.

But in your distress the Lord is calling you to let Jesus be your strength, riches and joy. He is to be your all. To learn to be obedient in that way is to be truly blessed

Take me away with you!

Song of Songs 1:4

“The smallest things which come your way, oh, bring them to Jesus, and then he will help you!” We sing like this, and it is true. We can come to Jesus with everything. He must guide our steps and help us on our pilgrimage, which can often be hard and difficult.

Even so, it is very important that there is balance in our spiritual life. It is wrong if we, through our prayer, just want to draw God into our world. First of all we are to pray that he will lead us into his world.

Take me away with you!

Jesus has a pain that he wants to share with you. It is the need for all those who live without God and without hope. He has poured out his love in your heart, in order that you must love those he loves.

It is a blessed and rich thing to be the Lord's instrument. The service can, of course, be hard and full of difficulties. No one can stick to God's works without perseverance. But if you look back, you do not doubt that the greatest riches in life are connected to the commission you got from the Lord himself.

Take me away with you!

This prayer is basically a prayer to get a better knowledge of Jesus. Your Christianity is first of all Jesus himself. Your thought and your longing are directed towards him. He is the one you love. That is why you want to see him in his glory.

Imagine gaining a deeper insight into the atonement. Imagine being able to recognize what it cost God to save. No human thought can understand that. It is a secret which God has to reveal through his word by the Holy Spirit. It is the heart God enlightens. You cannot fully interpret in words what God has let you recognize in the deep of your heart. However, if you have understood a little of the secret, it will strengthen you in your prayer.

Take me away with you! Lead me into your sanctuaries! Let me know your holy thoughts! Help me to wonder at your glory which is full of grace and truth!

With this prayer on your lips you thirst for God. And he is the only one who can quench that thirst. He will do so by his grace.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . . And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matt. 28:18-20

All authority has been given to me. That is Jesus' royal declaration. There are others who have authority, but they don't have all authority. Therefore, they aren't able to go beyond what Jesus allows them to do. He may permit them to go far and he may allow abuse of power for the upbringing of his children, so that they bow down and are humbled. But Jesus remains all-powerful to whom everybody in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bend their knee.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations!” That is Jesus' royal command. It has always looked like a hopelessly great task. The first time it was given to a small group of eleven disciples. This command has been heard in the most different situations. Thousands of people have heard it and obeyed.

It was declared simultaneously by a man and by God, because Jesus is God. And we don't discuss with him. We must obey him.

Foreign missions are a part of every Christian's life. We are all under Jesus' command. We take part in different ways, but we are all under the calling.

We sing: ‘The wonderful saviour I own, all, all must see him!’ And we mean it. Young people struggle with the calling. Parents talk with God about their children's calling. We struggle together with them who are fighting at the battle lines in God's kingdom. In wonder we see that God's kingdom advances.

With gratitude we think of them that obeyed and came to us with the gospel. Today we follow in their footsteps. It isn't always easy, but we know that those who sow with tears will reap with shouts of joy.

And then we find that Jesus' royal promise holds. He is with us all our days and all kinds of days. Through our service we become more strongly attached to him. And he doesn't forsake us. He goes along with us, and it's Jesus who works in us so that our work succeeds to his honour. There is no deeper joy than to see that Jesus gets the full reward for his suffering.

11 April

Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Mark 8:25

The blind man was helped the first time Jesus put his hands on him. He could see people. They were walking around. But they looked like trees. His eyes were fully opened only when Jesus touched him for the second time.

Many of those who have met Jesus have had the same experience. They have seen something which they hadn't seen before. Jesus has become a living reality to them. He has touched them and their lives have changed.

But still they don't see everything clearly.

They haven't understood the secret of the atonement. They are more occupied with themselves and their own Christianity than with the work of atonement which Jesus has finished.

If you are one of those, you are to learn a lesson from the blind man. He was truthful and told Jesus how things were. There are many who don't do that. They simulate a spiritual clear-sightedness which they don't have. That is why they can't get help. Their hypocrisy prevents it. It leads them to think that they don't need any help.

Learn from the blind man! Be honest!

You are not to deny that Jesus has begun his good deed. But neither are you to pretend that you have a full light on the gospel which Jesus hasn't given you yet.

Ask Jesus to put his hands on you again. Ask him to open the riches of the atonement and grace so that you look into the perfect law of freedom and continue to do so.

Pay heed to God's word. It is through the Word Jesus leads us into every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. It isn't through spiritual experiences. No, he enlightens your heart as to how rich you are in him. You will see that Jesus died not only as a propitiatory sacrifice for you. He has also lived instead of you. Jesus has fulfilled the law for you. Whatever you lack in yourself, you have in abundance with him.

You see that you are infinitely rich.

I know my sheep and my sheep know me.

John 10:14

If you have been born again, nothing is as precious to you as knowing Jesus. It is not about a superficial acquaintance; no one will be saved by that.

No, you long for the knowledge of the heart. When you open the Bible, it takes place with prayer that your heart may find rest in your Substitute and Redeemer. If you attend a chapel or a church to hear God's word, you are longing to hear the Word of the cross.

You feel like that because your heart has tasted God's grace. You cannot understand that others can be occupied with anything but the cross, because Jesus' blood is everything for you. His work on Golgotha means salvation and that is why you hunger to hear the gospel. You have experienced that it is the only thing which can give peace. When Jesus is portrayed before your eyes, you find out for certain that you are a child of God.

Do you know Jesus?

Yes, you have the only knowledge that counts in God's opinion. You know Jesus.

That is why Jesus also knows you. When he sees you, he sees the poor heart of a sinner who clings to the work of salvation by grace. Jesus meets himself in you. He meets his own blood. That is the means by which your heart was cleansed and you were made white as snow.

Shouldn't Jesus know you? He must know himself, mustn't he? All your life you have had to cling to him. He is the one your hands catches hold of. It is his name which is written in your heart.

Yes, Jesus knows those who are redeemed by his blood.

What confidence it gives you with a view to the day when you no longer are able to hold on to anything. Jesus won't let go then. Then he puts you on his shoulders and carries you all the way home. You have been there before when Jesus carried all your sins on the tree of the cross. Now you are there again, but this time you are clean, completely clean. Jesus has saved you. He knows you as his.

Then everything else can perish. You possess life because Jesus knows you as his child.

Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness ...

Revelation 1:5

Many words are cheap. They may appear right but they don't stand the test. There is no strength behind them.

It is not like that with Jesus' words. They are certified with blood.

Jesus didn't cry out and scream. It wasn't necessary. He spoke quietly and earnestly, and in generation after generation some have been saved through what he said.

If you have been born again through God's living and lasting word, then you have experienced this from within. When nobody else's voice could help, you heard the call from the Good Shepherd. The wonderful thing happened: God took you and lifted you out of the mud and mire; he set your feet on a rock.

Since that day many have made their voices heard. You live in a world where you cannot avoid hearing now one voice and now another. You have perhaps been led astray at times. You have entered a road that you shouldn't have walked on, and you have had to pay dearly for it. However, Jesus hasn't made his voice silent. He has called you back. The reliable Word gripped you again, and it never loses its saving power.

When other people disappoint you with their words, there has always been something you could return to. It is the Word from the faithful witness.

In tribulation and darkness it may appear as if Jesus' words don't go in. But it is like that just for a limited time. In God's hour the veil is taken away, and with wonder you realize that you stand on the eternal rocky ground of the Word. Then you can be delighted that Jesus is the faithful witness. His word is the unshakeable rock in the midst of the rough seas of time. A day is coming for you on which Jesus' words will stand the test. It is the Day of Judgment. If they prove true on that day, you are saved. If they aren't reliable, you are lost.

However, you don't need to be in doubt. If you cling to Jesus, you are saved. His words stand firm in heaven. They are certified with the blood which counts there.

14 April

Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

Luke 15:29

The older son had no joy. It looked as if he had the right conditions to possess it. Everything the father had belonged to him. And where he himself is concerned, he seems to be a hard-working man that had his life organized.

Nevertheless, he wasn't happy. It is the same with a lot of Christians. It is due to the fact that the full rights of sons have been replaced by bondage.

We easily slip into a law-relationship with God. We can discuss a long time about what a Christian can do, and what he cannot do. But there isn't much talk about Jesus and his work. Jesus doesn't fill heart and mind. That is why the mouth doesn't overflow about him.

Poor older son! He thinks that a young goat can make him happy. To him joy is connected to a festive evening. He doesn't think of the fact that there will be a working day again soon.

The way into Christian joy isn't some inspiring experience. Many have believed so, but they have found to their cost that, after a few weeks, nothing had changed.

No, the way to joy is the way into the full rights of sons. It became the blessing of the younger son to be embraced by his father. This is exactly what the older son needs.

How long is it since you have thrown yourself into your Saviour's arms? How long is it since you have seen your Father come running, throw his arms around you and kiss you?

A true and living Christian never grows out of the child-relationship with God. You will always be lost in yourself. You always need grace – undeserved grace. And the wonderful thing is that when you receive everything for nothing, you will be happy.

You have to forget everything you are and have done. Then you can look your Father in the face. You must let his love flow through you. You are his beloved child.

15 April

For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

2 Corinthians 8:12

Spiritual laziness and carelessness are an imminent danger to all spiritual life. But it isn't the only danger. A Christian may demand something from himself and others that is so great that he goes to pieces because of it.

It is true that we should encourage each other to do good works. At the same time we have to understand that not everyone has the same capacity of willingness. It is crucial to God that the willingness is present and gives what it is able to.

There are overworked workers in God's kingdom. They give more than they are capable of, and God takes no pleasure in it. God doesn't want us to give more than what he has entrusted us with in his service.

Some Christians have given what is quite extraordinary. A calling issues from those to give oneself fully. We are not to ignore that calling. At the same time we have to understand that we aren't going to account for our management compared to the gifts and abilities of others. We have to account for what God has given each one of us.

It is a relief to be released from the demands of oneself and other people. You are allowed to stand in the sight of the Lord. He knows you perfectly. He knows about the strengths and intellectual powers he has given you. He wants you to serve him with those. He also knows that the strengths aren't the same for an older person as they are for a young one.

To be at God's disposal, realizing that one is only a part of a whole, leads a Christian into the joy of service. God hasn't given me everything, but others have received what I lack.

God doesn't expect that I must be able to do everything. For me happiness is to be at his disposal as I am.

None of us is to meet all the expenses of the congregation, but our willingness is to give according to our ability. Then we are, in life and service, under God's blessing, and he will let the work succeed.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

Jesus' glory is different from any other glory. It is infinite. When sky and earth come to an end, there will be no more human glory - yes, most of it has disappeared long before. In the cemetery lie many who were revered while they lived, but others have filled their places now. Our glory is like the flowers of the field. It is different with Jesus' glory.

Most people didn't see any glory in Jesus. He didn't have anything. Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had no place to lay his head. Nevertheless, Jesus' closest friends saw a glory which they hadn't seen before. It had no connection with earthly riches, but it was full of grace and truth.

During their travels with him the miracle happened: the Holy Spirit revealed the reality for them. It was God's own glory that rested on Jesus' face.

When you became a Christian, you saw Jesus in a transfigured light. All earthly glory faded. You met a glory that couldn't be compared with anything else.

Greatest of all was Jesus' glory on the cross and in the resurrection. He loved so dearly that the love kept him there under God's Judgment of wrath in sinners' place. A love like that reveals a glory which is divine. It is full of grace. Jesus never used it to call attention to himself. He takes pleasure in your salvation.

God doesn't save you because he is ignorant of who you are. He knows you completely. But he knows your substitute as well. He knows that Jesus is a propitiatory sacrifice for all your sins.

To be a Christian is to see the same as God is seeing. To be a Christian is to have one's joy where God has his. God sees his Son and takes pleasure in him. You also see Jesus and are pleased with him. God's heart and your heart are filled with Jesus' glory. It is like that today. It will be like that forever.

17 April

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

Romans 5:20

Our old nature will always make wrong use of God's word. God knows that better than anybody. Nevertheless, he uses the strongest possible expression in order to help the one who laments his own sins.

A living Christian thinks that the sins grow worse as the years go by. "I was poor, have become worse, see more and more of the sin of the heart," sings Per Nordsletten. And it is true. In the Lord's light the sin becomes great.

When you think of the abyss of corruption in yourself, the enemy of your soul whispers: Do you think there is hope for you? Where is the fruit of your faith? Where is the jubilant joy? I wonder if your unsuccessful Christianity won't result in your perdition?

When this voice is heard, there is only one thing to do. You are to resort to what is written.

Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

It is a good thing that you see how great your sin is. But grace is even greater than your sin. Our many sins make grace increase all the more. The one who has been forgiven much loves much. Our thoughts protest that if it is like that, we can just go on sinning.

No, says God's word. By no means! We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer?

You are, moreover, so permeated with sin that you don't need to add to the number of sins.

Nevertheless, you can be confident. There isn't a single sin which isn't covered by grace, when you belong to Jesus. You will be allowed to appear before God in a stream of grace. Therefore you can, even down here, sing the praises of grace. Behind you, about you and in front of you is God's grace. Yes, it will rest on you forever!

The Lord be praised!

18 April

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Ephesians 1:17

A lot of Christians think only a little of Jesus. They know that he is their Saviour. They believe that they have received forgiveness of their sins by grace. They are convinced that someday they will meet him, but they don't turn their eyes towards Jesus.

The result is a poor Christian life, because Jesus is not only the Author of our faith. He is also the Perfecter of our faith.

All strength in a holy life depends on the heart's profound knowledge of the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

You cannot understand who Jesus is without the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. You cannot find rest in the cleansing power of Jesus blood, unless the Holy Spirit constantly glorifies him for your heart. You cannot go on looking at Jesus in your own strength. The Word has to be made alive for your heart, otherwise you lose your joy in God. On your own you don't hunger for the bread of life. God's Spirit has to create hunger and thirst in you.

Paul knew the way to God's heart. He lived in prayer, and he asks us to follow his example. He had experienced where the way to everything good is.

If God gave you the knowledge of Jesus that you asked him for, were you then a rich Christian? There are many who have lost belief in the power of prayer. They don't receive, because they don't ask God.

It is never too late to start praying. Let it become the most important prayer of your life that God may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. God will fulfill your prayer. It is a prayer in line with his will. He will let you see the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. And it will give you a different view of yourself as a child of God. It will dawn upon you how rich you are in him. You who are worried and troubled will be quiet, and you will be filled with thanks and joy.

You will see that he has released you from everything which binds you. Your heart will be delighted at the fact that it is Jesus God counts on. It will give you boldness to do the same.

You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.

Luke 12:20

Jesus told the parable of the rich fool when a man came to him to get assistance in a case concerning the dividing of an inheritance. The harrowing narrative about a rich man, who perished, was the answer Jesus gave.

Jesus knows our hearts. He sees what others don't see. He knows if we are rich in God. If we are, earthly wealth hasn't the same importance as it otherwise would have.

There are situations in which Jesus wants to teach us to suffer wrongs. It is a heavy lesson to learn, but it is useful. You learn that you cannot trust other people. You realize that the wealth of this world is insecure.

It is difficult to keep life in God and at the same time be rich. Wealth holds many dangers. Arrogance is obvious, worries also. How easy one loses treasure! Wealth opens up many opportunities for amusements and recreations which attract our mind and thoughts away from the Lord.

It isn't without reason that Jesus says that it is hard for a rich man to be saved. Therefore you are not to cry the day your earthly wealth disappears.

A Christian learns something when he suffers injustice in the financial field. Mind and thoughts turn from what disappears to the riches that never perish and which is safely kept in heaven.

Suppose the crops had failed for the rich fool! Then it is conceivable that he in his need would have come to the Lord. Then he might have been able to bear witness to the fact that the crumbs we put in the Lord's hand are blessed.

However, things didn't go on like that. He got so much that he forgot the Lord. And in the night of death God demanded his life.

Can you read the parable of the rich fool without being afraid for yourself? Do you not have to pray: Lord, don't give me so much earthly wealth that I forget about you? Whether I am to go through the world rich or poor doesn't mean anything, if only my soul is saved.

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Joshua 1:8

Your life depends on your relationship to the Word. This is the most important thing of all, because man does not live on bread alone. If you live in close contact with the Word of God, blessing will flow like a river of peace into your life.

The Word must go into you. You have to be filled with it; and it takes place when you read it diligently. You must carefully pay heed to it, and adapt your life to it.

God's Word should not depart from your mouth. The Devil uses all means to silence you. At a time when many follow their own thoughts and consider God's commands outdated, it takes courage to speak them out, either at school, in the office or in the workshop. But dare to do it! It is the way of blessing in your life.

When you preach God's word to others, you also preach it to yourself. If you are a person of truth, you are bound by your own words. You bind yourself on the basis of the Word.

To be filled with the Word, you have to become absorbed in your Bible constantly.

Most people get most out of not reading too long a passage, but instead short texts two or three times. Then it becomes easier to think about what one read. In this way you give God's word time to penetrate. Let the Word become like a calm spring rain into your heart.

It is also useful to learn single Bible verses by heart. Then God's Spirit can make them alive to you, when you need them.

God promises you rich blessings when his word is a part of yourself. It will go well with you in all your dealings, and blessing will follow you. God does not lie. You can rely on what he has said. It holds all your life, yes, into eternity.

Don't let it depart from your mouth! Meditate on it day and night!

21 April

Fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

Hebrews 3:1

Is it really necessary to tell Christians that they are to fix their thoughts on Jesus? Isn't it the fixing of one's thoughts on him that makes a person a Christian? Hasn't every single Christian experienced that the heart is filled with joy and boldness when it happens?

Yes, we can indeed marvel at the fact that it should be necessary to ask the friends of the Lord to fix their thoughts on him. But it is necessary. You know that from your own experience.

The Devil, our old nature and this world are doing their best to turn our eyes away from Jesus. It takes so little. Difficulties in family life or at the place of work, illness or financial problems, fill thought and mind. You can be seized with a feeling of hopelessness and dejection.

Many of our problems follow us all our life. They are cast over our days like shadows. We ask if we ever will get rid of them.

God's word answers that you are to fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom you confess. There are many questions which you aren't given an answer to, but God has given you Jesus, and the darkness that he cannot brighten doesn't exist.

When you are in despair and say that the darkness will hide you, even then the darkness will not be dark to him. The night will shine like the day.

To fix your thoughts on Jesus gives you peace in the midst of all the problems which aren't solved this side of eternity. Your faith in him doesn't make life easy, but it makes you happy in the midst of distress and sorrow. It makes you happy to see Jesus. He is your Shepherd, Substitute and Redeemer.

Your sin has been atoned for in all circumstances. You gain the victory through Jesus in the midst of all defeats. You have to learn to be more occupied with what Jesus has done and gained. Your defeats and victories mean nothing compared with everything he has finished for you.

Fix your thoughts on him! You will never be put to shame.

Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace ...

Hebrews 13:9

The time before the Second Coming will be confusing. Many false teachers will appear, and quite a number will follow them.

False preaching is dangerous. False things appeal to our old fallen nature. What is new and different, it considers interesting.

The false teachers often refer to the Bible. They distort the Word or they make a particular biblical aspect a matter very near to their hearts.

At the same time they emphasize that the salvation in Jesus naturally is the basis of everything they say. We cannot disagree about that.

Don't ask for the words but ask for the power that works in them.

Jesus' finished work and the salvation of grace by faith in him is the centre of the Bible. If the message of salvation isn't allowed to be what everything turns on, our hearts aren't strengthened by grace. Paul resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. That is why such a number of people were won for God's kingdom.

Our old nature quickly becomes tired of hearing about the atonement, where everything is about Jesus. That preaching isn't convenient to the self-centred person who always wants to intervene and take the principal part. If we give in to this desire, all sorts of strange doctrines get the wind in their sails.

No, let us keep to God's grace; it alone is able to strengthen our heart. The preaching of the gospel creates and strengthens the faith.

There is no room for anything of my own alongside that grace. Grace imputes my sin to Jesus and his fulfilment of the law on me. This is incomprehensible for the intellect, but the heart can grip it if I am allowed to hear it again and again. God's grace makes me happy and delighted. It creates a holy desire to follow Jesus. Grace creates hatred towards the desire for sin.

Keep to the old gospel. It is the only thing that can save from sin, death and Judgment. Fight for the faith which once and for all has been handed over to the saints. Stick to God's grace.

For Christ's love compels us ...

2 Corinthians 5:14

There is nothing that can compel as love can. It makes itself master of the objections over the protests of our common sense. It overcomes the life of self.

What isn't a father or mother able to do for their child? Often it almost appears as if they spoil their own lives. They are under the compelling power of love.

In Song of Songs we find this word: "If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned."

Our love compels. But Jesus' love is much stronger. It can bring about what nothing else can. That is why you have to lose yourself in it, because it concerns you. It did so before you were born. You were chosen before the creation of the world. God saw you with his beloved Son.

Your soul is to rest in the atonement. Jesus' work of salvation remains in force forever. You never come to him with your sin without having achieved anything. He cleanses you and makes you white as snow.

It was Jesus' love that nailed him to the cross. Without the cross, he couldn't lead you to heaven. He wants to possess you forever. His love knows no limits. That is why he has paid the price of love. We cannot understand how costly the price was. The only thing we can do is to defer to him in gratitude.

The love that compelled Jesus is also a compelling power in your life. God has poured out his love in your heart through your faith in him. He has anointed your eyes so that you see other people the way he sees them. God's love reaches farther than to you. Jesus died in place of us all.

Most people live without God and without hope. They haven't accepted the salvation.

Jesus' love compels you to go out to them. You have to take part in the great task of the congregation. The fields are ripe for harvest. "The wonderful saviour is mine, all must see him."

Give in to the compulsion of love - by doing so you are blessed and you become a blessing to others.

That is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

Romans 1:12

Paul had come a long way in spiritual insight and maturity. Who could compare with him? Nevertheless, it was not only Paul who had something to give. He too, needed his friends in Rome. They needed to encourage each other in their mutual faith.

It's like that even today. Many preachers need help. Perhaps they have greater insight than you in God's word. Maybe they live nearer Jesus than you do. Perhaps they are more influenced by Jesus.

Nevertheless, they need you.

They need your intercession. They need your love. They need to have a conversation with you about the life of faith. They need to meet Jesus through you. You must bear in mind that a preacher is a helpless sinner who has no righteousness in himself. He faces temptations and dangers the same way you do. Despondency may stare both of you in the face; likewise the desire for self-assertion.

Moreover, the fact is that Satan particularly attacks those who have been given the task of preaching, or who have a leading position in the congregation. They, therefore, need help. You can encourage them by thanking them for the Word you received. But first of all, it's a great strength to feel that there is somebody who encircles and supports one in intercession.

It's also immensely important that you call attention to Jesus and all God's promises in him. The mind of a servant is easily captured by many problems and difficulties. The temptation to make comparisons with times when the spiritual situation was quite different is obvious. It's a good thing, then, to have Christian friends who can confirm that Jesus hasn't changed. God's power to intervene hasn't become less.

Together we should help each other to faithfulness in the calling that the Lord has entrusted to us. We must show unshakeable confidence in God's word. We must under all circumstances continue the work of trusting in the Lord. Christians need each other's encouragement in life and service, in love and care. Let us encourage each other in our mutual faith!

But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.

John 11:22

It is Mary's sister, Martha, who says these words.

Wasn't she the one Jesus had reproved? Hadn't Jesus told her that she was worried and upset about many things? Wasn't there an admonition to Martha in Jesus' words to Mary who had chosen what was better?

Yes, Martha's sins and shortcomings weren't hidden from Jesus. Neither was it his will that they should be so for us. However, with that everything hasn't been said about Martha.

She belonged to the inner circle about Jesus. It is a blessing to be there. She was the one who owned the house at Bethany. She placed it at Jesus' and his disciples' disposal. It is hard work to care for many visitors. But Martha didn't spare herself.

We have much to learn from her!

When in the midst of her service she was reproached by Jesus, she didn't turn away from him. On the contrary! Martha wasn't too arrogant to learn from her sister. Martha also chose what is better.

How do we know that it is so?

We can read it from the fruits of her life.

When Lazarus became ill, the sisters sent a message to Jesus. It was not only Mary who did it; Martha took part in it.

Jesus' words had created the faith in her heart. She didn't doubt that it is useful to come to Jesus. She had experienced it herself.

See what confidence Martha has in Jesus as an intercessor!

After the death of Lazarus she says the wonderful words to Jesus, "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Learn from Martha! She served Jesus. You are to do the same.

When Jesus rebuked her as a hostess, she humbled herself under his words. You are to do the same. Then you get Martha's confidence in what Jesus' prayer is capable of.

I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

Isaiah 43:25

If God's word is to be of any help, it is not enough that you understand it. You also have to believe what the Lord has said. When God assures you that he doesn't remember your sins any more, you must receive this wonderful message.

We are liable to think that we can't be unbelieving if we don't reject the Lord's word. But that's wrong. If you don't receive it with faith and trust, you are an infidel. If you don't receive the Word, it won't save you, but judge you.

Listening to God's word always works either to produce hardness or life. That also applies to his greatest and most glorious promises. Many become hardened when they hear that God doesn't remember their sins anymore. They may listen and listen, but they don't understand anything. God's word remains without fruit. It hasn't been received. Therefore, it doesn't create joy.

When God has said that he doesn't remember your sins any more, it is a sin against him if you distrust him. Yes, it is the same as branding him as unreliable. You mustn't do so. Instead, let this glorious text bring freedom into your heart! The Lord has released you from everything you have done. Instead, he has credited everything Jesus has done for you.

You should not, therefore, become horrified when the memories of sin crop up. Instead, you must keep to God's word. You have to say to yourself that the things God no longer remembers, you will not think of either.

God has forgotten the things he has thrown behind his back. Therefore, you also have to do so. On the other hand, hear what the Lord always remembers: "See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me."

The Lord knows you as a sinner, who is engraved on your Redeemer's hands. Jesus' nail-marked hands testify to the fact that accounts have been settled with all your sins. Jesus faced them at Golgotha. Therefore, you won't face them. The Lord meets you with grace.

27 April

Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Ephesians 6:13

One wouldn't think that it was difficult to stand one's ground, when everything is done. But God knows us fully, and through his word he helps us to a deeper understanding of ourselves.

It happens that Christians, who have lived with the Lord for many years, can lapse from their faith a few years before their death. In their life as Christians they met warfare and distress of heart. They fought and struggled. But just before the goal they were attacked by a queer coldness and carelessness. That is why they were defeated.

An old Christian warrior can look back on many fights with both defeats and victories. The thought arises: isn't it about time to withdraw from the battle?

It is dangerous to believe that salvation is certain before the goal has been reached. If you allow this thought room with you, you no longer think that it is necessary to put on the full armour of God. And if you don't do so, you are defenceless when Satan starts his last large-scale attack.

Some of the most tragic accidents in the history of mountain climbing have happened just before the summit was reached. They were filled with joy owing to their impending victory, but a few seconds' lack of concentration cost the mountain climbers their lives. The foot wasn't placed on safe ground, and the fall towards the chasm was unavoidable.

Satan doesn't care if we become presumptuous; it doesn't matter that we have defeated him many times previously if he can crush us in the last decisive battle. What is most important to him is the final victory.

You are to resist the Devil until your last day. You can do so in the suit of armour that isn't your own. God has to give you everything. You have to come to him helpless. You have to get all your strength from the grace in Jesus. You have to clothe yourself with him and not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. You mustn't evade serving Jesus. Then you won't be defeated in the last struggle, but you will keep the victory.

Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

1 John 3:15

Some people think that one can hate one's brother, and in spite of that be saved by grace. But God's word says something else.

There have always been Christians who want to receive forgiveness of sins, but who don't want to break with sin. They can live in a wrong relationship with their brother. Some get these problems solved before they die; others don't.

When God's word speaks of hatred towards a brother, a shocking expression is applied. The words are so serious that the temptation to pass them by is strong. We try to explain away the enmity, and say that it isn't a question of hatred. In that way we try to take the edge off the Word, so that we ourselves escape being accused.

That way is highly dangerous. Every Christian lives life with the day of reckoning in view. On that day God will tell you if you made wrong use of the forgiveness of sins to indulge in your old sinful nature, but then it is too late to repent.

Have you talked with Jesus about your relationship to the brother with whom you are not on speaking terms?

There are relationships between brothers that cannot be straightened out through dialogue. There are situations as well, in which the ways must part. However, if the prayer for God's intervention ceases, wickedness and coldness make their entry into the heart.

God is the God of wonder. He is able to heal and cure where we ourselves can do nothing. First of all he knows our hearts and knows what they want and long for.

Jesus has said that you are to pray for your enemies. Pray for their temporal and spiritual good. Through the prayer you touch God's heart, and he touches yours.

The Bible calls it murder when one hates one's brother. A murderer cannot possess eternal life without conversion. Jesus and hatred cannot live side by side. Either hatred has to go, or else Jesus has to do so. The Lord calls us out. He calls us to have reconciled relationship with him and with one another.

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:20

Many Christians don't pay heed to the promises of God. They have emptied them of their power. They attach now one now another condition to what God has promised.

They don't doubt that God's word stands firm. They are sure that they would have got what is promised, if their faith, obedience or service had been different.

That is why they try to be as they ought to be. It fails time after time. At last they don't think they are able to manage any more. They believe that they are saved by grace because they have faith in Jesus, but they haven't succeeded in living a true and healthy life as Christians.

If you are a Christian like that, you are to pay heed to the Word. Your problem is that you still try to find God's promises 'yes' with yourself. When will you learn to understand that it isn't your signature which makes God's promises valid? Why do you want to put your signature to what Jesus already has put his name to?

All the Lord's promises are valid by virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ. You can therefore count on every single one of them.

When you meet God's promises in the Word, you are to say: these glorious promises remain in force. Jesus has fulfilled all demands and conditions. They therefore apply to me. Jesus has given them to me.

His gifts to you have an unending value. You have to protect them. You have to take them out and look carefully at them. The more you look at them, the more precious it becomes what Jesus has given you.

Find one of the many promises of the Bible. Seize it. Thank God for it, and let it carry you through the day or the coming night.

God's promises contain a wonderful power. They carry you through everything that hurts and oppresses you. Jesus' name is written under every single promise. He himself has written it there. Now he hands it to you, so you are to accept it and say thank you.

“He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself.”

Matthews 27:42

These words were said in mockery. What worth had his salvation when he could not even save himself? Helpless and stretched on a cross the possibilities didn't seem to be many. The mockers thought that everything was over with the cross.

However, they were wrong. They didn't dream of the fact that their words were literally true. They didn't know God's way. What they said was true. Jesus couldn't save himself if he was to save others.

Why not?

To God it is as wrong to acquit a culprit as to denounce an innocent person. The holy God hates all injustice.

If sinners were to be acquitted in the judgment, Jesus had to be sentenced with their penalty. God is eternal. Sin and guilt don't vanish like dew before the sun. Atonement is necessary.

None of our propitiatory sacrifices were able to extinguish the fire of God's wrath. A sacrifice that was holy and clean, unaffected by evil, had to be offered. And it was done. Jesus offered himself. When Jesus was lifted up towards God on the tree of the cross, he no longer was God's pure Son. He was the one whom God himself had put all the sin of the world on. Jesus died as the guilty one.

You are saved as the guiltless one.

Jesus has saved you if you take refuge in him. Then God doesn't see your sin. On Good Friday God let his wrath hit the sacrifice of sin.

God did not appoint you to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is really your Saviour. He has removed the sin that had to go, if you were to be acquitted by God. When he put the sin of the entire world on Jesus, no sin was forgotten. Neither was yours. Your account was paid before you were born. Jesus also knows your future sins. He has tasted their bitter consequences.

It was more important for him to save you than to save himself.

1 May

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

John 12:24

The kernel of wheat has a hard fate. It has to go down into the dark and cold soil in order to die.

That is what happened to Jesus. He had to go into the deepest and most impenetrable darkness that exists here below. It is the darkness of god forsakenness. There he had to die the physical death and the eternal death.

You have to die as well. Your body will be put into the soil. However, even on your way towards the grave, there is something in you which has to be killed daily. It is the life of the self. While you live, the Lord leads you as if you were a grain of wheat, if you really are a child of God.

He does so by taking you aside. At that time you felt the kindness and admiration of other people but you don't do so anymore. Now you have disappointed them. In different ways it becomes clear that they dissociate themselves from you. You have heard what they have said about you. Something is true, something isn't. But what hurts more than words is the attitude behind the words.

What is happening?

Behind all this is the Lord. He puts the kernel of wheat into the soil in order that it must die. Your opinion of yourself has to be changed. For that purpose he uses external opposition and hardship.

When you meet discipline and troubles your self-life is pulled down; but the self-life tries to escape death. It can use suffering to glorify itself.

However, the Lord won't leave his child. Some day you will see yourself exposed in your heart of hearts. The light of truth shines and you cannot explain it away. There is nothing good in your old nature.

You have to dissociate yourself from yourself and live in the power of Jesus. Nothing of your own will last. Everything he owns stands firm. You do not want to get any honour. The Lord alone is to have honour. In this way you bear fruit for God.

2 May

Remember the words I spoke to you: “No servant is greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

John 15:20

Of course, a servant isn't greater than his master. What does Jesus want to say with these words? He emphasizes them by asking us to remember them.

Jesus wants to say that you have to prepare yourself for suffering and persecution if you want to serve him.

It is so easy for us to forget about everything unpleasant. We think it is a horrible thought that we are to be persecuted for the name of Jesus.

Nevertheless Jesus asks us to prepare ourselves for it. Jesus' disciples are to share circumstances with him.

Through many years we haven't experienced open persecution in our part of the world. But God's word tells us that the persecutions will come in the time before Jesus returns. Yes, there will be a great tribulation.

Church history has shown that apostasies were particularly great where Christians had forgotten that no servant is greater than his master.

When the persecution reached the Christians who were unprepared, there were many who denied their Lord and Master.

It is a good thing to be realistic. And only the person who relies on what God's word says is so.

The crucial help in persecution is to think of Jesus. He is the Lord who has given us an example. Our hardships are small compared with his sufferings. Nevertheless we may fear and be worried. But we can be helped through by looking at Jesus. He will be with us in all distress, and he knows everything we have to go through. He has been tempted and tested in everything. That is why he can come to our help.

A Christian isn't honoured and respected in peoples' opinion; neither was Jesus. The most important thing for him was to be in the centre of God's will. It has to be so for us as well. Let us follow in his footsteps. Let him lead us on the way of the cross to the glory.

In heaven you will share circumstances with Jesus. There you will be elevated and honoured for ever.

Solomon showed his love for the Lord ...

1 Kings 3:3

Do you love Jesus?

These are strong words, but Jesus uses them time after time. He asks for love.

Why?

It isn't difficult, for the one who loves, to give the right answer. If love is to prosper, it has to be mutual. If you love you ask, first and last, for the love of the beloved.

Solomon loved the Lord. He did so because God loved him first. God is the one who creates the love in us. It is the warmth in God's heart that sets your heart on fire. It happens first of all by the proof of love: Jesus.

Face to face with him, God makes known that he loves you more dearly than you will ever be able to understand.

It may well be the case that you shrink from using strong words about your love of Jesus. It is possible that humbly along with Peter you must say, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Behind these words is the heart's deep dependence on Jesus. You are attached to him in life, in death, in eternity.

Aren't you seized with sadness when you hear the words, "Solomon showed his love for the Lord"? Do you remember that it didn't continue in that way for good? When he became old, his heart was drawn away from the living God. The pagan wives he married influenced him.

For a long time it appeared as if it was all right to live in disobedience to God's Word. There are many who rely on that today as well. But they are mistaken. The day will arrive when they will reap what they have sown. The end of their lives will be tragic, as Solomon's was. He ended up being an idolater.

If your heart belongs to the Lord, you should let him keep it. Don't let anything or anyone else in. To love God is to keep his commands. Solomon forgot that. Don't follow in his footprints. Follow Jesus on the narrow road. That is the one that leads to life.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Ephesians 1:7

Many Christians fight a hopeless battle to be released. They feel they are in bondage. They feel depressed. They cannot free themselves from others' point of view and opinions. Sinful thoughts worry them all the time. They know only a little of victory in their life.

At the same time they believe in Jesus, but they haven't experienced his grace as a redeeming power. They don't believe that the gospel is the hope of salvation. That is why they ask for help in another way and in other places. But they are disappointed. It is Jesus' finished work alone that can cure and heal a sick and plagued heart.

God's word preaches that in Jesus you are redeemed from everything you feel tied down by. You aren't redeemed by your own experiences. No, you are redeemed by Jesus' blood.

It cost God so much to redeem you. He had to pay with the life of his beloved Son. That is why he won't give you any other rest than the one you get through faith in Jesus. It is to be your life's riches that you have a full and complete redemption in the midst of your own distress and despair.

What you feel and think doesn't count in God's opinion. God reckons with Jesus and with him only. Your misfortune is that you don't reckon in the same way as God does. It is these riches God in his grace is longing to lead you into. You would never experience that, if God made you the successful Christian you want to be.

No, God wants Jesus to be your all; he can be so only if you are a mere nobody. Instead of your complaints, God wants you to be pleased with how rich you are in Jesus and what he has finished.

Instead of longing for redemption, you are to praise God because of the fact that you have been redeemed already. God's own Son has made you free. You need nothing in God's opinion. You have plenty of everything, because you have Jesus. And with him follows all the riches of his grace.

I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.

Philippians 1:23

Paul doesn't look forward to dying, but he looks forward to being with Jesus.

Death is the last enemy. Even Christians can be seized with fear and anxiety when they think of it.

Nevertheless the sting of death is broken for a child of God. Jesus has opened a road in through death. It isn't a narrow road; it is so broad that a Christian, at death's door, won't see death but only the glory of God. Therefore, you are not to think of the ending. Ahead of it waits the beginning of eternal life. Yes, Jesus calls himself the beginning.

To desire to be with Jesus isn't the same as having lost the desire to live. A living Christian has got his eyes opened to all the Lord's kindnesses. The longing to be with Jesus is living at the same time.

Life on earth isn't always easy. There is much in us and around us that can weigh us down and humble us. The world hasn't got the peace you are looking for. Neither will you find peace in yourself. Doubts and distress throw dark shadows over your life.

Look forward to the day when you will be with Jesus. Then you have nothing to fear. No illness will torment you anymore. No death will take your dear ones away from you. No misunderstanding will crop up.

Jesus is all in all. Then our behaviour towards each other will be the same as Jesus' behaviour towards us.

Grey, dark and hard hours will no longer exist. Eternity will be an unending day full of joy, service and praise to the honour of God and the Lamb.

We go towards eternity on account of the finished work of Jesus. It stands firm. We don't lack anything. The day will soon arrive when we will see him.

Do not withhold your mercy from me, O Lord.

Psalm 40:11

There are words in the Bible which make me inexpressibly happy. This is one of them; I am particularly fond of the wording this word had in the earlier Danish version of the Bible: "You, Lord will not close your heart against me." But my heavenly Father had every reason to do so. I have often hurt his love. Satan often gained power over me. There are so many shadows of sin in me. And my heart very often feels empty, indifferent and cold.

But God's heart isn't like that. It is open because God loves from within. No one can hold back the warm stream of his love, except himself. And he won't do so. He has revealed it to his servant, and he passes it on to you.

It is possible that others will close their hearts. What others think may change from day to day. Popularity is a very changeable thing.

Jesus experienced that the same people, who on the Sunday could pay tribute to him with the words, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" on the Friday shouted, "Crucify him!"

Jesus experienced, in all circumstances, that God's heart was open to him. It was so, right up to the day when he hung on the tree of curse and shouted, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Then God had closed his heart against Jesus. He went, as your Substitute and Redeemer, under the wrath of God and darkness closed up over Golgotha. Because of the fact that Jesus met what you should have met, he has forever opened God's heart to you. When God looks at you, you aren't alone. You are clothed in Jesus. And God cannot meet his Son with a closed heart. Because God takes delight in Jesus, he also takes delight in you who live in him.

You can therefore with joy and boldness turn your eyes towards the Lord and in his name raise your eyes towards Heaven and say: I thank you, God, because you will not close your heart against me.

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1 John 5:12

It is as simple as that. If you have Jesus, you have life. If you do not have Jesus, you do not have life either. If God's Son isn't your personal Saviour, you are lost and then you perish. Your only possibility to avoid perishing is to receive Jesus.

A lot of people are satisfied with their spiritual life even though they do not have Jesus. They all attend church services and meetings, and they think that this means that they are living Christians. If they use the Bible and prayer, they feel even more secure.

But there isn't salvation in anything we do. Lots of pious people will be shut out of the wedding hall for ever. God didn't find what he looked for in their lives.

What is it God looks for in your life?

God looks for Jesus. If he finds him, he finds life. And everything Jesus is and has, he shares with you, when Jesus lives in your heart. That is why you have life when you have him.

Is it not strange – you may lack everything, and yet you have life if you have Jesus? The thief on Jesus' right hand lacked everything, but he received him as his Saviour. That is why he was given life.

Many who live a virtuous and respectable life perish. They never posed the decisive question about themselves: Do I have the Son?

You have to ask for the same as God asks for on the Day of Judgment. You have to know, then, that it is Jesus he looks for in your life. Your eternity depends on if he finds him in your heart.

If you have Jesus, you have everything. You lack nothing, in God's opinion. He sees you united with him. Jesus' riches are yours. When God meets him, he meets the perfect love and submission under his will. Then his heart brims over with joy towards Jesus and towards you, who are one with him.

Jesus knocks at the door of your heart. He wants to come in. He wants to be united with you. Because then you are saved for ever.

What has happened to all your joy?

Galatians 4:15

The rule-governed mind of a slave makes joy die away. You no longer count yourself blessed. You look at yourself. Become sad about yourself. Preoccupied with yourself. But you never become satisfied, unless you end up in hypocrisy.

To become a Christian is to become finished with myself. It no longer depends on me myself. It is not my steps forwards or steps backwards which count.

To become a Christian means that now our entire salvation depends on Jesus and him only.

It is at this point that many Christians have got stuck. They look at their own misery. They don't think they make any progress. They don't read enough in the Bible. They don't pray enough. They don't testify enough. They still meet themselves with these words: not enough.

As long as you do this, you cannot count yourself blessed. You drive yourself forward on the road of self-improvement. And you never reach your objective.

Think about how it was when you met Jesus!

Who was it you were pleased with? It was Jesus and him only.

You realized that even though you were sinful right through, you were still saved only by grace. It was entirely unmerited. It was undeserved. You realized that you got everything for nothing from the Saviour. That is why you had to count yourself blessed.

You couldn't be anything but happy. Your heart had to shout with joy.

God's intention is that you are to continue in this relationship. You must rejoice that salvation flows from Jesus. Your sins don't deduct anything; your good deeds don't add anything. The greatest things in your life have been achieved without you – by Jesus only.

The only thing you can be proud of is Jesus. He is the only one who is perfect. Not even the least stain can be ascribed to him. You have a share in his wealth. That's why you count yourself blessed.

9 May

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

Romans 7:4

The decisive thing is that you, in the faith, acquire the facts of salvation. You suffer great losses in your life as a Christian because you bear fruit for death! You don't live in faith's continuous acquisition of the fact that you have died to the law.

When you don't do that, the genuine praise disappears from your life. The accusation of the law reigns in you. It all along draws your attention to the fact that you aren't the one you should be. You don't read enough in the Bible, you don't pray enough, you don't testify enough, and you don't care enough for others. Over your whole life are the accusing words: not enough.

And it is true. Whatever you do, it isn't enough. As long as you are occupied with the law with all its commandments and precepts, you are under the curse of the law.

How can you be deaf to the gospel? Jesus has saved you! You will escape meeting the accusing words of the judgment about the fact that you haven't done enough. When Jesus died, you died to the law. If your heart clings to him, you are no longer "married" to the law. You belong to another, that is, to him who died and was raised from the dead for you.

Instead of suffering and sighing under the terrible words "not enough", you are allowed to shout with joy because of the words "forever enough". And you are to know that these words have been written over the whole of your life. Jesus is the one who has written them there with his blood. And what he has written, no one can wipe out.

How can Jesus write, "Forever enough" over your life? He can do so because you have become his. And there hasn't been made any marriage settlement in your relationship with him. That is why the whole of Jesus' riches belongs to you. And it more than counterbalances your sins.

You have become his.

This is the thing that first of all must characterize you. It is also the thing that must be said when everything else has been said. Jesus hems you in—behind and before.

You are released from the law. You belong to Jesus only. He is everything to you and you are everything to him.

In order that we might bear fruit to God.

Romans 7:4

When you became a believer in Jesus, and he made his home in your heart, you got a deep desire to bear fruit for God. Again and again you say to yourself: if only I could bear fruit to God! It is your heartfelt prayer that the Lord may be honoured.

At the same time you have to realize that it almost comes to nothing. You make new decisions, but things don't change. You ask: what is it that is wrong?

There may be several causes, but with a zealous Christian the reason is often that he is more occupied with the fruit than with Jesus.

There won't be any fruit in spite of the fact that you incessantly think of it. On the other hand, if you turn to Jesus, life gets a healthy growth. If Jesus is the joy and delight of your heart, the fruit of faith sprouts.

Your incessant searching for fruit leaves you empty and disappointed. You don't find what you seek. Neither would it be an advantage to you if you did so. It would be a great temptation to self-exaltation!

No, in his wonderful goodness the Lord has closed all other ways. Jesus is the way, the only way. But you are also to know that he is the safe way.

You will never meet a Christian who lives in the close fellowship with Jesus, without feeling the holy fruit of his faith.

The person who lives closest to Jesus bears most fruit. It is as simple as that. It is bound up with the fact that it is basically Jesus who bears fruit through you. You are a branch of him.

That is why the Lord, through his word, will lead you into the whole riches of salvation. You will get your eyes opened to the fact that it isn't true when you think that you lack everything. You have everything. You cannot own Jesus without having every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.

It is through realizing this undeserved grace that you bear fruit to God.

As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

James 4:16

What kind of words are the strong words that are used here? What kind of evil words are mentioned here?

It is words in James 4:13 that say what the future will be spent on: "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

Why do you make many plans without thinking of the fact that you are like a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. You don't know when your life is over. Neither do you know if you will be caught by illness, or when the fear of war will be replaced by the reality of its horror.

No, you are a little human being who isn't master of your own life or your own circumstances. According to God's word it is boasting to speak as if you are lord of all your decisions. But since the day of the Fall of Man, fallen man has wanted to be like God.

What must you do then?

God has to come into your life. He must come into your thoughts. He has to influence your words. What you are to do or not do, doesn't depend on you yourself. It is God and his will that has to rule.

You have to sit down in the place of the humble. You don't know what the best thing is, and even if you knew it, you would not be able to fulfill it if God did not give you life, power and strength.

In your life you are completely dependent on God, and it is this dependence which has to penetrate all the plans you make.

Life never succeeds for you when you go your own, self-imposed ways.

They are just an expression of arrogance and sin. No, you have to put your hand into the Lord's hand, and then he has to lead you forwards on the way he has decided that you are to go.

Don't sin against the Lord by taking life into your own hand. Trust him. He won't leave you to yourself. No, he will lead you according to his will and plan, so that you reach the eternal, heavenly goal.

Remain in me . . . apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:4-5

It is to his disciples Jesus says this. Perhaps we think these words must be directed to non-Christians. Jesus has something to say to them too, but it is the disciples he talks to in his farewell speech.

A Christian is in danger of acting without Jesus. The way may appear to be so obviously right without being God's way. We have no doubts about what we are to do, but Jesus doesn't take part in it.

We often ask Jesus to bless what we have decided, don't we? As a matter of course we take it for granted that Jesus will agree with us.

That is why so many things fail. We take our starting point in ourselves. After that we go to Jesus. Then we are in fact separated from him. He doesn't feel bound to realize our thoughts and opinions.

We have to begin somewhere else. We have to admit that we are powerless. Apart from Jesus we can do nothing at all. We aren't able to think his thoughts. He has to help and set us right in everything.

All blessed beginnings arise in our helplessness before God's face. And their continuation is found in the same place.

Everything depends on the fact that we remain in Jesus. All our life we have to turn to him. We will never reach the point where we can do anything ourselves. We always have to receive.

Jesus' words throw a searching light on us. At the same time it contains a glorious gospel.

Just imagine, Jesus doesn't expect anything at all of us. He knows that we can contribute nothing at all. The only thing we can do is to remain in him. If we do so, he will work through us. Then we will be a blessing to others.

Basically, it isn't important that people meet us. They are to meet Jesus. He steps forward through his powerless servant, who isn't somebody in himself and therefore has to cling to him solely.

However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 4:5

These are strong words: “justifies the wicked”. But they are true. God declares the wicked righteous when in faith he takes refuge in Jesus.

Wicked – yes, it begins like this but a Christian doesn't continue to be so, does he? If Jesus lives in the heart of a sinner, we cannot still call him wicked, can we?

It is important to learn to distinguish between the old and the new man. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. But at the same time, not everything has become new. My old sinful nature follows me until my burial. It is this old nature that keeps on being wicked through birth, conversion and death. It can neither be saved nor is it meant to be so. It is to perish in death.

Often we may be tempted to think that the old man has reformed. It is because of the fact that it changes. Sin doesn't manifest itself as before. But you aren't another person because you change your clothes.

If you have been a Christian for many years, you still need the word of God that declares the wicked righteous. Your old nature is and will be wicked. It has its own will. It wants to manage without God.

Dare you believe that you can be saved when you, after many years as a Christian, still have to be saved as a wicked person?

The only thing you have is faith in Jesus. You have to cling to him in your wickedness.

Just then you get your faith credited as righteousness. It means that God will see you with him you cling to, and God will credit to you everything Jesus has done. That is why you can anticipate Gods judgment with confidence. You will be saved on account of another person.

For God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

1 Corinthians 3:17

The Bible gives a clear picture of a Christian. But how difficult it is to stick to it! My experiences, thoughts and feelings say something quite different from what it says about me in God's word.

A Christian is God's temple. God lives by the Holy Spirit in each and every person who is born again. No one can believe in Jesus but by the Holy Spirit. And there is no one who can be in living contact with God without possessing God's Spirit. And where God's Spirit lives a person is separated and consecrated. He doesn't belong to himself any longer.

It isn't your good works that make you holy. No, it is the Lord who has done his work by making his home with you. Where he enters he fills the house with his glory. It is difficult to understand that he who is elevated and holy would enter your unclean, sinful heart. But it is due to Jesus' blood that has cleansed you from all sin through your faith in him.

You have to make room for the truth, that you as God's temple are holy. The Devil does everything in his power so that you will forget about it. Because he knows that your faith in that truth is dangerous for him.

When God has made you to be a holy temple, you cannot surrender yourself to uncleanness. You don't want to make filthy the property of the Lord. On the contrary, it is your greatest wish that there must be agreement between the cleanliness of the temple and him who lives there.

Deep in your heart lives the longing to glorify Jesus. You are to yield to that longing. You aren't to let the Devil, the world or your wicked nature make you filthy. You are to let Jesus carry out temple-cleansing in your life. Then you are to thank him that he is always working in you. If you remain in him and he remains in you, you will bear much fruit.

He himself will be seen by others through you, his temple.

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

Luke 10:40

Martha was a capable woman. She was zealously busy with all the tasks in the home. And her diligence bore rich fruit. She was the one who owned the house where she and her brother and sister lived. There is a fine connection between her zeal and her hospitality which Jesus and the disciples benefited from. If you are absorbed in the tasks you have in everyday life, your daily work will give you many pleasures and you will be a blessing to others.

Your earthly calling can also help against sin. Idleness isn't all to the good. The danger of too much talking is obvious. "Many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God," says God's word. The desire for amusement and entertainment appear. A secular way of thinking and mode of life result from that. One easily become displeased, as well, with one's own existence and this leads to criticism of others.

Martha is an example for a Christian. But she is also an example for warning. Her strength was at the same time her weakness.

Martha thought that Mary should be like herself. This is typical. When you work hard under a heavy workload you envy those who don't work as hard as you do. You become critical and sensitive.

And what is worse. All your tasks can lead you into such great activity that you don't take time for the one thing needed. You don't become quiet at the feet of Jesus.

God's word tells us, in connection with Lazarus' death, that Jesus loved Martha. He wasn't blind to what she did for him. Jesus knew that her heart was focused on him, in spite of faults and sin in her life. Her hospitality towards Jesus and his friends was born of love. And she didn't spare herself.

God's people are blessed, even today, through Martha-Christians. Jesus loves them. They teach us something about the blessing of working by their example. Jesus reminds every Christian, at the same time, about the one thing needful: quietness at the feet of Jesus with an open Bible, and with hands folded in prayer.

He ... having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:12

Sin binds. That is why there are so many unredeemed persons. They try to make themselves free from sin, but they don't succeed. Neither material benefits nor religiousness of some kind or other can help.

Even a Christian knows the feeling that one lacks full freedom. Perhaps it doesn't concern external sins that others can see, but the hidden ones that grow in the deep in your mind. It may be your concentration about yourself, ambition, vanity or all the worries that show how little and weak your faith is.

That is why a Christian knows the question: How can I be redeemed?

God's word says that you who have come to Jesus with your sin, are redeemed already. Eternal redemption was yours the moment you put your faith in him.

It not only surrounds you now, it follows you all your life. Yes, you will possess it in eternity as well.

When will you get to understand that you aren't meant to gain what Jesus has gained for you?

Redemption is not to be gained, but to be found. It is no use making an effort trying to be redeemed. If you want to find the redemption which another person has gained, you have to turn to what has been finished. You have to seek redemption where it is. Turn to the Word. Hear what God says. Cling to that. Then you will experience that there is power in the Word of redemption. The Word creates praise in your heart and you have to sing: 'Eternal victory I now possess, always, Lord Jesus, in you!'

As sure as you belong to Jesus, you are to dissociate yourself from the feeling of being unredeemed. Jesus has saved you into a new world where eternal redemption has been won for you.

Your life as a child of God becomes poor if you don't learn to count on Jesus. The prayer and the songs of praise will die away. Despondency and despair will overpower you.

If you turn to the riches that are yours in Jesus, joy overflows and songs of praise will never cease.

17 May

... by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Isaiah 53:11

Nothing is as important as to possess a true knowledge of Jesus. Nothing is as crucial as to keep this knowledge.

Don't think that you know Jesus because you know that he died for your sins. There are a lot of people who, by word of mouth, can say the right words but their confession of their mouth has never become the faith of the heart.

The true knowledge of Jesus is the knowledge of the heart. It makes itself known in an inward thirst for him. It is a good sign if you are longing to hear that all your sins have been forgiven by the word of the cross.

Your thoughts and common sense aren't longing to hear about the blood of Jesus. It isn't a big problem intellectually to receive and accept the truths of Christianity. It is different with the born-again heart. It lives by the word of Jesus, who bore our transgressions. It cannot hear too much of the message of the salvation. The more it hears the stronger is the longing.

That is why the heart is longing for heaven as well. There you won't understand piece by piece and partly. You will understand fully.

Even though you never become content with your knowledge of Jesus, it is still the most precious thing in your life. Your heart's knowledge of him is opening a way for the riches of his grace. You don't realise there is a relationship between your knowledge and everything the blood has given you. Your helplessness and his perfect grace don't quite match each other.

We cannot receive God's salvation in a completely perfect way. But because it is a perfect salvation that you have in knowing Jesus, it covers up all imperfection in your life.

If you know Jesus, you are righteous before God. God's grace isn't payment because you know him. It is undeserved. You owe it to Jesus alone.

He is everything for you, because he has done everything in your place. That is why you are righteous before God.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 2:18

Are you surprised that you continue to be dependent on Jesus?

In many other circumstances in life, you grow. You get a new relationship with your parents when you are able to fend for yourself. An apprentice is dependent on his master, but some day he can manage the jobs on his own.

It isn't like this however in the relationship to Jesus. There you will always be completely dependent. You are like a little child who would be lost if there was no one who could look after it.

The Devil tempts you in many ways. Even though you know what he wants to do with you, you cannot always see through him. Jesus has to inform you through his Word and by his Spirit.

Haven't you heard the voice behind you that reminded you of where the way was? Hasn't he made the Word alive and shown you where you weren't to go?

God's Spirit convicts you of sin. When Satan entices you to fall into apostasy, he lets the sin appear harmless and safe. But Jesus says something else. Through his Word he makes you afraid to sin against God.

Even though you are aware of the seriousness of the sin, you cannot manage to resist without the assistance of Jesus. If you go against Satan in your own strength, he will defeat you.

The way to victory is to run to the victor. You have to hide yourself in Jesus. He is a shield which covers you on all sides.

Satan tried to get make an end of Jesus, but he failed. When he thought that the victory was secure, he was overthrown. He got the deathblow when Jesus was crucified. Now Satan is fatally wounded. He struggles furiously because he knows that his time is short. He cannot hurt Jesus; nor those who flee into Jesus' arms when they are tempted.

Don't think that Jesus rejects you when you run to him in your helplessness. He knows you, and he knows the temptation. Therefore he also knows how he will help. You are to resist the Devil, standing firm in the faith. Then the promise is valid: "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

**Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.
Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.**

Hebrews 13:7

It's a good thing to stop short and consider how others have fared. It's educational to see the connection between the way a person went, and the place where he or she ended their lives. Because there is a great possibility that if you sow what they sowed, you will also harvest what they harvested.

If you have been a Christian for some years, you'll probably know somebody who has lapsed from the faith. It is often easy to see what the cause of their lapse was. Don't follow the road they went. You shouldn't think either that a small change in their conduct of life would have prevented them from going wrong. Let the lukewarm and the backslider be warning examples.

There are others you must imitate. Those are your leaders who were kept in the faith in Jesus all their lives. Only a few of them are mentioned in church history, but they have left crucial marks in your life. It could be a mother, a father, a Sunday school teacher, a clergyman or a preacher.

It will often be a Christian who is older than you yourself. You may be tempted, therefore, to think that the time in which they lived was the reason for the seriousness and the attitude on spiritual issues in the person in question. That is one of the ways the enemy of the soul goes about to prevent us from imitating their faith.

You also must work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You cannot sleep or dream yourself into God's kingdom. It's easy for the spirit of time to sweep away a Christian who doesn't go against the tide. First of all, you must think of the relationship your leaders had to God's word. They took it seriously. The law was allowed to uncover and judge them. God's grace has lifted them up time after time. Their feet were planted on rocky ground.

Perhaps you know your leaders intimately. You aren't blind to their sins and faults in their lives too. In spite of that you don't doubt that Jesus and his atonement was the firm foundation in their lives.

Some of those went the way of sacrifice. They served the Lord throughout many years in a calling which wasn't noticed by people.

Imitate their faith. Then you will reach the goal.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness.

2 Corinthians 3:18

A Christian is to be transformed. Faith is active. Faith isn't a matter of the mind, but of the heart. It changes a child of God from within.

The Devil tries to prevent Christian growth. He does so in many ways. The one he uses most often is to encourage a legal way of thinking with the one who believes.

He makes us believe that sanctification is a question of willpower. What we lack is new decisions, whole-hearted surrender or spiritual experiences of some kind. In short, Satan makes us work on ourselves. He knows that we easily become self-centered then. Without wanting to do so, we are building a wall about us. Our joy and confidence disappear as the connection with Jesus becomes weaker and weaker. In the end all spiritual life ceases. Then our worst opponent has triumphed.

No, the way to sanctification is to see the Lord's glory. You won't find it by looking at yourself. Instead you are to turn to the mirror of God's word. There you can see a clear and glorious picture of the Saviour. You have to have confidence in the active power which lives in God's word. A lot of people neglect God's word because of the fact that they don't attach the right importance to the Word. God can, through the Word, give you riches which are wonderful. Yes, he can change you through it.

You should not measure the change or be occupied with it. If you do, it will stop. You are to look at him who changes you. Then you are still influenced by Jesus.

We don't understand how God's word can do such great things. But it is like that.

God's word consists of law and gospel. It isn't the law that is the power of God to salvation and sanctification; it is the gospel. It isn't the word of what we are to be and do; it is the Word of Jesus and what he has accomplished.

Look at his glory! Then you will be transformed into his likeness.

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.

Hebrews 2:11

Many Christians work like slaves. They work and aim at becoming what they are meant to be. Over and over they have to realize that they aren't able to live the Christian life. They don't doubt that the Christian life is of the greatest importance, but at the same time their heart and conscience accuse them.

What is wrong?

It is the incessant attempts to sanctify themselves. That fight will never succeed. A Christian cannot sanctify himself. The only way to holiness is that another person makes you holy.

No matter how often you decide to live your life according to God's will, you will always end up in despair or hypocrisy.

When do you come to Jesus in your helplessness?

The truth about you is, that you not only lack something. No, you lack everything.

At the same time you own everything in Jesus, if you are one of the happy ones who have taken refuge with him.

You will never become holy by the law. It means that you will never become sanctified by all that you are to do and can do. On the contrary, you become sanctified by faith in Jesus. If you put your faith in all the riches you own in him, you become transformed from within. The more you rejoice over Jesus, the more you become like him.

The way to salvation and the way to sanctification are the same. Jesus is the way.

You are not meant to be saved by Jesus' work of atonement, and then become holy by your own power. The source of both salvation and sanctification come from the work of the atonement alone.

No matter how you feel, as a child of God you can be confident that Jesus under all circumstances is everything for you. In yourself you are still poor. But does it matter, when at the same time you are infinitely rich in Jesus?

When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Matthew 13:46

It is like that to find Jesus.

You have been looking for fine pearls. You began as a child. If you found any, you took them with you. As the years went by it was other pearls that attracted you. You thought that you would be happy if you found a more valuable pearl. However, when you got hold of it, you became disappointed. In your mind you long for something else and more.

Then one day you stood in front of the carpenter's son from Nazareth. All values were changed that day. From now on your riches were not "to own" but "to be owned". When you understood that Jesus wanted to have you, everything else lost its magic power over you. You didn't search any more. You had found the pearl above all pearls.

You continued living in the world. There hadn't been great changes externally. But, in your heart, you had become another person. Jesus had moved in there.

Earlier you had been occupied with the many small goals in life. Now something else had become the overriding thing. You have become a disciple. Life for you is to follow in another person's footsteps.

Jesus is familiar with the way of the cross, because he himself has walked it. On that way he also guides his followers. They are not to atone for their sin. He has done that once and for all. However, on the way of the cross, he will lead us to the heavenly goal.

When you think that the way appears hard and difficult, you have to look at the pearl of great value. It surpasses all the others in lustre; and when you are reflected in it you cannot recognize yourself. You find yourself united with the lustre of the pearl. Then you say: I don't want to get the other pearls back. If I only have Jesus, I am rich.

Then the days go by. Jesus always lets his eyes dwell on you. You feel his eyes, and it makes you happy that you are never outside his field of vision. Every day is a day's walk towards the New Jerusalem. There the journey ends. There Jesus will be crowned. The songs of praise from you and all the saved will be the throne that support him forever and ever.

**He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Revelation 22:20

In the last but one verse of the Bible both Jesus and John have the last words. John has been deported to the island of Patmos. When as an old man he was taken there, he scarcely thought that he still had an important part of the service ahead of him. The Lord wanted to make known to him what was going to happen. The tremendous visions were written in a book, which through all centuries has been a comfort and an incentive for the Lord's people. Especially persecuted Christians have found great help in the book of Revelation.

John was the disciple Jesus loved. What Jesus said was written into his heart. As far as we can see, he let – like no one else – the word of Jesus take root. He was therefore attached more deeply to the Lord than the other disciples. It is characteristic that he – as the only one of the disciples – was with Jesus when Jesus fought his death struggle on the cross.

In the last but one verse of the Bible the two of them shake hands. They are entirely different. One is the Son of the King of heaven, the other is an old persecuted servant of the Lord and the course of his life was near the end.

Jesus assures John that he is coming soon. John is so gripped by Jesus' words that he has to write his “amen” and after that he adds a prayer of just three words, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

Through these words you look into a heart that loves Jesus. He cannot hear that the Lord is coming without saying that he is welcome! Yes, he has to let Jesus' promise become his prayer: Do what you say, Lord Jesus!

It is a good sign if you have John's heart. If your heart isn't moved by the gospel of the Second Coming of Jesus, it suggests that Jesus is not dear to you. It is a sign that you are ready if you can say “amen” to the fact that he is coming.

Let us turn John's prayer into our prayer: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The Lord will hear that prayer. We will see him soon; he has told us so in his word.

24 May

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

Isaiah 43:18-19

There are some who cannot learn from the past. Therefore they have to go through many dearly bought experiences that they could have spared themselves.

There are others who cannot free themselves from the past. It paralyzes them. They think that the condition of God's people is hopeless. There have been so many disappointments and falls that one cannot hope for any future; the same is true of their own lives. The opportunities are wasted.

It is dangerous to commend oneself to despondency. If you take all your defeats with you, you become a useless instrument. You have to pay heed to God's word which warns you against thinking of the old things. The part of life which is put behind you cannot be undone. But God can change your future.

No matter how old you are, the Lord can still create something new. He can, first of all, give you a new realization where you see everything in a different light. From seeing that everything withers and perishes, you can – when he opens your eyes – see that it begins to grow.

There is a big difference between shoots and full-grown plants. If we aren't familiar with nature, we can easily overlook small and insignificant plants. They don't look as if they could become something when they as tender plants they grow in the vegetable garden. But a few months changes everything, and one day they are healthy nourishing vegetables on our table.

Everything isn't in decline in God's kingdom. There are great and far-reaching revivals in several places in the mission fields. People in their thousands are turning to the Lord. The cross hasn't lost its power.

Even though it may be very hard and dark in our home fields, there are also some people who have met the living God. In holy earnestness they become roused by him. Perhaps they are not very many, but they are instruments of the Lord and if they remain in the Lord's hand, he makes them pillars in his temple.

The Lord can create something new in your life as well. He hasn't finished using you. He has said, as you know: "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green." (Psalm 92:14).

His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Revelation 1:16

If you look at yourself, you are tempted to despondency. A living Christian is always displeased with himself. The enemy of souls knows this. That is why he wants you to look into yourself again and again.

Don't do so!

An experienced Christian has said: Every time you look at yourself once, you are to look at Jesus ten times.

Jesus shines like the sun in its brilliance. He gives light, he gives life; by himself he is able to set the soul on fire. He gives you his tender heart of salvation. He shares the distress of others with you, and sends you to them.

Jesus also puts on the light within you. You yourself are darkness, but if you believe in him you are light, in spite of that. Your life isn't dark, bleak and hopeless. The light reigns in you. You are to throw all your burdens on the Lord, and then you don't carry them any longer. You can therefore boldly walk forwards. If you fix your eyes on him you see light no matter how dark everything else appears to be around you.

Jesus gives life. In him the sting of death is broken. You have passed from death to life; you will therefore live even when you die.

You will be convinced of all this every time you meet the wonderful brilliance of the sun. If you see Jesus, then the world may say what it likes. It doesn't make an impression on you. You know what the reason is that you see things so differently. You see, while the world is blind.

When your eye is captured by the sun, you become aware of the brilliance of the sunlight. Looking at it makes it difficult to see anything else. If you fix your eyes on Jesus, he becomes a regenerating and transforming power in your life. He makes you a new person.

He becomes your all. Your entire strength is from him. You have all your life-giving springs in him. Everything in your life points towards him. He is the sun that shines in its brilliance.

Jesus Christ

... who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

Revelation 1:5

There are words which a Christian cannot get tired of listening to. They make his life rich and fills it with joy.

Jesus Christ loves us. These words are the key for us to understand Jesus' life. And they hold the key to the deepest things in our own hearts.

It was love that drove him. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the last." The love of Jesus was the first thing his friends met; it was the last thing too. After the resurrection he met them once more with a stream of love.

Jesus wants you to know that he loves you. He leads you into many things through his word, but first of all he assures you of his love. It is his joy that you know you are loved by him.

It can be a healthy thing to look ahead. It is a good thing for a Christian to be realistic. God's word lets us have no doubts that fights and troubles are in store for us. Nevertheless you are to beware so that the mind isn't overcome by the trials which are in store for you. Rest in the faith that the Lord will lead you through them, and let the word of the love of Jesus give your liberty to act!

There is no one and nothing that can separate you from the love of Christ. You are surrounded by it in all circumstances. It will carry you to heaven. It overwhelms you when you see Jesus' face. You will praise it forever and ever.

The love of Jesus is one with his blood. It is the blood which is the sign that will take all doubt, that you are precious to him away from you. When you realize this, you bow down in gratitude.

You will never understand the profundity of the love of Jesus. But it does not matter, if only you are surrounded by it. It signifies that your sins are with you no longer. Somebody else has taken them away. You are, at the same time, dressed in the clean and holy garment of salvation. Along with all believers you are the bride of Jesus Christ. Soon he will arrive in the clouds of the sky in order to fetch you home.

27 May

He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.

Revelation 19:13

Jesus has many names; through them God reveals who he is. It is therefore important to pay heed to what God names the Son.

Jesus is named “God’s word”.

He is not only connected with God’s word; he is one with it. As your relationship is to the Word, so is your relationship to Jesus. You get to know him through the Word. The Word not only speaks about him, he is “God’s word”.

If you want to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, you have to grow in the knowledge of God’s word. Through it your eyes will be opened for the riches that are hidden there. When you find the treasure of wisdom and knowledge in him, you are filled with strength, boldness and joy.

Satan knows that it is like that. That is why he tries, in every way, to bring you to neglect God’s word. If he succeeds, Jesus becomes distant from you. This is his actual intention. He wants to separate you from the Saviour.

That is why he fills you with dislike to hear and read God’s word. He has an ally in your old nature that doesn’t want that the life of the self to have to be killed. This takes place when God’s word gets inroad in your thoughts and mind.

You must not give in to the enemy of the soul. Resist him. Don’t let him keep you away from the Word. Stick close to it. Then you will stick close to Jesus, and Satan has to flee from him.

It is a blessing to return to God’s word. It has been the way of renewal both in the congregation and in the life of the individual. Can you wonder at this? To return to God’s word is, as you know, to return to Jesus. We never come to him in vain. He is longing to let us into the riches which are filled with grace and truth.

Seek Jesus in the Word! You won’t search in vain. He will reveal himself to you.

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Peter 2:21

Jesus suffered.

What suffering it must have been for the Son of the King of heaven to give up the glory of heaven, and let himself be born into this world of sin and selfishness! What suffering it must have involved leaving his Father and his angels, and moving among sinful people who met him with coldness and contempt! What suffering it caused him to be condemned to death by those he loved with divine love! What suffering it was to go from the intimacy of God to the deepest darkness of god-forsakenness at Golgotha!

Jesus suffered. Never has anybody suffered like him. And he suffered for you. It was your sin and Jesus' love of you which brought the suffering over him.

At the same time Jesus is an example in the sufferings you are to go through.

Here below there is a close connection between doing good things and our suffering. Suffering isn't simply the wages of sin. Jesus suffered because of the fact that he was good. You too will be subjected to suffering if you follow in your Lord's steps.

What is it caused by?

It is connected with the fact that the one who is unclean feels judged by the one who is clean. Truth and goodness reveal this. The spiritual powers of wickedness rise to fight against the light. Jesus was hated, because he preached God's truth. You must not wonder that you go through the same things that the Master went through.

It was not only the Scribes and the Pharisees that turned against Jesus. His closest relatives did so too. They didn't understand him and asked him to leave their home town. Maybe you will have to go through suffering and be misunderstood by people you feel close to. It hurts down into the innermost heart when they dissociate themselves from you. Maybe they denounce you as fanatical.

Jesus has left an example for you. You are to follow in his footsteps. Don't evade the suffering. The Lord will bless you on the way of suffering.

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 11:6

It is always a great danger for a Christian to be occupied with his own works. It is often the good ones. They usually appear when we compare ourselves with others. However, in most cases Christians are oppressed by all that they lack. They fail by their standards when they think of how a true and living child of God should be. They think that everything accuses them. That is why they feel despairing and discouraged.

This is not without a cause, because it is right. There is nothing with us that can last before God. We are looking in vain for works that are completely rid of self-righteousness and selfishness.

When will I learn to count on grace alone? If I am occupied with myself and all that I have, it will overshadow God's grace.

It is completely different when the heart turns to Jesus. Then his undeserved grace lives in me. I am delighted that it is something which doesn't have its foundation in me. It is independent of me. I can neither add something nor deduct anything from it.

Jesus vouches for God's grace – not you. Grace has to do with Jesus – not with you. That is why it doesn't change. It has been provided abundantly through his sacrifice on the cross. This fact can never be changed.

What you can do as a Christian can very easily fall into ruins. In the hours of self-doubt you cannot see anything but sin and guilt within yourself. But if you believe in Jesus you will be saved, not because of anything of your own doing. It simply happens by grace.

Nothing has cost God as much as his grace. It cost him his Son. That is why he jealously watches that grace remains grace. He does so in his congregation and in each individual person's life.

You should elevate nothing but his grace. You are to do so here, and you will do so forever, when you will sing before the throne of God and the Lamb.

For he himself is our peace ...

Ephesians 2:14

Everybody has a deep longing for peace. Peace means a wholeness, coherence and harmony. Who doesn't want a life where this triad form our basic harmony? Imagine being able to look back on a life that was a unified whole from beginning to end! Imagine having peace with both God and people!

Many Christians ask against this background: Why am I so divided? Why is my mind so troubled? Why does my peace so easily become disturbed?

It is because of the fact that your faith is weak.

However, it can be different. God wants your new man to grow. It has to nourish itself through his word. If you pay heed to it and take it to your heart, your confidence in Jesus becomes stronger. Your faith grows. And then you begin to count on Jesus as your peace. He is so even when sin, disappointment and frailty are accusing you.

You have peace by faith in Jesus. Sin separates from God, but it doesn't do so in your life. You stand on the eternal ground of salvation and are covered by grace. Then sin doesn't lead you away from Jesus, but to him. You can come again and again. You have to receive forgiveness of all your sins over and over again. You have to be cleansed in his blood once more. The blood makes you white as snow.

You, therefore, have a peace that continues. It isn't due to anything in you. Or what you have managed in your life as a Christian. Peace is based on him who is your peace. Faith in Jesus gives your heart the rest and harmony which no one else can give you.

You have no peace in the world. There you meet with many difficulties. It may be in a home, a marriage, at the workplace or in the congregation. But the Word preaches under all circumstances: Jesus is your peace. In everything that meets you, he comes to you. He touches everything that hurts. He has said, as you will remember: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame.

Psalm 25:3

It may very well look as if you are put to shame when you hope in Jesus. Others may shake their heads at you. You should remember, then, that they did the same thing to Jesus as well. Common sense will justify the mockers. But always remember that they are not the ones who have the last word. The Lord has. The matter isn't settled until he has spoken. And God always has the last word.

If you trust in Jesus, you will not be put to shame. God's word says so. That is why you can trust in it. Maybe you must experience that much in your own world fall into ruins. Christians have undergone that before you did. But you will not be put to shame if you wait for the Lord.

What does it mean to wait for the Lord?

It is not only to understand that you can trust in Jesus, but to do it as well.

To wait for the lord is not only having understood that you can count on Jesus in all circumstances; but it is doing it.

There is a big difference between knowing that I must believe in Jesus, and doing it.

Here, no one must allow oneself to be deceived. Knowledge doesn't save; but confidence in Jesus saves.

You must say to God: In spite of all my sins, I rest in the fact that the blood of Jesus has made me white as snow. You have said in your Word, that 'though our sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow'. Also, you have said, that "the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." I count on this Word because you stand behind it.

Then, you won't be put to shame. On the Day of Judgment you will experience that what God has said stands firm in heaven.

Are you surprised, then, that God makes a way through all sorrow, struggle and suffering?

The Word holds good both in time and in eternity: "No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame."

1 June

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

Revelation 3:1

The words of Jesus are different from everybody else's. We can estimate and evaluate differently; but Jesus doesn't make a mistake. He can search the heart of a person, and he does so. He is contradicted here on earth, but a day is coming when no one will dare to say anything when he has spoken.

"You have a reputation of being alive." It means that other people think of you that you live. Yes, we may be under the impression that the congregation at Sardis has been considered alive to a particular degree. But the truth was quite different.

How can it be that the Christians' judgment and Jesus' judgment were quite different?

We judge by what we can see. But the Lord looks at the heart. When we hear a true confession and meet a Christian life and an exemplary congregational life, we are happy.

We are deceived. Behind the outward show, a secular spirit and way of thinking can have crept in, and the very pulse beat of faith is lacking.

It is a harrowing fact. In the light of it, every Christian is called to test himself before the face of God. We are very short-sighted. We have, therefore, reason to pray with David: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

God has to intervene. He has to wake me up, so that I don't sleep into death. No matter what it costs, I have to be stopped and led back to the starting point. I have to stand as a lost sinner again, who is nothing in me self. I have to find mercy once more from the Lord.

Jesus doesn't reject the spiritual dead. He is calling and waking them up. Now you must hear his voice and follow him.

2 June

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

A child of God has peace with God by faith in Jesus. He is our peace. He has made peace with his blood. No power can disturb this peace as long as we live in close connection with him.

Peace in Jesus has several aspects. Jesus wants his friends to have peace in the midst of storm and troubles.

Lots of things can go against us. They can meet us through us ourselves and through others. Perhaps we think that the conditions are developing in an unfavourable way, but it is not within our power to change developments.

Yes, it is true when Jesus says: In this world you will have trouble.

We will also have trouble the day when open persecution breaks out.

Then it will be costly to be a Christian. Many will deny him because of pressure and threats. It will be difficult to preserve our boldness.

What are we to do?

We are to flee into the peace of Jesus. To do so means to take our refuge in him.

Jesus is filled and permeated with peace. It is due to the fact that he is in perfect harmony with the will of God. Jesus has led his people into this peace. He has done so by being our Substitute and Redeemer. What we lack in ourselves, we have abundantly in him.

At the same time Jesus is our example. He teaches us that it is more important to have peace with God than peace with people. You are to submit only to God's will.

When Jesus did this at Gethsemane, there rested a peace on him that made people shrink back. No matter what you have to go through, you have a share in Jesus' victory. You must not lose courage. Even if the Lord leads you through fire, it won't scorch you. Christian brothers before us have walked singing into death. No one was able to take their peace away from them. Supported by the peace and victory of Jesus, they went across the final frontier and reached the goal.

As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand ... *

1 Kings 17:1

Elijah was a brave man. He appeared before King Ahab and prophesied that a catastrophic famine was to overtake the people of Israel.

How is it possible that Elijah would dare to say that? He gives us the answer when he says that he stands before God.

If we dare to appear before people, the secret of our life must be that we stand before God. Face to face with the living God we are led into both judgment and resurrection. God lifts us out of the slimy pit and sets our feet on a rock. And the person who is on firm ground can boldly appear before people. If you want to meet other people with the Word that penetrates, you yourself have to be penetrated by it. If you want to hand other people the Word which raises the fallen, you have to be raised by it yourself. You are seen through and through before God's face. He sees you right down to your heart of hearts. What you keep hidden from people is revealed to him. The coldness, the carelessness and the uncleanness of the heart are exposed and spread out before him. Through the word God tells you how things are with you.

It doesn't give you confidence, you say. No, but if you admit that God is right and if you remain standing before his face. God has more to tell you.

It is the Word of Jesus. He stood before God, and he was entirely different from you. He was clean. He was holy. He was good. God took pleasure in him.

God's beloved Son was ready to take your place. And he did so. He took all the sin, the guilt and the judgment. You can therefore stand before him. In that way you own everything Jesus has.

You are unclean in yourself. However, you are a new creation when you believe in Jesus. You are in your Substitute and Redeemer.

Relying on his work you can raise your head. You can face both God and people. You stand on the eternal and unshakable foundation of God's salvation, and it gives boldness whatever happens.

* after Revised Standard Version

4 June

I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.

Isaiah 44:22

The Devil has for a long time left you in peace but he had not forgotten you. He comes suddenly. You can't see him, but you can hear him. He whispers doubts into your heart: Are you sure your sins are really forgiven?

Maybe you have been a Christian for many years. You look back, and everything looks grey. How many times did you wish you were a Christian on fire for God? How often did you decide that all should now be different? But it never did.

I know the feelings after my many hopes faded. I never succeeded in living the human life and the Christian life that with all my heart I wished to realize. Then the many accusations and self-reproaches are coming.

It is easy then to go a step further and think that, when I am unsuccessful, God's grace is so too.

If you think like that, you are to realize that the Lord knows you. He wants so much to come to your help.

It is exactly you he meets with his word's strongest assurance: "I have swept away your offences like a cloud."

You are to notice that this is something God does. In Jesus' hour of death, your sins and misdeeds were wiped out. They were removed because they were put on Jesus. As your certificate of debt, he hung under God's wrath and judgment. When Jesus was struck it was so that you might escape.

The Lord therefore says to you, "Return to me, for I have redeemed you!" God doesn't meet you with judgment and accusations. No, he meets you with redemption. By virtue of Jesus God releases you from all sin. He can do so because of the fact that he has already done this at Golgotha.

If you, in your poverty, take refuge in Jesus, there are no sin and transgression with you. Jesus is your substitute. That is enough for God. You therefore have to let it be enough for you.

Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

Luke 5:5

There is a connection between having toiled in vain and letting down the nets because Jesus says so. Yes, as long as we profit by our own effort, we aren’t concerned with the word Jesus has spoken.

A child of God often goes through the same experience as Peter did.

You get into danger and fights. The night is dark and seems endless. No matter which fishing ground you try, the result is the same. It is no use even to let down the nets in a different way. Everything is in vain.

Then you wonder why the Lord doesn’t help. Why doesn’t he intervene, when you time after time you ask him to do so?

Has God forgotten his promises?

No, he hasn’t. He is silent in order to teach you to find words in the Bible that you can stand on. He will lead you into his thoughts, and they are far higher than yours.

It is to the one who hasn’t caught anything that God gives everything. When our own wells have dried out, the Lord sends rain from Heaven.

The richest periods in your life as a Christian are the times he leads you into the safe and solid ground of the Word. You experienced that all other foundations were shaking. But one ground held. It was the ground which God himself had established. Imagine what blessing Peter experienced, after he had acted on God’s word the first time!

His life was filled with fights and disputes. There were many defeats. But through it all, the Lord led him victoriously towards the heavenly destination.

Cling to God’s word; stick to it. Let others say what they want to say. Let your own thoughts and feelings prevail.

I want to inform you that the Word supports you through what seems hopeless. Nothing is impossible with God. He performs everything through his word. It is true that the full fulfilment of God’s word takes place in Heaven. But that is of less importance. The Word stands firm. Believe it, live by it, act on it!

Let it carry you into glory!

... to bring in everlasting righteousness ...

Daniel 9:24

It is Daniel's book that contains this splendid expression: "to bring in everlasting righteousness." These words point to him who was not only to atone for the sin, but who was also to dress us in his clean robe of righteousness.

What we need is an everlasting righteousness. It is not enough to be righteous today and tomorrow. Neither is it enough to be so for the rest of our life. We must have a righteousness that follows us into eternity. And it can only do so if it is eternal itself.

You can never procure righteousness like that. Even if you concentrate your efforts on achieving it, you will never succeed anyway. You can perhaps become quite exceptional in people's opinion. But face to face with God, even the best you can do disappears, because God is a consuming fire.

Therefore, your only possibility of salvation is that someone else brings the righteousness to you. This is what Jesus has done. Yes, he himself is your righteousness.

There is therefore salvation only in faith and confidence in Jesus. To believe in him is to consider him one's righteousness. You are to do this. Why do you want to remain on the way of self-improvement, when it doesn't lead you to the goal anyway? Why do you want to aim at gaining what God already has obtained? Why do you want to buy what you can get free of charge, undeserved by grace?

To believe is to thank. It is, at the same time, the easiest and most difficult of all.

Everything in you protests against God's gift of grace. You cannot understand that it can be so easy to be saved. Nevertheless it is the only way. You have to cling to God's word of grace. You must dare to believe it, and you can safely do so. You won't be disappointed. Jesus has spread his eternal righteousness over you. He has bought you. He has baptized you. His heart is eager so that in faith and confidence you will let his righteousness take effect. Your own righteousness doesn't mean anything, if only you are hidden in his righteousness.

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

Psalms 126:5

Lots of people think that God's kingdom makes best progress by smile and cheerfulness. If we fail to give people the impression that Christianity makes us glad and cheerful, we won't win anybody. But that's a secular way of thinking. God's kingdom doesn't make progress according to the laws which apply to marketing.

God's kingdom on earth is a kingdom of tears. How many tears have been shed there? Jesus wept. Paul wept. John wept. And countless Christians – like them – have done the same.

Today great activity is being displayed, but the results seem to be small. I wonder if one of the reasons isn't that only a few are willing to sow in tears.

Jesus wants us to take his yoke upon us. He has a pain which we are to share with him. It is the pain for all the unsaved. He wants to make it unendurable for you that people perish. He will do that because it is unendurable for himself. His love of the lost drove him to Golgotha, and since then it has driven him to the ends of the world. Jesus follows those who can't stay calm down as long as there are nations that haven't heard the gospel.

But the soil is hard. It isn't the many who will receive Jesus. The temptation to give up is great. But love cannot write off anybody as long as there is hope.

Listen to this, you who are tempted to give up: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy." God sees your tears, and he assures you in his word: you will reap with songs of joy.

Many tears are being shed in God's kingdom. But weeping isn't going to be the last thing. A day will come when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. But that day hasn't come yet. The battle is still raging between life and death, light and darkness, God and Satan. Every single Christian is involved in this battle.

Flesh and blood isn't asked for advice. There is only one way to go, and it is forwards. You have one hand on the plough and with the other you wipe away your tears. The day will soon arrive when God will wipe away your tears. Then it is Heaven for you.

... for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

The Lord already meets you with grace before you have sinned. God is like that. His grace is completely independent of you. Jesus is the one who has deserved it, you haven't. God therefore doesn't need to wait to see how the day is going for you, and on the basis of the result decide if he wants to show grace towards you. You mustn't forget what is real to God. Grace is given on the basis of a finished work which God has approved by letting Jesus rise from the dead.

It is old grace you receive in a sense. God has always met sinners with the same grace. However, it is always new. Jesus' blood is like a fresh life-giving stream which is the first thing that meets you every single day. Jesus is the beginning. He is at the same time the end. He meets you at the extremities of your life, and then he fills everything which is between these extremities with his grace.

It is difficult to maintain this wonderful gospel. Most days are ordinary ones, after all. And it is difficult to believe in a special grace over a day which is similar to any other day.

That is why we have to stick to the Word. We have to pay heed to how it sounds, because it is the Word that creates the faith. Grace is always new. There is therefore always the same strength in it to wipe out sin. And that isn't all. Grace is also like a robe which covers you from top to toe. And inside it you are clean and pleasing before God.

God wants to meet you before you meet the day's many hidden sins in word and deed. He knows that his true, new grace is the best means to create hatred of the sin. Grace binds you to Jesus. He meets you at the beginning of every new day because it is to be a walk with him.

You will therefore experience heartfelt thanks for the wonderful grace of God. Grace holds your life together. It is the lifeline. It is the unity with Jesus.

**I will extol the Lord at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.**

Psalm 34:1

There are many words in the Bible which can rob you of the blessing God intended for your life; one reason is that you accept God's word, but don't do what the word says. Therefore, you only partially experience the joy, the power and strength which the Word was meant to give you.

It is true that none of us can realize God's word in one's own strength. We cannot take it to our heart and use it in our life so that it bears lasting fruit. But Jesus has shown us a way: "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!"

And when you have asked, you have to venture out on the Lord's promises. You have to start praising the Lord at all times. The truth is that if you praise the Lord only when you feel a desire for it, it will be a rare thing. Life holds so many struggles and difficulties which easily can make the songs of praise die away.

If you want to praise the Lord at all times, you have to keep your heart close to the steady source of praise. And you find it in the Lord himself, not primarily in what you have experienced with God, but in the picture the Bible paints of him. God reveals the truth about himself in his word. He is entirely as Holy Scripture says, he is.

The way to praise must therefore be to lose oneself in the Word. God didn't create us before he had provided our salvation. We are connected with Jesus' propitiatory sacrifice in God's heart since the beginning. God who didn't spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. A place has been prepared for you. You are expected in heaven where Jesus has made everything ready.

When mind and heart see these wonderful riches, everything else becomes trivial. The mouth is filled with the Lord's praise. Yes, you must praise the Lord at all times.

Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive.

Acts 27:34

It was in extreme distress at sea that Paul gave his travelling companions this advice. The ship would be broken to pieces against the coast of Malta, but everyone on board was to be rescued if they would take some food.

You are also on a dangerous voyage. It isn't certain that you will arrive safely ashore. Many have been engulfed by the foaming waves.

You are to know that if salvation depended on you and your strength, you wouldn't be able to manage. The torrent would take you away. But someone else has a good grasp of you. You are not to save yourself.

Nevertheless you are to take some food. A lot of Christians have died of undernourishment. They took less and less nourishment. To all appearances they did well. It isn't Bible reading and prayer that saves after all, nor that we attend meetings and church services.

But one day life ebbed away quietly. They dozed off into the spiritual death. It happened so imperceptibly that neither they themselves nor others noticed it. The only external sign was that they were rarely seen where nourishment was obtainable.

To neglect God's word is not considered to be a sin. Nevertheless it is one of the sins which have led most people into perdition.

May God's Holy Spirit burn it into your soul in fiery characters: You are to take some food. You need it to survive.

Your old nature always wants to resist. It thinks that everything else is more exciting and interesting. But it isn't the old nature that is to be lord in your life.

Your new man lives on God's word. A fit person sits down to dinner with pleasure. Your new man is glad like that every time he receives the bread of life.

God's word is your daily bread. You die if you don't get it.

11 June

**A righteous man may have many troubles,
but the Lord delivers him from them all;**

Psalm 34:1

It is difficult to bear troubles (or 'afflictions', as it also can be translated). Something deeply within us protests. We think that it is pointless. Why are we of all people to have afflictions? Have we deserved it more than anybody else?

It helps us to recognize the truth. Face to face with God, we are dust and ashes. To remonstrate with him simply makes us fools. We should instead turn to the Word and get help.

If you do so, you won't be disappointed. God knew how he would help you when he breathed his Spirit into the Holy Scripture.

The Lord says that the troubles of the righteous ones are many. He doesn't talk about the unjust ones. It is the righteous one who has many afflictions. Therefore you mustn't take your troubles or afflictions as a token that you are forsaken and rejected by God. You must not believe either that he has something against you. You suffer because you are righteous. Behind the affliction is the disciplining hand of God, and it is necessary if you are to be preserved in faith's deep dependence on Jesus.

You are to notice as well that the Lord wants to release the righteous. He hasn't said when he is going to do so. However he doesn't let you be in doubt. He is going to release you. It is not only some of the afflictions he wants to release you from; no, it applies to all of them.

Your saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, is God's signature that the Word is true. Jesus' life was a long series of afflictions. And what distress and suffering his death involved! However, the Lord released him.

It is like that in your life too. God hasn't told you if he wants to release you this side of death. He will do it in eternity, if not before. And you are to know that it is near.

The affliction makes you look forwards. It makes your feet hurry. You will soon be in the New Jerusalem. There you will be released from everything that weighs heavy and hurts today.

**Forget your people and your father's house.
The king is enthralled by your beauty.**

Psalm 45:10-11

This injunction concerns a queen. In the midst of glory and splendour, her heart still clings to the world she lived in before the king married her.

It may happen like that for a child of God.

It is not you who have chosen Jesus, but it is Jesus who has chosen you. He has clothed you with the garments of salvation. He is the Son of the King who leads you to the wedding hall.

Earlier on you were lowly; now you are elevated. Earlier on you were unclean and bore stains of sin. Now you are spotlessly clean and white as snow. How is it possible that you can catch yourself longing to be back in the life of sin?

It is caused by the Devil, the world and your old nature.

When you became a child of God, the Devil got a new relationship with you. As long as you belonged to him, he left you alone. He obviously tried to keep you safe as his own then. The task then was easier for him than it is now. He wants to get you back. He neither allows Jesus to be your bridegroom, nor you to be his bride.

The Devil knows the fascinating power the world has over our old nature. He has found that so many people have bent their knees to him when they were tempted with this world's power and glory. If he exhibits it, it shines with a wonderful and seductive light.

When he didn't succeed in getting power over Jesus, he had to go to all of them who belong to the Lord. And indeed, he is hard-working. He is on the go day and night, and he rarely gives himself a rest.

You who are the bride of Jesus: Forget the world! Don't let its splendour into your heart!

God's word teaches you that the world is heading for disaster. You can see so for yourself. Moth and rust destroy, thieves break in and steal, and people who have been idolized and honoured, end in oblivion.

Forget the world which you will soon say goodbye to anyway. Turn your attention to the King. Let your eyes rest on him. Then you are beautiful in his eyes.

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

Romans 4:4

Many Christians are unhappy. They do not think they have good deeds to exhibit. Even though they have been Christians for many years, they haven't got anything to show God. The only thing they can bring is their sins.

They therefore ask: How will things turn out in the judgment? Isn't God going to reject me when he cannot find any fruit in my life?

If you feel like this, there is no reason to despair. If you ask like this, it shows that you have been kept as a child of God who won't be judged according to your deserts.

Suppose you thought you had something that could pass the test before God. Then you wouldn't receive your reward by grace, but by what you exhibited. How would things turn out?

A person will only be judged according to what he can show. A true Christian shows Jesus. He has nothing else to bring.

One can wonder at how uneasy a Christian may be, when he is thinking of the fact that he is going to appear before God, and has nothing but Jesus. It teaches us that we are still building up our own righteousness. Blessed are you who never make a success of it. God will grant you reward of grace.

You who think you have something to exhibit are unfortunate people. You are to be judged by what you bring. And it will be a condemnation to hell, because there is nothing with us that isn't infected with sin. All our righteous acts are like filthy rags, says God's word.

May I advise you?

Let go of the few works you think it will do to bring to God. Grasp Jesus in faith; point at him, when God turns his eyes towards you. Then he will give you your undeserved reward of grace. He has said so in his word, and you can trust in it.

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

Luke 24:50

Jesus' hands tell his history. They were constantly held out, over a rough lake, towards a blind poor creature or towards a leper that nobody else would touch.

Why did the impression of Jesus' hands stick so deeply in the minds of the disciples?

Was it because they knew that day and night his blessing hands rested on them? Jesus vitalized the words from Psalm 139:5b-6 "... you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain."

Finally his hands were pierced. They were nailed on to the tree of the cross.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah it says: "See I have engraved you on the palms of my hands . . ." Your name is engraved in Jesus' hands. He will not forget you. Neither will he do so when in his love he disciplines you.

Every time Jesus looks at his hands, he is reminded of you who are engraved in them. No one can snatch you from his hands, because there is a connection between Jesus' hands and Jesus' heart.

The last thing the disciples saw, here below when Jesus was separated from them, was his blessing hands. That sight followed them. Several of them lived a life that was full of hardships. Yes, some suffered martyrdom, but they were blessed through everything.

It is a curious thing to think of the fact that time and eternity are connected. A Christian lives his life under the Lord's hand, and the first thing that will meet him in eternity is an outstretched hand. You will meet Jesus, no stranger. And you cannot see him without meeting the price of his love. Pierced hands speak silently, but powerfully. You have been dearly bought, but in Jesus' opinion you are worth the price. The Lord wants you to be his blessed one forever and ever. We haven't deserved this. It is undeserved grace. We have to receive it for nothing. You never feel great in yourself. The Lord is all your riches, joy and song. And you honour him for his wonderful salvation.

15 June

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14

What does it mean to boast of oneself? It means drawing attention to oneself. That sin is very common among us. Perhaps we don't say it outright. But we draw attention to ourselves through our words. We often compare ourselves with what we have with others and what they have. Much discord and envy follow the desire to compare oneself with others.

Paul knew that he was a greater sinner than anybody else. Therefore all his great gifts didn't count for anything. He was convicted and irretrievably lost before God's face. But he wasn't empty-handed. God had given him Jesus. He could boast himself of him.

What is everything you have compared with Jesus? It is next to nothing. He is the priceless pearl. You have reason to be proud of him.

Our old nature doesn't like to call attention to Jesus. It wants to get honour itself. However, by his cross, sin has no longer any claim on you. You don't owe anything to the life of the self. Neither do you owe anything to the world. But you owe everything to Jesus. And you should give him everything when he alone becomes your boast.

First and foremost you are to exalt him in your heart. You are to think of the fact that he has taken responsibility for everything evil in you. You are also to think of the fact that everything you lack, you own anyway. You have it in Jesus.

You feel unworthy, but you aren't. You are precious in Jesus' eyes. And it is Jesus and his opinion that are decisive. What you and others think doesn't matter much.

You are also to pride yourself on Jesus to others. Oh, how we need Christians who call attention to him. They make us raise our eyes away from ourselves and all our misery. They make us to be occupied with Jesus, because they themselves are filled with him.

16 June

When Christ came as high priest ... , he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood

Hebrews 9:11-12

The most important assignment of the high priest was to carry the blood of the sacrifices into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. He was to provide atonement for the sin of the entire people.

The service of the high priest points towards Jesus. Jesus didn't enter a Holy Place that was made by human hands, but he entered the heaven itself. It wasn't the blood of a sacrificial animal he carried before God. It was his blood.

This is the greatest and most comprehensive event that ever has happened. The blood of Jesus is one with his death on the cross under God's wrath and judgment in the place of sinners. He is the sacrificial lamb. His work holds good not only here below. It applies in Heaven as well. God has accepted his Son's sacrifice. It is valid for him.

Jesus is everywhere, in heaven and on earth. Where he is, there his blood is as well.

When you opened the door to Jesus, he went into your heart as one enters a house. He has entered the many rooms of your life. It means that his blood has reached into your innermost parts. There isn't a corner in your life where Jesus' blood isn't present. And the blood cleanses us from all sin.

It is so wonderful!

The blood is both before God's face in heaven and over your entire life here below. It is the blood which connects you with God.

Jesus' blood makes you as white as snow. Perhaps you feel sinful and unclean, but you aren't if you believe in Jesus. Your dirty clothes are cleansed and made white in the blood of the lamb. It holds good even now, and it holds good in heaven.

Do you fear the Day of Judgment? Then think of the fact that Jesus' blood, which acquits you, is before God's throne. Can't your heart find rest? Then think of how precious the blood is for God.

You are lost in yourself. But you are in Jesus, and you are saved in him.

For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay.”

Hebrews 10:37

Now, you won't have to wait much longer. Jesus is coming in just a very little while. A morning will arrive when for the last time you will get out of your bed. Or an evening will come when you go to bed for the last time. Perhaps you will think then of the day or the night when you will receive the summons of death. Why does the Second Coming have so little room with us? In the Word he assures us that he won't hesitate to come.

Accept this word with a simple and straightforward faith.

The certainty that Jesus is coming soon contributes to making you free from what binds you to earthly things. Your old self easily becomes occupied with temporal things. Without noticing it yourself, you arrange matters as if you were to be here for ever.

The words of Jesus call you to be ready. Are you ready if Jesus comes before the sun rises next time? Is there anybody you should have forgiven? Are there sins you should have confessed?

Be ready! Jesus comes at that hour which you don't expect.

A Christian alive in Jesus looks forward to the coming of the Lord.

It was great for Simeon to stand with the Infant Jesus in his arms. But it will be greater by far to be raised from the earth and be allowed to meet Jesus in the clouds. Imagine being taken into heaven by Jesus!

If you are allowed to experience the Second Coming, if you belong to those who are known to him, you will never die. Your body won't be destroyed in order to be buried at the end. In the twinkling of an eye you will be changed. You will be like Jesus, because you will see him as he is.

This is the perspective for God's children. In the light of this, everything else becomes infinitely small. All that hurts, weighs down and oppresses, will last just a very little while. Jesus will come soon. Then there will be no more sorrow and distress. He will take you by the hand and lead you into the glorious kingdom of heaven.

Can you do other than pray: Come, Lord Jesus! Come soon!

18 June

When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left.

Genesis 18:33

Abraham had been praying to God. With great boldness he had again and again reduced the number of righteous people which had to be in Sodom if the city was to be rescued. He ended with ten.

One would think that Abraham had finished speaking with God after this prayer, but the Word says that it was God who had finished with Abraham.

It is basically not us who speak in true prayer, it is the Lord. The secret of prayer is the Spirit of prayer, and he instructs us.

It wasn't Abraham's own thought which made him stop at the number 10. He didn't know it, but it was God's number. If there had been ten righteous people, God would have spared the city. However, there wasn't such a number. That is why he let fire and sulphur rain on it.

God has intimate fellowship with those who love him. He wants to draw them into his way of thinking. We don't understand how we are to pray properly, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us. God's Spirit influences mind and thought when you pray. It is therefore important to be attentive, and ask for everything his Spirit reminds you of.

Lots of Christians postpone their prayer and forget what it was they should present before God. You can pray to him anytime and anywhere. Don't postpone it. Send a prayer or a sigh up to the Lord when he reminds you of it.

Jesus' disciples were humble enough to go to Jesus and ask him to teach them to pray. We too need to do so. We can come to the Lord with everything which weighs heavy on our heart. And we are to come with boldness. At the same time, the Lord has to take us by the hand and lead us into the world of prayer.

It is face to face with the living God we learn to pray. There we can be bold just as Abraham was. We don't go forward in our own name, but in God's. The Lord's Spirit speaks through us. And God hears our prayer.

We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Hebrews 3:14

The unsaved person rarely thinks of God. But if he is stopped by a death, he begins to ask if there is something after death. Is there a court of law which everybody is to appear before? How will it go with himself if the occasion should arise?

Then he tries to find the best things of his life; he wonders if they are enough?

The answer God's word gives is clear: nothing of your own can pass the test before God. No one is righteous in God's eyes. Everyone has sinned.

That is why you cannot trust in anything of your own. However, you can count on Jesus. To be saved is to trust in him.

It is possible you think that this is far too easy. You cannot understand that it is enough for salvation, but it is enough. Count on Jesus and his work, nothing more is needed.

You are to stick to this simple confidence in Jesus until your last day.

Lots of Christians won't accept that childlike confidence in Jesus must be their only basis of salvation after a long Christian life. They therefore put all their efforts into being successful Christians. When time after time this turns out a failure, dejection threatens.

When you were saved, the blood of Jesus cleansed you from the sins of your life without God. After you became a believer, the same blood cleanses you from the sins of your life with God.

Your Christian life accuses and judges you, but Jesus doesn't do so. He covers everything with his precious blood. There is nothing that he doesn't touch with his grace.

You are therefore saved from looking at the sin that condemns. Neither can you find any works that saves you. You may rest as you rely on Jesus. He is your saviour.

Confidence in him releases you from yourself and attaches you to him. When a sense of guilt, judgment and fear arise, stick to the Word of him. Then the storm dies down. You have peace in Jesus. You rest in him.

But there is a God in Heaven ...

Daniel 2:28

It is not only the unbelieving children who forget that. God's children can also live and think as though there is no God in heaven.

Do you see everything you meet in the light of the fact that there is a God in heaven? Are you aware that your life isn't governed by chance? Have you realized that a Christian – behind the exterior – only has to do with God?

It hurts to be disciplined. If it happens through other people, it often feels unjust. However, you mustn't stop at what you can see with your eyes and understand with your mind. You have to look behind things.

There is a God in heaven.

When a child of God is disciplined, it is God who disciplines him. The Lord wants you to submit to him and receive discipline from his hand. The Lord wants to talk with you afresh. That is why he puts his hand heavily on you. He doesn't do it in his wrath. God's discipline is the result of his love.

There is a wonderful comfort in the Word in the midst of adversity and distress: there is a God in heaven.

The Lord can lead you out of whatever troubles you have entered. He will do so if you belong to him. The Lord is your shepherd. Surely goodness and love will follow you all the days of your life.

In the darkness of your doubts you cannot see that there is a God in heaven. The only things you see are dark, heavy clouds above you. But behind them is the Lord. Some days the clouds disappear, the Lord sees to it. There is a God in Heaven and he releases believers from all distress.

You have to raise your mind towards the Lord. You have to be still before his great power. He has always used it to salvation for those who belong to him. God will do it again. He will look at you. He will step in no matter how hopeless things look. The day will soon arrive when with pleasure and shouts of joy you will shout:

There is a God in heaven!

There is a crowd on earth that every day praise God with these words. They will shout the same words in heaven. You are blessed if you are take part in that crowd.

Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels ...

Hebrews 2:8-9

Many people say that they won't believe in Jesus because he doesn't make an end of all the wickedness and disasters on earth. They think that if Jesus really had all power it wouldn't look as it does on earth.

The world is evil, and the prince over this world is Satan. God's word says so. And God allows Satan to go far in order to stir people to realize that the wages of sin is death.

God is holy. That is why the world looks as it does. A man reaps what he sows. This also concerns a world in rebellion against God's laws.

Never yield to the temptation to believe that Jesus hasn't got all authority in heaven and on earth. God has given him total mastery. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to Jesus. There are still questions that we cannot answer. However, it doesn't matter if only our eyes rest on him, who, for a short while, was made a little lower than the angels.

God doesn't give you an answer to everything. However, he assures you of his love again and again. You cannot look at Jesus as God's sacrificial lamb without being reminded of how dearly God loves you.

Is it not the most important thing that you don't need to have any doubts that God's heart broke for the love of you? Is it not enough to be assured of the fact that you – in the midst of sin, distress and misfortune – have an eternal righteousness which Jesus has achieved for you? What does it matter that God doesn't answer when he instead takes you in his arms and hugs you? Is there anything greater than the certainty of being his child?

God has given you an answer to the most important question. You don't have to be in doubt of how you become saved. It happens when you look at Jesus and pay heed to everything God's word says about him. Then God in grace gives his Spirit and creates faith in your heart. You are saved then and go towards the day when you will see everything subject to Jesus.

Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

Matthew 11:26

A child of God is attached to God's will. You were saved by it, and you know that his will is always the best.

Yet it isn't easy to submit to it. God's way not only leads through sunshine and light, but also down into the valley where there is darkness. When God gives health, strength and comfortable circumstances, it is easy to accept to go his way. It is more difficult when God gives suffering, distress and death.

Nevertheless, there is only one way forward. In all circumstances we ought to say, "Yes, Father, for this was your will."

If you don't make these words yours, there is a disagreement between you and God and it never leads to blessing.

Jesus teaches us to accept God's will. God's way is the best one, whether we can see it or not. Our own way leads us sooner or later towards the abyss.

Measured with the yardstick of eternity, a human life is immensely short. It goes like the wind. We must leave soon. Our old nature is only occupied with life down here. God first and last keeps our eternal salvation in view.

We often overrate our own strength and force. Very few Christians are uneasy when they think of whether they will reach the goal. But the Lord knows us completely. That is why it happens that he handles us roughly. He cannot accept that we begin going our own ways. He stops us. Sometimes he terrifies us. He always wants to call us back to himself.

It is a blessed thing to be able to see God's discipline as a result of his love. No one can see that of one's own accord. However, God has given us his word which preaches that the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.

It is richer still to be able to accept the Lord's discipline. Then you put your life in his hand. You let him control all things, because you know that the responsibility is his. Then he gives your heart the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, even if his blows may be so severe that tears fill your eyes. Your heart tastes the blessing of the Word, "Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."

“You are my witnesses”, declares the Lord.

Isaiah 43:10

A Christian testifies by being, by speaking and by acting. The devil concentrates his effort on silencing every single witness.

The strongest testimony is made through faith. The life of faith belongs apparently to the hidden world. We cannot search each other's hearts. Nevertheless faith leaves its stamp on a person. We get a distinct feeling of what matters. In the crises of life it becomes evident what keeps us going.

Therefore you will first and foremost be what you are. You are a sinner who is saved solely by grace. Nothing of your own holds you safe. You had nothing to exhibit. Therefore you stood before God with a silenced mouth. The only thing you could do was to ask for mercy to a lost sinner.

The Lord didn't send you away. He let you stay by his throne. He changed the throne of judgment into the throne of grace.

Even if you have grown as a Christian, you have never got farther than to become saved solely by grace. If God doesn't save you by grace, heaven will never become yours. But you know God's heart. He will not leave the poor in heart. Grace is not used up. It is new every morning.

That's why you drink daily from the spring of living water. You take possession of Jesus once again. When he comes to you through the Word, you receive him with joy.

If you live like that with Jesus, then God's peace is the secret of your life. You have peace with God, because you are justified by faith. The Lord gives you daily the peace which is connected to prayer. You throw your worries on him. Therefore you know that he takes care of them. He will look after you, and he will advance his kingdom through you.

You are my witnesses, says the Lord. These words were spoken, the first time, to a people who had to walk through a desert. By walking they were witnesses.

You are on your way to heaven. The Lord has broken the shackles of sin. He has led you out into the wonderful freedom of grace. By walking towards heaven you are a witness.

Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

John 20:29

The decisive thing must be to believe, we think. Whether we believe before or after we have seen cannot be so important, can it?

Many think like that. But Jesus says something else.

If you believe only when you have seen, your Christian life is poor. Yes, you are in danger of losing it. You become tired and discouraged. You see so little after all. You cannot catch sight of the big treasures and riches. They are hidden in Jesus and him you cannot see.

What is left is your own misery. You can see that you aren't in the least the Christian you ought to be. But there isn't much help and comfort in the fact that you have to come to that conclusion time after time.

It is quite different when you believe without seeing. Then you are blessed. It means: then you are indeed happy. Then you keep to God's word.

What Jesus is for you, and what he has done for your salvation, is entirely independent of your experiences. Nothing in you can annul God's finished work. Through God's word he promises the forgiveness of all your sins.

You aren't able to see it; but if you believe it, you are blessed.

There is no condemnation for you who are in Christ Jesus.

In him you have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. Therefore you are rich in everything. You lack nothing.

You cannot see and feel that Jesus has risen from the dead, but he sits at God's right hand and intercedes for you. He has taken up your cause, and he will lead you home saved.

You are blessed if you cling firmly to this.

God's people do not need new experiences. But we need to believe what the Lord has said in the Word. That is the way to blessing. Therefore, use the Word. It creates faith in what you cannot see, and helps you forwards towards the land where your eyes will be opened.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:14

John sees the great multitude in white robes in heaven. But he isn't able to say who they are.

Why?

The explanation might be that John cannot possibly imagine that poor, lost sinners could ever shine in so great a heavenly purity and glory as the one that rests on the great multitude in white robes. No thought can grasp the leap from the earth to heaven. The distance is infinite. What is sown as perishable, it is raised imperishable.

The great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language is standing before God's throne, because they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

No merit is mentioned here, no sacrifice or any action. No, the only thing that can save a sinner is the blood of Jesus. It is a ransom. You will take your place in heaven by virtue of his sacrifice as sure as you have received Jesus.

How am I to wash my robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb?

Have you thought of the fact that Jesus gave people the help they sought? The blind came with their blindness to Jesus. They got their sight again. The deaf came with their deafness. Jesus opened their ears. Those with leprosy prayed for healing of their leprosy. They were cleansed.

You are to come to Jesus, in the same way, with your sins. You do so by confessing them to him. Ask him to cover you with his grace.

You are to know that Jesus cleanses you from all sin with his blood. Nothing can be compared to having one's sin forgiven. It gives peace of mind. It gives great confidence.

Have you washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and have you received the forgiveness of sins? If so, you are on your way to heaven. You will soon take part in the crowd of people that cannot be tired of praising the Lord for the incomprehensible fact that they are saved simply by grace.

Jesus Christ ... the firstborn from the dead.

Revelation 1:5

The widow's son, from Nain, wasn't the firstborn from the dead. Neither was Lazarus. They were raised to the same life which they had lived before they died. That is why they had to die again.

The first person, who was raised to the new life, was Jesus. He is therefore named the firstborn from the dead. As God's sacrificial lamb he bore the sin, and he therefore had to receive the wages of sin, which is death. But after God had raised him from the dead, he will never die again.

You therefore do the right thing when you place your hope on him. In the world you continually meet death in some form, because sin and death belong inextricably together. Death has therefore left its stamp on many of the circumstances of life. But there is one place where there is neither sin nor death. It is with Jesus.

It hurts us to meet sin and death when they come through other people. But it is even heavier when one feels the same forces in oneself. The snake poison from the day of the Fall of Man has saturated all our life. Sin is ineradicable. That is why the body is to decay and be buried.

There is more to say though if you believe in Jesus. You are saved into a different world where sin and death don't exist anymore. You will never die in the proper sense of the word. You are united with Jesus and have passed from death to life. You have a share in Jesus' resurrection life.

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead, but he isn't the last one. Far from it! He went in front, and you follow in his footsteps. As God raised him, he will raise you too.

You therefore have a living hope. Jesus was dead, but lives and will never die again. Therefore, you can know that Jesus cannot forget you, even in death. He has engraved you on the palms of his hands, and he carries you in his heart. He will raise you up. Jesus wants you, who have lived life with him on earth, to do so in eternity as well. You will own the riches in heaven which already are yours in the faith. The difference is that you will live without sin and death, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence and bliss.

If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation.

2 Corinthians 1:6

If we do not see suffering in the light of God's word, we will often find it pointless. But everything changes when the Lord reveals the truth to us.

When a Christian suffers, it happens so that others can be comforted and saved.

How is that possible?

Think of your experience! It is often Christians in heavy sufferings who have given the strongest testimony through their trust and confidence in the Lord! They have taught you to know the riches in Jesus. God has, through them, shown that a child of God builds his life on an eternal foundation. In a weak and broken-down Christian, you have met the saving hand of the Almighty God which holds you fast in all distress. Doesn't it impress you to read about Christians who are imprisoned for the sake of God's word? Some people are subjected to torture. Their sufferings tell us that martyrdom isn't a romance. It is sheer horror and something awful; but it is fellowship with Jesus in his suffering at the same time.

The many suffering brothers and sisters are a testimony that not only is it worthwhile to live for Jesus; it is also worthwhile to suffer and die for him.

Along with suffering come scruples. Persecution, troubles, fear and illness attack our thoughts and mind. God leads some of his children through this, so that others will receive help. Paul puts it like this, "If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation."

When serious illness casts its dark shadows over a home, it calls for seriousness from everybody. Young people are called to salvation, and many elderly people are led into a more intense relationship to the Lord. The superficial has to retreat when God works in the depths of our life.

It is hard to suffer. Suffering holds many dark and heavy hours. But it is never pointless. Think of it, you who are in the furnace of suffering! You are an instrument in the Lord's hand – serviceable and useful for him. Let that be your confidence today.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

Can I really be a child of God?

Jesus has said that a person who follows him will never walk in darkness. It is true that I do not always walk in darkness, but even so I have to admit that it is dark for me time after time. However, there isn't anything I long for more than the light. I do my best for it to clear up, but it doesn't succeed.

Many know such thoughts. When they came into faith, they hoped that everything would become different in their lives. But they soon discovered that it didn't happen. Problems and difficulties resulted from it.

It tempts me to disappointment and despondency. Something must be wrong with my Christian life, when what it says in the Bible doesn't happen in my life.

It is dangerous to commend oneself to this way of thinking. It is wrong even if it appears right, because there is a big difference between what we put into God's word, and what it really says.

Jesus hasn't said that it won't become dark for a Christian. We aren't alike, but many are worried by doubts. They know themselves again in the words of David in Psalm 139:11: "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me."

If you read what Christians have written, you meet the same thing. Their journey through life hasn't been easy. It hasn't always been marked by sun and joy. They have known bitter pain inwardly.

All this doesn't change the fact that Jesus has told the truth. A Christian has never walked in darkness, and no Christian will ever do so. If in eternity you can look back on your Christian life, you will understand that not a single one of the few or many days were lived in darkness. How could a thing like that happen when in faith you were united with him, who is the light of life?

No day was without God's unifying plan and oversight. He walked by your side and saw and knew everything. That is why you always walked in the light.

He must become greater; I must become less.

John 3:30

John said these words shortly before he was thrown into prison. They found a shocking fulfilment in his life; loneliness and terrible doubts led him into darkness. He had to send word to Jesus in order to ask if he really was the promised Messiah.

God always hears our prayer. He knows the heart's hidden longing – also the desire that Jesus must become greater, and I must become less.

God often answers in a way we cannot imagine. The Lord puts us aside. We can be struck by illness. Spiritual darkness and doubts humiliate us. There may also be difficulties in the family and the working life.

We ourselves are liable to think that we can stand success. But we are wrong. It takes only a little following wind before the arrogance grows in the fallen heart of a sinner. Then Jesus is pressed into the background, and we become great in our own view.

However God is good. He doesn't allow you to remain in your folly. He uses many means to take away from you the confidence in your own abilities and strength. He makes you ask for what never disappoints.

Jesus is great and powerful in himself. God also wants him to be so in your heart. He is to be your praise and honour. The Lord shows you how small you are in order to open your heart for what you are in Christ.

God wants you to raise your head with confidence. He lets you breathe more easily. The only perfect and complete thing is the work of Jesus. Nothing of yours must be added.

John himself had to be led back to the beginning. His eyes had to be turned towards the Lamb of God, who carried the sin of the world. When this happens, Jesus becomes greater. Then the song of the Lamb is sung. Everything else becomes small and unimportant.

The greatest in the kingdom of God is the one who has everything in Jesus.

The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest.

Hebrews 8:1

It is always dangerous to turn things upside down. It applies in life, and it also applies in the spiritual life. When something less important is made the most important, the main thing is pressed into the background.

If you are saved by the grace of God, you have Jesus as your high priest. He does service for you in his heavenly temple. Compared to that, everything else is secondary, because it is the prerequisite for your salvation.

Before you were saved, your greatest requirement was grace. If you didn't receive it, you wouldn't survive God's judgment. After you have become a child of God, you still need the same grace. Jesus has to come to you again and again. You have to receive everything undeservedly. You have to be assured that he stands between you and God, so that God sees you covered by him. You are hidden in Jesus. God looks at you with the same feeling of pleasure that he has with his beloved Son.

This is the most important thing of your life.

What strength to let the main thing be what it is. Then things fall into place. Your dissatisfaction with yourself can no longer paralyze you. Jesus has the responsibility for everything in your life. You do not stand alone with the responsibility anymore.

Satan is trying in every possible way to get you away from the main thing. It is of secondary importance for him what you are occupied with, as long as it isn't Jesus as Saviour and Redeemer. Don't let him deceive you. Stick to the decisive thing. Lose yourself in it, then you stand on a foundation that holds – also when worries, restlessness and fear arise.

Your matter of salvation is settled in heaven before God's throne. This moment Jesus appears before the throne in your stead. Your salvation depends on him. He is your substitute. You can be quite secure. Your case has been won. It will never be changed. Jesus vouches for it.

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Only one thing is needed

This is what Jesus answered Martha when she felt left alone to cover all her duties in the kitchen and blamed Mary for laziness.

What is needed? Jesus gives no direct answer, but points out that Mary had chosen the better part. The place to be, to have, what is needed first and foremost in life, is at Jesus' feet, where he gives, what we need more than anything else - himself!

This is the focus of this book of daily reading. Our desire is that you may meet God in Christ in a way that it may never be lost.

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