



**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 July

I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

Romans 15:29

How could Paul know that he was to come to Rome in the full measure of the blessing of Christ?

God had shown him that.

The Lord knows everything beforehand. He saw that Paul would come to the capital of the world as a prisoner, physically broken down after a long imprisonment and a dangerous voyage which ended in shipwreck.

God is not dependent on external strength. His power is made perfect in weakness. Paul was taken to Rome, a lowly and unimpressive figure. When the rumour that he was on the way reached the Christians, they went to meet him outside the city. At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged.

With what did Paul meet the Christians?

Well, he came in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

There were many wrong things in the congregation in Rome. None of the admonishments in Paul's Epistle to the Romans leaves us in doubt about that. Even so, Paul didn't come primarily to discipline and admonish. He came with God's grace and with all that this blessed word contains.

The blessing in Christ is all the riches that a sinner gets by faith in Jesus. Nothing is as blessed as getting your heart opened for that. You are filled then with the joy of salvation. Your cup overflows. You see oceans of grace surround you on all sides. You get everything undeservedly.

When this blessing is living, it is a compelling power. Christ's love compels us, says Paul.

And in Christ's service, he doesn't rely on his own strength and abilities.

Paul knew that he hadn't got any ability in himself. His ability was from the Lord. And it was closely connected with the words of reconciliation which God had put into him.

And as he was praying, heaven was opened.

Luke 3:21

What happens when you pray? You mustn't yield to the temptation in believing that prayer is mere words. Perhaps common sense thinks that it is so. Perhaps you feel so. But God's word says something else.

When Jesus was praying, Heaven was opened.

It was like that in the life of Jesus, and it is important to him, through his word, to assure us that every single child of God lives under an open Heaven.

Jesus says to Nathanael, "You shall see heaven open." When the furious crowd stoned Stephen, this word came true. Then he saw heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. And John experienced the same thing when Jesus gave him the great visions on the island of Patmos, an open door into heaven.

Jesus is the one who has opened heaven. We cannot do so. It is not necessary either. It has been done already. It doesn't prevent us seeing the connection between prayer and the open heaven. It isn't your name or mine that opens it. God has given you the name Jesus. You may come in it. Come therefore boldly. Don't hang back, because God expects you.

John saw the prayers of the holy ones in bowls of gold in heaven. It is an expression of how precious prayer is for God.

I wonder if there isn't a connection between spiritual poverty and a shortage of prayer. When prayer dies away on the lips of a Christian, spiritual poverty makes its entry. Learn from Jesus. It is mentioned only once that heaven was opened as he was praying. But he knew that his Father always listens to him. That is why his life was permeated with prayer.

In heaven you will see that prayer in Jesus' name sets heavenly forces in motion. Here below you have to walk in faith; put your trust in God's many promises. Make use of the right of prayer. You pray under an open heaven, and everyone who asks receives. Jesus has said so.

When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.

Proverbs 10:25

It is our disaster that we often seek our riches in home, family, friends, work, or good and secure circumstances. It is true that all these are good gifts of God. But it is also true that, sooner or later, we have to say goodbye to all of them. If you make earthly things to be your safe ground, you are deceiving yourself. You will realize it the day your life's foundation shakes.

There is only one foundation which never shakes. It is the one a sinner stands on when he has been justified in Jesus. This foundation of salvation is eternal.

You therefore do well to ask yourself if you stand on this foundation. Only the ones who have received Jesus as their personal Saviour do so. You have to be a disciple and to live in the faith.

If you take refuge in Jesus, he is everything for you. You cannot get into any storm where he staggers. He is the firm point when all foundations crumble.

You do well to think a great deal of the Lord. Then you know where you are to go, when all roads are closed.

It is important that the road between you and the Lord doesn't become overgrown. Earthly things can easily steal your entire attention. It means that it is difficult to find the way on the day of misfortune. It is quite different if you frequently seek the Lord. Then you are to do just what you usually do when the darkness descends on you.

What comfort and strength there is in the fact that Jesus is my rock forever and ever! Even when I have to die, I keep the firm foundation of my life. It is eternal.

Jesus will be the same person in heaven as he is here below. His work has been approved by God. His salvation is like a bridge which lifts me above the roaring and changing currents of time, and leads me into the kingdom where everything will be new, everything except Jesus. He remains the one he is. He is the eternal foundation.

You have to stand on him – now and forever.

The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening.

1 Kings 17:6

God acts strangely here. Why didn't he let angels take care of Elijah, when he, in his loneliness, sat by the Kerith brook? Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? What if Elijah had got a visit from angels! It could have strengthened him as Jesus was helped by an angel in Gethsemane.

Now here, God's intervention consists in the fact that the ravens behaved most unusually.

You are to notice that. It is written in order that we shall learn from it.

You are not to prescribe to God how he should help you. Nor are you to consider what possibilities God has. His thoughts and plans are often curious, and he doesn't consult you. His way of helping is part of his long-term plan.

Nor are you to ask, after God's intervention, why he acted as he did. You can put a lot of effort into trying to understand God's intention. Don't do so. Keep to God's word and live your life with Jesus. Don't wear yourself down by mulling over what the Lord hasn't revealed. Instead learn from Elijah that God sometimes gives his children "raven assistance".

It is "raven assistance" when he has small insignificant fellow creatures or circumstances serve to his plan in his infinite care of you. You are also to learn that God doesn't send the entire assistance all at once. The ravens came in the morning and in the evening. We want to have an abundant supply. If we get it, we easily drift away from our constant dependence on God. That is why he doesn't give us what we need in advance. We receive enough for every single day's needs.

It isn't always easy to be thankful for the way God helps. But it is always such a blessing for a child of God to accept it. Then you are like a child that confidently puts his hand into his father's or mother's hand, resting assured that it is they who know what is best.

You will have nothing to fear.

Isaiah 54:14

Your soul finds rest in God's word. That is the only place. Here on earth you know that expectations may be fulfilled, but you can also be disappointed and brought to despair. However, God's word leads you into another world.

You are not to be afraid, because you have nothing to fear.

It applies to you who, in your helplessness, have taken refuge in Jesus. You don't think that your Christianity is a success. Indifference and coldness often play around with you, and therefore you have to ask if God's great, rich and glorious promises really can apply to you.

It is important here to pay heed to God's word. You are not to be afraid. This was said to a people whose life was deeply marked by sin and apostasy. But the Lord had decided to take pity on them. It is like that with you too. The secret of your life isn't what succeeds or fails. No, God has chosen you in Christ. He has, in his beloved Son, showered you with all the spiritual blessings of heaven. Therefore you will have nothing to fear.

You cannot understand God's promises. They go far beyond your understanding and comprehension. However they stand firm in heaven. And on the glorious day of eternity you will see that not a one single one of them fell flat.

"Nothing", says God's word, and it means nothing. You have absolutely nothing to fear.

Storms may blow heavily against you, and difficulties may pile up like a mountain which your eyes cannot see over. Nevertheless you have nothing to fear.

It is an immensely rich thing to be a Christian. Imagine, whatever the conditions are, that a wonderful stillness rests deeply within you. Perhaps you cannot feel it yourself, because things have drowned out the stillness. But it is there, created by God's word.

Therefore, listen to the glorious gospel that has been spoken exactly into the situation you are in this day. You will have nothing to fear. The Lord has said so.

This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God

1 John 4:2

To confess means to express what is most important in life. Many think that it is just a question of saying a few words. They are content with the confession of their mouth. They live in a false hope. There is no connection between what they say, and what lives in their hearts.

If you confess your sins, you admit that there is sin in your life. Sin sticks to everything. Again and again you feel a desire to be noticed.

If others don't notice you, you become disappointed. You want to be thanked, honoured and elevated. We hide many sins deeply in our mind. They continually appear. Most of them belong to the thought of life. Sin occasionally bursts into action, and that horrifies us.

That is why we must confess that there is sin in our lives. I cannot get the better of it. No matter how much I make an effort, I will never get rid of it.

You must first of all profess Jesus. It is all about him. He is the deep connection in everything. Yes, he has entered and with his clean hands has touched all your sins. It made him so unclean that he had to die as a criminal at Calvary under God's wrath and judgment. If you acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh, then you point to him as the One who has atoned for all your sins on the cursed tree.

Jesus has come with a message from heaven. He has preached the whole counsel of God to salvation, but not just that. He had to do another work as well. He had to atone for sin. It cost him his blood. It cost him his fellowship with the Father.

This is what it's all about. The Lord himself has convinced us about that by his Spirit.

“Jesus, Jesus, absolutely enough for heaven and earth is hidden in this one word.”

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

Matthews 10:28

People fear one another. Others can harm you. Perhaps you have experienced your friends turning their backs on you.

Jesus, as no one else, has known the conditions of the human life. He has also said that we are in for troubles, which are so great that – if those days had not been cut short - no one would survive. Prison, torture, hunger, war and persecution won't stop as long as this earth exists.

Nevertheless Jesus says that we are not to be afraid of people. They can only kill the body. Death sets a limit to their power.

However we are to be afraid of God.

A lot of people will ask: Why are we to fear him? They don't think that there is any reason to do so. They don't think that Jesus speaks the truth about God. It will be terrible for them to wake up beyond death and the grave, and have to stand before the God who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

God can do so, but will he do so?

Jesus has answered that question. He says that God on the Day of Judgment will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthews 25:42).

There is therefore every reason to fear the God who casts people into hell. There is reason to pray the Lord to search your heart, so that you avoid self-deception. First of all, the important thing is to get peace with God. You have to receive Jesus as your personal Saviour. If you don't do so, God has to cast you into hell. Don't fear what everybody else fears. Fear what really is horrible: to be judged by God to spend eternity in the eternal fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

...when the times will have reached their fulfillment ...to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.
Ephesians 1:10

God has a plan with your life, we sing. And it is true. His plan is in agreement with his purpose. God wants everything to be united in Jesus. That is the key to an understanding of what otherwise may be difficult to grasp.

When the Lord answers our prayer with a no, it isn't because he doesn't care for us. Neither is it because he doesn't understand us. No one knows us as well as he does.

God's answer is to be seen in the light of the fact that everything in your life must be summarized in Jesus. If you received what you prayed for, you would to a certain extent be able to fend for yourself. That is a dangerous state for a Christian. When the people of Israel had entered the land flowing with milk and honey, they forgot the Lord. They didn't need his care and help in everything.

Perhaps you feel like a weak Christian. You dream of a strong and victorious Christian life, so that you can show others how good it is to be a Christian. You therefore wonder at why God doesn't help you to become strong. But if you have managed one difficulty, a new one turns up. You have to run to the Lord again, and present your powerlessness to him. He won't let you down. From time to time he steps in so late that you are horrified. However he doesn't leave you to yourself. Nevertheless you cannot help asking: Why must it be like that?

It is because God wants Jesus to be all-in-all. All lines are to point to him; they do this only when you take refuge with him.

When David defeated his enemies and secured peace on all sides, he appeared as the invincible victor. But he was on the threshold of the deepest and greatest tragedy of his life. Satan was allowed to sift David, so that he was led back to the basis of salvation, where God's grace and salvation became everything for him. God united all things in Jesus.

This is also his way in your life and mine. In ourselves we are nothing. Jesus is our all.

You will . . . hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

Micah 7:19

It is an impressive experience to walk along the beach, to look out over the sea and hear its roaring. The sea never ends. Sea replaces sea, and together they encircle the earth.

Has it ever happened that on a walk along the beach you have come to think of the words: “You will . . . hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea?”

The seas hide an entire world. In our day many of the secrets of the seas are being revealed.

But what about the sea that hides your sin; will it also someday reveal what is hidden in it?

No, it will never happen. Because the sea that hides your sins is the sea of grace. The sea is named Jesus. When God has hurled your sins into it, they can never be dragged up again. They have disappeared.

The Book of Revelation tells about a sea in heaven. It is different from any other seas. It is transparent, clear as crystal.

This sea is like the grace in God’s heart. Where it is, there is nothing but grace. So wonderful is the power of Jesus’ blood. When your sin has been hurled into the sea of grace it disappears, and grace alone stays behind.

You may be worried by old sins. You may be tempted to pass judgement upon yourself again and again. Don’t do so! You are to know that God doesn’t acknowledge the sin which has been hurled into the sea of grace. That is why you have to forget it as well.

But have I confessed in the right way? Did I remember everything? Did I do it seriously enough?

Notice that God’s word doesn’t say that you are the one who is to hurl the sins into the sea; the Lord is the one. Everything that God does, he does completely. Jesus, therefore, said the blessed words, “It is finished!”

You will never find anything about yourself that shouldn’t be different and better. But the Lord has taken care of us who are lost. Stammering and inadequately we must confess our sins before him. Then he hurls all of them into the depths of the sea of grace. And then God never sees them again.

I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.

Exodus 3:12

A lot of people long for a sign. They think that if only they get it, they have something to look to. They think that the sign makes everything much easier.

But it is dangerous to demand signs. Often it doesn't help when it comes to doubtfulness. When the difficulties arrive, the doubt arises anyway.

Neither is it certain that God wants to give a sign. He can also give it in another way to what we want. Moses experienced this by the burning bush.

God had entrusted to him an overwhelming task. He was to go to Pharaoh and ask him to let the Israelites go. Then God gave Moses a sign. Next time he returns to the place where he saw the burning bush, he won't be alone. He will have the people with him.

Moses had to get the sign first before the people were led out of Egypt. It may appear odd. But God doesn't make a mistake. He knew that Moses badly needed a sign, when he was with the disobedient and obstinate people in the middle of the desert.

It is like that in your life as well. God can give you a sign that awaits fulfillment far ahead on the way. The Lord wants to teach you to take many steps in faith. However, the Lord's sign never arrives too late. When sooner or later you are in the midst of incalculable difficulties, the Lord will give you the confirmation that you are on his way.

Until then the Lord has given you the same assurance which he gave Moses, "I will be with you!" Nothing is as important as listening to God's promises. You are to let them carry you. The Word stands firm when doubt makes even the sign given you seem uncertain.

The Lord has a shepherd's care – he leads you on his way. Confidently put your life in the Lord's hand! He knows your heart, and knows that your greatest wish is to be in his will and walk on his way.

11 July

He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Isaiah 40:28-29

You aren't able to think God's thoughts, but he can reveal them to you. He has done so in Jesus. He can also do that by letting you understand the interconnection in the way he is leading you. At other times he doesn't show you what he wants you to do. Then you may tire yourself out examining God's way. You can think of many possibilities, but none of them gives your worried heart peace.

When will you learn to accept that there is something you don't understand? There is something that you cannot comprehend, no matter how much effort you make.

But you can worship him whom you don't understand. You and I are dust and ashes. We must submit in humility to the wise and holy God. More important than all the answers you can get, is to worship and exalt him.

How often have you worn yourself out by reiterating the questions which the Lord won't answer? Is there perhaps an accusation behind your questioning? You aren't content with the fact that God understands everything. You want to understand it yourself. Some days you aren't able to think any more. That is a blessed situation. Then the Lord can come to your assistance with his gifts.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. It doesn't happen so that you must continue with your questioning. No, he wants to help you to continue the walk along the road he has decided for you.

We are prone to think that anybody who has great strength receives still more. But it isn't like that. The Lord's help isn't a reward for good effort. It is always by grace.

It is therefore a good thing to be weak and tired. Then the Lord can come to one's aid. He won't hesitate. He doesn't give sparingly. No, you receive power and a new strength until you reach the land where all questions are answered and all mysteries solved.

Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.

Proverbs 4:26

Jesus is the way. There is no other way to God's heart than him. It means salvation for a sinner to find that way. It is a new and living way. If you are on it, and remain on it, you are on your way to heaven.

Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. That word refers to the many choices and circumstances in life. Do they lead towards the destination, or do you make your arrangements in the same way as non-Christians?

What is your attitude to the truth? Can we rely on what you say? Or do you use words to deceive others?

Do you always use your signature in an honest way? What about the films you watch and the books and magazines you read? How do you spend your time and your money? Do you act as you would have done if you weren't a Christian?

Every single area of your life can be likened to a road. A road is designed to walk on; therefore there will always be directions to take. It depends on whether the many roads lead towards the destination. If they don't do so, you go farther and farther away, and some day you may have left Jesus without realising it.

Many people think that everything is all right, as long as they want to go to heaven. They wouldn't dream of saying goodbye to Jesus. But if they use God's word or seek the Lord in prayer, they aren't very serious. Nor do they adapt themselves to what God has commanded.

Neither if they adapt themselves to what God has said.

The result is that several of their ways don't lead towards the destination. The Devil draws them imperceptibly into his world. They become more and more secularized.

There is indeed reason to be on the alert. Every single day we advance on life's many paths. If they don't lead towards the destination, we won't reach it. Jesus wants to come into your ordinary day. He wants to decide what you do, think and say. If he is Lord in your life, you become a Christian who heads for the destination of heaven.

Give careful thought to your ways. ... You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”

Haggai 1:5-6

It was a difficult time in Israel. The country was impoverished, and it wasn't easy to make ends meet for one's family. The difficult conditions led many to become still more occupied with their own private affairs. Everyone was busy with his own little world, while the house of God was in ruins.

But then some people started listening to the Lord's will. His house was to be reconstructed. A lot of people probably met them and thought them crazy. How could they have money to spare for the raising of a temple, when they had not even enough for themselves?

The people of faith however didn't give in; boldly they declared what God had reminded them of. And God aided them. On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month the foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid. Then the Lord pronounced, "From this day on I will bless you."

Even today we know, that worry about the future can drain our strength and joy. It is as if our money isn't sufficient any more. Our wages are put in a purse with holes in it.

How can it be possible then to give something for the cause of God's kingdom?

That way of thinking is dangerous.

You are not to act in such a way that you miss God's blessing. The Israelites regained that blessing when they started to reconstruct the ruined temple.

God is true to his word. You won't lack what you give to him and his kingdom, far from it! God has set you to take care of his kingdom. When you do so, the Lord will take care of you. He will let the stream of blessing flow into your life. You will get enough of everything and even have plenty for every good work.

It doesn't mean that suddenly you are rolling in money. That would be dangerous for you. Many people have been drowned in that stream. No, God's blessing brings about that what you have goes a long way. And, then, it makes you happy and grateful. You experience that he has given you a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. There is, in addition, something to give to others! So good is God.

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ . . . to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

Romans 16:25, 27

When God wants to strengthen you, he does it by the message of Jesus Christ. God uses the word of the cross. God's strength isn't an impersonal power which gives you new strength. The gospel is the living and active word of God.

The gospel creates faith in your heart. It is also the message of Jesus which similarly adds to your faith. And when God strengthens you, he does so by making your faith strong.

However, the remarkable thing is that in times when your faith grows, you aren't in the least occupied with your faith. It is Jesus who fills your mind, and you cannot be tired of hearing about him.

When a Chinese student leader was released after decades in the prisons of China, he said that the time had been like a long honeymoon with Jesus. He could say so because God is a God who is able to strengthen us by the gospel.

Paul calls the gospel his gospel. God's gospel had become his. God had given it to him again and again.

In numerous trials and fights, he had experienced its power. He therefore ends his great Epistle to the Romans by pointing out the message that can lead his friends all the way to the goal.

And the gospel hasn't lost its power. It is capable of strengthening you for the remainder of your life. That is why you are to trust in the word about Jesus' blood. In this blood you are cleansed and released from all your sins. Jesus' blood is the payment for you. You have been bought with the blood. Through the price Jesus has paid, he strengthens you in all distress.

When the gospel is living for your heart, the hymn of thanksgiving breaks out in the midst of your own darkness, your own distress and helplessness. You aren't in doubt any longer. God is the only wise God in your life too. He has saved your soul, and he wants to strengthen you to the end with the message of Jesus.

Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

Psalm 96:9

The first part of the verse can also be translated like this: “Worship the Lord in holy array”.

You can pray to the Lord in all kinds of clothes. You can talk with him at any time and at any place; even so, God’s word says, “Worship the Lord in holy array.”

The external forms aren’t unimportant. Without realizing it ourselves they influence, in the long run, both in opinion and attitude. Lack of respect in social convention leads to a lack of respect in attitude; it is like that in our relationship to God.

God’s word doesn’t prescribe us specific external forms which must be observed at all times and everywhere. Where Christians know of trembling before the holy God, a desire is produced to show outward respect and deference to God. However, according to God’s word it isn’t just the Christians who are called to prostrate themselves before God. It is the entire world that is to prostrate itself before him.

Some day all God’s enemies will lie as a footstool before Jesus’ feet. They met him on earth with scorn and disdain. Many people do so today. They misuse the holy things by drawing them into a connection where they don’t belong. God’s word is sometimes applied in an attempt to generate laughter. Churches become arts centers where everything may take place.

The people to whom nothing is holy, are a poor people. All their defences have been broken down. Everything holy is being destroyed.

The worst thing is God’s judgment. God lets us taste what we present to him. With anxiety, we have to ask: How long does God tolerate being mocked? When does the hour of his judgment come?

To God’s people the truth is: Don’t allow the spirit and mindset of the world to break in. Never come before the Lord without realizing that God is holy, and you are dust and ashes. Pay deference to him.

Where there is no awe of God love is missing. We cannot love what we secretly or openly profane. Therefore we have to exalt the Lord both in our hearts and in public. Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him! Worship the Lord in holy array!

Because they will all know me . . . I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

Hebrews 8:11-12

God's grace and forgiveness are closely connected to the knowledge of him. To know him is to know his grace.

We therefore have to refuse to entertain ideas and thoughts which lead our mind and heart away from God's grace. Satan is trying to put us on the wrong track in countless ways. He can't stand that we are filled with a jubilant happiness with God's gracious forgiveness of our sins.

Don't let the enemy of souls deceive you. Don't believe that profound knowledge of God is something different from, and more than, the joy and rest in the finished work of God.

Give heed to your experience. What is it that characterizes Christians with profound spiritual knowledge?

All of them are small in their own opinion, but God's grace and Jesus' cleansing blood are more than words. It is the foundation their lives rest on. It is not only their starting point. It is their centre. They turn to it again and again. Therefore they always have a good word to say about Jesus. They know him; they need his grace daily. They haven't got boldness and strength in themselves, but they know him who has lifted them onto a rock. That is why they go forward towards eternity in faith and confidence.

To know God means that I know that my judge has conducted my case. I do not have to answer when I am called to account. There is another person who answers for me. That person is Jesus. He has atoned for all my sins. He has taken the penalty for them. When God put the sin and the penalty on his Son, it lies on me no longer. Nor does God demand payment twice. Because Jesus has paid for all my sins, I don't have to do it.

On the basis of Jesus' atonement, God by grace forgives all my injustice. When it is forgiven, he doesn't remember it any longer.

God sees and knows everything. And no one is able to forget like God. I can remember the sins which are forgiven, but God cannot. What Jesus has taken away is completely gone. God doesn't remember your sins. If your heart knows this truth, then you know God and you will experience that you are known by him forever.

17 July

I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.

Isaiah 45:3

There are treasures which God can give you only in the dark. Think of that, when the Lord takes you through what is hard and difficult.

Don't you often call out for light and deliverance? Don't you often forget to pray for the treasures which God can let you have only in the dark?

How important it is that God doesn't take his disciplining hand away from you before he has given you the treasures which are hidden in the dark. You can see no way forward in the dark. But the Lord can. You can't understand what he wants with your trial, but he always knows what he does.

God knows you through and through. He knows that there are blessings from heaven which you can receive only when complete darkness has fallen around you.

What kind of treasures are those that are hidden in the darkness?

It is a deeper knowledge of the Lord. God can reveal himself in the darkness. You can then see him in radiant glory. Jesus becomes in the profoundest sense your heart's only delight.

The Lord mentions your name. It happens when the Holy Spirit is allowed to make the Word alive for you. Then it becomes clear that the full abundance of salvation is yours. You have the forgiveness of all your sins. And Jesus has clothed you with the garments of salvation. His deeds are your deeds. His prayer is your prayer. His purity is your purity. His victory is your victory.

The moment your heart believes this glorious gospel, the light is switched on. It may well be the case that external circumstances and trials appear as before, but everything has nevertheless become different.

Your heart believes the gospel. There is light then within you. You own a treasure. You sense that the riches in it is so great that, here below, you will never be able to understand the value of it. But it does not matter either. The treasure goes with you into heaven. And there you are to grow for ever in the knowledge of him, who here on earth gave you, "the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places."

... You are precious and honoured in my sight, and . . . I love you.

Isaiah 43:4

It is urgent for God to make it clear that you are precious in his sight. God knows your heart and all your thoughts. He knows how unworthy you feel. Yes, when you think of how sin sticks to you, you cannot understand that God wants to have anything to do with you.

God wants you to know that he isn't obliged to busy himself with you. No, he loves you!

It is his love that makes you valuable.

How can you know that you are precious in God's sight?

He has proved it by concentrating his efforts on saving you. There was only one way to go. It was to let somebody else take your place. You had to have a substitute who could take your place under the judgment.

It couldn't be one of your brothers. Each of them has an account to make up with God. Neither can they answer in the judgment, but they have to stand with a closed mouth. That is why none of them could act as deputy for you.

The only solution was that God's own Son let himself be born here below, and took your sin and guilt on himself.

As far as we can see, this price was too high. It is different, however, in God's opinion. For him you are so precious that he called his Son to empty the cup of wrath for you.

A love like that is so great that it overwhelms me. I cannot find words for it. Again and again I have to return to the Bible's own words, and let them say what I cannot find words for.

"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

You are so precious to God that he gave Jesus in order to be able to tell you, that you are honoured and that he loves you. Your sin no longer separates you from his love. Jesus has atoned for it and removed it. It is therefore only grace and love from God that streams towards you. You are really his!

For anyone who enters God`s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.

Hebrews 4:10

Life is no bed of roses for a Christian. There are of course many bright and festive hours, but there are also many battles and disputes; especially for those who make it a point of honour to follow in Jesus` footsteps. They experience that no one can follow Jesus without being bound to share circumstances with him.

The temptation to want heaven right now is strong. You long for the day, when all strife is ended. You look forward to the day when all resistance is broken. It is therefore tempting to make one`s arrangements as though that day had arrived already. But that is dangerous. Then you settle down in enemy territory and forget that Satan is the prince of this world.

Many Christians are expecting that God will transform life on earth into a paradise. When he doesn`t do so, they become disappointed and lose courage. Hardship and troubles make them doubt God`s promises and care.

Through faith in Jesus we have a foretaste of heaven on earth. But heaven itself and the heavenly rest are in store for us. Pains and distress aren`t all over until we walk into the wedding hall. Until then fear and anxiety will be a frequent visitor to our door.

However the day is coming, when you will rest from your own work. Everything insufficient and imperfect will cease to exist anymore. You will want to tell Jesus that you are only an unworthy servant. Nevertheless he will invite you to dinner and wait on you himself. You will be allowed to rest from everything in your life.

“Happiest to rest on, is the finished work,” we sing. But the work of your life is anything but finished. Is there at all a heavenly rest after a failed Christian life?

Notice that God`s word doesn`t say that you are to go to your rest. It says that you are to go to his rest.

The rest God gives you is Jesus` rest. The works you are allowed to look back on are Jesus` works. You are to rest on his finished work in heaven.

Salvation is found in no one else.

Acts 4:12

Many questions meet us on our journey through life. We have to go through many narrow passages. The road may often be winding and dark. There are times also when it becomes so difficult that we are hardly able to continue.

One question remains when all battles are fought, the question of salvation. When we have arrived at the absolute limit, and a retreat is impossible, everything else becomes unimportant. The last question on earth is the first question in eternity.

Before God's court of law everything else is secondary. Are you going to spend eternity in heaven or in hell? Are you saved or lost? What will God tell you?

The answer depends on your relationship with Jesus. Salvation is found in no one else.

You cannot save yourself. Perhaps you have been a good person whom many are grateful for. But all your good works don't count before God. He isn't satisfied. The only one with whom God is well pleased is Jesus. God has linked our salvation with Jesus only. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12) Therefore, the question of your salvation is decided by your relationship to Jesus. Have you received him as your personal saviour? Have you ever experienced Jesus standing at the door of your heart and knocking? Have you opened the door to him? If you can answer yes, I want you to know that Jesus became the beginning in your life. But the beginning is not the completion. Have you continued the walk with Jesus as your Saviour and only hope? If you can truly answer yes, then he knows you and you are saved in him.

There really is salvation in Jesus. If you belong to him, you are saved completely and fully. Jesus doesn't strengthen you so that you can save yourself. No, he has taken the whole responsibility on himself. It is he who leads you to heaven. It is his sacrifice and works that God accepts. You own everything by your faith in Jesus. You get it all undeserved by grace. Therefore, let Jesus into your heart and live your life with him.

„You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you”, declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:13-14

To us it looks as if there are conditions attached to God's promises. It makes us think that even if his promises hold good we don't benefit from them, because we don't meet the conditions.

You think: I have to find God, but the condition is that I seek him with all my heart. That is why you start fighting to become whole-hearted. The more you fight the more inconstant and deceitful you find your own heart. You are not surprised that God seems far away. How could he not be, when you have a divided heart?

There are certainly many Christians whose lives have ended in despair. They came under the law. The law can only accuse and break them. Its way never leads to salvation.

In the realm of salvation and grace a wholesome heart is the same as a crushed heart. When your heart hasn't anything to come to God with, the Lord can come to you.

It is true that God lives in heaven. But he also lives with him who is crushed and lowly in spirit.

If God's Spirit has done his revealing work, you realize that you are nothing before God. Your mouth has been silenced. But God's mouth hasn't. He preaches grace to lost sinners. He preaches peace to you whose heart is like a rough sea. He preaches hope when all hopes are shattered.

You are therefore blessed when you are poor in spirit. Then you look for the Lord, because of the fact that you haven't got anything else to cling to. You won't be disappointed. You will find him. He has said so in his word.

Don't give up and don't despair. To do so is to give in to Satan. God may delay of course but he doesn't go back on his word.

By delaying he opens your eyes to how lost you are in yourself. He is longing for you to find grace.

To find God and to find oneself in his love is the same thing. It happens for you when you come to Jesus with a broken and contrite heart.

How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

Hebrews 2:3

The author of Hebrews says: We. It is about us. We find it easy to think that we are out of danger. But we do well to bear in mind that the warning not to ignore God's salvation was told to God's children.

There are very few, who call themselves Christians, who deliberately disavow the Lord's salvation. All of us have a feeling that we aren't Christians any longer if that is denied.

When Satan met Jesus in the desert, he used God's word in order to get Jesus to leave his appointed way. It is one of Satan's most effective methods when he confronts those who live for God. He also tries to make us blind also to what is written. If he succeeds the victory is certain. We are led away from the fundamental truths of salvation.

Satan tries to lead God's children astray by turning their attention to aspects of God's word that have been neglected, perhaps for many years. We are to read God's word and preach the whole counsel of God, and it is definitely not wrong to call attention to what others have failed to see or neglected to preach. The dangerous thing is when our mind and heart are captured by the subject matter to such a degree that it takes our whole attention. Then it can get a much greater place in our mind and thinking than it has in the Bible.

Christians, to whom this has happened, say that we must naturally rely on God's salvation first of all. That is the foundation. They wouldn't dream of denying the gospel. At the same time they are surprised at Christian brothers who warn against their special biblical interests.

But this is a dangerous situation.

To hold fast to the message of God's salvation is the most difficult thing of all. Satan tries by all available means to lead us away from the basis of God's salvation. We live by the Word about the cross. That alone is God's power to salvation. If you live on this Word about salvation, you keep eternal life. If you live by any other words, you lose it.

I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.

Matthew 11:10

These words were said about John the Baptist. He was the “messenger” that God sent ahead of Jesus. When Jesus said this, John was in prison. Many of the Lord’s messengers have spent years in prison. Our own century has especially abounded in imprisoned Christians.

It can cost heavily to be a messenger of Jesus. To a greater or to a lesser extent you come to share conditions with the Master you belong to. In some countries the price is higher than in others. It may also change from time to time. But everywhere and at all times it has cost something to belong to Jesus. It does so even today.

Troubles and hardship can easily discourage us. Then there is one thing to do: Go the same way which John went. He sent word to Jesus. And he received the answer that can give every tired servant new courage. “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”

God’s kingdom makes gains, after all, even though it is dark for you. In spite of the fact that the Lord has put you aside, his word isn’t bound.

You may be in the trough of a wave where your field of vision is limited, but God’s kingdom isn’t. It advances towards its glorious completion. Then people of all nations, tribes and tongues will praise God before the throne of the Lamb.

John had performed a crucial task. He had fearlessly called sinners to conversion and reform. This task was finished now. A new one was imminent. He was to be the Lord’s martyr at the hands of Herod. He obeyed his calling, even though it was to cost him his life.

But his service has borne fruit, hasn’t it? Many of God’s imprisoned children have received new courage through John’s example, haven’t they? Lots of people have learned through him to send word to Jesus when it became dark, haven’t they?

Let us thank God for John. Let us follow in his footsteps.

I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

God doesn't strengthen us by adding to our own strength. That is what we often pray him to do. God cannot fulfil that prayer because it is against his will. If the Lord's strength must be perfected, it has to happen in our powerlessness. He doesn't want to share his honour with us.

God acts with his righteous right hand. Through these words the Lord leads our thoughts to him who sits at the right hand of God. Jesus has always done what is right in the Lord's opinion. He did nothing of his own accord. In everything, he carried out his father's will.

When God through his word gives you faith in Jesus, it is Jesus himself he gives you.

When you were in distress with your soul, nothing could and no one would help you. But the gospel opened your eyes, and Jesus entered your heart. With him came the strength of grace.

You knew that you weren't anything in yourself. Nevertheless you lived in plenty. The victorious hand of the righteousness of God rested on you. Jesus was your strength, your help and your support.

Perhaps it is a long time since you got peace with God. But Jesus is still your treasure. God intervenes in your life through him. The word of the cross is therefore the word of life to you. When you are depressed or at your wits' end, the word of salvation lifts you onto the rock. Your heart shouts with joy in the assurance that in all circumstances you stand in the grace of God. He won't let his child down, but assist it safely through the waters, torrents and fire. You have focused your faith on Jesus. You are expecting everything good from him. When you are weak and helpless, then God's powerful hand is though equally strong. And God uses his strength to help you to reach his eternal destination.

There is rest for a harassed soul in Jesus' finished work. No demands will be made on you. On the contrary, the Lord wants you to be satisfied with the life Jesus has lived in your place. If you cling to him, you have a share in all his riches. God wants you to be satisfied with Jesus; so rest in his strength, help and support.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Ephesians 1:4

Many people think that they must be holy and without fault in themselves. But they have to admit that they aren't this at all. Soon they are condemning themselves. You think that everything should be different. You are only a humble Christian. All attempts to improve have failed. You look forward with anxiety and ask: shall I achieve the goal?

If this is your situation, you have to learn from God's word. God has never expected that you should be in such a way, that you in yourself can pass the test before his face. No matter how far you come, on the way of sanctification, you will never be clean in your heart. You will never be holy as God is holy. The Lord knew that it was so. That is why he has imputed a holiness to you that hasn't got its basis in what you are and what you are capable of. It is due to Jesus alone. It isn't in yourself, but in him, that you are chosen to be holy and without fault before his face.

That is why you are to seek your holiness in Jesus. Only there you can find it. As long as you search for it in yourself, you will continually come to the same unfortunate conclusion: you have no holiness. When you seek for it in Jesus, you realize that you have a complete and full holiness. It isn't possible to stain it. It is clean and glorious. Not even God can find any defect in the riches he has given you in your Saviour and Redeemer.

There is nothing about Jesus that God doesn't like. When he has dressed you in the Son's righteousness, you are as holy as you can be. There is then nothing in you that God isn't satisfied with. You are completely covered by Jesus. You are hidden in him.

Fancy being able to come before God with the consciousness that when he sees you it is Jesus he sees. And it is like that for a child of God. You are therefore blessed. It all depends on Jesus, not you. You are in him, and God sees him only.

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am.

John 17:24

A Christian has many struggles with his own will. There are two powers in a child of God. Spirit and flesh fight against each other. Therefore it isn't difficult to understand Zacharias Nielsen, when he writes:

My prayer: "Oh, God, your will be done!"
Has often under dauntless faith gone up
But often, when I see your will,
I realize that I meant my own.

You will never reach the place, where you have an unblemished, clean and holy will.

It is, therefore, crucial that you turn to him who owns all that you lack. Jesus hasn't a heart divided into two. His will is one with God's will. It was so, even when he was to empty the bitter cup of death. He prayed that it might pass him by. However, it wasn't the last thing he said. He bent his will under God's will, saying, "Yet not my will, but yours be done!"

Jesus has given a child of God something of himself. If you believe in him, you are also united with him. You have a share in the fullness of Christ. That is why you have to embrace his perfect will.

What is it Jesus wants?

He wants those God has given him to be with him where he is.

No matter what it might cost, this was Jesus' will. No power was able to set itself against it. Not even death on the cursed tree could get Jesus to change this decision.

So powerful is his love for you. He couldn't imagine a paradise without letting you have a share in it. That is why he put all his will into it.

If you are tormented by your own changeable and vacillating will, you are to think of what Jesus wants for you. Put your trust in him. His will is strong. It is able to carry you. It can lead you through life. He wants you to spend eternity with him. Thank him for it and rest in his will.

27 July

(Jesus Christ) has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Revelation 1:6

It is Jesus' greatest delight to give. It is as though he never becomes tired of giving.

It isn't enough for Jesus that you are cleansed and acquitted from all sin. He also shares his majesty and royal dignity with you.

When you appear before God, you aren't dressed in rags and tatters. No, you are dressed in royal robes. In his eyes, you are a king.

If you look at yourself, this is incomprehensible. You are a sinner, after all; your life and thoughts are characterized by the bitter consequences of the Fall of Man. It has to be like that when you see yourself in the light of the truth.

However God's word says more than that. If you believe in Jesus, then he shares everything with you. He has involved you in his clean, holy and devoted life. He has given you the humility and obedience which made him accept the death of the cross.

Jesus humbled himself. God has therefore exalted him and given him the name above all names. With him are all those whom he shares everything with. They have a share in his honour and dignity.

You are a king before God. You are also a priest.

In the Old Covenant, the high priest was the only one who was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and appear before God. It isn't like that any longer. Jesus has prepared a new and living way for us. That is why any child of God can meet our holy God face to face. When Jesus died, the curtain to the Holy of Holies was torn in two, and the access was free.

The high priest always had to take the blood with him, when he entered the Holy of Holies. He could come only with this in his hands. Jesus has carried his blood into the Most Holy Place, and won eternal redemption for us. You may come by virtue of this. If you believe in Jesus, God regards you as one who stands on the merit of Christ's blood.

Jesus has made you both king and priest. He says so in his word. Step boldly into the presence of him now, with joy and thanks. You have a share in the riches of Jesus.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

John 13:35

The disciples were sinners. They were therefore occupied with the question of who of them was considered to be greatest. An interest like that doesn't result in anything good. Still the world said about them: "Look, how they love each other!"

Nor is everything as it should be among Christians today. It isn't difficult to point to sins and faults. Even so, it is a blessed thing to belong to them, because they love one another.

Every mother and father knows that things do not always go well in a family of brothers and sisters. There can be both disputes and crying, but it doesn't mean that any of the family members can be dispensed with. Despite all disagreements, there exists a mutual love.

It is also like that with those who belong to the Lord. Stronger than all tension and dispute are the ties that unite.

Love doesn't shout loudly. It doesn't call attention to itself, because it isn't self-seeking. It is best when it lives in secret. Even so it cannot be hidden in the long run. We meet faithfulness in fellow-Christians that can make us ashamed. At the same time we feel that it is God's grace, that we are allowed to be among those who have become united by Jesus.

Let us take care not to turn our glance towards one another's shortcomings. Let us instead look at what counts more by far. Let us not be so great in our own opinion that we fail to recognize that we need every single one of the others. We are members of the same body. In that way, we serve each other, each of us with the gift of grace he has received from God.

Satan wants to make mischief, but let us resist him. Let us regard one another as brothers and sisters who are hidden in Christ's clothes of salvation. Let us thank one another. And let us think of what we ourselves would be, if we didn't have the others.

First of all, let us be united in Christ's love! He has loved us first.

Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:13

Without the Holy Spirit, no one can become a Christian. Neither can anyone be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit.

By nature, no one can recognize the seriousness of the sin. I cannot understand how God could reject and condemn me to perdition. Everything is changed when the Holy Spirit throws light on my heart by God's word. Then sin becomes most serious. The coldness, carelessness and contrariness of my heart accuse and condemn me. I owe God everything. Nevertheless I don't thank, honour and obey him as I should. I myself am always of primary importance. When I want to have anything to do with God, it is in order to use him, rather than to bow before him.

When God's spirit shows me a little of the depth of my corruption, I cannot believe that there is any possibility for me to be saved.

However, the Spirit doesn't stop at convincing the world concerning sin. To reveal Jesus is the task of the Holy Spirit. I can hear and read about him, but I cannot give myself faith. If God's Spirit doesn't lead Jesus into my heart, he will never get in.

However, the Holy Spirit likes nothing better than to glorify Jesus.

He makes Jesus your heart's greatest and most expensive treasure. He isn't remote and unapproachable. His love warms and glows through. I know that I am loved by him. His love produces love in my heart, and I return his love.

When that happens, I cannot live without Jesus. My feelings change. Sometimes I am cold, sometimes warm. Now I am burning, now indifferent. When my feelings are strong, my heart is filled with praise for Jesus. When they disappear, and it seems as if Jesus has left me, then that distress drives me back to him. Jesus and his salvation of my soul are more important than anything else. I would rather die than lose Jesus.

This is the work of the Spirit in my heart.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.

Psalm 23:6

Perhaps for you it is hard to understand that only goodness and love will follow you all the days of your life. Some days it is like that, but there are days when you think that this isn't the case.

But it is you who are wrong. Even in the days of darkness, misfortune and sin, God followed you with goodness and love. He did so for Jesus' sake. Jesus has gained for you all the rights of a child. Jesus is your substitute; therefore God takes pleasure in you. You have a place in God's heart. He lets his grace reign in you day and night. You have to see God's discipline in this light. He humbles and bends you. It is necessary; otherwise you cannot find grace.

On the day of suffering and illness, it is a help to take one step backwards and see life as a whole. We find it easy to forget the big picture. Everything close at hand captures our full attention. Our old nature wants to rest peacefully in us. But that is dangerous. If our old nature is allowed to be master, we will be stopped on the pilgrimage and will never reach our goal.

But the Lord wakes us up. He cannot let go of us.

Sometimes you can see afterwards that without God's intervention you would have failed. If God hadn't held you in his strong hand, you would never been kept as a child of God. The Devil, the world and your fleshly nature would have led you into perdition.

The Shepherd leads you in such a way that you reach the goal. It is exactly what you have prayed him to do. Surrounded by a thousand dangers, you don't know what is good for you. But the Lord does. He has the full breadth of view and sees through everything. You can therefore confidently put your hand in his hand and let him lead you.

The little word "surely" is a blessed word. It is surely goodness and love that follow you. It isn't anything else. It concerns all your days and all the conditions of your life. Your restless heart can therefore rest. Faith can be firm when you believe God's unshakeable word. God hasn't decided anything evil. Neither has he forgotten anything good. Everything he does is gloriously done.

A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.

Galatians 5:9

It takes just a little observance of the law to lay the life of a Christian in ruins. Nothing can steal the confidence and joy of a Christian as demands can. Therefore, one cannot wonder at the fact that Satan in every way is trying to get Christians under the law.

Many Christians begin with grace, but the demands take over the place of the grace a short time after. They become occupied with what they are to be and do. The interest centres on how a Christian is to relate to both one thing and another. A great and exhausting work begins and it becomes so hard to be a Christian. Yes, for some it became so hard that they said goodbye to Christianity, and felt it was liberation.

A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough. It makes everything sour.

A true and living Christian begins with the grace, continues with the grace and ends his life with the same grace. Grace means that all the demands that were directed against you have been directed against Jesus. When they are fulfilled by him, you don't have to meet them.

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Your righteousness isn't something you have to find by living your life in the right way. You receive it by faith alone for Jesus' sake. He has fulfilled the law in your place. That is why you don't have to.

Our Old Man never learns to count on Jesus and the strength of grace. It thinks that sin gets out of control, if we aren't under the law. Our old nature has never been willing to submit to the truth that the strength of sin is the law, and the law was added so that the trespasses might increase.

No, the strength against sin is freedom from all demands of the law. When you live in this freedom, which Jesus has bought you to, God's grace works in your life. And the love of Jesus has accomplished what prohibitions and demands never could.

Therefore, beware of law-bondage! Live in God's grace! It is the strength of a holy life. It is the grace that keeps you as a child of God.

1 August

For he will be great in the sight of the Lord . . .

And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Luke 1:15 & 17

It was John who was a forerunner of Jesus. That is why he became great in the sight of the Lord.

What you are in people's opinion isn't without importance, but if other people are controlling your life you are their slave. Christians may suffer from an unhealthy desire to please everyone. Giving in to it leads to unhealthy bonds to others.

No, a child of God is to be judged according to what it he is in the sight of God. And God judges you by your relationship to Jesus. Jesus means everything to God. He loves the Son above everyone else. Therefore it cannot surprise us that he sees everything in relation to him.

If you love Jesus, you are great in the sight of God. Then your love and his meet in a shared centre: Jesus. If your work in God's kingdom is compelled by the love of Jesus, your service is precious to God. He is the one that God looks for, in our lives. He is the one who has to be the heart and motive of our service.

If you are longing for Jesus to come back, you are great in the sight of God. Then your longing is the same as God's. It is his will that everything should be fulfilled in Jesus. If this hasn't happened already, it is due to his great patience. God wants still more people to be saved.

Preparing the way for Jesus makes a Christian great in the sight of God. God isn't satisfied with the fact that people become interested in Christianity; nor in the fact that they take a liking to Christianity. All of that doesn't save. No, you are to prepare the way for Jesus.

Where does true greatness begin?

The answer is simple: it does so, kneeling before Jesus, when a lost sinner begs for mercy. Then you are a person of truth. Then you see yourself as God sees you.

What is God going to do then?

He lets us see him who took away the sin of the world. Then the greatest thing has happened. You have become a saved sinner who lives on God's grace alone.

2 August

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

Isaiah 44:3

The Holy Spirit changes everything. Dry land turns into blossoming orchards. Every single child of God has experienced that. Before you received God's Spirit, you probably knew who Jesus was, but you only turned your eyes towards him when the Holy Spirit revealed the truth to your heart. Then you found rest in the fact that his blood cleanses us from all sin and makes the soul white like snow.

If you believe in Jesus, you also have the Holy Spirit. You mustn't believe in Jesus first, and then receive the Holy Spirit. No one can say in truth "Jesus is Lord", without having the Spirit.

But if you belong to Jesus, you must let yourself be filled with the Spirit. The Spirit should constantly glorify him in your heart. There are Christians who don't let the Spirit get any space and liberty of action. They wither. Their confidence decreases. Their joy disappears. Their prayer dies away.

The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus. God's Spirit is where faith in him is created and is allowed to grow. When you resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified, this is a certain sign of the work of the Spirit.

You get all your riches in the Son. Your eyes will be opened to the fact that Jesus shares everything with you. He has led you into his world by the faith.

As Jesus is the Son of God so also you are a child of God. You are therefore allowed to be like a child before his father. You may tell him everything. You may confidently tell your Father that your eyes can't see clearly. But God has the total vision. You may therefore put your hand in his.

You are allowed to look at your sin and wretchedness as ragged and cast-off clothes, which are at your feet. You will never put them on again. No, you want to wear your royal suit of clothes which Jesus has given you.

If this is a reality for you, then you own the Spirit. He does his work in you. Living streams flow into your life.

3 August

. . . and he drank from the brook. Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.

1 Kings 17:6-7

God told Elijah that he had to go to the Kerith Ravine. He also said that he was to drink from the brook. Why then didn't God let the water continue to flow? Why did the brook dry up?

It was undoubtedly difficult for Elijah to see the water decreasing. Eventually there was no more water.

From this you are to learn that even though you are on God's way, you don't escape difficulties and trials. You mustn't take hardship as a sign that you aren't in God's plan. But one thing is certain: God wants to tell you something through what he sends on your way.

Elijah wasn't to stay any longer at the brook Kerith. It was a widow in Zarephath that God wanted to help. And Elijah was to be his instrument.

Times of drought do not always mean that the time has come to leave. There was also famine in Zarephath. Sometimes God leads us, through external conditions and an internal certainty, into a new connection. And then we are to go.

The difficulties weren't less in Zarephath; they were greater, if anything. Elijah had to experience death's devastation at close quarters. But God is the same. His care is the same. The help was the same, even though it was no longer the ravens that brought it. And first of all God appeared to Elijah in a new way. He was allowed to see other aspects of God's inscrutable wisdom.

God also acts like that in your life. He wants you to grow in knowledge and faith. That is why he often allows difficulties to come from a quarter you least expected. However, he won't forsake you. He expects you to seek him in every distress. Then he will give you new help and grace.

Do not despair when things become difficult for you and it seems as if God doesn't keep his word. He has neither forgotten you nor his promises. You are loved, and the promises hold forever. God vouches for that.

4 August

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate.

1 Peter 2:23

Jesus was severely criticized. He was accused of being born in adultery, of being a glutton and a drinker, of leading people astray, of rebellion against the emperor and of blasphemy.

But Jesus did not retaliate. He was silent like a lamb that is led away to be slaughtered. It was not unimportant for him, what they said about him, but he did not defend himself. He entrusted his cause to his heavenly Father.

Jesus rested in God's hand. He knew that there was One who knew everything and completely saw through everything. That was enough for him. What did people's opinions matter?

Jesus calls us to follow in his footsteps. We are also subjected to false accusations. Some have their root in misunderstandings, others in malice. It can really hurt to hear what others say. However, do as Jesus does. Entrust yourself to God who knows the truth. He will take care of you. He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

The Lord tests you through people's words. He wants to see if you want to be faithful to his word and follow in Jesus' footsteps.

God took care of Jesus. People's scorn fell flat. Today lots of people know that the accusations against him were false. And on that day, when Jesus' enemies will lie as a footstool before his feet, all slander will be stopped.

Things will also turn out like that for you, because God is on the throne. You are to learn to wait for God. You want him to step in immediately, but he rarely does. God is king forever, and he steps in when he thinks that the time has come to do so.

Jesus was led to completion through suffering. Are you surprised that you are to go the same way? Something happens in us when we follow in Jesus' footsteps and don't retaliate. Without noticing it ourselves, we reflect our Master. Jesus becomes visible in our lives. It isn't then in honour of you, but of Jesus. And is there anything you want rather than Jesus being glorified through you?

5 August

I always thank God for you . . .

1 Corinthians 1:4

The congregation in Corinth was no model congregation. The Christians' spiritual knowledge was insufficient. They were mere infants in Christ and not ready for solid food. Strong mutual tensions prevailed, and sin lay in wait.

Paul doesn't hide the seriousness of it all. He calls sin by its right name. Anybody who doesn't break with sin will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Even so, he always thanks God for the Corinthians. How can it be possible?

Paul always sees them as in Jesus.

The congregation of God consists of sinners. One can point to much weakness and sin, and rightly so. A great many things should have been different. We are therefore called to get rid of the old yeast.

At the same time, we must say that it isn't our struggle against sin that makes us Christians. If that had been the case, Paul wouldn't have thanked for the Corinthians. And they would have failed.

When he gives thanks, it is because of the fact that their paschal lamb – Jesus – has been slaughtered. It is he who cleanses, sanctifies and saves. It isn't our own more or less successful struggle.

There is reason to thank God if you believe in Jesus. To be a Christian is to be with Jesus. God never sees you by yourself. His eyes are fixed on you all the time. What he sees fills him with joy. Jesus covers you from head to foot in a clean and shiny suit of clothes. All sin and weaknesses are hidden. The riches that are yours in Jesus are greater and more important than anything else.

You are a living testimony that God's grace is great. It is the small, helpless and miserable ones who are saved. They have nothing in themselves. In spite of that, they are very rich. Jesus, the Son of the king of heaven, is their possession.

There is, therefore, always reason to thank God for being a Christian.

6 August

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field

Matthew 9:37-38

The harvest is really plentiful. A great multitude that no one can count will stand before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They have come one by one. There is a long time between the great revivals in God's kingdom, and even during those, the individual has to meet Jesus and become born-again.

It is the few workers who have won the many people. All Christians ought to join in, but it isn't like that. There has always been scarcity of real soul-winners among God's people. It is only a few workers who are fervent in the Spirit.

That is why the temptation to despondency is great among the workers. They think that many things would have been easier if there had been more workers.

Even so, don't lose courage! God has more workers than you think; but he spreads them, so that he can reach as many as possible.

And then Jesus asks you to go to the Lord of the harvest. Ask him to send out workers into his harvest field. It mustn't be our calls that make others go into the service. We are to encourage and prompt, but it is God who has to send. The Lord of the harvest is the only one who can reach people's hearts. If that doesn't happen, the service to God won't last long.

The love of Christ has to be the compelling power in all Christian service. By God's grace, we have to learn to see with his eyes. "Give me your tender saviour-mind for the sorrow and indignation of this generation! Let me share your sufferings, and make me strong and warm!" This is the way – the only way to persevere in God's service.

We should live in prayer while working. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest field. This prayer has been prayed countless times. And it has always been heard. The Lord often stepped in at once. At other times the Christians had to pray through many decades. "Night is coming, when no one can work." There are signs which seem to show that it is near. But there are still many open doors. Let us make good use of our time! Let us remind the Lord of the few workers! Let us back up those we have in intercession and sacrifice. Let us ask God to send more people.

7 August

... to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:6

The Christian has a strong urge to be to the praise of his own glory. It has caused much trouble in the life of each individual and congregation; one derailment after another came for that reason.

All Christians agree that the Christian life begins with grace. But that a long life as a Christian only contains the glory of grace is a difficult lesson to learn.

Lots of people have prayed to get glory themselves. We aren't satisfied with just being helpless and poor sinners, who have to cling to Jesus alone. We think that it must be to the honour of God, if he helps and supports us to become successful Christians.

You are perhaps among those who have worked themselves tired. After many attempts you have to recognize that you cannot manage to become what you would like to be. You cannot display any glory of your own.

Notice what God's word says. We are not to be to the praise of our glory, but of his glorious grace.

Who is to the praise of his glorious grace?

They are only those who cling to God's grace. If your past is covered by grace, then it is to the praise of his glorious grace. If God looks at the part of life which is behind you, he finds Jesus' grace. The same applies to your present and future. Grace reigns in you now and in the future.

You are a child of grace. The more you realize this, the better you sing the praise of grace. You yourself know that even though you are poor, you are still rich. Even if you possess nothing, you still own everything.

God's grace makes you a blessed Christian. If grace fills your heart, you have no desire to be or become somebody. You want Jesus to be your all. You know that he is so before God. He should therefore be so for you as well.

8 August

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

1 Peter 3:9

To inherit involves something painful. Someone you are fond of, you cannot meet any more. You cannot talk to each other. Therefore it may be a sad thing to see something from the home of the person concerned.

However, it isn't like that in God's kingdom. Your saviour was dead, and behold he is alive! Still you cannot see him face to face, but his heart beats for love of you. His desire and joy is to bless you.

As his child, you are to live under a continuous blessing. The contents of the Lord's blessing are everything his death implies. When a person dies, everything he owns passes to others. At Jesus' death his entire property passed to us. Jesus was poor in earthly property. Others got what he had. On the other hand, he owned spiritual riches. These can be described with the phrase: A child-relationship with God. It is these riches you have been chosen to inherit.

When I look at myself, it is difficult to find rest in the fact that I live in a child-relationship with my heavenly Father. I think that there are so many things which should have been different, if the relationship between God and me is to be really good. Then I compare myself with others. I can understand that they live in an open, confidential and good relationship with God. But they are also quite different from me.

You, who think like that, have to notice the word: 'inherit'. You receive the blessing of the child-relationship because you are chosen to inherit. The blessing isn't your pay for your deeds done. It has been achieved by someone else. You receive it as undeservedly as you receive an inheritance.

To be a Christian means to be called to inherit God's blessing. You are to answer a call. The answer is to receive.

You receive a relationship with God that you haven't brought about yourself. Jesus has done so in your place. There is a wonderful rest in this. Then you know that it is in order, because everything with Jesus is perfect. Nothing is lacking. There isn't one single shadow between God and him. He has saved you into this free and open relationship. This was what happened at Calvary. Then Jesus went out of his blessed God-relationship in order to lead you into it. Blessed Saviour!

9 August

... coarse joking, which are out of place.

Ephesians 5:4

Coarse joking is doubtful jesting. One amuses oneself with what is “near the knuckle”. One says in words or does in play what one would certainly dissociate oneself from in real life. The amusement thrives on exaggeration and breaks barriers of acceptability.

The danger for the majority of Christians isn't to deny a healthy human self-expression. On the other hand, several Christians have problems in drawing the line with questionable jokes. They are under the strong influence of this world's spirit, and its way of thinking and mode of life.

How do you find the way between a self-denying stance and conforming to the pattern of this world?

The most important thing is that you talk to Jesus about everything. If life cannot be lived in his name and to his honour, you cannot take part in it. If you don't say no, you endanger your soul.

Now a lot of Christians act against their conscience. They take part in a number of activities in which they let things into their soul through their eyes, things they feel judged of by their conscience. That is dangerous. What you allow others to sow in your mind, you will reap yourself.

Through coarse joking, sin is drained of its seriousness. People often laugh at coarse jokes. Soon they have an irresponsible relation to sin. It is no longer highly dangerous to commit sin.

Sin is sown as a small seed, and it takes years before it becomes fully ripe and breeds death. The seed is terribly viable and vigorous.

Many Christians have in this way fallen into sin and misery. When they look back, they can find links to something they looked on as comparatively harmless. They realized too late how dangerous sin is.

Coarse joking is out of place. If you do not do what is right, sin sits crouching at your door; it desires to have you. You have to renounce the devil and all his works and all his being. It costs a fight to do so, but it is the fight of life. And you have to fight it.

10 August

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

Psalm 40:2

Sin and its consequences are like the slimy pit and like the mud and mire. You are knocked off your feet. You will not reach the goal. You sink deeper and deeper into the mud and mire.

How is a person saved?

A day will come when you will experience the slimy pit as never before. You sense the sucking from the deep. Then it is clear to you that you are lost. You cannot lift yourself out of the slimy pit. You will not reach the goal. There is no salvation for you.

However, in your greatest distress Jesus comes to you. You expect a crushing judgment, but he doesn't come in judgment. He comes out into the mud and mire and catches hold of you. Then he lifts you out and sets your feet on a rock.

Fancy having a Saviour who doesn't merely give good advice; he doesn't instruct you to do what you have to do in order to save yourself. No, he steps in himself and saves you.

Jesus has the means by which he leads you on to the rock; it is his word. There is saving power in the Word of the cross. This word is one with what happened at Calvary. On the cursed tree Jesus grasped you. There he lifted you out.

It happened because Jesus was swallowed up by the slimy pit. He disappeared into the abysmal deep, whereas your feet were placed on the eternal rock of salvation.

Perhaps you are a stranger to the reality of salvation. You think that you lack a saviour. But you don't. Jesus is your Saviour.

It is faith you lack. You must have your eyes opened for what Jesus has done for you. You are therefore to pay heed to the word of the grace of God. God wants to show you that Jesus' hands are outstretched towards you. They are marked by the wounds and blows it cost him to lift you out of the corruption of the sin.

"I was bought with Jesus' wounds, he holds on to me. He doesn't let my soul be lost, he holds on to me.

11 August

He entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Peter 2:23

Jesus came to save but he has also, through his life, shown how a Christian should live.

In everything he met, he didn't take the law into his own hands. That is to say, he didn't defend his own rights.

No one has been as unjustly treated as Jesus. He was the king of justice; even so his opponents branded him as a blasphemer. According to our way of thinking it was obvious that he would silence them. But he didn't do so. He entrusted himself to God.

Why did he act like that?

Jesus put everything into his Father's hand. Neither did he take any cause or any question into his own hands. Throughout all his life, he was in constant prayer to God. That is why, even in the hardest hours of his life, he could entrust everything to God.

When Jesus saved you, all his privileges become yours. You became a child of God like he was. You got the advantages which go with having a Father in heaven.

He has reserved for himself the right to take care of your circumstances. You are therefore to leave your cause with him.

When people rise against you and do you wrong, you are to go to your heavenly Father. He will pass sentence, and he judges righteously. Injustice will not have the last word.

We find it difficult to put everything into God's hand, because God is long-suffering. Can we be sure that God doesn't let injustice prevail?

We can, because he has said so in his word. But at the same time we have to understand that he loves sinners, and he wants everybody to be saved. Jesus interceded for his enemies. Let us do the same! Let us follow in our Saviour's footsteps.

And let us think of the fact that no person is righteous before God, neither you nor I. All of us have to be saved by grace, by faith in him who gave his life for sinners.

12 August

The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Isaiah 58:11

Life is brief. Nevertheless, a Christian can become tired. The journey often seems troublesome. No worker in God's kingdom escapes crises in his work. One's thoughts rush lightly back to times when everything was different. Life and work then were like a walk through a fertile and flowering landscape. What is more natural than to pray God to transform the desert and let it blossom?

God hears our prayers; but he doesn't always answer them the way we expected. As often as not God lets us continue walking in a desolate area. The Lord doesn't change your conditions of life, but he changes you yourself.

He satisfies your soul with the bread of life. You are led into a more intimate relationship with Jesus. The difficult things make you look deeper into what your life rests on. God's living, lasting and creative word gets new importance. Often you have to cling to particular verses in the Bible, and you experience their carrying capacity.

At the same time, you receive new strength. It takes place in a curious way. The difficulties make you helpless. You don't think you are equal to anything. You haven't looked for it yourself, but the Lord has led you so that he can give you new strength. It doesn't take place when you yourself become strong. But you get a new relationship with Jesus. Your dependence on him becomes greater. Again and again you have to cry to him in need. He won't forsake you. He himself has made his dwelling in your heart by your faith in him. And when you aren't able to do anything yourself, you do not spoil his vision at all. His power is made perfect in your weakness.

In this way, the Lord makes you like a well-watered garden. Jesus himself becomes the spring in your life. This spring never fails. You don't feel that you are somebody, but others meet Jesus through you. This is the work of the Spirit in a Christian's life.

When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?

Amos 3:6

Many people find it difficult to believe that disasters can come from God. They think that it is the Devil or ourselves who are behind all the evil things that happen. They are, most often, completely uncomprehending when disaster strikes us.

There is a connection between us ourselves, the Devil and God in the disasters that strike us. It has not always been given us, however, to be able to explain them. The three friends of Job aren't the only ones who have been greatly mistaken. We aren't called to look for greater light than what God's word gives us. On the other hand, it is equally important that we don't deny the light the Lord has lit for us.

When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?

The Lord isn't afraid of taking responsibility for the disaster. Even though we cannot or are not meant to find the reason, God doesn't discipline and punish us without a reason. God doesn't act haphazardly. He is holy. His holiness is revealed in his anger against all ungodliness and injustice.

The God of the Bible passes judgment. He does that on the last day. But he does so in these days as well. He wants to teach us that it is a highly dangerous thing to sin.

Some think that God's love means that sin doesn't have consequences. But that is wrong. They have forgotten what sin cost God at Calvary. And God's attitude hasn't changed.

We live in a world that is on the brink of disaster. It is not because mankind has invented terrible weapons of destruction. It is because we have sinned against God. And no nation will go unpunished.

Israel had to wait before taking the country of the Canaanites until their sin had reached its full measure. When the sin of the people of Israel had reached its full measure, they themselves had to leave their country.

God is the same today. If a people deliberately have turned its back on the Lord and his law, then God-sent disaster is imminent. The only way to escape that is the way of true conversion. Let us pray the Lord that we and our people may go that way.

14 August

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Exodus 20:7

On the day of the Fall of Man, the Devil's snake poison penetrated into the human race.

Not a single one of us has escaped the consequences. The desire to be God's equals is deeply ingrained in our old nature. The snake's words that we will be like God, we haven't forgotten. That is why we want the distance between God and ourselves reduced. We try to raise ourselves up and to drag God down.

However, God cannot be mocked. He punishes anybody who misuses his name. God's name is holy, and people are not to profane it.

You misuse God's name by swearing. Surely you aren't two persons, are you? At your place of work, you are not particular about misusing God's name, by talking about God and to God in the same way that you speak about your workmates and friends? An over-familiar behaviour is improper in our relationship with God.

It is true that God has humbled himself. But we have no right to misuse his name for that reason. With our words we can drag God down to a level which is a misuse of his name. We may speak of God's word and his intervention with cheerful new terms which are vulgar. That is a misuse of his name. We may sing about God in a way so that we profane the holy things.

God wants us to be filled with holy fear so that we don't dare to sin against him. That is why God, from time to time, lets sin have its consequences in our life. In connection with the third commandment, God's word emphasizes this truth. You must learn that it is highly dangerous to sin.

Not only your mouth but also your heart has to be cleansed. It takes place when Jesus' sacrificial death as a substitute touches your sin. His blood, as it were, has to go completely into the intellectual life. The words originate from there.

We need Christian people who tremble before the living God! God is exalted and holy. By grace, we are allowed to lie in the dust before his feet. He doesn't trample on us. He lifts us up and allows us to exalt his name!

15 August

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1

To all appearances everything seems to be in order. You are occupied with doing what is right. There are many who don't give much thought to that. But you take it seriously. You want your Christianity to have consequences. You are zealous for God.

Without knowing it yourself, you may be drifting away from Jesus. You are so occupied with yourself and your own Christian life. There isn't much room left for Jesus. Creeping apostasy may have started in your life.

You think perhaps that many others are in far greater danger. You think of those who aren't so particular about sin. And you are right. However, you are also erring, if you aren't living in the freedom and joy that Jesus has achieved for you.

Jesus has not only ransomed you from the curse of the law, but he has made you free from the law itself. You belong to him and his will. Jesus has released you from all demands. He lives in your heart with his love. The more he and his grace get power over you, the more are the fruits of love in your life.

God's grace doesn't make you idle. Far from it! When the Lord surrounds you with the joy of salvation, his grace frees you to serve him. In everything you do you are carried by and imbued with the freedom in Jesus.

He has released you from all the ties of the law. Stand firm now! Don't let yourself be trapped and bound again! Other people's demands and our own easily creep in and steal joy and courage. Remember: All God's demands of you, God has demanded of Jesus. That is why the Lord meets you with grace alone.

Jesus is the fulfilment of the law. The righteousness that the law demands is given undeserving to you by grace.

Stand firm in this freedom. Sing the song in the Lamb's honour!

The chains have been broken! You are free!

16 August

They wandered over mountain and hill and forgot their own resting place.

Jeremiah 50:6

Have you forgotten your own resting place?

You know how it is when the body doesn't get its necessary rest. You become tense, touchy and worried. If it lasts long enough, you cannot find rest anywhere. The consequences of forgetting one's spiritual resting place are still more serious. At first, you become restless. Afterwards, you become sympathetic to everything new, in the hope that it may help you. Later on, you become discouraged and despairing. You want to throw the whole of Christianity overboard.

Sometimes you turn to the mountain; it is great and huge. Sometimes you turn to the hill; it doesn't look as if it has something to offer you. In both cases, you go Israel's way. You turn to gods that cannot help.

There is only one God who never forsakes you. He has given you a single resting place. And that is Calvary. By Jesus' atonement you find peace.

When your heart found rest by the foot of the cross with Jesus, you were born again. Your eyes were turned towards your substitute. You were released from the burden of sin, and the enthusiasm of salvation was put into your soul.

Have you forgotten your own resting place?

Your mind hasn't forgotten it. You remember what happened on Good Friday, and you do not forget what the cross means.

Nevertheless, has your heart forgotten its resting place? Are you really resting in the finished work of Jesus?

It is a blessing for you, who have lived with Jesus for many years, to find your way back to the resting place! Indeed you need to rest from everything of yourself. Sin clings even to the best things about you. Therefore, you cannot be satisfied with anything.

However, there is one action which is perfect. You are allowed to lose yourself in it. The more you do so, the deeper the rest the Lord gives your soul. You are healed by Jesus' wounds. You are so even today. A heavenly peace fills your mind when you rest on the rock of atonement.

17 August

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

Isaiah 43:1

A Christian may come into such dark doubts that only one thing can help. God himself has to come and say: You are mine.

God knows your name. He always sees you and knows everything about you. You don't understand your distresses and difficulties completely, but the Lord has the full breadth of view. Nothing is hidden, and his eye is fixed on you day and night.

He also knows the darkness. It may be so impenetrable for you that you think that no one and nothing is able to help you. But then the Lord comes and says your name. Maybe you simply hear it as a whisper, but you are the one he calls. He wants to assure you that you are his.

It isn't certain that God helps you the way you would like him to.*Kingo has so aptly described God's way with the words: "Bitter and sweet in the bowl of life, this is my life's portion."

A Christian's circumstances involves suffering. To be saved doesn't mean to be spared. The Lord doesn't help you avoid suffering. He helps you through it. When it becomes particularly difficult, he assures you that you are his. Then there is light in the midst of darkness, fights and strife.

It is wonderfully great to be able to say: Jesus is mine. Yes, only one thing is greater. It is to say: I am his. "Yours, oh Jesus, yours to be is my desire and my entire honour!"

If you know that you belong to him, then you understand that you don't need to fear. What should you fear? Jesus has seized your hand. He leads and guides you in all circumstances. He carries the responsibility for your life.

The Lord redeems you. To be redeemed means to be released from one's debt, and established in all one's rights.

You don't feel that you have the right to anything. Nevertheless you have rights. Jesus has achieved all the child's rights for you. He establishes you in the relationship with God that he himself has. "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

*Thomas Kingo: 1634 -1703, Danish hymn writer and bishop.

18 August

Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

Well, there are many kinds of anxieties! Again and again they crop up. Sometimes it is one thing, sometimes a different one that makes you worried.

You have to cast all your anxieties on Jesus. Yes, it really says all – those that concern you and those that concern others.

Jesus has, first of all, bore all your sins and mine. He has taken them with him on the tree of the cross. But his work isn't finished with that. Day by day he bears our burdens.

Many work hard and tire themselves out with numerous anxieties. They keep doing this until they sink. Then their faithful shepherd comes, lifts the burden off and picks them up by his grace.

When will you learn to cast your anxieties on Jesus as soon as they arrive? Why are they allowed to steal your joy from you? Why must your life on earth be so hard?

The Lord will help. He asks you to cast everything on him.

There is a difference between putting something down and casting it away. What you put down, you can pick up again. Many lay their anxieties out before the Lord. But when they have done that, they retake their burdens and walk on.

Cast all your anxieties on him. The Word assures us that he takes them.

Instead of the anxieties Jesus gives you his care. How wonderful it is to be able to tell him: You know all things, and you have full responsibility for me.

Jesus carries a mountain of burdens. But there is still room for what weighs on you. Entrust it to him. He will give you that rest which transcends all understanding. In his care and grace you rest securely.

19 August

But he said to me, „My grace is sufficient for you”

2 Corinthians 12:9

Our old man finds it difficult to familiarize itself with the fact that the grace is fully sufficient. All the time, it wants to get something more to lean on. It seems as if our whole world falls into ruins when God shows us that we have nothing which isn't infected with sin. How will it go then before the court of the Lord?

God himself has answered that. If you have taken refuge with Jesus, his grace covers your entire life and that is enough. You don't need anything else.

What is grace? It is God's gracious forgiveness of all your sins. Grace makes every single sin disappear. It also applies to sins which you still recall, and which you fervently wish you had never committed. All your sins are like a fog that disappears when the sun of grace shines. It does so when you trust Jesus and what he has done for you. You are therefore to turn your eyes towards what lasts. Sin doesn't last any longer, but God's grace does.

God doesn't give his grace sparingly. No, he showers it on his children. He gives grace upon grace. He is not only taking the filthy clothes away from you, but he also clothes you in his salvation. He gives you the righteousness which Jesus has won through his sinless and holy life. God sees you as if you were Jesus. He does so because on Good Friday he looked at Jesus as if he were you.

What more can you wish for than forgiveness and the holy life of Jesus? These gifts are so great that everything else become unimportant. When you get every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, your little concerns doesn't count.

You are therefore to keep to God's grace alone. You are to consider everything else to be loss and rubbish. You are to know that as you received everything by grace when you entered God's kingdom, so it is grace that holds you until your last day. Therefore you can always sing: "Grace that he found me, grace that he saved me, grace that he carried me round to his home!"

Remain on the solid base of grace; it bears. It supports you. Jesus vouches for it. Don't cry over what you lack. Rejoice in your substitute. He is the Lamb of God whom you will thank forever.

20 August

... and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

James 1:21

It is a good thing to understand God's word. But it isn't enough. God's word is to be received, first of all, and then over and over again. We find it easy to think that non-Christians are to accept the Word. They should; there can be no doubt about that. But the believers also have to accept the Word. If they don't do so, their spiritual life dies.

The unbeliever cannot accept a word which is inspired. No-one, who is not born again, can receive the word as from God.

God has put the Word into you who belong to him. It was by the Word he regenerated you. So you have to consume, acquire, eat, what you already have received in the word to stay alive in God.

An older Christian has heard the Word throughout a long life. However he hasn't finished with it. Even if you knew the Bible by heart, the Lord still calls you to accept it. The Word has to go deep into your heart to do its work. It has to go into the centre of your personality. In the depth of your soul, you have to become one with God's word.

God often uses distress, doubts and battles to make the Word personal for you.

The Word becomes a rescue plank which you have to become acquainted with so that you can cling to it. When you are distressed, you experience the strength of the Word. As long as you are able to swim, you aren't concerned with lifebelts. But when your strength is spent, you try to find something which is strong enough to keep you afloat.

God's word has such a strength. Yes, it has the power to save your soul. And a saved soul is what it is all about, after all.

It is possible that you are far nearer the destination than you imagine. However you haven't reached it yet.

You are therefore to accept the Word humbly. You are to do so with a quiet mind. It isn't the strength of receiving the Word that matters. It is the strength of the Word. When the Lord makes you still before him, he makes you realise that it isn't you who carries the Word, but it is the Word that carries you. Catch hold of the age-old Word of God. It still lives on.

21 August

This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:6

There is a deeply ingrained conviction in us that righteousness is required before God's face. Without it, it is impossible to pass the test before him.

The natural man, therefore, has an ingrained desire to justify his conduct, both before people and God. We don't find it difficult to find extenuating circumstances. If we can call attention to ourselves without it showing too much, we aren't slow to do it.

All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. If we appear before God in it, we will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

God isn't satisfied with anything less than perfection.

Life as a Christian does not result in righteousness that can pass the test before God. Everything in our Christian life is infected by egoism and sin.

Righteousness is found only in one place, and that is with Jesus. God has acknowledged his Son. He takes delight in him. Jesus hasn't taken any steps or done any action which God isn't pleased with. That is why Jesus by his resurrection was declared with power to be the Son of God.

The salvation implies that Jesus gives you his entire righteousness. His life and actions are credited to you. It happens by grace. You haven't deserved a gift like that. The only thing you can do is to say thanks.

To accept Jesus' righteousness doesn't mean that you yourself become righteous. Nevertheless, you own a whole and full righteousness.

You will always see this gift inseparably connected with Jesus. The gift of righteousness is one with him.

That is why you give him the name Jesus, my righteousness.

Your heart is satisfied with Jesus. You cannot imagine that any righteousness could be greater and more perfect. It must carry you in life. You can trust in it in death. Yes, it will save you before God's court forever.

22 August

But when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.

John 21:18

It can be hard to get old. Physical and mental infirmities can make everyday life hard, and loneliness can make it seem long.

But it can also be difficult spiritually. Perhaps you can't cope any more with being in the service which has been the richness of your life throughout many years. The emotional life isn't as rich as it once was. In a Christian context, there will often be a lot of things one is wondering and questioning about. Tiredness and dejection are imminent dangers.

In this situation, it is a good thing to get one's life into the light of the word of God.

Peter's service in God's kingdom didn't stop because he grew old. Neither does yours. But you will serve God in a different way than before. God's way for you is the same as it was for Peter.

You are to grow in powerlessness. Finally Peter became so helpless that somebody else had to bend down and dress him. He also had to stretch out his hands and let himself be guided.

There is a person who has to serve you. It is Jesus. Without him, you cannot take a step. He has to help you with everything.

Being a Christian who is completely dependent on Jesus is a strong expression for our true situation. Imagine how rich it is to be able to witness to this as elderly people.

Peter was to be led where he didn't want to go. With these words, Jesus indicated the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

A child of God glorifies God in the death. It is difficult to understand. But that's how it is. When we die, we die to the Lord. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," says God's word.

A child of God serves Jesus during his life. This also applies to old age. At the end, a child of God serves Jesus in death itself.

After that comes eternity, where all who believe in him will take part in the heavenly choir of praise in honour of God and the Lamb.

23 August

He (the beast) was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.

Revelation 13:7

Some of the words of the Bible are shocking and they make us silent. In Revelation, the beast is a name for Antichrist, who will rule the entire world and whom everybody must worship. He will wage war against the holy ones and defeat them.

His victory doesn't imply that all Christians will deny Jesus. But everybody has to undergo terrible sufferings. Jesus speaks of the chosen few, for whom the hour of distress will be shortened.

Couldn't God prevent this? Yes, he could do so, because he is God Almighty. But he doesn't do so. Far from it! God's word stresses that it is God who has given Antichrist power to wage war against the holy ones.

We don't understand God's thoughts. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts.

However, the Lord has revealed himself in the Word. It says that his relation with the suffering is different from ours. God uses suffering. Through it, he moulds his people in Jesus' image.

No servant is greater than his master. Jesus' disciples have to follow in his footsteps. At the end of his way was a cross. It is also at the end of our way. The darkness on earth will deepen, and the children of light will be increasingly different from others. They will be harassed, and open persecution will be a common thing.

Then Satan will ask you his question: Isn't it better to give up? He tempts you to leave the way of suffering. If you deny Jesus, the world will smile at you again.

However, is that the way forwards? Isn't it better to belong to the persecuted people who march on towards glory? If you think of eternity, you cannot be in doubt. "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" Follow Jesus! "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."

24 August

She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord`s feet listening to what he said.

Luke 10:39

If you read the gospels, you will find Mary at the Lord`s feet three times.

First she sat there to listen to his words. All spiritual life`s beginning and growth is connected with doing this. It is more important than anything else. If you don`t pay heed to the Word, you refuse his life.

However, it`s important how you listen. Mary took the place of the humble. She didn`t do so because she would promote herself through her humility. It was her knowledge of Jesus that determined where she had to be. The right place for an unworthy sinner is at the Lord`s feet.

Then the miracle can happen. You can find grace through Jesus` words. Jesus speaks to the heart. He wants to tell you what he has done for you. If he is allowed to do this, you begin to understand a little of his love for you.

The second time you meet Mary at Jesus` feet is at the hard hour of grief. Mary`s brother, Lazarus, had died before Jesus arrived. Her heart was on the verge of breaking, but then she found her old place.

There are also days in your life when it appears as if your whole world falls into ruins. Then you are to learn from Mary. Even if you feel that your mind is in turmoil, and that it is difficult to be quiet before God, in spite of that find your place at Jesus` feet. He is the only one who can help you. Even if he doesn`t give you an answer to many of your questions, he isn`t silent. In the midst of distress, he lets you experience a peace which transcends all understanding. Many Christians have experienced this before you did. You must know that the Lord doesn`t forget you.

The third time Mary is at Jesus` feet, her heart is filled with devotion and adoration. Jesus is on his way to Calvary. Mary anoints him before his death. She was allowed to serve Jesus to the last. The service of adoration continues in eternity. It begins at Jesus` feet here below. It ends before the throne of God and the Lamb in the glory.

25 August

This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

Luke 22:19

Jesus is burning with longing for fellowship with his disciples. He uses the strongest words to assure us of his love. Yes, he gives us his holy body and blood and says: take this and eat it, drink it.

Jesus' friends have assembled, time and time again, in order to receive him. They have been as different as we are. Nevertheless they have been united with each other. Heart, mind and thought have been turned to Jesus.

In the Lord's Supper, Jesus gives us himself.

The disciples had been given many gifts by Jesus. Finally he gave them himself. When he had given them his body and blood, he could give them no more.

When you receive the bread and wine, Jesus assures you that you have everything with him. Then you are as rich as you can be. Anybody who has Jesus has everything with him.

His blood has kept its cleansing power. It makes the soul white as snow. Through his sacrifice Jesus dresses you in the clothes of salvation. His righteousness is ascribed to you, and with it you can stand the test before God.

The communion table is still set out today. It isn't set for the one who wants to use the Lord's Supper to keep Jesus at a distance, with the thought that if only one goes to Communion one will be saved. The Lord's Supper is for Jesus' true friends. It is those who long for a meeting with him.

If you do so, you mustn't miss the Lord's Supper.

It is difficult to maintain the faith. How can God go on loving me? He wants you to be united with him in the same way as the wine and the bread become an intimate part of your body.

Don't let Jesus invite you in vain. Accept his body and blood. Do so in memory of him.

26 August

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

Hebrews 10:39

Many Christians can witness that they became saved, when they no longer shrank back any more.

At first they tried the way of self-improvement. They knew that the decisive thing was God's grace, but they couldn't believe that it concerned them. There had to be a change first. It became a long and hard way. It didn't lead to the destination. And the way was never-ending. One day they had to tell themselves: You will never become what you are to be in order to be a Christian.

They had given the death sentence on themselves. But, then the Lord came to them with his grace. Again and again, he had preached it for them in his word. But they had not been receptive. Only now, when they were empty-handed, they didn't shrink back any more.

Neither must a child of God shrink back from the grace of the Lord. This is a great peril in the life of a Christian. The way of self-improvement is stumbling close. Now it isn't about becoming a Christian, but being a Christian. Before you are aware of it, you become so occupied with what you are to do as a Christian, that you think more of that than of anything else. You have again entered into a hopeless fight. All the many defeats make you discouraged. You are tempted to give up all of it. Joy has disappeared. The close fellowship with other Christians is over. You yourself have become the centre of your spiritual life.

What are you to do? You have to return to the beginning, when you didn't shrink back from God's grace. You have imperceptibly slipped into a Christian life in which grace isn't everything.

Your misfortune is not that so much has failed for you. Neither is it your sins which you see in increasing numbers. No, your misfortune is that you shrink back from God's grace.

You are therefore to give up your attempts at improvement. Instead, you are to commend yourself to God's grace. You are to live under the word undeserved. Your centre has to be the infinite riches you have in Jesus. Then the Lord himself will bring about in you what is pleasing for him. Then you believe - and are saved.

27 August

- to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Revelation 1:6

Everything you have is gifts from God. That is why he is to have the honour.

Much disappointment and despondency is bound up with the fact that we want to be honoured. We put a lot of energy into getting power and influence. What relief it is to give Jesus his due!

His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever!

You owe him everything. He has created you, and you have absolutely nothing which you haven't received as a gift. If God hadn't given you life, you could not live a moment longer.

If you belong to Jesus, you know that your salvation is due to him alone. If he hadn't forgiven your sins, you would still have had to bear them yourself. But you are not to do so. Your sin has been atoned for. Your debt has been paid. You have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus to be God's property.

Everything else becomes small compared with the wonderful gospel. All difficulties and hardship will last only a short time. You will soon be dressed in your clean and white wedding robe, and sing the Lord's praises forever and ever.

In the grace there are riches which we don't fully understand. Nevertheless, in his love God lets us taste it in its glory.

It happens when we are humbled and learn to look truly at ourselves. Then grace becomes our only riches. It happens when we don't listen to ourselves, but to what he has spoken in his word.

Then a longing is being born in us. Think of the hour when with clean and sinless lips we will praise the Lord! Think of the hour when our poor words won't be poor any longer! Then we will see the Lord face to face, and it will be possible to give expression to what lives deepest in us. Here on earth below, we cannot tell Jesus what he really is and means to us. However, the day will arrive when without hindrance you will ascribe to him all honour, might and praise.

28 August

They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

Crowds of people will be led astray in the time immediately before the Second Coming. The power of the devil's lie will intensify. Yes, Satan will try to lead even the chosen astray, and apostasy will be widespread.

Why?

Because people will no longer ask what the truth is.

If something is a help for a person, most people consider it to be good. Even many Christians find it difficult to refuse everything that creates joy, peace and harmony in one's life. Many people don't ask if a teaching is true, but whether it works.

It is easy in that way to undermine God's truth. At first it happens between Christian churches and next between the religions. People claim that all of us are on our way to the same God, even if we each approach him from our own quarter.

Such thoughts take part in preparing the way for an alliance among all religions in mutual acknowledgement that we – basically – want the same thing.

But that is a lie. There is only one way to God, and that way is Jesus. He alone is the way, the truth and the life. There is salvation only by faith in him.

A child of God loves that truth. He is ready to suffer and die for it. And the readiness will be put to the test. We are on our way to a world where everybody will be agreed about the false attitudes and goals.

The time of Anti-Christ is a time of trial for the Lord's people. It is natural to be seized with fear and anxiety. Don't let it happen. Trust in Jesus. He won't forsake you. You are to accept a love for the truth. It doesn't depend on the number of people who believe it with you. God has spoken. What he has said stands firm.

Be one of the few who are true to the truth, to the end! You shall not be put to shame. God guarantees that.

29 August

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:15

Jesus' death holds incomprehensible riches. First of all, he has procured the atonement for sins through it, so that he can meet you with his grace.

In the next place, he has also given you a new aim in life. It is expressed through the words: "that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

You are not to live for yourself.

Many think that a life, in which they themselves are the centre, is a happy life. That belief leads millions of people into trouble. They have become their own curse. They see everything in their life in relation to themselves. The longer they live the more occupied they become with themselves. That is why their life becomes lonely.

The life of self feels it is a sacrifice not to be in the centre. However, don't give in. You have to dissociate yourself from yourself. Yes, you have to lose yourself.

Those who live should no longer live for themselves. It sounds like a commandment, but it is a gospel. The Lord has saved you from a life where everything turns on yourself.

He has given you a life where everything turns on him. All your fountains must be in him. Every single day, you have to receive what you need undeserved by grace.

Jesus leads you into his love. You aren't the only one who lives there. Every single person whom he has bought with his blood does so. He therefore sends you to your fellow human beings so that you can serve them.

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me," says Jesus (in Matt 25:40). In your service for him, you are always with him.

Whether you are to go to foreign nations with the gospel or serve in this country is in this connection of secondary importance. He is pleased with you because you have accepted his grace, and are an instrument for his blessing.

30 August

By the word of your lips I have kept myself from the ways of the violent.

Psalm 17:4

It is dangerous to overestimate one's strength. It also concerns the fight we are to fight as Christians.

It is easy to ascribe good motives to oneself. If we have done something we shouldn't have done, it isn't difficult to find mitigating circumstances.

However, that is a dangerous way. If you don't enter the light of the word of God, you will sooner or later end on the paths of violent people. The Fall of Man and the consequences of it will work through in your life.

It is stumbling near to meet the truth with violence. Your only possibility to avoid it is to pay heed to the word from the mouth of God. His word is connected with himself. God's word is true as God is true.

Through his word, the Lord takes all glory away from you. You are unmasked in your heart. There is nothing good in your sinful nature. You cannot even judge yourself. You have to say: "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."

The Lord will listen to that prayer! He will speak to your heart through his word. He will seize your hand and lead you forward. Your self-confidence will be shaken. You will realize that your thoughts and opinions aren't pure. They are coloured by the poisonous tragedy of the Fall of Man. But you are also allowed to see that there is grace for a lost sinner.

We are apt to believe that commandments and admonitions will help us to live a true and healthy Christian life. But it isn't like that. You have no strength and power in yourself to follow the way of the Lord. You are therefore to pay heed to his grace. That is what helps you. It teaches you to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions. It gives you a desire to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

Therefore absorb everything Jesus has said. Do so today. Then your steps become firm, and the Lord guides you forward to heaven, where you will never be tempted to sin again.

31 August

Here they crucified him, and with him two others – one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

John 19:18

It is important that Jesus is near when your hour of death arrives.

He was, when two criminals had to die at Golgotha, which lay outside the city wall of Jerusalem. The Romans had crucified them. Midway between those two hung the saviour of the world. He was also nailed to a cross.

It was a remarkable conversation which was carried on among those three crucified persons. It shows what lived in the heart of those individuals.

On the Day of Judgment the three of them will meet again. How will the meeting be between Jesus and the robber who hung on his left?

In his last hours on earth, he could both see and hear Jesus. But it didn't change the attitude of his heart. He had no doubts that he was going to die. Nevertheless, he simply hurled insults at his Saviour.

The death of this man is a harrowing warning against postponing one's conversion until one's deathbed. On the face of it one would think that he had everything to gain and nothing to lose by being converted. In spite of that, he didn't do so. He died as he had lived.

Lots of people have suffered the same fate. They continued postponing the most important thing in their lives. It was too late at the end.

Today, it isn't too late. The Devil tries to make you believe that it is too late, if throughout many years you have resisted the Lord's calling. You mustn't believe him. Think of the robber who hung on Jesus' right side. He put his affairs in order with Jesus in the last hours of his life.

When the Lord calls, it is the time of grace – time to be saved. You are not to postpone coming until you think you are as you ought to be. That day will never arrive. You have to come as you are.

One lost robber did so. He could bring nothing but a sinful life. He couldn't do anything. His hands were nailed to the cross. However, he begged Jesus for mercy. This is the way for you, for me and for each and every sinner on earth. Ask Jesus for mercy! Then you will be with him in Paradise.

1 September

And God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.

Acts 27:24

There were 275 persons who saved their lives because Paul was with them on board. Even though he was with them as a captive bound for Rome, he mattered more than the ship's captain, the first mate and the whole crew, because he knew the way of prayer to God.

Throughout 14 stormy days and nights, Paul had not only prayed for himself but also for all those who travelled with him. The God of heaven heard his intercession. Paul was to get what he had prayed for. 275 persons were to be saved.

You and I are with our fellow-countrymen in a terrible storm. The spiritual army of the evil one is on the attack. Many destructive forces have already been deployed, and still more are to be expected. We cannot help asking: how will it turn out?

We become indignant when holy things are trampled on. It grieves us when some of those who should be night watchmen and shepherds lead the way in this. There is a connection between seed and harvest in the life of a people, and it is God who sits on the throne as the judge of justice.

In a situation like that, it is so easy to focus one's thoughts on oneself and one's preservation. Paul didn't do so. He interceded for all those who were with him on the voyage. In the furious storm, he followed in his Saviour's footsteps. He took pity on those who were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

In the midst of our people's sin and misery, we are still loved by God. There isn't anyone among our people who hasn't been dearly bought with the blood of Jesus. Jesus fought for all of us in his fight in Gethsemane.

We are in many ways rich. Previous generations have given us great cultural values, and materially, we do better than many others.

Nevertheless, we are poor. Our people are in great spiritual distress. Destructive and subversive forces threaten us from within. Intercessors are needed.

God gave Paul 275 persons. How many will he give you if you get those you have interceded for?

2 September

... and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

This word follows a child of God throughout his entire life. There isn't a day when we don't need it. It speaks of the greatest need of all: to be purified from sin.

According to our reason, there is only one chance that this can happen; that is to say, if we can purify ourselves. That way is followed by millions of people all over the world. Behind the foreign religions is the desire of people to mend their ways, so that they can be acquitted before God.

All attempts like these are doomed to failure. Somebody else has to act. And another person has done so. God's own Son became flesh and blood. He gave his blood as sacrificial blood. He atoned for sin. That is why it has power to purify.

The blood of Jesus really purifies. It doesn't simply give partial help. If the blood has purified you, you are perfectly clean. It is difficult to believe when you think of the binding power of the sin. But it is true. The blood of Jesus makes you white as snow.

It is us the blood purifies. Jesus is the Saviour for real sinners. Unintentionally we give the thought a free rein that this concerns everybody except me. We can understand that there is grace for all the others, but it is incomprehensible that there is grace for me. Nevertheless you are the one the blood purifies, even you!

Finally, it says "all our sin." Perhaps you believe that the blood of Jesus purifies us from most of sin. However, it isn't like that. His blood purifies from all sin. There is no sin, and there will never be any, which his blood cannot purify us from. So great is the power of his blood.

When you became a believer in the blood of the Lamb, God led you from death to life. In his opinion you became a perfectly purified sinner. As long as you remain in the faith, you are white as snow. You have to pray, every day, that Jesus' blood must enter your entire life – in every nook and corner. Then you remain in God's grace.

On your last day you must go to heaven with this Word as yours. The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin.

3 September

For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water.

Revelation 7:17

Do you, from time to time, think of how your relationship with Jesus will be in heaven? It is your joy and privilege here below to depend on him. Will you also depend on him in heaven? There you will be perfect. Yes, you will be like Jesus, and then you won't need his help as you do here below, will you?

It is true that everything will be new in heaven. In spite of that, you cannot live without Jesus. While you are here below, time and time again you try to handle things yourself; but your dependence on Jesus will be perfect in heaven. That is why heaven is heaven.

Your richest days on earth are the days when you are most dependent on him. Then he is everything for your heart. The smaller you are in your own opinion, the greater is Jesus.

Jesus will also be everything for you in heaven. It says in our text that he will be our shepherd and lead us to springs of living water.

The joy in being led by Jesus is the same in heaven as here below. However there is a difference. While many shadows are cast over life here, the sun of glory will always shine in eternity.

It is wonderfully rich when Jesus leads us to the springs of living water. Then we can draw and drink to the full. We can quench the thirst of our hearts. Our cup overflows with gratitude.

We will also drink from the water of salvation in heaven. You will, forever and ever, live in an incessant appropriation of the abundance and riches of Christ. In one way, heaven changes everything. In another way, it changes only a little. If you want to possess Jesus forever, you have to possess him here. Death doesn't change a person's relationship with him. But faith does. Let Jesus be your Saviour and shepherd today, then he will also be so forever.

4 September

One will say, „I belong to the Lord”; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, „The Lord’s, „ and will take the name Israel.

Isaiah 44:5

We are so occupied with possessing things. But there is something which is greater by far. It is to be owned when you are owned by the Creator of heaven and earth. It means that God has an exclusive right to you. You no longer live to yourself, but Jesus lives in you.

To become a child of God isn't something added to what you are already. It is something completely new. It is a new birth. It is a rebirth.

Now you no longer belong to yourself. You belong to the Lord.

He is in charge of you. At the same time, he has the whole responsibility for you. It is neither you yourself nor others who have the last word. God is behind everything.

Today you will probably write something with your hand. It means that you must realize what your hand will be used for. It shouldn't be at your disposal, it belongs to the Lord.

You aren't to neglect the activities of the weekday. God has presented them to you so that you can serve him. You honour him by making yourself useful in your home and at your workplace.

Another side of your service is the calling of prayer. The Lord wants that hands which belong to him should be folded together in prayer. The service of intercessory prayer is the greatest and most important of all. That is why the enemy of the soul tries, in numerous ways, to prevent it.

Perhaps God wants your hand, that belongs to Him, to become a blessing for someone, today. Be at his disposal. The Lord will lead you then. Don't refuse what looks small and unimpressive in other people's opinion.

Your service in God's kingdom never stops. The tasks aren't always the same, but the Lord needs you until your last day. That is why he allows you to live.

How blessed it is to be able to look back on a life which has been an instrument in the Lord's hand! Maybe you were weak and insignificant. You felt the warmth from the hand that used you, and it is a blessed thing.

5 September

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace.

Isaiah 55:12

To be saved is to go out in joy.

Do you remember it? Get away from the sin, away from the darkness, away from the bondage, into the wonderful realm of freedom.

There is singing, then, in the heart. It is so incredible, but all God's promises are "yes" in Jesus. No journey is like the transition from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.

And the cheers of joy live in the heart. Even if it may be years since you became a child of God, you still wonder that you are allowed to be his. Jesus was not content with paying you a visit in your misery. He took you with him. He led you from the darkness of death to the kingdom of life.

It happened when he opened the gospel in all its glory. The finished work of salvation became everything for you. You saw that it was everything for God. In a moment it became clear that you were not meant to find the way to freedom yourself. Jesus had found it. And he had prepared it, yes he himself was the new and living way.

Then a flood of joy went through you. It is also like that today. Nothing else can give a greater joy than hearing the Word about the cross. It is still this word that makes you free. And it is the only thing which can hold you up. You will go out in joy then.

But God has given you more than that. You will not walk alone on your way home to the New Jerusalem. The Lord walks with you. He leads you all the way, and during the journey he gives you his divine peace.

This peace has its basis in the atonement of Jesus. Yes, Jesus himself is your peace. You don't have to go a long distance to find peace. It surrounds you from behind and from in front, as sure as your Lord and Saviour goes along with you both day and night.

The way to heaven is narrow, says Jesus. It often winds in a strange way. It leads both up towards the peaks and down into the valleys. But it is a way in peace. The eternal heavenly joy lives already in your heart by faith. Walk on, therefore, in the name of Jesus.

6 September

When our fathers were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea.

Psalm 106:7

It is important to notice God's words of judgment on his people's actions. When the Israelites saw Pharaoh and his army get closer, they panicked. They called to the Lord. Then they turned on Moses and said, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?"

To act like that is to defy the Most High.

Look at your life in the light of this Word. You have often called to God in your distress haven't you? An instant later, you thought and spoke as if God didn't exist.

You have resisted the Most High.

To call to the Lord and afterwards act as if he hadn't heard you is unbelief.

Unbelief is one of the basic sins which draw numerous other sins into a Christian's life. If unbelief grows in power, it leads to the final apostasy from God. We must see to it that none of us has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

The consciousness of sin is often faint in believers. That is why the confession of sins is faint, as well. I wonder if unbelief is one of the sins which a child of God rarely prays for the forgiveness of, and yet it is a sin which offends God as Father. An unbeliever doesn't expect that God has a father's care when difficulties arise. The unbeliever doesn't trust God's word, but considers all his promises to be empty. They are words without any carrying capacity when it really comes to the crunch.

That is to show contempt for God. You have resisted his word again and again in unbelief. However, your unbelief cannot wipe out God's faithfulness. The Lord led the people of Israel through the sea in spite of the fact that they defied him.

The Lord has also saved you. Therefore you have to carry your unbelief to him. There is also forgiveness and purification for it. God forgives you by his grace so that you can continue the journey to the Promised Land.

7 September

He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore.

Luke 5:3

It wasn't much Jesus asked Peter to do. He was only to put out a little from shore so that Jesus could sit down and teach the crowd from the boat.

Peter did what Jesus asked him to do.

A lot of Christians want to be used by God. They want to make their mark, but they don't think that the Lord leads them into important tasks. Everything always seems to be small and ordinary. That is why they hang back.

When the Lord is calling, he looks for faithfulness in the small things. To pay a visit to sick and old people is a pure and genuine worship of God. Yes, Jesus will praise a service like that on the Day of Judgment.

What is great in God's kingdom? It is to receive Jesus.

Who does that?

The one who receives a child for Jesus' sake does so. Jesus wasn't great and important in people's opinion. Nevertheless, he carried the riches of the whole of heaven in himself. That's also how it is with the service he calls us into. It may seem unimpressive. Still it contains incomprehensible riches. Through it, Jesus himself comes to meet us.

Today Jesus gets into your boat. Perhaps he asks you to put out a little from shore. It isn't great things he wants from you. But he needs your help.

For Peter the obedience on a small scale became the beginning of a great and rich work which is known to all Christians. Your obedience will scarcely result in that. But fancy being of any use to Jesus! All service for him is great. You will never regret that you have been at his disposal.

Many fellow workers in God's kingdom have been like hidden pillars. Most often, other people haven't noticed them, but Jesus knows them. They weren't too big to serve the Lord on a small scale.

Ask Jesus about what he wants you to do. Give in to him and serve him. This is the way to blessing.

8 September

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 9:36

There are Christians who find it difficult to believe that Jesus really likes them. If they look at their own hearts, they have to admit, to their sorrow, that they don't love Jesus as they ought to. That is why they cannot believe that Jesus can really love them.

If you feel like this, you are mistaken. Jesus' love of you doesn't depend on your love of him. It doesn't rest on anything with you. It is due to him alone.

Long before you saw him, his eyes were directed towards you. You aren't insignificant to him. He follows you day and night. In joys and good times, in difficulties and hardship, his eye watches over you.

Nothing is hidden to Jesus. He sees everything. But it doesn't make him avert his eyes. Far from it! He feels heartfelt pity for you.

Jesus sees that you are in distress. Your temporal difficulties are perhaps great. You are to know, then, that he knows them. He feels pity for you.

Behind all earthly distress, Jesus sees an even greater distress, the one that the sin has caused. It is cruel. It separates from God. It shuts Heaven and opens Hell. If you aren't saved, you aren't free. Satan has chained you up. His servants preach a false gospel which is no gospel at all. Through the deception of sin, he tries to entangle you in his snare.

There are, therefore, many neglected and exhausted people. They have no true shepherd. And no one can lead oneself.

However Jesus has heartfelt compassion. The strong love of his heart compelled him to lay down his life. He loves like the one who has sacrificed his life.

Jesus doesn't give you up. He comes to you this very moment. He uses his word to open your heart. He makes you certain that he is shepherd for those who have no shepherd. Believe it, and Jesus is yours.

9 September

The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.

Psalm 25:14

God isn't satisfied if his children talk to him just once in a while. It isn't enough for him. He doesn't want them to come to him just now and then. He longs for fellowship with them. He wants to draw every single one into his confidence.

Your old sinful nature says no. It will decide itself. Our flesh resists. Often it cannot understand God, and when it understands him, it doesn't agree with him. It doesn't submit to his law, and neither can it do so.

The way to intimacy with God lies through putting to death our sinful nature. His disciplining hand always weighs heavily on us. There are so many things that have to be done away with. The life of self-dies hard.

But because of God's wonderful management, it may happen that one day everything is taken away from you. If, in that situation, you still have your eyes turned towards Him, you no longer ask what it means to fear God. The Lord himself has taught you that.

The odd thing is that only then can God make his covenant known to you. To be poor and have little strength is something great in God's kingdom. God sends the rich away empty-handed. He satisfies the poor with good gifts.

When he begins to reveal his covenant of grace, many matters and problems become unimportant to you. You are surprised that previously you were keen to get answers to both this and that. Intimacy with God leads you into his thoughts.

Through his Word he reveals that he – before the creation of the world – has chosen you in Jesus to be holy and blameless in his sight.

The God, who from eternity has created a universe which to our minds is boundless, has known you with Jesus before he created everything else.

He couldn't choose you in your sinful self. He had to do it in Jesus. He can therefore eternally confide in you and make his covenant known to you.

10 September

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing . . .

Hebrews 10:25

Satan tries to make us critical of our own congregation. He concentrates his efforts on teenagers from Christian homes. He tries to create their dislike by calling attention to the faults of older Christians and their insistence on the old and traditional customs and practices.

It is true that not everything in the congregation is as it ought to be. Neither is it so in a Christian home. Still, we are not to leave either our home or congregation.

Parents are to listen to their children, but young people are not to dictate. We can learn a lot from young people. They can help us so that we don't stagnate in forms and traditions; but the spiritual course and direction in a congregation are to be defined by experienced and mature Christians whom God and Christian people have entrusted to this task.

It may be difficult for young people to submit to that. They think that the future is theirs. Therefore some people resign in disappointment from their own congregation and try somewhere else.

At first everything looks good and promising. But time also betrays the weaknesses of the new place. It comes to light that not everything is better there. That is why they don't feel at home in the new connection either. They don't attend the meetings frequently. Perhaps they try a third place, but the result is the same. After that, they gradually back out of any congregational connection.

There is real reason to be on the alert. There are many examples of how unhappy life goes when we don't obey God's word. When the Lord says that we mustn't give up meeting together, it is not only a point of view we are to take into consideration. But they are words with divine authority, and one cannot ignore it without sinning against God.

If God's word sounds true and right in your congregation, then your place is there even if there may be many things you want differently. The Lord wants to use you where he has placed you. He calls you to love and serve as a member of the congregation. Therefore, be faithful to your own congregation.

11 September

Pharaoh said, „Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.”

Exodus 5:2

When we are following Jesus, we expect that the Lord will clear away all difficulties. But it isn't like that. Far from it! Many Christians have experienced that the longer they travel on the way of the Lord the more and greater are the difficulties.

Moses had misgivings about his mission. He hesitated, but in spite of that God made him go to Pharaoh. Moses told him what God had ordered him to say. But Pharaoh was absolutely unresponsive. Mockingly he declared that he did not know God, and he was by no means willing to obey him. Moses' words caused their slavery to become even harder for the Israelites.

A lot of Christians give up when they come to a similar situation. Far too quickly they agree with themselves that they aren't on God's way anyhow.

Learn from Moses! He turned to the Lord and presented everything to him. And God didn't forsake his servant. He strengthened him by repeating his word.

Moses took God's promises to heart. Then everything changed for Moses. Not in his outward circumstances. There everything was worse than it used to be. But he believed, and he could therefore defy all difficulties and go forward in the strength of the Lord.

Today many people live in the land of bondage. They have been created and intended for something else, but the Devil keeps them in bondage. It may appear quite impossible that they can ever be saved.

You have prayed again and again, but to all appearances nothing happens. When there was an opportunity to do it, you have tried to say a word, write a letter or give a book, but without result. From time to time you are seized with the thought that it is getting worse, if anything.

We have no guarantee that we can lead anyone to salvation. But we mustn't give up. Everything may look hopeless, but it isn't. We are dealing with God here - and he is capable of even the impossible.

Don't be tired, seek the Lord. He will take action in his time.

12 September

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.

Psalm 62:5

Incomprehensible riches are prepared for anybody whose soul finds rest in God. Satan knows that. That is why, in every way, he tries to prevent you from finding rest.

He makes you believe that you cannot find rest until everything which makes you worry has been dealt with. But that isn't true. David and many others found help by resting in God in the midst of battles and storms. You also know that it is blowing a gale now from one side in your life and now from another. It is hardly ever completely calm.

Satan also tries to prevent your rest in another way. Every time you want to read the Bible or pray, he fills you with many thoughts and ideas.

What are you to do?

In the midst of worry and fighting, David said, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone." You are to say the same.

A child of God isn't under the control of his feelings. They are not meant to control him. What Jesus has done endures for ever. He has saved your soul, and he has led you to God. There you stand in the midst of anxiety, doubt and uncertainty.

Everybody is able to find rest with God. Here the powers of the world and their accusations mean nothing. Nor do the Devil's words mean anything. He has for ever been cast out from before the throne of God. He is no longer able to accuse you.

Before God your eyes are turned towards him who sits on the throne. He lifted you out of the slimy pit and he put your feet on that rock which is himself. God has made you unshakeable.

God is your salvation. If it was up to you to hold on, you would never reach the goal. But God holds on to you; he will succeed.

God is your protection also. Amid all the ups and downs of your life his protective and defending hand safeguards you.

Face to face with God the light of life enters your darkness, and you are filled with hope and confidence.

13 September

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Ephesians 1:15-16

The congregation at Ephesus was definitely not a perfect congregation. It was necessary to talk with it about anger, theft, rotten talk, prostitution, uncleanness and greed. Nevertheless the congregation filled Paul with joy.

There are lots of people who forget to give thanks for their own congregation. They think that there are a lot of things that aren't as they ought to be.

That is first and foremost what they fasten on in speech and conversation. Some people, after some time, seldom if ever attend a meeting or a service and in the end their place is empty.

We shouldn't be blind to failures and weaknesses among God's children. On the other hand, we must not overlook their faith in the Lord Jesus either, and the love that in spite of everything is to be found among them.

There are many children whose parents have preached them away from the congregation by negative talk about the others. Our words about each other can have long-term consequences. Paul admonishes his friends to settle with their sin and live a holy life. At the same time, he tells them that his thanks for them won't stop. In his opinion, the congregation is God's work. Even the weakest Christian is a new creation in Jesus. And in spite of the fact that their sin hasn't been removed from their mutual relationship, they still love each other because they are united in the love of Christ.

Is it not similar among your believing friends? You are incredibly different, but faith in Jesus makes you one. What were you without faith in Jesus and fellowship with those who belong to him?

Can't you, from time to time, feel a warm stream going through your heart when you are with God's people? Is it not like an internal voice telling you that you belong with sinners who are saved by grace? Mustn't you like Paul give thanks to God for all his children?

14 September

Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.

Nehemiah 1:3

God's people are harassed as the Israelites were. Our wall is also broken down. So many of God's people have lost their sense of sound doctrine. It is first of all due to the critical approach to the Bible.

In Paradise, the Devil asked, "Did God really say?" He asks the same question even today through some servants in the congregation. It is the ferocious wolves that Paul talked of Acts 20:29. They won't spare the flock. They come from our own number, those who go in search of prey.

A lot of those who call themselves Christians call God's word in question. They don't think that we can count on it in everything it says. That attitude is dangerous. It sets the individual up as a judge.

Many people in the congregation are more dependent on what the majority think and say than on the clear statements of the Word. People say that there are so many things in the Bible that are typical of its period. They speak of contradictions and mistakes. The result is that we are left with a Bible that people have drained of authority.

The protecting wall of the people of God has also been pulled down through hidden biblical criticism. Some maintain the right view of God's word, but they don't obey it. Every time conscience makes itself felt, they soothe themselves by their own view of the Bible.

A living Christian trusts what God has said in his word, and lives his life according to it. He suffers defeat daily. He has to receive grace once more daily.

And he doesn't exalt himself over God's people in their great spiritual distress. No, like Nehemiah, he makes himself one with the people and presents their distress before God in prayer.

God has done miracles before. It can happen again. The desert can blossom like a rose garden once more. God's word can become our protection. His name can be trusted again. His will can be followed. Lord, let it happen in your grace!

Everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Romans 14:23

Have you ever stopped at this word? Has it got a place in your life, so that you judge as sin everything that does not come from faith?

Have you become aware of the curse upon everything of one's own making? It may look pious and right in one's own opinion. And perhaps the thought doesn't enter your head at all that God estimates differently.

We can get many things going, both in our own life and in other people's, but it doesn't honour God. He looks at it as worship of one's own making. It basically honours us alone. The Lord won't acknowledge it. It is sin in his opinion.

You have to be careful, otherwise you will choose a way that is yours and not the Lord's. You have to become quiet before him. If you don't do so, nothing in your life comes from faith.

"The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them," says David. (Psalm 25:14) He had experienced that. His history also tells of actions that didn't stem from his intimate fellowship with the Lord. When he wanted to measure God's blessing by counting his people, he called down the curse of God on himself and Israel.

God also searches your heart. He always asks for the origin of your action. Any service of your own making he doesn't bless. It is sin in the Lord's opinion.

Luther learnt this from bitter experience. His piety as a monk was actually sin. If we go our own way, it is always the way of sin.

Therefore, Jesus calls you even today into an intimate life partnership with himself. He wants to lead you. He wants to advise you. He does so by turning his glance towards you. Therefore, you have to bend your knee to him. You are nothing. All your thoughts and attempts will fail. However, Jesus leads the blind by ways they don't know. In your helplessness, he is strong. If you put your hand in his, he leads you on the way of faith and beneficial obedience.

16 September

They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

2 Corinthians 8:4

The congregations of Macedonia lived in great material need, but it didn't mean that they left it to others to help the saints. Far from it! "Their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity" (2 Cor. 8:2). Therefore they urgently pleaded with Paul for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. They gave beyond their means. They didn't give money alone, but by the will of God they gave themselves.

It is usually not the rich who give most to God's kingdom. It is those who don't have too much for themselves. Riches have closed many hearts and made them insensitive to the needs of other people. The more you get the more you want. It is as if it is easier to give when one doesn't have very much.

Not all Christians find the blessing of giving a joyful service. Have you done so? Are you among those who regularly give their gifts to missionary work?

What a blessing it is to be allowed to take part in it! Our world easily becomes very small, and our thoughts circle about ourselves. However, if you give, you become attached to those who receive your gift. What joy it is to take both nationals and missionaries into one's heart! What perspective it casts on everyday life to be allowed to take part in the greatest work/ministry of all: to diffuse the cause of God's kingdom on earth.

Everything you have is on loan. You are to let go of everything – if not before then on your last night. However, today it is at your disposal. Don't forget the missions. There is a connection between our readiness to sacrifice and the number of missionaries we can send out.

There are still open doors. We don't know for how long; but Jesus has said that night is coming when no one can work. We have to make use of the possibilities, while we have them.

When you put something into God's one hand, he blesses you with the other. There is a special relationship between God and a cheerful giver. God's word invites you to experience what it implies. You won't be disappointed. God always pays generously.

17 September

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

Luke 6:12

Throughout one's life one has to make decisive choices. When you face them, you are to consult God before you make up your mind. Your greatest danger is that you make a decision, and then you ask God to bless it. God isn't satisfied with that. He wants to lead you in the actual choice.

You are to learn from Jesus. He spent the night in prayer to God, before he chose his twelve disciples.

Can we be certain of choosing correctly, when we have prayed?

Did Jesus choose correctly, when the following day he called Judas as one of the twelve? It was wrong according to our human way of thinking. But it was right in spite of that.

It was a choice that cost him very dearly. It must have been a burden to have to keep company with Judas every single day. In happy hours in the inner circle of the crowd of disciples, it must have felt like a stab each time the eyes of Jesus rested on the traitor. Jesus knew what this disciple was to commit against his Master. He also knew where it would end for him. However, he didn't send him away. He didn't abandon him. Quietly and meekly he went with the traitor until the night when the betrayal was accomplished.

Jesus knew that Judas was among the chosen, after a night in prayer.

It may look as if you choose wrongly, even though you have prayed. But don't be too quick to believe it. God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are higher than ours. You see very narrowly, but he has the full breadth of view.

Jesus had to walk with Judas. Paul had to bear his thorn in the flesh. God may also have put something into your life that you don't understand. Without knowing it yourself, it serves God's plan of salvation. Even if you feel it as a hindrance in serving God, the burden still helps to keep you in the right place, where Jesus can enter with his grace.

And it is a good thing then to be able to say: I have talked it over with Jesus. But he has answered, "My grace is sufficient for you."

18 September

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.

Isaiah 53:5

All becomes quiet within you, when the Lord, through his word, shows you his pierced and crushed Son. It is a horrifying sight. "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." It is an appalling thing, when God says that it was my transgressions and my iniquities which caused Jesus to be stricken, smitten and afflicted by God.

I can do nothing but ask: Is my sin really so great that God's punishment had to be so severe? At the same time I have to tell myself: God didn't submit his Son to his anger and judgement, if it wasn't necessary.

I therefore have to defer to the crucified Saviour. I have to do so with shame about myself. "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature." The venom of the Snake, from the day of the Fall of Man, has saturated everything.

Ponder the fact that Jesus took full responsibility for it all. He allowed God to make him into sin. Then he submitted to the punishment. He drained the cup of wrath to the dregs.

It makes one inexpressibly sad, to think of what Jesus had to go through, for my sake.

At the same time, my heart is filled with a quiet joy. Think about Jesus taking both the sin and the punishment. His love is so great that I cannot understand it.

How shall I say thank you, when I cannot even understand all that I have to thank him for?

One thing is clear: I have to begin now, and I have to pray that the thanks of my heart never stop.

I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!

Matthew 7:23

How terrible these words are! To think that it is Jesus who says them. And he will say them at a time when it is too late to be converted. There are people who will hear these words as the last words from the mouth of Jesus. They are to spend eternity separated from him. The words will continually sound in their ears: "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"

I understand you if, more than anything else, you fear that Jesus will tell you this. Then everything would be lost. Then perdition would be the final thing. How can you know if you will hear these words from Jesus' mouth? There is a way which you shouldn't go. Don't look at what you have achieved. All the many people Jesus speaks of, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, have done many wonderful things in Jesus' name, as you will remember. It has made them believe that he knew them. But they made a mistake.

Everything they did was a violation of the law. They did it without possessing a living relationship of faith with Jesus.

It is also worth noticing that they, when they met him, were occupied with their own service, and not with Jesus' redeeming and sacrificial service for them.

What is it that fills your mind? Are you a poor beggar who has to beg for mercy? Do you have the faith of the heart that only knows the blood of Jesus as its basis of your salvation?

One feels so poor when one is to examine oneself. It is as if everything disappears, and one has nothing to hold on to. One has to ask: Can it really be true that I am a child of God? Does Jesus know me?

It is a good sign if you, because of the seriousness of eternity in this question, have to flee to the throne of grace. There, you have to say it to Jesus as it is: I have nothing, and I am nothing. But I cling to you! You are my only hope.

You are not to be in doubt. Jesus knows you. Psalm 91:14 says, as you will remember: "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name."

20 September

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven.

Revelation 4:1

It is a good thing to notice what this verse doesn't say. It helps us to pay heed to what it does say. When John was allowed to look into heaven, he didn't see a door being opened. No, he saw a door which was opened. By that he was allowed to experience that we can trust in Jesus. He told the truth when he said, "You will see heaven open."

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was also allowed to see it. Before he was stoned to death, he said, "I see heaven open."

A child of God lives under an open heaven. The door of heaven is not to be opened for you when you stand in front of it. It is open already.

When your saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, stood in front of the door, it was opened, and it has never been shut again on any person who, distressed by sin, has taken refuge in him. We find it easy to forget the open door. When Israel prospered greatly in the Promised Land, they forgot God who had given them everything.

"Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:2). Don't forget the open heaven, when the Lord showers you with what is good. Don't forget it either when the dark and heavy clouds of life collect above you. When all ways seem shut, you are to know that there is a door which is open. It is the door Jesus has opened. He opens so that no one and nothing can shut it.

He has removed all obstacles between you and God, when he shed his blood at Calvary. A door has been opened straight into God's heart. If you live your life with Jesus, sin and disappointments cannot shut that door. You live under an open heaven of grace. You will soon go into the kingdom where forever you will be with him who accomplished everything for you on the cross.

21 September

Be . . . like men waiting . . .

Luke 12:36

Have you ever noticed people who are waiting for something? If not, you should do so. Jesus uses them as an example to teach you something.

People's feelings at the railwaystation are different from their feelings at the park. Most people, who wait on the platform, don't sit down. At regular intervals, they glance at the clock and they turn their glance in the direction from which they expect the train. When they see a bright dot in the distance, they realize that it stops at the station in a few moments. Then they go into the train. It doesn't stop for long.

A long time has passed since Jesus asked his friends to wait, seen by our perspective. Seen in the perspective of eternity, two thousand years is an instant. Throughout the many years there have been people who were waiting while others fell asleep. They forgot to examine if they had oil in their lamps.

God has given us a clock which shows that the time for the Second Coming is approaching. That clock consists of the many signs that will precede the Coming of Jesus. You cannot read the Bible and look at the world about you without having to wonder. God has known the time in which we live, and he has described it in his word. It is as if we can see the light in the distance. We are therefore to tell each other: Now it won't be long before Jesus arrives.

The brief waiting time is to be used correctly. You have to ask yourself: Am I ready? Am I wearing the wedding clothes? Am I among those who will be included or will I be left behind?

It is also time to remind others that Jesus will arrive soon. A lot of people live without thinking of him. Jesus' reappearance will be shocking for them. Fancy having to stand outside and knock at a closed door. Let us spend the waiting time correctly.

The Lord has also put us in a great missionary service. The gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth. This can only take place through service, sacrifice and prayer.

The King's errand is urgent!

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Hebrews 1:14

These words speak of angels. They have been spoken, so that you are to know that Almighty God has an army of angels. It is at his service and he uses it. He sends it out again and again to help those who will inherit salvation.

Angels are mentioned many times in the Bible. Still, one may wonder why it doesn't say even more about them. They have, as you will remember, immense powers. The explanation is no doubt that God wants to save us from the sin of worshipping the angels. We would be in danger of doing so, if we focused our attention on them. The apostle John prostrated himself before the feet of an angel on Patmos, but he was stopped in his worship. Angels are only our fellow-servants. God alone is to be worshipped.

The angels have a task. It is to help you to inherit salvation. You cannot earn it. Jesus has done it. His deed cannot be improved. You are to inherit, and the angels will help you to do so.

Satan and his army of spirits have an overall objective in everything they do. They want to prevent you from getting your inheritance. How it happens is secondary to them, if only they reach their goal.

You are little and powerless in this spiritual fight. Satan is strong, and he fights against you from all sides. You are, therefore, to put on the full armour of God. While you do so, you are not to call for angels but you are to pray to the Lord. Then he sends angels to serve you.

We do not know how often God has done it, but we can be sure that it often takes place. If the Lord didn't stand by us from heaven, we would lose the inheritance that Jesus has achieved for us.

God leads us from time to time through deep, dark and dangerous valleys. Maybe you are in the valley of dejection and despair now. Then you are to know that you aren't alone. God has seen your distress, and he has stepped in. He has surrounded you with a fire-wall of angels.

As the Devil basically only has one purpose concerning you, so it is with God. He wants you to inherit salvation. And the angels will help him to achieve his purpose.

23 September

There he was transfigured before them.

Matthew 17:2

Jesus had taken three of his friends with him. They had gone up the mountain alone. Perhaps they wondered about him during the difficult walk. Why had he singled them out? Why hadn't he chosen an easier road? What did he want?

There are times in your life too, when you ask like this. You don't understand him. He has singled you out, and his way seems strange.

Have you thought that Jesus might have the same purpose that he had with his disciples?

He wants you to see him transfigured before you.

The disciples had walked with him throughout a long period. They had listened to his words, and he had performed many miracles. Who had known Jesus better than they?

However, Jesus looks at the hearts, and he knew that his friends needed to see him in his glory. He knows your heart as well. He wants to lead you into a deeper recognition of himself.

The disciples saw Jesus with Moses and Elijah. They saw him as part of the bigger picture. He was the prophet that God had promised to Moses. And as Elijah ascended into heaven, Jesus was also to do.

You were known and chosen before the creation of the world. There is only one who can bring full meaning to your life. He sees everything in a far greater perspective than you do. And his objective is basically to be glorified for your heart.

This was what happened with the disciples. Finally, they saw no one except Jesus.

God leads you through life in such a way that all other glory loses its gloss. You realize that all earthly glory is like the flowers of the field. They are lovely, of course, but some day they wither and perish.

It is also like that with those things in your life, which are temporary like flowers. Finally Jesus is left alone. Then he comes to you, and you see him transfigured before you. You will see him, in the same way, in eternity. Then you will be delighted and surprised, and no one and nothing will take your joy away from you.

24 September

For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:16

Jesus says these words in connection with the institution of the Lord's Supper. He stresses that there is a line from the communion table to the wedding festivities in heaven, where his friends will be at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

How many times has Jesus met with his friends in the Lord's Supper? He has, again and again, given them himself through bread and wine. In many churches the ring of people kneeling makes a semicircle. It reminds us that the other part of the meal takes place in a different world.

The communion table turns your eyes towards the coming kingdom. Heaven lived in the mind of Jesus, when for the last time he was at table with his disciples. He couldn't help thinking of the next time they would be together.

We cannot grasp the depth of Jesus' suffering. What he had to go through dismayed his soul. In Gethsemane, God sent his angel to strengthen him on the way. Yet still we cannot explain how Jesus was able to bear the agony of the cross. However, his words help us. His love shines so wonderfully through them, especially what he said on the last evening he lived here below.

His heart was filled with love for his friends. They were the ones he thought of. It is as if he could not leave them. Therefore Jesus found help in the certainty that, in a short while, they will be together again.

Every time you kneel at the communion table, you are to think ahead. If you live by faith in Jesus and are preserved in this faith, there will always be another time. The last time will be in heaven when all is completed.

Jesus knew that he was near the goal, when that Maundy Thursday he sat with his friends. Most of us don't know how long our journey will last before we reach heaven. But we will turn our eyes towards Jesus who waits for us, and then we will hurry forwards towards the kingdom where we will be with him forever.

25 September

We write this to make our joy complete.

1 John 1:4

Sin ruins all joy. It infects all that is near with its rottenness. It applies to the relationship between people and God. It applies among people.

John is, therefore, anxious that his friends should walk in the light. If they don't do this, their joy fades away. Criticism and slander gain a footing, because there is something which is hidden and defended. If one hasn't got a clear conscience, one finds the shortcomings of other people, so that one stands in a better light oneself. It is scarcely joyful when that spirit takes hold among brothers.

There is a joy which belongs to heaven. As long as you live on this sinful Earth, the joy in temporal things will always change. Illness, suffering and death can get hold of your life and cast their shadows over it.

Nevertheless, there is a perfect joy on earth. It consists in having a right relationship with God. If you have come to the Lord with your sin, you are not to doubt that he has received you. He has also taken your sin away from you. He did this on Good Friday.

Is there a more perfect and relieving joy for a lost sinner than to be free from both sin and guilt?

God wants this joy to be in your life constantly, and this is possible when you walk in the light. But it doesn't mean we live without sin. A Christian cannot do this while he is on earth. However, he can live in an honest real relationship with God. He can say that as far as he can see, there is nothing, which hasn't come out to the light.

If you are like that, you possess a perfect joy. You are at peace with God. There is nothing unsettled between you and him.

You are ready to leave this life. When God calls you, you can leave at once. Then your joy will be complete before God's face for ever.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.

1 Peter 2:24

We prefer to get away from all that hurts. We do not even like to be reminded of it. Far less do we want others to get into difficulties due to our sins.

What suffering we have caused Jesus! What things he had to undergo because the corruption of sin has such power over us! Our mind isn't able to understand what it cost Jesus to be our rescuer. But God's word reveals the secret to our heart. It doesn't happen once and for all. Over and over we have to become absorbed by the price Jesus had to pay. In spite of the fact that God's Spirit lets us see what no eye has seen, and understand what no mind has conceived, we never reach any further than the beginning.

Jesus and sin belong together. God has put all our sins on him. They lay on him and he knew the weight of them. He was not only wounded by slaps, whips and nails. He was wounded by sin itself.

The greatest opposites are united in Jesus. He was God. Anybody who saw him, saw God. But John could also point to him and say, "Look the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" To see Jesus was the same as seeing the sin of the whole world – yours and mine as well.

Jesus has borne more sin than anybody else. Are you surprised that life here below was difficult for him? It is sin, as you know, that makes it so difficult to live. Your sin makes it difficult. The sins of others make it difficult. Yes, many think that they aren't able to live a life that is ravaged by sin, and therefore they decide to put an end to it. In despair they try to get rid of sin and its consequences.

Jesus didn't do that. He said yes to your sin and mine. He chose to live with it. That is why he had to die with it. To die with sin is to die under its terrible weight. Jesus did that. He bore our sins to the end – right up to the tree of the cross. The soldiers took his tunic, but he kept the sin that God had put on him. Left to God's wrath and judgement, he was sacrificed in your place.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

2 Corinthians 8:9

When Paul left Corinth, he knew that the Christians knew the grace of God. He had portrayed Jesus before their eyes as the crucified Son of God. He had done so many times. He resolved to know nothing while he was with them “except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

How are things among Christians of our age? Do we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Many people will immediately answer yes. However we should not answer too fast.

Could not the reason for so much spiritual poverty be the fact that grace is so little known among those who belong to Jesus? We are occupied with questions of one kind or another, but the heart is rarely refreshed by grace.

You need to return to the beginning. Then you stood before your Lord with a closed mouth. You had nothing to say in your defence. You deserved to hear the death sentence against yourself. However, it wasn't what you heard. God let you hear the death sentence against Jesus. He made it obvious that somebody else had taken your place.

You saw heaven open then. Jesus had prepared the way. You can appear before God by virtue of him. Your Saviour and Redeemer have conducted your case.

God's grace is your only hope even today. If Jesus' blood doesn't cover all your sins, you cannot be saved. You still have nothing to pay with. No matter how much you grow as a Christian, you will never get further than having to be saved by grace alone.

You are to be delighted at this. The truth is that God's grace is so overwhelming, that you cannot achieve a greater bliss. God has given it to you in overflowing abundance.

The deed of Jesus doesn't take you only part of the way forwards. It has taken you right up to the destination. It is what is enveloped in the wonderful words: “It is finished!”

Live in God's grace. Let it carry you throughout your life. You will praise him for it in eternity.

28 September

... what we are in our letters . . . , we will be in our actions.

2 Corinthians 10:11

Is there agreement between your words and your actions? Satan does his best to break this connection. He knows that if this happens, you are paralysed from within. Your words will be without strength, and self-contempt will threaten you.

Jesus warns the disciples against the yeast of the Pharisees. He said about them: They do not practise what they preach.

All Christians are in danger of being like the Pharisees, but the danger is greater for those who have been entrusted with a special task in the congregation. One wants to live up to other people's expectations. One gives other people a positive impression of one's spiritual life. It can happen in countless ways. On suitable opportunities one mentions one's prayer, Bible reading, witness, service or donations to missionary work. It is dangerous. Without realizing it, one drifts away from God's face and begins to live one's life before people's eyes. Then you may give others an impression which doesn't hold water in real life.

Learn from Paul. As he said, so he also was in action. One might point out sin, shortcomings and faults. Still there was a life of sincerity. He presented everything in the light both before God and people.

There were, therefore, many vulnerable points for those who had it in for him. They only needed to turn his words against him. He himself said, as you know, that he was the worst of all sinners, and that nothing good lived in his flesh.

Christians of truth are Christians whose lives endure suffering. If there is a connection between conviction, word and action, it costs something.

John the Baptist couldn't meet Herod without having to expostulate with him about his sin: "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife". These words cost him imprisonment and later his life. John's words were like salt in the open sore of Herod's conscience.

Jesus calls us to take up our cross and follow him. Let there be a connection between our words and our actions.

29 September

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8

God's word often reminds us to love our brothers. Maybe you wonder at the fact that it is emphasized so strongly. But love is the actual lifeblood of the Christian community. If it is lacking, mutual relationship becomes more and more conflict-ridden. Gossip and throwing suspicion on one another gain a footing. The distance becomes greater and greater and it becomes colder and colder.

A Christian fellowship only prospers if many sins are hidden. There are some sins which are to be spoken against. There are situations that must be cleared up. There may also be cases in which ways must part, as they did for Paul and Barnabas. But, first of all, we are to have heartfelt love for each other, so that sin can be covered.

The self-opinionated attitude is dangerous. It shows itself when you still fight to receive your right. If it doesn't happen, you feel that the justice is defeated.

You are to realize that it never happens. Justice cannot lose. Neither can it be oppressed in the long run. It also applies to your right. The Lord himself will bring it forward.

Finally, it isn't certain that you have so much right as you think you have. Most cases have more than one side.

The self-opinionated attitude produces a legalistic spirit among brothers. It makes the fellowship crack, which might take years to get healed.

We shouldn't make everything dark. There is a difference between black and white. God's word speaks of impenitent sinners, who are to be subject to church discipline. There may be a dangerous tendency to throw the truth overboard, in the name of Christian love. It is not the right way to go about it. Truth cannot be preserved without a fight. But in all and through all we are to have heartfelt love for one another. Love isn't indulgent. It is forgiving. We cannot live without it. Love is the life nerve between you and God and between you and your brother.

30 September

Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them.

Matthew 6:1

When Jesus tells his disciples that they are to be careful, there is a real reason to do so. He knows your life's pitfalls better than you do. He knows how easily your spiritual life ends up as an empty role play. You live no longer before God's eyes, but before people's eyes. Your spiritual life has become a shell without its contents.

There is reason for serious self-examination. It is horrifying to realize one's true situation on the Day of Judgement. Then it is too late to be converted.

An old proverb says: A person is as he is, when he is entirely alone!

God doesn't see as people see. He doesn't inquire about words, but power. Is there something hidden in your heart despite the impression you give to yourself and others?

The danger is obvious, that a cold and dead heart hides behind a Christian appearance. We find it so easy to become preoccupied with and captured by visible things, and then The Invisible is driven out.

Can you look at yourself without being uneasy? Must you not ask: Where am I, after all? Must you not pray with the psalmist in Psalm 139:23-24: "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."

The Lord knows everything. You have to go to him. It is a good thing to know that you are seen through by him. He will not break a bruised reed. Jesus wants to lead you back to the starting point.

It is where you received grace for free. You knew that your heart's great sin and uncleanness cried to heaven. Then Jesus came towards you with grace, undeserved grace.

There was only one person, then, in the whole world that you were occupied with. It was Jesus. Remain before his gaze; live your life there. Your spiritual life can only be preserved fresh and healthy with him.

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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! elf!

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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