



SO GREAT A SALVATION

Sigurd Bratlie

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For this edition the New King James Version of the Bible has been used in the text. An occasional word or phrase from the Norwegian Bible translation of 1930 appears in brackets in place of (or in addition to) the New King James Version wording to more accurately reflect what the author wrote.

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Foreword

The letter to the Hebrews is a special letter, and it is called a "word of exhortation" by the apostle who wrote it. Most of what is written in this book is taken from that letter, and therefore references are simply marked "CH" (chapter), followed by the chapter and verse. Wherever other books in the Bible are mentioned, the name of the book, chapter, and verse appear.

In the letter to the Hebrews we are able to see just how great Jesus is, who has given us the gospel. He is the radiance of God's glory, the heir of all things. He is the firstborn among many brethren and is anointed with the oil of gladness more than His companions. He established a new covenant, a perfect salvation, and consecrated a new and living way for us into the Most Holy Place.

In this book (*So Great a Salvation*) we read much about God's only Son, who was manifest in flesh and blood like us. Thus, this book casts light on the spirit of Antichrist, which has explained away this truth and thereby the salvation and hope that Christ brought us. The purpose of this book is to bring faith and salvation to all those who have a heavenly calling. (See 1 John 4:1-3 and 2 John 7-8.) It is recommended that all the references be read.

Now Consider How Great This Man Is

Chapters 1 and 7

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." CH 1:1-2. God could not have sent a greater, more valuable person. That is to say, God had no greater gospel to give people than the one Jesus brought. Everything the angels had spoken through the prophets in the Old Testament was of great value; nevertheless, it cannot be compared with what God sent His Son to declare. All those things that happened and were recorded are for our example and admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. (See 1 Cor. 10:11.) The "ends of the ages" is from the time of Jesus to the "end of all things."

In CH 11 we see how the saints of old were able to achieve the impossible by faith. They are examples for us in faithfulness, although they did not attain to perfection, which the prophets had declared would come with the Son. Nevertheless, they embraced it and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They had to suffer because of their faith without receiving the promise, because God had "provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us." The prophets had spoken about this perfection—the salvation Jesus brought—even though they knew that they were not ministering to themselves but to us (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12), yet they suffered without accepting deliverance; therefore they have also obtained a better resurrection and become friends of the Bridegroom. (See John 3:29.) The salvation Jesus brought makes it possible for us to become His bride, and the bride is, of course, much more valuable to the bridegroom than his friends. (See Phil. 3:7-10.)

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." CH 12:1.

Since we are surrounded by such faithful witnesses who suffered for a lesser calling, how much more faithful ought we to be in our sufferings in order to attain a far greater calling than they had! We are surrounded by them, it is

written. It is also written that we have come to them, and to much more: "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel." CH 12:22-24.

This heavenly realm is not inactive. No, here is a world of the Spirit that is alive and intensely interested in the completion of God's work of salvation which we are to partake of. Yes, they are intensely interested in us, who have a heavenly calling. Jesus Himself appears "in the presence of God for us" (CH 9:24), "since He always lives to make intercession" for us. CH 7:25. Jesus is also called a "surety" of a better covenant (CH 7:22), that is why it succeeds for all those who believe and are willing to suffer for this heavenly calling. There is no excuse for not attaining to it.

How Great Is He Then?

"Whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." CH 1:2-3.

That is how great He is, and He is the only begotten Son of God. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

"...who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." Phil. 2:6-7 (RSV). The fact that Jesus, who was the sole heir, did not consider being equal with God a thing to be grasped, demonstrated that He wanted to have brothers who had also partaken of divine nature and who could inherit with Him. It was this possibility, this salvation, that Jesus accomplished while He was on earth; and when He had finished, it is written of Him, "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'" CH 1:6. Here He is called "the firstborn."

It is written further about the Son: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." CH 1:8-9.

From this we see that He has brothers, but He is the firstborn; and it is He who completed the work, giving us the possibility of becoming His brothers in truth. He considered this as very great, because as soon as He arose from the dead, he said: "Go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'" John 20:17. We read how enthusiastic He was to receive brothers. "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." CH 2:12. We can also read the glorious promises He gives to His brothers: "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His Throne." Rev. 3:21.

But now the question is: do we regard the fact that we are His brothers so

great a thing as He does, so that we count everything as rubbish in order that we might gain Christ? John gives us an exhortation which is extremely needful: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" 1 John 3:1.

This is not some kind of make-believe, something we are merely called, something we are merely imputed to be. No, we read: "He who overcomes...as I also overcame." We are to be His brethren ***in truth***. "Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." 1 John 3:1. If we have this proof, we can rejoice. O how sorely we need this exhortation: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us!" 1 John 3:1.

How was he able to make this salvation possible for us?

Jesus could not do it while He was in heaven. No, He had to relinquish His God-likeness [make Himself of no reputation] and become like a man. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8. This happened in the following way:

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." CH 2:14-15. There was no other way for Him to do it. It had to be done in this way. Therefore, since Jesus was able to destroy the power of the devil, through death, by partaking of flesh and blood like us, it is obvious that the Antichrist is determined to do away with this truth and this work, and he has succeeded to an enormous degree.

It is because of this that the apostle has given us this truth as evidence of whether a prophet is true or false: "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." 1 John 4:2-3. "For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." 2 John 7.

There were already many of these deceivers in the time of the apostles. Religious people nowadays are so deceived that they believe we make Jesus impure when we declare this truth, that He partook of flesh and blood like us.

Thus we can see how terribly the spirit of Antichrist has deceived people, and in so doing has made both Jesus' victory over the devil and this glorious salvation ineffective. The result is that people are left only with the forgiveness of sins, which they had before Jesus came, through the sacrificing of animals and by the law. In other words, they have no opportunity to become Jesus' brethren.

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren." CH 2:11.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself

likewise shared in the same." CH 2:14, etc. "For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." CH 2:16-17. Here we see that in no other way could He have become a merciful High Priest. "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." Verse 18. Again, we understand that unless He had shared in flesh and blood, like the seed of Abraham, He could not have been tempted like them, nor would He have been able to help them. It is therefore clear why the spirit of Antichrist resists this truth so adamantly.

Jesus As The Son Of Man

"The Son of Man" is the way Jesus referred to Himself in Matt. 8:20 and in many other places. Paul also writes the following: "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. 2:5. He had to relinquish His God-likeness and become a man in order to consecrate a new and living way and thereby become like His brethren in truth. (See 2 Pet. 1:3-4.)

There are many concocted religious expressions that are not found in the Bible. One of them goes like this: "He is true God and true man." That, of course, is not possible, since He would not have needed then to walk by faith; but He is "the author and finisher of our faith." Yet, in another sense, it *is* true, because God sent His Son. When the Son was sent, it was His (the Son's) Spirit that was sent, and He (the Son) did not have the whole fullness of God that He had when He was with the Father. No, He relinquished His God-likeness or, as it says in some translations, "He emptied Himself." When His Spirit was born in a human body, it had been "emptied," as it were. It is written in Rom. 1:1-4 that He was "born of the seed of David according to the flesh."

The flesh with its lusts and desires is the veil that prevents us from doing God's will. Those lusts and desires are too strong for us and cause us to sin, even though we really want to do God's will. That is why God sent His Son and gave us the gospel—the glad tidings. This is the glad tidings: "Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Gal. 5:16. It was this that Jesus made possible for us while He was the Son of Man.

If we are looking for a simple, brief description of what the gospel is, we can find it in Rom. 1-4: "Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

The resurrection proved that Jesus had not sinned, despite the fact that He had this flesh in which we know dwells no good thing. He returned to the Father undefiled by the flesh of David. (See Rom. 7:18.) The significance of this for us is that we can, through the gospel, attain to victory over sin and to the same

life that He lived. It is written about Jesus: "Curds and honey He shall eat, when He knows to refuse the evil and choose the good" (RSV). There was a time for Jesus, just like with other children, when He did not understand how to choose. However, when the time came that He was able to choose, His trials and temptations resulted in victory, which was curds and honey for Him. (See Isa. 7:15-16.)

"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Rom. 8:3-4. These verses show clearly that the work which was accomplished in Jesus was done in order that the righteous requirement of the law could be fulfilled in us. We see plainly the possibilities that are open to us when we receive knowledge of Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh. When Paul got this knowledge, he counted everything else he had previously been interested in as rubbish. (See Phil. 3:8.) It is also written that through this knowledge we have received exceedingly great and precious promises, so that through them we might partake of divine nature. (See 2 Pet. 1:3-4.) That is how important it is to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and how equally important it is for Antichrist to explain it away.

We read earlier that it was God who condemned sin in the flesh. In other words, this means that Jesus Himself did not have light over it. He had to receive that light from the Father. Jesus was obedient and became a sacrifice. Through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. (See CH 9:14.) This tells us that He did not have the power as the Son of Man to offer Himself. He had to do it through the eternal Spirit. It was in such weakness as the Son of Man that He learned to be a merciful High Priest for us.

The New And Living Way

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." CH 10:19-22.

We know that the old way for the high priest to enter into the Holiest was with the blood of calves and goats. Only the high priest was allowed to enter with blood in order to atone for the sins of the people. This sanctified to the purifying of the flesh. The blood of Jesus, however, purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Here is the difference between the old covenant and the new one that Jesus established.

When Jesus came into the world He said, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.' Previously saying, 'Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." CH 10:5-10.

Jesus made a covenant here with the Father that He would abolish the sacrifices in which He had no pleasure and offer His own body instead, in order to do the Father's will. Sin, of course, has its origins in the body. Therefore, in order to do God's will with this body, a sacrifice had to take place in the body. The sin which otherwise would have come out from His body had to be put to death there. In this way the devil lost the necessary points of contact through which to tempt and deceive. Through this death, Christ destroyed him who has the power of death, that is, the devil. It was a totally new death that Jesus brought, which is why it is called "the dying of the Lord Jesus." 2 Cor. 4:10-11. We, too, are to carry about with us this dying in the body so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. Jesus has consecrated this new way for us in order that we should walk on it.

Jesus As Our Forerunner

"That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." CH 6:18-20.

Have you ever heard of Jesus as your forerunner? It is more likely that you have heard of Him as the One who has gone the way *instead* of you. But if Jesus is called "forerunner," then there must be those who follow after, otherwise it would be a meaningless title. He consecrated the way for us so that we should follow Him; and, as we have previously read, the veil was His flesh.

We "have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." What is this hope that we have laid hold of? It is to be set free from sin in the body so that no more sin comes out of our body, but only the virtues of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit. If we have begun on this way, we shall not be put to shame, because Jesus, as the son of Man, has consecrated the way for us. The resurrection from the dead proves that He is within the veil. Therefore our hope is firmly anchored, and there is no doubt that it will succeed for those who believe and are upright.

Jesus "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." CH 4:15. (We could also say, "without failing," or "without giving in.") "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." CH 4:16. If He had sinned, if He had given in, if He had failed in the hour of temptation, then we could not have this boldness and this glorious hope that He can give us grace so that we do not give in and do not fail in temptation—in other words, that we overcome in everything. It is when we must suffer that we are tempted. That was how it was with Jesus too. "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." CH 2:18. This is the hope to which we have fled for refuge, sure and steadfast. Our forerunner is also a merciful High Priest who intercedes for us.

When we are tempted, we see the sin that dwells in our flesh, and this gives us an opportunity to put it to death. That is why James writes, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (many translations:

temptations), "knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." James 1:2-3. Many people consider temptation to be the same as sinning; but if that were the case, how could James exhort us to rejoice? On the contrary, we who believe in victory win the crown of life in the trials [temptations], just as we read in James 1:12: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8. In 1 John 3:4-8 it is written: "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." This is to do what we **know** to be sin. In other words, we **fall** in temptation. "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin." If, then, He is able to do His work in us, we stop committing sin. Further on it is written, "Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him." That is to say, everyone who abides in Him stops committing sin. They know Jesus, who is their merciful High Priest, who gives grace for victory in time of need.

"He who sins is of the devil." To sin, or **commit** sin, is not the same as to fall in sin. We never "commit" a fall when we are running. To fall is to have an accident, but a person who commits sin remains in sin. He is of the devil. "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 2:1-2. It is clear, however, that if a person does not have the mind to stop sinning, he cannot get comfort from the fact that Jesus is the propitiation for his sins. No, such a person is of the devil.

To have sin is not the same as to **commit** sin. John does not contradict himself. If I say that I do not have sin, that is the same as saying that I do not have a flesh with lusts and desires, that I cannot be tempted, that I have no will of my own to put to death. In that case I am a liar and the truth is not in me.

Many people say that we are tempted from without, thus putting the blame for their own evil on others. James, however, says: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." James 1:14. One has not sinned when one puts to death the desire which draws and entices. If, however, the desire conceives so that it captures and overcomes my mind, it gives birth to sin which, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Then the person tries to hide his fall. He does not come to the light so he can be cleansed, and sin ripens

and brings forth death.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8:1-2.

It is not written that Jesus came in a *sinful* flesh. No, it is written "...in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8:3. Had Jesus lived according to the flesh, He would have had a "sinful" flesh. On the contrary, however, God gave Him light and condemned sin in the flesh. Jesus was faithful in the new covenant and sacrificed Himself in an eternal Spirit. This was the new death which destroyed the power of the devil. Therefore the sacrifice of animals for sin was no longer necessary. "He takes away the first that He may establish the second." CH 10:9. "The second" was to do the will of God in His body. It was in that body that Jesus had His development, His education, and it was there that He became the forerunner, for us, who are to be "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Rom. 8:29.

Jesus' Preparation For The High Priesthood

"For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' As He also says in another place: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" CH 5:1-6.

There is no hypocrisy in God or in His stewardship. He does nothing that isn't genuine. Everything is true, righteous and genuine. Jesus was not appointed High Priest because He was the Son of God. Nor was that the reason why He was raised from the dead. He did not, as many people maintain, receive a flesh like Adam before the fall, nor was He tempted in the same way as Adam was. It was not people like Adam that He was to save. He did not take upon Him the nature of angels, because it was not angels He was to give aid to, "but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore..."etc. It had to be true that He was taken from among men and appointed for men in things pertaining to God. He had to be beset by the same weaknesses that we are beset by, in order to learn how to serve people like us.

That is why it is written: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." CH 4:15. If He had sinned in the trials, He could not have presented Himself as an offering. Our "weakness" is that we have a flesh with lusts and desires. He also had that same weakness, which was why He was tried and tempted just as we are. These trials and temptations gave Him an opportunity to put to death the sin which makes us transgressors, and thereby He opened a new way to a divine life for us even while we are in this body.

We can read about Jesus' preparation in these verses: "Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear." CH 5:7. He was not heard because He was God's Son. No, God is no respecter of persons. Everything was true and genuine, because the way was to be opened for our sakes. We read that He prayed

vehemently to be saved from death. Then we can ask: "Was He so afraid to die?" It is written that He was heard, yet clearly that is not true in terms of His death on Calvary. He had to die there for our sakes. It is not His death on Calvary that is meant here. It says, "in the days of His flesh." "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Rom. 8:13.

Here we read about the new and living way that Jesus has consecrated for us. If He had lived according to the flesh that He had received of the seed of David, He would have had to die. But He was faithful in His covenant, despite being so weak that He had to pray with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death. He had a tremendous fear of giving in to the flesh, even in the slightest thing—for He was a blameless sacrifice. How glorious, then, to read that He was heard! The resurrection from the dead is the proof, because death could not hold Him.

Notice how conscious He was of His weakness. Just think how humble He was to battle in that way and to acknowledge so completely His dependence on His Father. Yes, He was heard because of His godly fear. He is our forerunner, and we must have the same godly fear when we are in trials and temptations. Then we can come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain help to overcome death. That is what we, who are followers of our merciful High Priest, are called to. "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek." CH 5:8-10. We see from these verses that He did not become a High Priest just as a matter of course. He first had to learn to be obedient, and those who want to follow Him on the new way also have to go through the same process of learning to be obedient. Then they too become priests. Peter writes of them: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Pet. 2:9.

After reading this we could well ask: "Had Jesus been disobedient and therefore He had to learn obedience?" No, far from it: but He had relinquished His God-likeness. Therefore He had to regain the whole fullness of God in a human body, in order to obtain brothers. "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether

things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross." Col. 1:18-20. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." Col. 2:9-10.

In order to regain this fullness He had to walk in the light the Father gave Him. That light was quite different from His own human will, which is why He prayed, "not as I will, but as You will." Matt. 26:39. "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." John 6:38. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

When sufferings come, sin in the flesh starts to protest. Then the person asks, "Why did this have to happen? What's the point of all this?" Jesus never asked such questions, because He understood to sacrifice His own will. When the Father condemned sin in the flesh in the temptations, Jesus believed and got larger and larger areas to be obedient in. The way went through the flesh, and the sacrifices were many.

We read in Isaiah 53 what kind of tribulations He had to endure. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Verse 10. And in Isaiah 63 we read about the battle in Edom where, traveling in the greatness of His strength, He trampled all His enemies underfoot. Who is this? "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Verse 1. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come." Verses 3-4.

Edom is another name for Esau, which in turn is a type of the flesh. The verses above describe the battle Jesus waged in order to destroy the lusts and desires of the flesh so that the year of redemption could come for mankind. He is our Redeemer. It was in the sufferings that these enemies were revealed so that He could crush them. "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." CH 2:10. This offering took place as He constantly walked in the light through faith and obedience. The point came, then, when the Father no longer had more light to give Him that He could partake of. This took approximately 30 years.

When most religious people talk about Jesus' sufferings and death, they

usually think of the crucifixion at Calvary. But the suffering and death that we have received an understanding of here, we, too, will share in, if we obey Him. Then we partake of sanctification and become His brethren. "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren." CH 2:11.

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." 1 Pet. 4:1-2. Here it is quite plain that we are to follow Him. We see that there is a constant reference to "the flesh," and people are not used to that. Yet, it was the flesh that was the veil and which hindered people from entering into the Holiest.

"...the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing." CH 9:8. That veil was rent asunder when Jesus cried out, "It is finished." Now, whoever wants to can follow Him, but the way goes through the flesh, for He became the author of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys Him. We read that since Jesus suffered in the flesh, we are to arm ourselves with the same mind, that he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. If we are to become a "royal priesthood," we must make the same sacrifice.

To "cease from sin" does not only mean to get victory in temptation. One can fight an enemy and overcome him, only to have the enemy return. But if we kill these enemies, as we read in Isaiah 63, then we are truly finished with them. Jesus destroyed them. The only way is to suffer. We are not to be constantly tempted by the same things. We are to slay our enemies and move on. The "land" that we then occupy becomes divine nature. We are in the new covenant that Jesus established, and it is written, He "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed." 1 Pet. 2:24. Many people think this means healing for the body, but it is sin which is our true sickness. You can see this if you watch people who are angry, offended, anxious, etc. They are sick, and the only cure for them is to suffer in the flesh and die with Christ.

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you..., " 1 Pet. 4:12-13. If we think it strange, then we do not understand the sacrifice in the body of Christ, or that we are baptized by one Spirit to be one body. We are members of His body and are under the same covenant to be obedient and make the same

sacrifices. That is why the verse continues: "...but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." Here we can see that there is a difference between how much a person suffers. "The fiery trial which is to try" us is something that is difficult for us, and that is when sin in the flesh is aroused. This sin has to be put to death. I have to make use of the opportunity to put sin to death just as Jesus did, and the degree to which I partake of His glory will therefore be that much greater. It is written, "to the extent that..." Paul writes in Rom. 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God." Yes, those who love God also hate sin, and the greatest thing of all for them is to be conformed to the image of His Son. Rom. 8:29.

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." Rom. 6:12. Through this death, the sacrificing in the body of Christ, He freed a human body from sin. Through the sufferings and death of Christ our mortal bodies are also freed from sin, which is why it is written, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" Rom. 6:3. Through baptism I enter into the new covenant, which is, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." Then the death of Christ begins to work, so that sin does not come out of the body, but the body becomes a sacrifice acceptable to God, which is our "reasonable [spiritual] service." Rom. 12:1.

Many people are busy serving God. They want to do something for Him who has done so much for them, and so they organize many things which are great in the eyes of other people. Large congregations and great revivals are to them a proof that God is with them and that they are servants of the Lord. Often they really do sacrifice a great deal, many missionaries in particular. Nevertheless, they understand nothing of this spiritual service.

It is because of this lack of understanding that they have nothing to say about Jesus before He was 30 years old. The only thing they can say about that period of His life is that He was in the temple when He was twelve years old. Otherwise the only things they have to speak about are the signs and wonders He did, and some of the things He said. The entire Sermon on the Mount, according to most people, was the law. He preached it, they say, so that we would see we needed grace. So they say that Jesus preached the law, in stark contrast to His own words. He said about Himself, "and the poor have the ***gospel*** preached to them." Matt. 11:5. "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John 1:17.

Jesus' Sermon On The Mount

Matthew 5-7

"...and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...." Matt. 5:1-2.

This shows us that the Sermon on the Mount was addressed to His disciples. They had entered into the new covenant and had given their bodies to do the will of God. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ""So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:26-27 and 33. "Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him." Matt. 4:19-20.

It was to such people that Jesus spoke the Sermon on the Mount. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." Matt. 5:17. Jesus fulfilled the law in a body just like the one we have, a body with the same flesh. Then it became possible for all those who want to be His disciples to live the same life in fulfillment of the law. We have read this before in Rom. 8:3-4. It says there that God sent His Son "on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

What is the righteous requirement of the law? It is, "You shall not covet [lust]." Rom. 7:7. This was impossible for the law because it was weak through the flesh. The law could only punish sin when it came out of the body, but covetousness (or lust) is hidden. This was what God condemned in Jesus' flesh, which meant, of course, that sin could not come out of His body. Here is the sacrifice in Jesus' body which has made it possible for the righteous requirement of the law to be fulfilled in us, who are disciples and who are in the new covenant.

To be under the law is the same as to serve in the oldness of the letter. People who serve in this way serve before the face of man. Jesus said, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:20.

They did their works before the face of men, to receive honor of men. "But all their works they do to be seen by men." Matt. 23:5. If our righteousness is to exceed theirs, we must live before God's face and serve in the newness of spirit. (See Rom. 7:6.) That means to be obedient to the light that the Spirit gives us, in exactly the same way that Jesus was obedient to the light that the Father gave Him.

This is where we need Jesus as our merciful High Priest, who gives us grace in time of need. We have power in the Holy Spirit to put to death the deeds of the body. This is the sacrifice in the body of Christ, and the law cannot be fulfilled in us unless we walk in the Spirit. Only those who walk in the Spirit are the children of God—Jesus' fellow heirs. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Rom. 8:14. Only such people are under grace. "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Rom. 6:14. "For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.... Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Col. 3:3 and 5.

This hidden life with Christ in God is a life of putting to death our lusts and thus truly fulfilling the law. Then the body is a well-pleasing sacrifice to God. "...which is your reasonable [spiritual] service." Rom. 12:1. "But now, having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." Rom. 6:22. When we have reached this point, we have victory over sin, and sin no longer comes out of our bodies. Sanctification means to put to death the sin we get light over by walking in the Spirit on the new and living way through the flesh. The reason people have nothing to say about Jesus before He was 30 years old is because they know nothing of this new way. After He was 30 He did many signs and wonders, and that is what people look up to, and what most preachers wish they could do.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:3. Moses came with the law, which led to earthly riches. We read about that in Deuteronomy, chapter 28. When we read about the abundance of earthly glory that was to be theirs if they kept the law, we might well ask ourselves: What more could I want? In that chapter we read only of earthly riches, but the vast majority of people (religious people included) do not want anything more. That is why when people come into need because of earthly things, especially physical illness, they begin to seek God and ask for prayer. They know nothing, however, of their spiritual need and poverty. They are not worried

about that at all.

Jesus, however, brought us riches for our spirit. "What are those riches?" you ask. They are the virtues (attributes) of Christ, and strength for our inner man. "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man." Eph. 3:14-16.

When trials and tribulations come, most people have such a weak inner man that they have no power to bear them. They "lose their composure," as the saying goes. Sin gets the upper hand, they develop animosities, marriages break up, and the love of many grows cold. We read further in Ephesians about the capacity of the love of Christ. He bore the sin of the whole world and thereby overcame all the spiritual hosts of wickedness. "To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Eph. 3:19. Paul preached **all** the fullness of God, the **whole** counsel of God. Acts 20:27.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Matt. 5:3-9.

The Sermon on the Mount is like a table that Jesus spreads for those who have a heavenly calling. It is a heavenly message of glad tidings for everyone who hungers and thirsts for a divine life, an unlimited abundance of the fullness of God for our spirit. Yes, you say, but they will also inherit the earth. True, but that is merely "added" to them. People fight over the earth and the earthly things, which is why they are so restless and so poor. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Matt. 6:33. If we seek the kingdom of God first, then the earthly things are included in it as a gift. Jesus continues: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Matt. 6:34. It is the meek who will inherit the earth, which the others are so busy fighting over. The meek have time to wait for it to be "added" to them.

Jesus is called, among other things, the Prince of Peace. One day He will bind Satan for 1000 years. Then the millennium will begin, and those who will

rule and reign there are Jesus and His bride—who is also called "His brethren." They have attained to that by putting to death the flesh with its lusts and desires. Rev. 19:7 and further on in chapter 20.

If we read the Sermon on the Mount, it becomes quite clear that the law is fulfilled by putting to death the indwelling lust. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart!" Matt. 5:27-28. Further on we read how radical we must be if we are to put this to death. Only then does one come to rest. One example of the difference between what the law had achieved and what we can attain to in the new covenant can be seen from the incident when the Pharisees came to Jesus with the woman caught in adultery.

"Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?' This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.' And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.' Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'" John 8:3-12.

The Pharisees were righteous according to the law, just as Paul was as a Pharisee. Phil. 3:6-10. Paul called this righteousness according to the law his "own righteousness." He had not achieved that through grace. However, when he had received the knowledge of Christ, that righteousness was no longer of any value to him. He wanted to have the righteousness of God by faith. He then goes on to explain how:

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Phil. 3:10. This is the way to

fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. Then it will be true before the face of God and not just before the face of man.

Many people wonder what it was that Jesus wrote on the ground. Some say he was just doodling in the "sand." It doesn't say "sand" here, and it is difficult (if not impossible) to write in sand. Others say that He showed how humble He was by bending down to write while waiting for an answer from the Father. Usually people mention what suits them and leave out what doesn't. Personally, I am in no doubt about what Jesus wrote. I believe He wrote what was written further in the law: "You shall not covet [lust]." And, when He bowed down again, I believe He wrote what is written further in the law: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." "Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last."

We see that through faith and the grace in Christ the law can be fulfilled—our lusts can be put to death. Then the divine life that Jesus lived is manifested. Further in Matthew 5 it is written, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." Matt. 5:38-39. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." Matt. 5:43-45.

When we read these verses, we understand that a really powerful slaughter—or death—is necessary if we are to be finished with our temper, so that we can bless from the heart without hypocrisy. This has now become possible on the new and living way that Jesus has consecrated for us. Then we are the children of God in truth—we are Jesus' brethren.

In Matthew 6:1 Jesus gives us a powerful exhortation: "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven." Here we see that what really matters is what we do before the face of the Father. That is the hidden life with Christ in God.

In Col. 3:22-24 it is written, "Bond servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."

When we think about a servant (who in those days was usually a slave) being so straightforward and simple that he served as to the Lord and not to men, then we understand that the death of Christ had to work in order for him to live such a life. Besides that, he was to think only of the inheritance he would receive from the Lord as his reward. Such a person is a true believer.

"Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men." 1 Cor. 7:21-24.

The slave was not free to use his time as he saw fit. Therefore, he probably felt that he could not serve God as free people could. He felt that he was of no use. But Paul comforts him by saying, "Do not be concerned about it." Why not? "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love." Gal. 5:6. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation." Gal 6:15. No matter what one does, if one does not become a new creation, one is nothing in God's eyes. In the resurrection, only divine nature will have any value. Therefore everyone has the same possibility. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Col. 3:17. In this way, everything I do has eternal value. "Do not become the slaves of men." Those who do what they do in order to be seen by men become their slaves, and what they do has no value in the resurrection.

The Bridal Garment—The Fine Linen

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." Rev. 19:7-8. This is how she appears before the Bridegroom. It is **granted** to her. In other words, she had received grace to appear like this, and that grace had not been in vain. 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1.

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."'" Rev. 3:1. The angel was alive for people but dead for Jesus. That was the righteousness of the Pharisees—whitewashed tombs. Matt. 23:27. "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Rev. 3:4-5. They were alive for God. Their acts were not defiled by eyeservice. They were perfect and had a righteousness that was fine linen, clean and bright. This was in stark contrast to the angel of the church in Sardis and to the righteousness of the Pharisees. A person cannot obtain such a righteousness without knowing "Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Phil. 3:10. To be cleansed from eyeservice is a tremendous victory.

The Narrow And The Wide Gate

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them." Matt. 7:13-20.

Here Jesus gives us simple and powerful instruction. Two gates are spoken about, each of which leads to a completely different result. The common understanding of these verses is that those who call themselves believers have already entered by the narrow gate and the unsaved have entered by the wide gate. We must then ask, "Have these two groups entered by any gate at all, and if so, when did they do so?" When a person is converted, then he or she stands before these two gates; the true and false prophets are there too, each proclaiming his gate and his way. These two gates stand side by side. "When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defile My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger." Ezek. 43:8.

It has always been like this. What are these two gates which converts come to? They are the narrow and wide gates. One is difficult to go through, the other is easy. Unconverted people have not come to any gate at all. The narrow gate is: "Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:33. The wide gate is: "He has done everything; we don't have to do anything. He was crucified for us, He has suffered for us, He kept the law in our stead, He died for us, everything is imputed to us, and we are to do nothing."

It is plain to see that most people enter by the wide gate, and there are plenty of false prophets to guide them through it. The way they proclaim is: "Look at Jesus; His blood covers us; we are perfect through Him; God sees us through His blood as though we were without sin," and so on. These false prophets

have no divine life, and the apostles fought a great battle against them. It is not uncommon to see them exposed as those who are covetous and live in adultery. 2 Cor. 2:17 and 4:2. "But beware the false prophets," Jesus said. They come in sheep's clothing and speak so movingly about Jesus and grace.

To live is to build. They continue to live without building on the rock. To live is to walk on a way, and Jesus teaches us that those who enter by the wide gate walk on a way that leads to destruction. There is no new life on the broad way.

Jesus goes on to teach that every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. This is in accordance with what Jesus also says about the house that was not built upon the rock. When the storm came it fell down, and great was its fall.

We see that the wide gate and the broad way lead to destruction. People who have entered by this wide gate have only one recourse: They can pray for the forgiveness of sins, along with all the ungodly people (if God gives them grace for that), and, like the thief on the cross, be saved "as through fire." 1 Cor. 3:15. Such people will not receive forgiveness, however, if they do not from their heart forgive their brother his trespasses. Matt. 6:14-15 and 18:35.

Jesus says in Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able." Why are they not able? They will not, as Jesus says, forsake everything to be a disciple. They try to enter through the gate and to come to a new life without becoming a disciple. That is completely impossible. It is only by entering through the gate—the new covenant—that they can walk on the new and living way through the veil, which is His flesh.

We can read what is necessary in order to begin to walk this way: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." CH 10:22. It is no use beginning with a bad conscience. The false prophets say: "Your former life is under His blood; you don't have to concern yourself with that any more." The truth of the matter is, however, that if you pray for the forgiveness of sins, but do not put right the wrong you have done or make recompense for things that can be put right, then those sins are bound to your body. If you want to start on the new and living way, you must have your body "washed with pure water." See also 1 Cor. 6:18 and Ezek. 33:14-16. Without having a true heart—which means that you really have forsaken everything and hate your own life—you can never come to the full assurance of faith. This full

assurance is, however, absolutely necessary in order to begin.

"Most assuredly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." John 10:1.

Thanks be to God for true prophets! Can you hear the difference? We have read that false prophets do not confess that Jesus is Christ come in the flesh. "Beware," says Jesus, "of the false prophets!"

Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with the parable about the two men who built a house. The similarity between them was that both had the words of Jesus and both built. The difference was that the one "dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock." He did not begin to build on top of his former life, but the other man did. He built his house on the sand, without a foundation. Another similarity was that the storm beat against both houses. It was then that the difference between them was revealed. The house of the man who had built on the rock stood firm and could not be shaken. The other house, however, fell immediately, and the ruin of that house was great. Luke 6:47-49.

Everything depends on whether or not we have done according to God's Word. Paul, who was chosen to preach the gospel, puts it like this: "...through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His Name." Rom. 1:5. It was in obedience that Jesus, our elder Brother, was perfected.

Jesus Rebuilds The Temple

"And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!' Then His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.' So the Jews answered and said to Him, 'What sign do you show to us, since you do these things?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said." John 2:14-22.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" 1 Cor. 6:19.

Jesus found that His Father's house had become a house of merchandise. It is exactly the same with our bodies. Lusts and desires fill our hearts with all kinds of thoughts and selfish interests. There is not the necessary quietness for prayer. And if we do find time to pray, it is not long before our thoughts are somewhere else entirely. It is all those things in the body which disturb our thought life which Jesus came to cleanse and put to death, so that our fallen bodies could be raised again as a temple for the Holy Spirit. Here the Jews were given an object lesson by this manifestation of His zeal, and were shown what was necessary in order for the temple to be raised. This is the same zeal we read about in Isa. 63.

The Salvation Of The Soul

"...receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into." 1 Pet. 1:9-12.

"And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being [soul].' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second man is the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. 15:45-47.

We can ask: "What is the salvation of the soul?" It is the salvation we partake of through Jesus who became a life-giving spirit. Then we too become heavenly instead of being earthly like the first Adam. "As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man." 1 Cor. 15:48-49.

From these verses we see the difference between those who partake of the salvation of the soul (who partake of the grace that came with Jesus, which those under the old covenant did not have), and those who only partake of the forgiveness of sins. The former become heavenly, as Jesus is heavenly, and receive a body which is the same as His glorified body. (See Phil. 3:20-21.)

God shall create a new heaven and a new earth, and in Rev. 21:2 we read: "Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.'"

The difference between those who partake of the salvation of the soul and those who merely receive the forgiveness of sins is as great as the difference between those who descended from the new heavens and those who were on the

new earth. Adam did not know the difference between good and evil, but he was not a sinner. It was only after he was disobedient that he became a sinner and paradise was disturbed. Then cherubim and a flaming sword were placed to guard the way to the tree of life.

After Peter wrote about our calling to proclaim the virtues of Christ, he gives us the following exhortation: "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles." 1 Pet. 2:11-12.

The fleshly lusts came with the fall, and the first person born after the fall became a murderer. Every person has a soul which finds the fleshly lusts repulsive. Those who live according to these lusts are on an animal level and are driven by their instincts. They know that what they are doing is sin. No one can call himself a Christian and at the same time live according to his fleshly lusts. Paul lists many of the works of the flesh and says that they are manifest, and that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal. 5:19-21. Even the Gentiles know that these things are sins and that a Christian should not do them.

When people are converted and receive the forgiveness of sins, they are lifted up from this animal level to a human level. Then they can live a good life; indeed, we can call it a "paradise life." The Jews were lifted onto this level by the law. If they were obedient to the law, they were lifted above the animal level that the Gentiles were on, and through their sacrifices they received the forgiveness of sins. There was, however, never any question of spiritual growth. That possibility came only through the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

The Hebrews began very well, but they did not continue on the new and living way that Jesus consecrated for us. The reason was that they had become dull of hearing about obedience, and therefore the apostle writes, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food...but solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." CH 5:12 and 14.

Our senses are in our soul, and they need to be exercised by being used. We exercise our senses in those things we are interested in, and since everyone is earthly to begin with, our senses become exercised in earthly things. This is not sin; it is merely what is natural for a human being. It is only when the fleshly lusts, such as honor-seeking, covetousness, and so forth come into the

picture that sin appears. No one comes to the paradise they had envisaged through their senses, but we can be born again to a living hope by the resurrection from the dead and become interested in what is heavenly. We must then walk on the way Jesus walked, He who became a life-giving spirit. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being made alive in the spirit." 1 Pet. 3:18. Of course, this cost Him sufferings in the flesh; and if we are to be made alive in the spirit, then we, too, must arm ourselves with the mind to suffer in the flesh and cease from sin. 1 Pet. 4:1 and 13.

The first thing one thinks of when a child is born is whether its five senses function and are developing. If they are functioning properly, then even if something is wrong with the body, one's sorrow is not as great. That is why the apostle was so concerned when the Hebrews had not developed their senses to discern between good and evil. This development could not take place in paradise.

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus." CH 3:1. "Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out his soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Isa. 53:12.

When a person has exercised his senses in the earthly things, he becomes a personality; many even become world famous. Anyone who wants to become a disciple of Jesus, however, must give up everything in order to enter through the narrow gate and learn of Him. He must pour out his soul, give up his human reasoning and surrender himself to the Lord. Prov. 3:5-6. This is a life of faith. The senses are then exercised and he becomes a spiritual man. Spiritual growth comes through the obedience of faith. People could not partake of this salvation under the law, because the promises of the law were of an earthly glory. Naturally, the people were interested in those promises, and through obedience they became rich and successful. Deut. 28. We, on the other hand, have heavenly promises and a heavenly calling. Through the knowledge of Him we have been given these precious promises, that through them we might be partakers of the divine nature. 2 Pet. 1:3-11.

Jesus says, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. 16:26.

Luke quotes it like this: "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" Luke 9:25.

Yes, what profit is it if one exercises one's senses in what is earthly and vain so that one becomes a great personality, when one day it must all be left behind? Then the soul—the personality—has actually been lost, even if the spirit is saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor. 5:5.

To begin with, our interests are earthly and our senses are exercised in the earthly things. Jesus explains to us the way of salvation for our souls—our personalities: "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." John 12:25 and 1 Cor. 15:50.

It is written that the Word of God divides between soul and spirit and that it discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. (See CH 4:12.) As human beings, we rely on what the soul feels, sees and hears. That is to say, we rely on our reasoning. Many thoughts come into our hearts from this reasoning, and they are **human** thoughts. We cannot rely on this reasoning; instead, we have the Word of God, which is able to give us light. The Word of God divides between soul and spirit so that we can be freed from our human reasoning and entrust ourselves to the Word of God which discerns [judges] our human thoughts. If I love this judgment and receive the light the Word gives, I will grow into a spiritual person with senses exercised to discern between good and evil. This is written in connection with Him who has eyes like flames of fire and knows all things. In this way I live a hidden life with Christ in God. Then it is not difficult to bear the scrutiny of the ungodly. If I depend on the testimony of people, I am not living before God's face.

In Isa. 53, where it is written of Jesus who poured out His soul, it is also written that He was counted among the transgressors, though He bore the sins of many and made intercession for them. That was a divine life, not a human one. We also have this heavenly calling, and Jesus teaches us in this way: "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." Matt. 5:44.

In situations like those, many thoughts arise in one's soul, and people around us volunteer "reasonable" (but soulish) advice and counsel. The Word of God, on the other hand, teaches us about the narrow way that leads to life. In these situations we must pour out our earthly senses and let the Word of God fill us so that we can be exercised in overcoming evil with good, exercised in putting on the virtues of Christ, and in this way forgive one another and become one as

the Father and the Son are one. Jesus was the first one to go this way, of course, and we love because He first loved us. We, too, are to get spiritual senses so that we can love first in order that others can also come to love. We cannot partake of this salvation if we do not forsake everything.

"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." 1 Pet. 4:19.

It is when we must suffer that the human senses begin to work. The soul becomes agitated. To commit one's soul to a faithful Creator means that all that I understand and think, I am to leave in God's hands so that He can take care of it. My calling and my responsibility is to do good. By the obedience of faith I experience God's wisdom—He takes care of the matter. Then my senses develop and I grow in spiritual understanding.

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart." 1 Pet. 1:22.

Brotherly love is only sincere when it is not mixed with self-interest. Trials put this to the test. When the Word of God judges the thoughts and intents of the heart, it is vital to love the truth. One gets light over what is human, and it is important to cleanse oneself in obedience to that truth. Then love becomes godly and is undefiled by human reasoning.

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. 4:17-18.

It is truly difficult to lead those who seek God into a spiritual development. It is not possible to come to the salvation of the soul without loving God with all one's heart. We read how Paul rejoiced over such people: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 2:13-14.

We do not receive the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as a gift. No, we see from these verses that it is by belief in the truth that we partake of sanctification, and without sanctification no one shall see God. (See CH 12:14.)

The rich young ruler who came to Jesus had become very rich by keeping the law, but he felt that the paradise life he had was not enough, and he asked

what he should do. Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Matt. 19:21. This young man did not have enlightened eyes of the heart so that he could see the hope of his calling and the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the saints. (See Eph. 1:18.) Therefore he went away sorrowful. If he had believed and been obedient, he would have come to that glory.

Many believers are in the same situation. They do not live according to the lusts of the flesh, which war against their souls, and they see God's blessing as an earthly glory. When they speak about the blessing of God that is over them, they only tell about how God has helped them with the earthly things. They see things just as Job's friends did. But it is clear that since they have so many earthly goods to take care of, their thoughts must also be occupied with the earthly things. Paul teaches us in 1 Cor. 7:29-31 how we are to make use of the earthly things. The whole chapter teaches about this matter in order, he writes, that we should understand what is proper, namely, "...that you may serve the Lord without distraction." Verse 35.

The salvation of the soul consists of emptying one's senses of all earthly interests and filling them with heavenly glory. Then one will be a personality together with Jesus in the resurrection.

The Great Mystery

"By revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel." Eph. 3:3-6.

We can read in Eph. 2:12-18 about the knowledge that Paul had. The Gentiles were without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."

It says here that Jesus abolished in His flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances. It is really a great mystery that He could do that in His flesh. The law with its commandments and ordinances was given because of the flesh. It enabled the Jews to restrain themselves from indulging their lusts too much, and through the law they could punish sin when it came out of the body. Therefore the Jews had a high moral standard, as opposed to the Gentiles, who had no restraints. The law was a wall of separation that kept the Jews within limits; it was also a matter of honor for them not even to eat together with the Gentiles. For this reason there was enmity between them.

Jesus broke down this wall and this enmity through the cross. Most people think in terms of Calvary, but that was merely the end of the story. What is meant here is the cross that Jesus said we must take up in order to follow Him. It is that cross which is also mentioned in Gal. 5:24: "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." These passions and desires are put to death by that death which is called "the dying of the Lord Jesus." When the passions and desires are put to death, the law becomes superfluous; it is abolished. Because there is the same flesh in both Jews and

Gentiles, He carried them both up to the cross. There the enmity was put to death and the two became one new man, and both have access to God in one Spirit, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all." Col. 3:11.

The Gentiles were afar off, but through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is preached, "and by him every one who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses." Acts 13:39 (RSV). They were brought near by the blood of Jesus. The Jews, of course, were already near, but then we can ask: "What was it they had come near to? They had come near to being freed from all those things from which they could not be freed under the law. And what was that? It was the lusts in the flesh. It is these lusts that cause unrest and division to this very day. Unrest comes from the lusts which war in our members. (See James 4:1-6.) Those who do not understand this mystery that Paul writes about can never be one body, or "one new man." If we read Col. 3:11-15, we see that this is possible. Paul worked with them and showed them the way so that the peace of Christ could rule in their hearts in one body and they could be thankful.

Millions of people believe in forgiveness for the sin that comes *out* of the body, but they do not believe in victory over sin *in* the body. This great mystery, that Jesus raised up the temple—the body—the temple of the Holy Spirit, is not believed or understood by them at all. Israel is a pattern here of the unbelief of the religious world.

Near To

Numbers 14

We read of how the twelve spies came back with large clusters of grapes. All of them praised the land and showed the fruits, but the enemy was mighty. The nations were great and the spies were like grasshoppers in comparison. For this reason they had no faith for victory and taking possession of the land. Joshua and Caleb agreed with the other spies in everything except in the matter of not being able to overcome the enemy. All the people had now "come near to," but they did not have faith to enter in.

From this we see how easy it is to listen to unbelief. All the people listened to the ten. Why? They did not believe in God's grace and power, and it sounded so humble when they said that they could not overcome. "But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: 'The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.' And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel." Num. 14:6-10.

They had come near to the promised land, but did not have faith to go in and conquer the enemy. This is because they did not believe in the Lord, but only in their own strength. If God had sent a plague into the land so that all the inhabitants had lain there dead, then they would have had faith to enter. Then they would have praised God and said, "He has done everything; we didn't need to do a thing." That is the way the religious masses would like to have it. But what would that be in comparison to God's giving them power so that they themselves overcame? "If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land, only do not rebel against the Lord," said Joshua and Caleb.

Here is the crux of the matter. Does the Lord delight in us? The children of Israel, if the Lord had delighted in them, would have consumed their enemies as if they were bread. This might sound like pride and arrogance, but in fact

this was true faith in God who had called them to possess the land. When you hear this, you can hear the difference! But are you also able to hear the difference today between those who have faith in victory over sin in the body and those who do not have faith and who say, "He has done everything, we are to do nothing"?

"And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were **not willing** to believe?" CH 3:18 (Norw. transl.). Why would they not believe? Because they did not want to fight and were afraid to suffer. Many people suffer because of sin in the body, which is constantly manifesting itself, and they seek the baptism of the Spirit. They think then that all sin will be torn up by the roots and done away with. They think that the power they receive will take away the sufferings. Here many people are thoroughly deceived. It is impossible to cease from sin without suffering in the flesh. (See 1 Pet. 4:1.) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" so that you can suffer in the flesh and be finished with sin. Then you can be witnesses of what Jesus has made possible for us. Acts 1:8.

If we read further about Israel, we find that Moses prayed that God would forgive them, just as He had done ever since they left Egypt. "Then the Lord said: 'I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord—because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.'" Numbers 14:20-23.

In other words, they received the forgiveness of sins, but they did not get victory in the land and partake of the glory there. They had to return to the wilderness and wander there for 40 years. They continued to murmur, and the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, and many died. They confessed their sin and Moses prayed for them. If they were bitten they were to look up to the serpent, and they would live. This was an amazing thing that required faith. It was only those who believed who lived, but this bronze serpent could not prevent them from being bitten in the first place.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:14-15.

This is the first thing that is preached to us, and without it none of us would be saved, "...through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you..." Most

people stop here and never come to what is written next: "...and by Him everyone that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses." Acts 13:38-39 (RSV). The greatest thing for most people is to preach Jesus as the bronze serpent. They do not know Jesus as High Priest.

Later we can read that Israel, long after they had entered the land, was still burning incense to the bronze serpent. But then they had fallen away and Hezekiah, who was zealous for the Lord, broke it in pieces. "He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan." 2 Kings 18:4.

Down through the ages there has been a vast amount of idolatry with Jesus as the bronze serpent. There are millions who think that they are worshiping God by kneeling in front of a crucifix. They place it at crossroads, where they kneel and kiss it, or on their property. Think of all those who wear it as an ornament around their neck. This is an awful deception. Because they do not know the great mystery, the new and living way through the flesh, and Jesus as High Priest, there is no spiritual development, only a wandering in the wilderness with sin and divisions, murmuring and complaining. The heavenly calling is something completely different!

The Great Mystery: The Body of Christ—The Church

We have read about the sufferings and death of Christ, how Jesus suffered in the flesh and was finished with sin, and how He sacrificed Himself in the power of an eternal Spirit. That Spirit then became acquainted with all the sacrifices that had to be offered on the way through the veil, which is His flesh. When that way was completed at Calvary, His body was raised up as a temple. After the resurrection He received the Spirit from His Father, and it was this Spirit that He poured out upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

"Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear." Acts 2:33.

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and all have been made to drink into one Spirit." 1 Cor. 12:13. We are baptized by one Spirit to be one body. That is the body of Christ. The Spirit must then do the same work in us as the Father did in Jesus. And Jesus says, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." John 16:12-14.

To guide us into all the truth means to give us light over all that is to be put to death, and here an acknowledgment is necessary. The Spirit can only guide those who love the truth about themselves. The Spirit lusts against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit, but I am the one who decides which of them gains power in my life. That is why the exhortations are written to me. Many people say, "The Spirit is to do it," which means, of course, that the Spirit gets the blame if it isn't done! No, we are to "serve in the newness of spirit." Therefore we are exhorted to "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Gal. 5:16. "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Rom. 8:13. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Rom. 8:14. And so on.

All those who do not love the truth will be deceived by the Antichrist; God Himself will see to that. In 2 Thess. 2:13-15 it is written: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God

from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle."

We see that it is the Spirit that guides us into the truth. The Spirit works with us. Unless we love the truth, however, He cannot lead us to sanctification. We are to win the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we do that through obedience to the form of doctrine. Thus we walk on the way He has consecrated for us, and we partake of His life. Then we are His body, and Jesus is the head of the body. Despite the fact that we are so different, both Jews and Gentiles, we are nevertheless baptized by one Spirit to be one body. That is the same Spirit in which Jesus offered Himself and by which we are led. "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Gal. 5:24. Unless we have done that, we cannot be led by the Spirit.

"And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." Eph. 2:16. And, "...having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace." Eph. 2:15.

We see from these verses that the two—Jews and Gentiles—became one new man on the cross. This is the church, the body of Christ. Eph. 3:4-6. What a mystery!!! Where can you find it? You will never find it among the various religious organizations with their different names. They are in stark contrast to the church, which is the body of Christ. The very fact that they try to find so many fine, Biblical names for their so-called churches is a powerful testimony against them. Often they fight against each other and also among themselves. This strife can be so manifest that it even gets reported in the daily newspapers and becomes a national disgrace.

Jesus said: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Matt. 18:20. He also prayed to His Father: "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are." John 17:11. We can see from this that those who take another name have no chance of becoming one. Nor do they have any promise that Jesus will be among them. Jesus continues: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us,

that the world may believe that You sent Me." John 17:20-21.

Where can you find a church today in which this prayer of Jesus has been fulfilled?! You cannot find it among all the denominations with their various religious names. They deny that Jesus came in the flesh, that He partook of flesh and blood just as the children; they deny that God condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Therefore they have no part in the gospel which was promised through the prophets "...concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. 1:3-4.

They know nothing of the death of Christ, which is the mystery Paul writes about, and which we are always to carry about with us in the body so that "...the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." 2 Cor. 4:10-11. When they know nothing of this death, how can all these different people become one as the Father and Son are one!? It is absolutely impossible! Their lack of unity is constantly being manifested.

But wherever the gospel about Jesus, who came of the seed of David, is preached, the hearers can partake of a righteousness which they could not partake of under the law. Then they are joined together by the Head, who is Christ. "...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Eph. 4:16. What a glorious mystery is revealed to us through the Scriptures! We must truly say, "So great a salvation!"

Jesus As Surety For A Better Covenant

Chapters 7 and 9

"...(for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: 'The Lord has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"'), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." CH 7:21-25.

We read earlier about Jesus' preparation for the high priesthood, how He was tempted but put to death sin in the flesh so that He did not sin. For this reason death could not hold Him, and He ever lives to make intercession for us. Since He has called us to follow Him, He is also a surety (or guarantor) that all that the new covenant gives us hope of will be accomplished. What exactly does the new covenant give us hope of? It is written in verses 18 and 19: "For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." This, then, is the better hope: Being led to that which is perfect.

The old covenant could be faulted because it did not lead to perfection. The entire religious world is deceived as far as this "better hope" is concerned. Neither do they have any understanding about Jesus who "has become a surety of a better covenant." The reason is that they have never heard of Jesus who partook of flesh and blood like the children and who consecrated a new and living way through the veil, which is His flesh. Because Jesus, as the Son of Man, partook of all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, He has become a surety that it will also succeed for all those who obey Him. Col. 2:9 and CH 5:9.

We read the following in CH 5: "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is

called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are my Son, today I have begotten You.'" Verses 1-5.

We see clearly here that Jesus had to be taken from among men and appointed for men. We see too that He did not become High Priest because He was the Son of God, but rather because He had offered the sacrifice for sins which led Him, in the days of His flesh, to the whole fullness of God, and which can also lead us to perfection. That is why He is a surety for this hope—this new covenant that leads us to perfection.

"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever." CH 7:26-28.

Here we see clearly that as a result of being perfected, Jesus was made High Priest. We read earlier that He learned obedience through the things He suffered, "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." CH 5:9. In the same connection it is written, "who, in the days of His flesh...." It was as the Son of Man, in flesh and blood like the children, that He was perfected as High Priest and as a surety for the new covenant, so that He could perfect all who come to God by Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them.

We read: "Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." CH 7:27. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Isa. 53:10.

All corruption in the world comes from lust. (See 2 Pet. 1:4.) Sin in the flesh is the cause of all the corruption in the world. That was what the Father condemned in the flesh of Jesus. (See Rom. 8:3.) If Jesus had not been obedient in the sufferings when He was tempted, to offer Himself—to put to death the sin which the Father condemned—He would have sinned. He had to make an offering for sin, first for Himself, so that He should not sin, and afterwards for the people. This resulted in salvation for everyone, that is, everyone who obeys

Him.

In connection with the offering for sin, we can read about Jesus' battle in Isa. 63:4: "For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come." It was He who is mighty to save, who came from Bozrah. In verse 8 it is written, "For He said, 'Surely they are My people, children who will not lie.' So He became their Savior."

It is written in 1 Pet. 3:18 that Christ suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

Now the sacrifice for sins lay in the flesh. When that sacrifice was completed, the "handwriting of requirements" was met, and He nailed it to the cross. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him. (See Isa. 53:5.) Then He redeemed us with His precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, from our aimless conduct received by tradition from our fathers. (See 1 Pet. 1:18-19.) Through this we can now receive the forgiveness of sins. He made us alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses. (See Col. 2:13-14.)

But He did not bear our sins on the tree so that we should merely receive the forgiveness of sins. No, it was in order that we should die to sins, live for righteousness, and walk in His steps. (See 1 Pet. 2:24.)

Then we begin on the new and living way through the flesh, where the offering for sins lies, and the death of Christ must carry out the judgment over the sacrifice within us. Otherwise sin in the flesh will cause us to continue to commit sin just as before. If, however, we are led by the Spirit to make this sacrifice in the body, we come into the blood of Christ and have boldness to enter the sanctuary. The pleasure of the Lord will prosper in our hands and we can lead people to God. Then we are the body of Christ here on earth as long as the time of grace lasts.

Therefore we, just like Paul, can preach: "...that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses." Acts 13:38-39 (RSV). The forgiveness of sins was preached under the law, but people could not be set free from their former evil way of life inherited from their fathers. But now, with Jesus as High Priest and surety, we can preach a "better hope"—liberation from our former way of life, victory over sin, and partaking of divine nature. "Because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.' And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's

work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear...." 1 Pet. 4:16-17. Where can we find this fear today?

"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." Rom. 6:22. To be tempted is not sin, but if we do not make an offering for sin, we sin and cannot be the servants of God. But if Jesus is our High Priest, we are led by the Spirit and we do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (See Gal. 5:16.) Then we can work for God.

"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." 1 Tim. 4:16.

Where do you hear exhortations like this one, which Paul gave his precious co-worker—the "man of God"? If one were to take heed to these exhortations, then almost everywhere people would cry out, "Heresy, You want to save yourself." Therefore it is difficult to follow these exhortations today, even if you have heard them. The reason is that they do not know Jesus as High Priest, only as a propitiation for their sins. They do not know Him as "forerunner" and "surety for a better covenant." The "better hope" the new covenant gives us is to be set free from sin. (See John 8:36.)

The apostle writes about the old form of worship: "It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation." CH 9:9-10.

"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come..." and so on in verse 11. Now there is something completely new. There is an end of serving in the "oldness of the letter" because of the law's demands. Now our consciences can be purified from such dead works, which cannot give any growth or development. The time has come to serve the living God and partake of sanctification—growth and development.

"And for this reason He is the mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." CH 9:15. And then we have this exhortation in CH 6:1 and 3: "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...." "And this we will do if God permits."

What, then, does it mean to go on to perfection? It means what Paul writes in Eph. 3:17-19: "...That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Have you ever heard this preached anywhere? I doubt it, simply because people do not know Jesus as He was in the days of His flesh, as our forerunner, our High Priest and surety for this "better hope, through which we draw near to God." This is the hope that "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." CH 6:19-20.

In other words, in going on to perfection, we have Jesus as our forerunner. It succeeded for Him in the days of His flesh. The resurrection from the dead was proof of that. He has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. (See 1 Cor. 15:20-23.) "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." CH 6:18. Jesus is our forerunner, and He is beyond the veil. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." CH 4:14. That is, the confession of our hope.

Most people then say, "Yes, but He was God's Son; it was different for Him." But we read further why we can hold fast to our hope. "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." CH 4:15-16.

Religious people do not have such a high priest, and therefore they do not have such a hope to confess, either. They speak only of Jesus who has done everything and that we do not have to do a thing. Further on in CH 5, verses 7-10, we read about His weakness in the days of His flesh and how He battled to be saved from that death which comes from walking according to the flesh. Rom. 8:13. He was not, of course, saved from dying on the cross at Calvary. He **had to** die there for our sins in order to reconcile us to God and be able to lead us to this glorious hope in which we have taken our refuge. "And you ... He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the

faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel...."Col. 1:21-23.

When we read this, we see that we have a High Priest who really knows our weaknesses and our trials. If we get to know Him, even in the midst of our wretchedness, we get boldness to come before the throne of grace. We know that there we can get help and, with confidence in Him as the surety for this hope, we can confess our hope with great boldness. But we also read how we must not be moved away from the hope of the gospel. This is particularly important now since the entire unbelieving religious system denies it. They say it is highminded to hope such things. That is because they have never heard of the High Priest we have.

When we read about the new and living way, we also read the following: "And having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking our own assembly, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." CH 10:21-25 (Norw. trans.).

Here we read that we are not only to hold fast to the hope, but "hold fast to the **confession** of our hope without wavering." "Our own assembly" is where this hope is confessed. We are not to forsake this assembly and go around to listen to all kinds of religious chit-chat. It is easy to lag in zeal and to be defiled by the spirit of unbelief. Why should we waste our time with religious books and being entertained in the different religious assemblies? No, the day is approaching when Jesus will return to fetch those who are waiting for Him.

He will not be coming to forgive sins or make a sacrifice for sins. No, He is coming to fetch the result of the work that He has completed in those who believe. "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." CH 9:28.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony." CH 11:1. Further, we read what the elders attained by faith. All those things were humanly impossible, yet they became possible for those who believed. All of these things are written for our sakes so that we should see what God can do in those who believe. These

things were impossible for the unbelieving. It is exactly the same when we preach the new covenant and the hope that it gives us. The crowd cries out, "Impossible!!!" But for us who believe, it has become possible.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for." To get someone to believe in something he does not hope for is virtually impossible. If, however, we find someone who is hoping for the kind of life the gospel gives us hope for, it is not so difficult to lead them to faith. Therefore we must never argue with people. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit...who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." It is no use trying to work with anyone else. Thanks be to God that He gathers those who mourn in Zion. (See Isa 61:1-3.)

It is written at the end of CH 11: "And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us."

When we read about what they had to endure and suffer for the hope **they** had, then what about **us**? Should we not be able to endure and suffer even more for the better hope which God has provided for us? By faith our eyes are opened to the glory God will reveal in us. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8:18. If we see this glory, then it is not really difficult to suffer. (See 1 Cor. 2:9.)

We read further in CH 12: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." Verse 1.

This cloud of witnesses testifies that God revealed His glory in them and that He used them to do and accomplish what was humanly impossible. In the same way God will also reveal His glory in us and fulfill in us the hope of the gospel, which almost all people say is impossible! But he who believes is never put to shame. (See 1 Pet. 2:6-9.) "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us." Yes, then we have victory; we have laid aside every weight; we have given up everything in order to be His disciple. We have become free, just like Jesus when He came into the world and said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." One might then ask: "Well, what more is there?" It is written further, "And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." This is the same as Paul writes, "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness

(sanctification), and the end, everlasting life." Rom. 6:22. Here we see what there is to do and partake of, after we have been set free from sin.

Timothy was, of course, set free from sin, but he was to take heed to himself and the doctrine so that he could save both himself and those who heard him. The fruit of his work was holiness for himself. There are multitudes of preachers who have never imagined that this should be the fruit of their ministry. But they are not set free from sin, either. They have had a glorious conversion and have perhaps received the baptism of the Spirit, and then they go to a Bible school or study theology. No one asks whether they are set free from sin or whether they are partaking of holiness. All this is a system which they come into after they have gone through the wide gate.

After entering by the narrow gate and getting victory over sin, we find what Paul calls "the deeds of the body." We are to put these to death by the Spirit. The deeds of the body consist of my human nature coming out from my body because I have sin which I have not seen before. That is the other law in my members which wars against the law of my mind. (See Rom. 7:23.) The Spirit reveals this to me when I take heed to myself and the doctrine. By walking in the light I put these deeds to death and divine nature increases. This is spiritual growth and development—sanctification—a glorious fruit of my ministry! This is the race that is set before us after we have laid aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us.

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." CH 12:2. It was Jesus who began this race of faith, and He completed it. We can see from these verses where He ended up. Have you come to faith in the gospel? Are you along in the same race as Jesus? Are you waiting for the joy that is set before you? "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My Throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." Rev. 3:21. Yes, Jesus once asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Further on in CH 12 we read that all true sons are chastened, and we are chastened "that we may be partakers of His holiness." Have you ever read that it is His holiness you partake of when you are chastened by Him? Therefore, "...do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him." "Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed." Verses 5 and 12.

Here we see how our High Priest works with us. The Hebrews were falling behind on the way. By that time they should have been teachers, but they were still babes and could not bear solid food. Why had they not grown? They had become dull of hearing about obedience, and without obedience Jesus could not save them. (See CH 5.) It was the same people who had made the glorious and wholehearted beginning that we read about from CH 10:32 onwards. In spite of the condition that they were in, the apostle writes about the heavenly calling and the glory of Jesus Christ that they could partake of. This "so great a salvation" was still possible for them. Nevertheless, he reminds them that "our God is a consuming fire," and he exhorts them that, "since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

Outside The Camp

Chapter 13

"We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." CH 13:10-15.

Those who serve the tabernacle are those who serve before the people in order to keep all the outward things in order. "Yet they shall be ... ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them." Ezek. 44:11. The blood of these sacrifices is not carried into the sanctuary (see Lev. 6:30). "'But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,' says the Lord God. 'They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge.'" Ezek. 44:15-16.

"Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate." Verse 12. We know, however, that when the high priest went into the Holiest with the blood to make atonement for the sins of the people, the people themselves did not go in with him; they only received the forgiveness of sins, and those sacrifices could not "make those who approach perfect." CH 10:1-4. But Jesus, "who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot" (see CH 9:14), entered the sanctuary with His own blood and brought an eternal redemption. Through Him the forgiveness of sins is preached.

But those who are sanctified with the blood of Jesus do not enter into the sanctuary, either. The religious world is living under a great deception on this point. They comfort themselves with the Scripture: "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus...."CH 10:19. They reckon that they have entered by receiving the forgiveness of sins. But that is not true. Those who receive the forgiveness of sins are sanctified "with" His blood. We read further that Jesus has consecrated a new and living way for us to enter the Holiest, and that way goes through His flesh. Yes, that is a tremendous mystery, which Paul says was revealed to him. You have probably

read this many times without ever thinking about or noticing exactly what was written. If we are to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, then we must walk on the way Jesus has consecrated for us.

We read: "Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach." CH 13:13. When religious assemblies split up, those who leave say, "Yes, we must go forth to Him, outside the camp, and bear His reproach." Then after a time they split up again, and they again believe that they are going forth to Him outside the camp. They have overlooked the fact that it says "to Him." Where was He when He died outside the gate? He was crucified on a cross. So what does it mean to go forth "to Him"? It means what Paul writes as his personal testimony in Gal. 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Among those who have "gone forth to Him" there are no splits or divisions. We read in Eph. 2:16-18 that on the cross He made one new man of the two and broke down the middle wall of separation, which was in His flesh. Paul writes further in Gal. 5:24: "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

If we have been baptized in one Spirit to be one body, and have crucified the flesh with its lusts and desires, we are members of the body of Christ. Then we have the power of His resurrection, and we come to know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. (See Phil. 3:10.) On this way we have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. Those who live for themselves do not have that boldness.

It is very easy to hear the difference between these two groups when they speak. Those who are sanctified with the blood of Jesus speak about how He has done everything and we are to do nothing. He has fulfilled the law in our place; He suffered for us and was crucified for us, and God sees us as perfect through the blood of Jesus.

The other group speaks about what Jesus has done for us and of the possibilities that we have because of the work the Father carried out in His Son. They speak about giving up everything in order to be His disciple and of following in the steps of Him who did no sin. They speak about partaking of the sufferings of Christ, of being crucified with Him and bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus can be manifested in our bodies, and that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in

us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. These two groups speak completely different things. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." We read in Revelation that the Spirit always says, "he who overcomes..."

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." CH 13:15.

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." That was Paul's testimony. Did he have anything to complain about, then? Anything to be dissatisfied with? No! He sat in prison awaiting judgment, not knowing whether he would be sentenced to death or not, and in that situation he wrote to the church, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" Phil. 4:4. How often were they to rejoice? Always! That is how it is with those who have gone outside the camp to Him! They no longer live themselves, but Christ lives in them. The fruit of Christ's living in them is that they continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God. There is nothing else on their lips.

"These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage." Jude 16. One would think that those mentioned here are people who would have nothing at all to do with God. But that is not the case. "These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots." Jude 12.

One might well ask, "How could such people be in their love feasts?" Because the spirit of Antichrist had been so active that the grace of God had been turned into licentiousness. They were not able to see or hear clearly, and they were incapable of discerning properly. That is how it goes with religious people who preach: "He has done everything, we are to do nothing. The grace of God covers everything. God sees us through the blood of Jesus as perfect. Take care that you don't come under the law and try to save yourself. Watch out! Don't do anything in your own strength!" etc., etc. It is all a terrible deception!

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Jude 3.

Yes, it was really necessary for him to do that, considering the situation. None of them could preach the word, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, in such a way as to separate the godly from the ungodly. (See CH 4:12

and 2 Pet. 1:9.) The usual thing today is that if someone lets the light shine so that ungodliness is brought into the light, the so-called worshipers start crying out, "Don't judge, preach Christ!" And so no one dares to speak out. (See 1 John 2:18-19 and 4:1-6.)

It is easy to understand that all these worshipers have not gone forth to Him outside the camp. You can clearly hear that such people are not crucified with Christ, because those who love God and no longer live themselves, understand that all things work together for their good. The one thing they are thinking about in all situations is sanctification. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Rom. 8:29. It is no wonder that one hears only a sacrifice of praise from such people, and that they rejoice in the Lord always.

We read in 1 Cor. 13 about all the glorious gifts we can have and all the good works we can do. Without love, however, I am nothing, and these things profit me nothing. Then we read a description of what love is, and what it is not. From this we understand that we do not have love if we live for ourselves. If I am to abide in love, which "thinks no evil" but "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things," I must have an altar in my body that enables me not to live for myself. Then I am walking on the new and living way, which goes through the flesh and into the Holiest. With such an altar I enter in by the blood of Jesus, which speaks better things than that of Abel. (See CH 12:24.)

One might ask, "What are we to do in the Holiest?" That is where the throne of grace is. There we can pray for grace in our own lives so that we do not sin in temptations. But not only that; Jesus is in the sanctuary before the face of His Father, where He intercedes for us. That is just what the high priest did in the old covenant. It is easy to understand that we cannot be a true intercessor for a person whom we cannot bear, or whom we have something against. All that must be put to death, because the blood of Christ does not accuse; it speaks of grace and salvation.

We do not have boldness before the Father unless we abide in love. In this condition we continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God. If I am in the blood of Jesus, then I have a work to do—the same work that Jesus had and which Paul exhorts us to in Eph. 6:18-20.

"We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." CH 13:10. Where is that altar? It is in the body. "Always carrying about in

the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." 2 Cor. 4:10. Here we see that the sacrifice takes place in the body.

"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'" John 4:34. "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me." John 6:38. Jesus offered Himself without spot to God. (See CH 9:14.) In these verses we read about the sacrifices of His will—of Himself—in order to do God's will. He had an altar in His body. It was from there that He received the food to eat which the disciples knew nothing of, namely to do God's will and to finish the work of God that He was sent to do.

By going to Him outside the camp and by being crucified with Him, His death also becomes active in us. Through this altar the Word of God becomes living for us. We understand to do God's will, and we have a work to do. It is no wonder that we continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God.

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes...." 1 Pet. 1:6-7. "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." 1 Pet. 4:1-2. "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." 1 Pet. 4:12-13.

The altar in the body is clearly spoken about in these verses. That which has to be sacrificed is our self-life, that "I" which spoils everything and enables Satan to gain power. We must first suffer on the altar, and then we come to the life of Christ which is our food, and we find the work He gives us to do as a member of His body. We partake of the "oil of gladness," with which Jesus was anointed more than his companions (or brethren). (See CH 1:9.) But all His brethren are also anointed with the same oil.

The fact that we must suffer first, means that it is a life of faith; and Jesus is "the author and finisher of our faith." (See CH 10:38-39 and CH 12:2.) This was quite clear from what we read in Peter's epistle. Faith enables us to rejoice in the sufferings, just as Moses did, "...choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the

reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for He looked to the reward." CH 11:25-26. You will never find this life in those who live for themselves and are not crucified with Christ.

The Blood Of The Covenant

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of an everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." CH 13:20-21.

It was through the blood of an everlasting covenant that God brought up our great Shepherd from the dead. Without that testimony God could not have raised Him from the dead. In other words, He was not raised up because He was the Son of God. No, God sent His only begotten Son to accomplish a work; this was to establish a new covenant and to consecrate a new and living way into the Holiest for us so that we could be His brethren and partake of divine nature.

This covenant was: "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.' Previously saying, 'Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God." CH 10:7-12.

All these sacrifices and offerings and offerings for sin had to be offered as an "emergency measure" until the time came for reformation. God did not desire these measures, but they were necessary because people did not do the will of God. This situation did not satisfy God, and that is why Jesus came to put everything right.

Instead of all these sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings, He came with a body like ours and offered that body by offering Himself. An altar was set up in that body, and God determined those sacrifices that were to be placed on the altar. He condemned sin in the flesh, which had hindered people from doing God's will. Thus, that which had been impossible for the law became possible, "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us

who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Rom. 8:4.

"Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness....'" "But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you." Luke 11:39 and 41. "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also." Matt. 23:26.

To merely cleanse the cup on the outside is to serve the tabernacle. There can never be any development or growth with that ministry; but when it is cleansed from within, a new life comes forth. The new life is to use our body to do God's will, "...that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable [spiritual] service." Rom. 12:1.

Jesus established this service, which was the new covenant with His Father. There had to be a cleansing of the inside and a dying to sin in the flesh to establish this covenant. Jesus offered Himself through the blood of an eternal covenant. The blood that was shed through that offering was the blood of the covenant. That blood testified that Jesus had never done His own will but kept His covenant with the Father. His food was to do the will of God, which is why it is written of Him: "This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness... the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son." 1 John 5:6-10.

The water cleanses the body outwardly, and the blood cleanses it inwardly. Jesus came not only with water, which brought an outward cleansing; He also came with the blood, which cleansed inwardly. What Jesus came with, He came with for our sakes. This blood was His own blood, which was evidence that He did not live Himself but that the Father lived in Him. It is by this blood of Jesus that we have boldness to enter into the Holiest. We come to this when we have been crucified with Christ and do not live ourselves, but Christ lives in us. If you are not faithful in this new covenant and do your own will, you can receive the forgiveness of sins—an outward cleansing, which is the testimony of the water. You are justified "with His blood."

"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself," 1 John 5:10. He who believes in the Son of God, follows Him and enters into the new

covenant and into the life which Jesus lived. He also has God's witness of the Son in himself. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." Rom. 8:16. This witness is, of course, far greater than the witness of people. It is because a person doesn't have this witness of the Spirit that the witness of people is of such importance to him. Then his moods fluctuate between sullenness and joy, depending on what people say or think. Only when he comes to the blood of the covenant can he find rest.

"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." CH 4:11-13.

People strive and strain to please others. That was what the angel of the church in Sardis did. He received the testimony that he was alive, even though he was dead. He had lived for people and received a good testimony from them, but it is to God that we must give account. God declared the angel to be dead, and it is to Him that we are to give account. When a person seeks honor of men, he is living for himself and is dead to God. Jesus taught us this explicitly. "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven." Matt. 6:1. "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." Col. 3:23-24.

"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Rev. 3:4-5.

One cannot live in the new covenant and at the same time please people. We must have an altar in our bodies where sin in the flesh is put to death, so that we can receive food (which is to do God's will) and complete the work He has given us to do. The angel in Sardis had stopped being faithful here, and therefore he had lost the witness of the Spirit with his own spirit that he was the child of God.

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the

Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." Rev. 19:7-8.

This is the bride, who follows the Lamb wherever He goes. (See Rev. 17:14.) She was faithful in the new covenant and did not live for herself. She had not defiled her garments (her deeds) with eyeservice. Like Jesus, she had to do with God alone. She will also be raptured in the power of the blood of the covenant when Jesus returns to take those who belong to Him. 1 Cor. 15:23. He will come as a thief, but He is not a thief. He will not take anyone except those who belong to Him.

"(Now may the God of peace) make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." CH 13:21.

When God works in us, He does so through the head of the body, who is Christ. Therefore it is the head who joins us together and "by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Eph. 4:16.

Without being connected to the head, we cannot partake of this salvation. In order to have communion with the head, we need to enter into the new covenant. Jesus makes the conditions for being His disciple very clear and plain. It is, among other things, necessary to forsake everything and hate your own life. (See Luke 14:25-27 and 33.)

When we have done this, we can say that we have lain on the altar just as Jesus did when He came into the world. This is the narrow gate, which few people find. This is what it means to be baptized into Jesus' death in order that we might live a new life. God answers us with fire, and we are baptized with the Holy Spirit and receive the power necessary to follow Jesus. John baptized unto the forgiveness of sins, but we are baptized unto the death of Christ, and it is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire. (See Acts 19:2-7. and Rom. 6:1-5.) Shall we then continue in sin? Certainly not!

"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." CH 10:10. It was because Jesus submitted to His Father's will that He, through the eternal Spirit, could offer Himself without spot to God. When we yield our bodies to do the same will, we belong to His body. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all.

"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died

for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:14-15. The death which took place in Jesus' body is imputed to us when we live for Him and cease to live for ourselves. Then we hate our own life, and the Spirit gives us light and leads us to the same sacrificing that took place in Jesus' body. We are then in the blood of Jesus—the blood of the covenant.

"And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." CH 10:11. All these sacrifices were taken from outside their bodies, and since they were not able to take away sin, there was no change in their lives. In the same way, we see how religious assemblies speak about sacrifices. There are many things to offer up. First of all, they have to "tithe" at the very least, and then give voluntary donations to mission work. One gets the impression that if only they had enough money, they would save everyone in the world. However, no change takes place in their own lives, beyond living honestly before people (and even that does not always succeed!).

This shows that their sacrifices—"the same sacrifices"—which they are so eagerly encouraged to make, cannot take away sins. They do not believe in the method of evangelizing that Jesus spoke about in His prayer: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." John 17:20-23. What a prayer! With this unity as our foundation, we can evangelize.

Do you think Jesus was praying aimlessly? Do you believe that this salvation is impossible? "No," you answer. Then we must ask, "Why, then, do you not preach it!? Why do you not hear about this salvation in the various denominations? Or why do you not see Jesus' prayer being fulfilled?" That is because they do not know the new and living way that Jesus has consecrated for us through His flesh. Neither do they know that since one died, "all died." 2 Cor. 5:14. They have not entered by the narrow gate and do not hate their own life. They have entered by the wide gate and say, "He has done everything, we are to do nothing." They know nothing of the altar in the body of Christ, where one's food is to do the will of God and to complete the work that He gave us to do. Therefore there is always strife and division among them.

Nevertheless, they build mission centers and send out many missionaries. And yet, where these missionaries come from, strife, envy and division exist, and the same things will arise in those places where they are going. Despite all their sacrifices, sin does not come to an end. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God." CH 10:12. It is the blood of Him who "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" that purifies our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. All those who are crucified with Christ are "in" the blood of Jesus and have boldness to enter the Holiest by that blood. There is no envy, strife or division there. There they are one, just as the Father and the Son are one.

The Apostle's Final Exhortation

"And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words." CH 13:22.

In other words, he calls the whole letter a "word of exhortation." In this letter we find clear and powerful exhortations that are scarcely matched by anything else in the Scriptures. What, then, is the reason for these strong and serious exhortations? It is because those who had made such a glorious and wholehearted beginning had begun to fall behind on the way which Jesus had consecrated. They had become dull of hearing where it concerned obedience, and so there had not been any spiritual growth. They were still babes, despite the fact that they should have been teachers. What should they have been teachers in? In discerning "between good and evil." They had not fallen away in the sense that they didn't believe in God anymore. No, they still served the saints, but they no longer had the same zeal. (See CH 6:10-11.)

Was that which we read in CH 6:4-8 and further in CH 10:26-30 so important? Indeed it was, but he now had a better hope for them. He uses the example of the children of Israel to show how easy it is to fall away from God, how that after they had come out of Egypt they had not entered into the land because of unbelief. God was angry with them. Read CH 3 where he says, "Beware!" How necessary this exhortation is; and yet, where can you find this fear of God—the God who is a consuming fire? (See CH 12:28-29.)

On every hand, we find superficiality and the comfort of the false prophets, just as it has always been. "They continually say to those who despise me, 'The Lord has said, 'You shall have peace;'" and to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, 'No evil shall come upon you.'" Read Jeremiah 6:14 and 23:15-21. They comfort their congregations, who are living in sin, by saying, "Jesus' grace covers all our sin. We are under His blood. He has drawn us in the palms of His hands, and He has drawn the correct picture of us, just as He sees us through the blood." And they pray, "Place us under the blood," and many similar things.

At the beginning of his letter the apostle gives a powerful exhortation: "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken by angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we

escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His will?" CH 2:1-4.

Think that the apostles could confirm the preaching about "so great a salvation," which we have now read about in the letter to the Hebrews and elsewhere in the Scriptures. In order to be able to do that, they themselves must also have partaken of it. But where do you find this preaching today? Where do you find faith in the finished work of Jesus?

Praised be God that it is the same today as when God answered Elijah, "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." 1 Kings 19:18. Likewise, "...at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Rom. 11:5. He is now gathering them into one body—the body of Christ!

I will say like Jesus, when He began His ministry, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled," etc. Matt. 5:3-12.

I strongly exhort everyone who reads this: Flee from all superficiality and idle chatterers! Do not argue with people about the Word of God. Receive the Word as the Word of God, and believe it just as it is written. Then it will effectively work in you. (See 1 Thess. 2:13.)

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Tim. 2:22.

Your happy brother in faith, grace, and salvation,
Sigurd Bratlie