

Werner Woiwode

# **STOP! EMERGENCY BRAKE!!**

Corona- blessing or curse  
for the church?



Werner Woiwode

# **STOP!**

# **EMERGENCY BRAKE!!**

Corona- blessing or curse for the church?

# **STOP! EMERGENCY BRAKE!!**

Corona- blessing or curse for the church?

## **Table of contents**

### **Chapter 1**

- Attention	4
- Stones through the window	4
- Deceptive	6
- Knowing God	10

### **Chapter 2**

- The church's development	20
- Blow the trumpets	28
- The letter to the church of Jesus Christ	34

### **Chapter 3**

- The church in our days	39
- Coronavirus - blessing or curse?	51

### **Chapter 4**

- The emergence of organically growing communities	64
- Overcoming	67
- Our Father in heaven	94

Bible quotes are from the New international Version 1984

Preliminary remarks: It is not easy for us to write these lines. We have friends who are pastors and church leaders; precious brothers and sisters in the Lord. We love them and see how much heart and faith they invest in their ministry. God's children and their spiritual growth concern them deeply. We also celebrate church services together and rejoice together. And now this?!?! We, like Luther, cannot do otherwise. The Lord has spoken: often, very often, emphatically and now we obey (finally). We hope very much that we will still remain friends.

## **ATTENTION**

Some time ago I heard about the following incident: On the flight of an EL AL machine from Zurich to Tel Aviv there was much noise and confusion on board because everyone had something to stow away somewhere. So it was quite chaotic. The voice of the captain, who wanted to welcome the passengers, was almost lost. But when everyone heard him say: „Welcome aboard the flight from Zurich to Moscow“, it was immediately silent - the captain had the full attention of all passengers. This was exactly what he had intended! After he had made the destination clear, he could calmly pass on his instructions and information. A successful and amusing way to get the attention of a group of people entrusted to your care.

It is increasingly difficult to direct people's interest to something so that they are actually willing to take in and think about what they have heard or seen. I hope and pray that you, dear reader, will give your full attention to this „announcement“ of our Captain Jesus Christ. That you are all eyes and ears for what you read and hear, because we are all on a journey and it is absolutely necessary to know where we are going. Will we arrive at the right place and how do we get there? God's word is our safest compass and we want to point this out over and over again.

## **Stones through the window**

In 1953 a warning was issued in the Netherlands province Zeeland. A heavy storm was approaching from the northwest. Together with the coming spring tide, it threatened to become a great danger because of flooding. The circumstances deteriorated visibly. The disaster increased. How did the local mayors react to this grave situation?

The mayor of Oude-Tonge had attended a celebration the previous evening and then went to bed early. The mayor of Dreischor was not at home. He had his regular bridge evening. When he finally came home at 1:00 A.M., he could not be persuaded to do anything. The mayor of Kruieningen

thought that they should remain calm. „There will be panic if we wake up the whole village at this hour.“

Cor van der Hooft, mayor of Willemstad (Zuid-Holland), had a very different opinion. He realized there was no time to lose and gave the order to evacuate the entire polder. Even when the others remarked, „Tomorrow everyone will laugh at you,“ he could not be dissuaded from his plan. „Perhaps,“ he replied, „but I won't be responsible for people drowning because we didn't warn them.“

The border guards were told to warn the polder inhabitants. Less than an hour later they returned to the community center and called out in desperation, „Mr. Mayor, no one wants to leave the house. They just stay in bed. They are convinced that the flood won't be so serious!“

Mayor van der Hooft was furious: „Go back, throw stones through the window if you have to, and call out: ‚Flee ...! The water is rising, fast, the dikes can't hold it any more... flee!‘ Make a lot of noise so they realize it's dramatic.“

In Zeeland more than 1,800 people drowned during the night. In Willemstad, Cor van der Hooft's town, not one. (Original title: Steen door de ruit, Bart Repko 2011 Jerusalem)

In my opinion this true story vividly illustrates the situation in which the world in general and the church in particular now find themselves. Therefore the following lines should be understood as a kind of „storm warning“. We are facing severe to very severe storms. At stake is nothing more or less than our life, not only here on earth, but also in eternity. And just like Mayor van der Hooft, we throw stones into living rooms, churches so that we finally wake up, are alarmed, assess our situation honestly and realistically, and act accordingly.

May we understand that it is now not just a small group of people who are in danger, but everyone. However, we are not primarily waiting for a „flood“, we ultimately await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with deepest longing and anticipation. As unique and indescribable as this event will be, it will then also be just as clearly and irreversibly too late for repentance. That is why Jesus now calls us to repentance, conversion and salvation. Please listen to His voice and accept His saving invitation today.

Revelation 3:20

„Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.“

## **Deceptive**

Again and again I am stunned and deeply horrified, as most of us are when we read or watch reports and films from National Socialist days. How people who had lived for decades in good neighborhoods, sometimes in close friendly relations, could change so radically and become bitter, hateful hunters just because it was dictated by the government. The greatest majority (there were, thank God, also laudable exceptions) of the German people and other nations let themselves be infected by the virus of anti-Semitism without resistance, even enthusiastically in the end. This change and the resulting complete distortion and perversion of the truth is unique in its dimension even today. First, fear was sown. Fear of the Jews, who were the source of all evil. This evil had to be fought and eradicated. Fear was later joined by enthusiasm, a kind of intoxication, to be part of this movement of power, arrogance, expectation of salvation and strength.

Those of us who believe in Jesus Christ and the Bible know that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). Almost an entire people or entire nations came under this power and violence. One would never have thought such a thing possible! How can an entire people be convinced that what they are doing is right and good when it is so obviously wrong and evil? Fear and propaganda played an essential role.

Or let us think of racial segregation, especially in the USA and South Africa. This has been on everyone’s lips again since the murder of the African-American George Floyd. How we are now outraged, horrified, upset. And again fear, propaganda and the media play a central role. Of course his death was terrible, just as every murder is horrible and dreadful. But until the 1960’s, no white person was bothered by the fact that blacks were terribly discriminated against. They were the whites’ slaves and servants, not even allowed to use the same schools, restaurants and toilets. They were denied special training, jobs and sports clubs. For all whites it was clear: Blacks are second-class people (are they even human beings?) who could be treated however we wished. And „we whites“ resisted granting them the same rights with all, sometimes the most brutal means. It was a long, arduous, bloody road until the blacks were equal to the whites, at least be-

fore the law. Here, too, we were deeply convinced that we were right, that our thoughts and actions were good, even God's will. How is such thinking possible even now, although it is clearly wrong?

But let us now turn to Jesus' church. This is what it is all about in the first place. But what does all we have written here have to do with us believers? The two examples of the virus of anti-Semitism and racism show in all clarity how and by what means a group, peoples and whole nations can develop an attitude that is obviously wrong - but this is still not recognized. Perhaps we do not even want to recognize it because on the one hand fear is stronger, on the other hand it is easier and simpler to go with the flow according to the motto „so many cannot be wrong“. Thus I can be deeply convinced that I am thinking and acting rightly, although it is obvious on closer examination that this is not true. Yet many of us cling to such a wrong attitude, unwilling to look more closely, or let ourselves be changed. This book wants to hold up a mirror to everyone, but first and foremost to us Christians. I am not the one holding the mirror, but our Lord and King Jesus Christ. With great love and good will he holds up his word as a mirror to us. What do we Christians usually see when we look in the mirror? Our opinion of ourselves is what Jesus holds before our eyes in Revelation 3:17. We say: „I am rich, and have more than enough, and need nothing!“ Then we hear His opinion. Let's see if this conforms.

Jesus says, „But you do not know that you are wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked.“

What a stark contradiction - our view, His view...

What Jesus Christ himself says here is an unparalleled provocation! It means that I am completely wrong, that I have a totally erroneous opinion of myself. My situation, yes, my life is one big lie and self-deception! Who can and who is willing to simply swallow, admit and believe this? It's strong stuff!

I well remember the day 35 years ago when I seemed to look in a mirror and for the first time was able to see my real life. I had to see it exactly and sharply. When I had looked in a mirror in the previous years, even as an alcohol and criminal drug addict, I actually imagined that I didn't need anything. I saw myself, really believed that and was convinced of it. We are masters at deceiving ourselves (and others). And then, thank God, there came that moment of clear vision of myself, my whole life. And what I reali-

zed was that I was deeply and thoroughly miserable, wretched, poor, blind and naked. What a humiliating, exceedingly painful, profound process that led to a total breakdown. And yet what a unique, blissful, indescribable moment when my heavenly Father entered into this broken life, mind and heart and made everything new!

What I mean is that we as Jesus' church have for centuries been stuck in an attitude in which we assume that everything is O.K.; or rather, we do not need anything, even though God's Word tells us something completely different. Nevertheless, we have declared and accepted the dead, powerless, blind, lame and silent situation of Jesus body (the church) as normal. Why? What went wrong? Is there a way out? What can we do, must we do or allow to happen? That is what this book is all about.

The two previous scenarios described propaganda and fear as tools for influencing the vast majority (to which the church of Jesus belonged and to a large extent still belongs). Now the question is what we as a church fear; to what extent do we let ourselves be carried along and lulled by propaganda in the broad river of „this is what everyone thinks and says“? Dear brothers and sisters, I know this is not pleasant - not for me, either. Each person must decide what to do about what he or she has read. When I consider that the Word of God, which is sharper than a double-edged sword, has little or no effect in many Christian lives, this does not prove that God's Word is powerless or a lie. It proves only that we are not prepared to use it or let it work on us. In the end, few things happen without our consent. (Thank God there are exceptions, as in my own life).

Let us look briefly at what God's word says and compare it with our current condition as a church. I realize that we see only a small segment of the church, but we have had insight into different types and structures of churches and structures, in different countries and peoples. The prerequisite for writing this book was not to have detailed knowledge of as many different types of churches as possible. It was to know, feel and try to follow the heart and word of our Father in heaven. It is His view. It is His tears. It is His intention to hold the mirror up to us. He wants to give us the opportunity to learn His will and finally wake up so that we can be found in the book of life; so that He can use us to do what He has wanted to do for so long, namely to reveal Himself to people through His church, through you and me!

For clarification I must add that there are certainly some in Christ's body

who do not need a physician because they are not sick. But I am convinced that by far the largest part of the church, which should represent the body of Christ, is seriously or terminally ill, yet lives in the conviction they are healthy. Or in the words of God: we are convinced that we lack nothing - yet God himself says that we are lacking everything.... What in God's name makes us believe that we are right and God is wrong? We must come to this conclusion, because if this were not the case, we would have long demonstrated insight, would have let our behavior and life be changed and thus the course of human history as well.

We said that propaganda and fear have always been used to manipulate people in general and Christians in particular, in order to keep them from the truth. What kind of propaganda and fear keep us imprisoned in the mistaken belief that our condition is normal and we need nothing?

Before we begin, let me explain the meaning of the word propaganda. The term is derived from the Latin name of a papal administrative body, the „Sacra congregatio de propaganda fide“. This was founded in 1622 by Gregory XV during the Counter-Reformation. In English it is called „Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith“, today officially „Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples“. Already in the 17th century, the short form propaganda, „to spread, to expand,“ became the name for this missionary society. Its purpose was to oppose Protestantism and missionize the New World. In the light of this declaration, it is of course immediately clear that a blind, misguided church through false doctrine continued to expand, up to the present time.

2 Timothy 4:2-4

*“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”*

One kind of „propaganda“ which we were and still are being fed is instructions that tickle our ears. This means that they simply make us feel good. They confirm what we desire. They adapt to us. In these teachings, lies are either clearly stated or biblical truth is mixed, is emphasized one-sidedly or omits essential matters. What remains is a half-truth that does not allow us to recognize the whole essence of God. It dilutes or renders impossible

his goal to change us into the image of Jesus. In the end, it serves only our own satisfaction and the assurance that we are on the right path. No need to worry, everything is fine. Peace, peace, when there is no peace. A blatant example which changed the course of the church's entire history is „replacement theology“, which we will discuss later.

Acts of the Apostles 5:29

*“Peter and the other apostles replied, ‘We must obey God rather than men!’”*

John 12:25

*“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”*

These two statements of God reveal what we fear. For many of us the fear of man is much stronger than the fear of God. That is why we would rather obey and follow people than God. This is a shameful statement, but a widely accepted and practiced fact. We are also afraid of losing our lives. This is not only about the fear of death, of dying as such. No, it is primarily the fear of losing the way we live, the way we have established ourselves. We fear we will have to exchange desires, dreams, family, friends, house, work etc. for something uncertain, unpredictable and possibly incompatible with our own planning. Since this is no superficial matter, no trivial offence, but rather involves the honor and holy name of God and whether our names are found in the Book of Life, you may have some idea of how far-reaching and profound it is for God. Therefore it should be for us as well. How can this condition be explained? How could it have come to the point where it no longer even bothers us that we present such a powerless, shameful and unworthy image before God, the world and the cloud of witnesses?

*„For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power!“*  
(1 Corinthians 4:20)

## **Knowing God**

John 17:3

*“This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

I am deeply convinced that this is the key! The word „know“ used here is

the same word that is used in the Bible for sexual intercourse. ("Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived" Genesis 4:1).

The union of man and woman, embedded in marriage, bears witness to the deepest, most intimate, most trusting love relationship between two persons. This is wonderful and very precious. In a time of such unprecedented speed and superficiality, the act of love today often serves only to quickly satisfy instincts. For many of us, our relationship with God is similar. 5 minutes for Him: Give me what I want, as soon as possible. But God wants us to know Him deeply! Isn't that amazing and to some extent incomprehensible? He knows us through and through. We cannot hide anything from Him or fool Him. He has „woven“ us in the womb. We are His work. He is our creator and knows His creatures like no one else in the universe. He sees everything. He knows everything. He hears everything. And yet He loves humans, He loves you and me. How incomprehensible. And how incredible that He wants us to know Him!

But what we must first grasp is our great lack of knowledge of God. We don't really know God and it doesn't bother us much because we have enough information about Him. In Exodus 32:1-34 we read the story of the golden calf which Israel created in the desert and then worshiped. They made their own god, a statue of gold, and turned away from the living God. Away from the God who had led them out of Egypt, with incredible miracles they themselves had experienced. We scratch our heads, rub our eyes and can hardly believe it, let alone comprehend it. We wonder how it is possible to sink so low, become so ungrateful, so blind and rebellious, stray from the path, etc. How could it come to this?

STOP! STOP! STOP! We should not simply condemn, but recognize that we are not one bit better or different! We also create our own god. We take what we like from Jesus and his word and what suits our life, our ideas and wishes and so worship a God that we ourselves created. It is high time that we recognize Him as He really is. Just as He presents Himself in the Bible, with all facets. Not our self-made image of Him. Let us be called out from the grave of self-blindness and remove the grave clothes that block our view, as Lazarus experienced.

Here is a current example from the early days of the Corona crisis. I participated in a European prayer meeting via internet. I was responsible for a prayer time and took 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 as a basis. There God says explicitly:

„When I shut up the heavens so that there no rain, or command locusts to devour the land, or send a plague among my people, if my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.“

Here, God clearly says that HE is the one who, if he deems it necessary, closes the sky, even puts up with dryness and drought. He sends locusts, which devour everything and leave behind famines. He sends plague among HIS people, so that some die. I made it clear that I was convinced that God not only allowed this Corona crisis situation, but that He was the initiator. Afterwards a brother from the leadership team wrote me that God is no longer like that. All this was before Jesus in the Old Testament. Here I find exactly the attitude that believes and says, „This cannot possibly come from God. He is love and love is not like that, does not do something like that, but only wants to do something good, beautiful, nice, uplifting, just love. Thus we reduce God to love. God is love, yes - completely, but love is not God! At the same time He is much more than „just“ love! This dear brother was and is of course not an isolated case. Almost in unison, leaders of churches, works and ministries loudly and unmistakably outdid each other to proclaim that only the enemy was at work here.

Accordingly they prayed against the virus or the enemy. But to fight against God or His intentions has never accomplished anything. That focuses on the wrong thing. Over and over again I hear the argument that the „wrathful“ God was the God of the Old Testament. He actually did walk over corpses, thousands and tens of thousands, not only among Israel’s enemies, but also among His own chosen people, when they disobeyed and went their own ways.

But thank God, that was then, now everything is different since Jesus and the New Covenant. However the God of Israel, the creator of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his Son are of the same nature. There is no difference. Not the ungracious, angry, strict old father then, and now finally the gracious, loving, soft-rinsed young son who shuts both eyes. They were and remain completely one in their being and character. We can even see that Jesus takes it one step further, that is, he is „more severe and narrow,“ if we want to put it that way. So he says in Matthews 5:27-28 (Sermon on the Mount)

„You have heard that it was said, ‚Do not commit adultery.‘ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.“

Does this give the impression that everything is now more relaxed and can be taken more lightly because Jesus has come and God is love after all? That grace now rules and no longer God? He always has been gracious, he is now and he always will be! But HE is really much more, among other things He is holy, wrathful, a consuming fire, totally righteous. These are character traits which we often ignore, do not want to perceive or admit. Even biblical passages in the New Covenant which point to these characteristics, which clarify and emphasize them, offend us. For example in Revelation 6:1ff John describes the vision of a lamb (Jesus) opening seven seals of a book. In the events described, ¼ of mankind will die after the fourth seal is broken. Notice that the seal was broken by our dear Savior; the gentle Lamb triggered this event!

Let us also take a brief look at the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) in order to know God more fully. On the one hand Jesus was filled with merciful love towards „failed existences“ (which we all are, basically), people on the fringes of society, repentant crooks like the publican Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), or the adulteress whom He saved from stoning (John 8:1-11), or a Werner Woiwode whom He saved from drinking himself to insanity, respectively to death.... in short - toward all those whom the gospels call „sinners“. On the other hand we get to know a completely different Jesus there, one who can become sharp and „aggressive“ in such a way that it almost takes our breath away. At one point Jesus uses a very drastic image:

Matthew 23:27-28

*„Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.“*

Verse 33: *“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”*

Outside great - inside awful, could describe the hypocrites’ spiritual state of the. The main thing is to preserve pious appearances. Pretending as if...

Back to Ananias and Sapphira. They sell their field. They did not have to do this, and no one would have reproached them for it. They could have sold it and kept three quarters and given one quarter to the apostles. Nobody would have said anything then either. But now he arrives, as it were, with a proudly swollen breast and pretends to give the entire proceeds. What hypocrisy! Before he dies, and afterwards his wife as well, Peter makes it clear that they did not cheat or lie to men, but to God. Both fall down dead! What a terrifying, dramatic situation. What a drastic consequence! This was not without effect (Acts 5:11), "Great fear seized the whole church and all who hear about these events."

Was that all, then? Were they now all cowering somewhere in their homes, not moving? (Reminds us of corona.) Let us read on about what then happened.

5:12-16 "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed."

Hallelujah! The Lord was truly among them. They were not „only“ filled with the Holy Spirit, but the presence of the HOLY Spirit was also so strong on them that signs, miracles and healings took place to an extent that I have never experienced, and probably not the rest of us, either. When God comes, He always comes totally! In His love, grace, goodness, mercy, holiness, justice, light, glory, power, consuming fire and much more. Do we really want God to visit us in this way? I dare to state: No, we don't really want that. We want the miracles, but not the one who works them. We would not object to more miracles, perhaps even through myself or in my church, through the ministry of which I am a part or the work with which I am affiliated - but if I were then to be convicted of any kind of hypocrisy, that would be too much of a good thing. Maybe we have a lot of trouble swallowing that now.

It is good if this does something, anything, in us, if something rises up

so that we begin to really think about it and actually look in the mirror of God's Word. How dare I compare us with Ananias? He pretended! Do we not do the same? We pretend that we have everything and need nothing. We pretend that we know God. We pretend that we believe. We pretend that we love. We pretend that our life belongs to Jesus. We pretend that we follow Jesus. We pretend that we are better. We act, act, act, act. We do theater, we mimic a never-ending circus show. The main reason it could come to this is our lack of insight. We must know Jesus Christ. We will never act perfectly here on earth, but with Paul we ask, Philippians 3:10-14 "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Beloved sister, beloved brother, to be honest, do you find this attitude in yourself? And if not, why doesn't it bother you?? Isn't it terrible, this „I don't need anything“?

Let me now briefly describe my personal experience in this respect. I am not a Christian who for generations drank faith in Christ with my mother's milk. Faith, religions, churches, never played a role in our family. I saw and judged all of this very superficially, without differentiating. When Jesus came into my life without my consciously seeking, wanting or inviting him, I had been addicted to alcohol and drugs for 15 years. A life that had completely gone off the rails and which "experts" labeled as no longer possible to integrate because I was incapable of relationships or of working. As I already described, I was then allowed to look in the mirror and recognize who I was. It came to this decisive encounter with the One who makes everything new. The One who in a moment, the blink of an eye, released me from all my bonds and addictions. What a miracle! What an experience! What proof of His existence and love! I was and still am free, born again, without the help and support of doctors, therapists, cures, therapies or medicines. Nothing. Only HIM. An undeserved gift! I know that it is not always like this for everyone.

With me it was like this! What was the consequence? I am totally, completely, in love with my Savior and Redeemer. I had no theological understand-

ding whatsoever, neither before and nor through this experience. I had no idea about the Bible, church history or religion, but I had met God! And what moved me immediately, without transition, deeply, greatly and strongly, was the longing to know Him! There was nothing more I wished for! That is nothing special, is it? It is completely normal, isn't it? On the interpersonal level this happens over and over again and is a thoroughly logical, ordinary process. Man and woman meet, fall in love with each other. Suddenly everything revolves only around the one you love. Thoughts and deeds revolve around that person. And it is a profound need to know the other better and deeper. Spending time together becomes the most important thing. I loved Jesus Christ with all my heart, not some specific qualities, but Him as a person, completely and fully. What also happened was that Jesus immediately brought me to the Father and I was allowed to see myself as a son. All this without any Bible school, church, congregation, seminars, pastoral care courses, YouTube or online sermons. God alone deserves all thanks, honor and worship. Not that all these other things are bad, but in the end God doesn't really need them to get his will to be done.

1 John 2:20: „ *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.*

The point is that I felt a hunger, a longing, a deep desire to know my Father and Savior deeper and better. And this has remained the same until today. In the first years of my new life, I spent the first hours of every day in our tiny bathroom. This was my „tent of encounter“, where I usually just sat, lay or kneeled in silence, in deep knowledge and awareness that my father and I have the most intimate fellowship, even without words. He is my father. I am his son! This was a process of getting to know him, of being deeply immersed in his fatherly love for his once lost but now returned son. It is the most important, all-decisive beginning of the relationship with God, which each of us should experience and be moving toward: to know Him. None of us would be satisfied only with information from third parties about the person we love, would we? This can be helpful, interesting and also sometimes exciting. But in the end we ourselves, in a direct, immediate encounter with the beloved, want to get to know this person more deeply. This is how it should be with God. As in a good marriage, this means spending time together. Pastors, Bible teachers, leaders of any kind, can teach you what you need to know about God, but this never replaces a personal encounter between you and the Father/Jesus. So, open up and stretch out! And read the Bible!!! His words to you!

In order to be drawn into such a deeply grateful love relationship with God at all, or for our heart to open up to Him as if by itself, we must first realize from what a terrible, horrible, lost state of damnation we have been saved. I am deeply convinced, because all of us „were not so bad at all“, that this is barely clear to even the smallest number of us. Somehow understandable, but our attitude will correspond. To exaggerate a bit, we actually believe that we aren't so bad or in need of salvation. Take a look at XY, who.... But me? We should think about what it means:

John 3,36

*„Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.“*

How it should motivate us with joy and enthusiasm, full of passionate love and gratitude to know Him who gave us eternal life in God's presence. Love and acceptance, instead of anger and rejection. Overwhelming and undeserved!

One way to know HIM is to see what He does, how He does it and why He does it. From this point of view, have you ever thought about what it means that God not „only“ dwells among men, as previously in the tabernacle and temple, but has now even taken up residence in us? What on earth is wrong with us? What else could lure us out from behind the stove? What would it take for us to become amazed, deeply overwhelmed, stunned, grateful, and full of love and awe? Is it not significant, does it not convict us that the Creator of the universe dwells in you and me, yet this creates and triggers nothing like that in us? We can only conclude that either we do not really believe it or we simply do not really know Him.

Suppose you received a personal invitation from Queen Elizabeth to come to Buckingham Palace. Or from the American President for the White House (whether you like him or not, it's all about the office). That would probably leave none of us cold and indifferent. We would cancel all other appointments to accept this invitation and would prepare ourselves as well as possible. It would probably be „the event“ of our lives, the highlight we would never forget. Now let us go one step further. Let's imagine that one of them suddenly appears at our apartment or house and wants to visit us. We cannot imagine that because it sounds too absurd and probably is. You would at least be stunned, confused, full of amazement and maybe a bit awestruck. Now let's end the dreaming and turn to reality. Jesus, the son of

the creator of heaven and earth, the timeless one, without beginning and end, the eternal, unchanging one speaks.

Revelation 3:20

*„ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and have communion with him, and he with me.“*

What a unique invitation, what a deep and beautiful secret. It would take a book of its own to write about what it means that HE wants to have communion with us. But the fact is that HE is seeking us in order to have the deepest, most intimate fellowship with us. Is there a more glorious way to express His love for us? This fact cannot possibly leave us indifferent! Can it?

Let us consider how meticulously Moses built the tabernacle. God gave clear instructions for every smallest detail of material, color, form, and workmanship. This is exactly the way HE wanted it! It became a tent of encounter between the Lord and Moses. Joshua did not depart from the tent, that is, from the Lord's presence, which prepared him to lead the Israelites after Moses died. All the rest of the people kept a reverent distance from the tent, that is, from God himself! When the Lord descended on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19), HE Himself warned His servant Moses that the people, including the priests - except Aaron - were not allowed to approach the mountain or they would be killed. But what the Israelites heard and saw, even though God was hidden in the cloud, was enough to create awe and fear. God wanted to reveal how much HE was to be feared so that they would not sin. Do we know this awe-inspiring God - who wants to dwell in us and eat with us?!?!

In 2 Samuel 6:6-7 we read the story of Uzzah and the Ark of the Covenant. Although the ark was often touched by the Philistines (unbelievers), none of them died. Why then did Uzzah (Israelite and Levite) have to die? The New International Bible names "irreverence". This strikes our heart deeply and sharply because irreverence is a lack of respect for God. Or more strongly, even disdain of God. We think we are free to judge God because we have no knowledge and no sense of His awe-inspiring holiness and majesty. The Ark of the Covenant was the most visible representation of God before Jesus came. Uzzah (and David) disregarded this. His death was a constant lesson and reminder for the Israelites to take the holiness of their God seriously. We could list further examples of this or simply return to what happened to Ananias and Sapphira in the time of the apostles.

God never changes! Isn't it all the more astonishing that He stands at the door (heart's door, church door), knocks and asks to enter? I find that breathtaking.

On the one hand HE approaches us, but we are also allowed to approach HIM.

Hebrews 4:16

*„ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.“*

Is it possible to somehow understand and respectfully acknowledge this without losing our composure and being eternally grateful? Yes, unfortunately we can. Under the cloak of grace and mercy, people often continue living their own lives, they sin and practice all sorts of idolatry. Nothing will happen to us. God is merciful! What a terrible and momentous error. In and through Jesus Christ, God's wonderful and undeserved grace and mercy met us, so that we were allowed to repent and turn to Him. Hallelujah, what a gift. And it applies to everyone, no matter what they have done or where they are at the moment. But not only that. God continues to give us His grace to live a life with Him and under His guidance.

Titus 2:11-12

*„ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.“*

Even God's mercy does not mean that we can just do or not do as we please. The opposite is the case, as we read in

Romans 12:1

*“Therefore, I urge you , brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.“*

What could move us to strive to know HIM, if not love? His love for us and of course our love for HIM? When Regula and I were married 34 years ago, we knew each other a little bit, of course. But during those 34 years we got to know each other better and deeper. We laughed and cried together, were devastated, mourned and rejoiced inexpressibly. Love naturally

expresses interest in others, wants to experience, hear, see, feel. Imagine that you get married, but then live your life just as you did when you were single. You cannot imagine that, can you? Sounds rather weird. Unless it is not a love marriage, but merely serves a purpose (e.g. residence permit and passport, money, good name etc.)

Our God offers you and me an eternal covenant of love, decided and sealed with Jesus' blood, although HE knows us through and through. He deeply longs for us to return His love, to love not even primarily because of what He has accomplished, but for His own sake, simply because He is who He is! And for this He wants to reveal Himself to us. Therefore we should, may, must know Him. Do you seek him for his own sake? Do you spend time with your beloved? Would you like to know what occupies Him, moves Him, what He is happy about, what He cries over and is angry about? Then read the Bible. There you meet Him, see Him and hear Him. You need interest, time, the Bible and the Holy Spirit. These are the ingredients in order to know Him. Many Christians live in a pragmatic covenant with the Lord. They gave their word of consent to be saved and redeemed but are not interested in more and deeper relationships. It must be made totally clear to them that this this will ultimately be insufficient.

In 2.Tim. 3,16 it is written:

*„All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.“*

This is what is meant by sanctification. Repentance and conversion is only the beginning!

Let us briefly recall our starting position. We will consider both the Lord Jesus and ourselves (the church). We see white. He sees black. We believe that we have everything and need nothing. Jesus believes that we have nothing and need everything. There cannot be a more contradictory assessment of the situation. I think that one of the main causes of this fatal, dangerous and erroneous self-assessment is a deep lack of knowledge of God and the Bible. This leads to openness for and acceptance of false teachings. How could it even come to this? To answer this we will take a brief look at the church's development.

### **The church's wrong development**

As mentioned before, I am neither a theologian nor a historian. If you want

a chronological, well-documented history of the church, please have a look at the Internet. We can read about the church's origin and its early development in the Book of Acts. I only want to briefly mention some important events that contributed decisively to the church's undesirable development.

It is important to point out here that the first communities (Koinonia) or house churches (Ecclesia= the called out) were purely Jewish. Of course this was no coincidence because God, the creator of heaven and earth, is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Egypt Moses was commissioned to confront the most powerful representative of the world's nations at that time with the words, „Thus says the Lord God of Israel...the God of the Hebrews has sent us.“

The „newborn king of the Jews“ was sought by the first worshipers from the nations (Matthew 2:2). „Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews“ was the title on the cross on which Jesus defeated hell. Such statements give clear information about our Lord's identity. An absolutely central and important fact. He was, is and remains the same for eternity! He chose the people of the Jews in order to reveal Himself through them to all peoples and nations. Jesus was sent exclusively to the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24).

In Acts 10:1-31 we then read how the Kingdom of God, through Peter, also reached the Gentiles. It was a giant step and required several interventions of God before the apostle Peter was ready to even set foot in the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. Only then did non-Jews also come to the Lord's church. How these communities looked and functioned we also read in Acts and the apostle Paul's letters. We learn through God's Word that the church is to be built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, and that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). Through God's Word we are taken into the process of electing elders and deacons and learn what abilities and character traits they must have. (Short interposed question: Do we still align ourselves according to these criteria today?) Although there were difficulties, quarrels, persecution, false doctrines, sin, etc. in the early days of the church, it grew and God did signs and wonders. Problems were probably not the problem....

The first and decisive step in the wrong direction was when Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the state religion in the 3rd century. With this he hoped to bring it under his control. From a community of people who

followed Jesus with full devotion, a religion decreed and controlled by the state arose - „Christianity“. Constantine separated Christianity from everything Jewish, also from the God of Israel and the King of the Jews, basically from our roots (Romans 11:18). As a result the feasts of the Lord were ignored, abolished and replaced by pagan feasts and holidays (Easter, Christmas).

Paul gives us with the image of the natural olive tree (Israel), into which we believers from the nations (wild branches) were grafted (Romans 11:17). He made clear that it is not we who carry the root, but the root carries us. But we have separated ourselves from the root. With the religion or church of Christianity, another independent new tree was created and with it replacement theology. Israel, the Jews, were robbed of all their promises and their position and the Christian church set itself there instead. „The church“ no longer consisted of the called out, serving and loving followers of Jesus; they became the fear-spreading, controlling, perverted and avaricious power. Thank God there were always exceptions, but on the whole the church became a place that frightened people instead of bringing them the good news. The consequence was a seduced, misguided church separated from the root.

Finally after many centuries, a light seemed to shine, in the dark Middle Ages of all places. Hopeful dawn on the horizon. God basically needs very little to achieve many and great things. He needs „only“ a humble, open, searching and broken heart which He can enter, such as Martin Luther. The brighter and clearer God's Word became inside him, the more obvious was the church's darkness. „Here I stand now and cannot do otherwise.“ These famous words simply expressed that he was committed to the truth (Jesus Christ).

For all the merits of a Martin Luther, who set things in motion and contributed to a breakthrough, it was in the end „only“ a partial success. Today we can hardly imagine what it was like to finally hear and understand God's Word for oneself after such a long time! To hear the words of Jesus about grace, love and justification by faith, after centuries of bondage, lies, fear, oppression and humiliation by an institution that claimed to do everything in the name of God. One can still feel how chains were loosened and fell from people who were then ready to give their lives and die for this truth (Jesus Christ).

Luther was radical on the one hand, but not radical enough on the other. At first he wanted to free the church from what he considered the most obvious, unbiblical excesses. These were indulgences, relics, canonizations and veneration of saints, the office of the pope, „pomp“, purgatory (time of purification, which can be shortened by reading masses for the dead), to name only the most important ones. Martin Luther wanted to retain the practice of infant baptism and the Lord's Supper ritual. He wanted to bring Christ back into the center. His famous sentence „Faith alone is enough“ became a Protestant and later also a Catholic principle and still is today. In this way he probably wanted to oppose the „work righteousness“ of the church of his time, but in doing so he created a new „problem“. For Jesus himself says

Matthew 7: 24 *„Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.“*

Luke 10: 28 *„Do this and you will live.“*

„To do one thing and not neglect the other,“ as the saying goes. We need both: faith and works, grace and sanctification. To rely on a unique conversion experience alone is a dangerous thing.

Hebrews 12: 14+15

*„Without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses God's grace.“*

Luther would not or could not completely renounce the church's dogmas and was therefore prepared to compromise. This concerned for example the question of the Lord's Supper and adult baptism. He allowed adults who had come to faith through his message and therefore wanted to be baptized (because it is written in the Word of God) to be prevented, persecuted and even killed.

But his greatest and most tragic mistake was ultimately his attitude toward the Jews. Luther was not merely indifferent to them, which alone is enough to incur God's curse (Genesis 12:3). No, in the end he was inspired by a deep hatred and called orally and in writing for the Jews to be ostracized, beaten, dispossessed, their houses set on fire, killed and slaughtered. (Hitler claimed to be merely implementing what Luther had „taught“ earlier). Thus the church, including the Reformed, seemingly renewed church remained, but separated from its roots. Indifference and hatred toward the Jews are still with us today - in both churches which now exist. The old one now called itself Roman Catholic in order to clearly distinguish

itself from the newly formed Lutheran, Reformed Church. Within these two large „people’s churches“ there were, in the course of history, more and more splits, groupings, up to the thousands of free churches and countless house churches that now exist worldwide.

In connection with the celebration of „500 years of the Reformation“ and the election of Francis as the new pope, one could observe a disturbing trend. Many evangelicals and charismatics are looking for the way back. They hesitated to stand by the achievements of the Reformation. Audiences of evangelical associations with the Pope were not uncommon. There were even conversions to the Roman Catholic Church by very well-known Christian leaders (e.g. Ulf Ekman, founder and director of the Bible School „Living Word“, which founded churches worldwide).

The truths of God’s Word are valid for every epoch of world history, for all people and every kind of church, always and forever. Our Father was and is so gracious that He has repeatedly given new beginnings (revivals) in response to the dedication of individuals or small groups and has poured out His Spirit in a refreshing and renewing way. And this despite our ignorance of Him, our unbalanced teachings, our idolatry, our carnal disposition and our lukewarmness. But we must realize how close we are to His return and that there is a „too late“, as with the ten virgins, half of whom had to remain outside (Matthew 25:1 ff).

A significant milestone on the path to Jesus’ return is the gathering of the Jews, their return to the land promised to them and the birth of messianic congregations (with Jews who recognize Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah). What the God of Israel prophetically prophesied thousands of years ago is happening today before our eyes (Ezekiel 36:23-27). He has never renounced any of his promises to his people Israel. So a return to the root is not merely a possibility, but an absolute, life-giving necessity in order to share the promises which apply first to Israel!

Do we really believe that there would be no consequences if we act and live explicitly against God’s Word, against Him? Do we seriously believe that God doesn’t care if Jesus suffers a terrible death on the cross in order to tear down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, so that we both, as the one new person (i.e. His church), have access to the Father through His Spirit (Ephesians 2:14) - and we then as a church not only ignore His will, but even erect this dividing wall again? We will reap what we have sown if we do not repent and return!

The fatal thing about these „outbursts from the two mother churches“ is that, with a few exceptions, they usually continued in the same rut: still no return to the origins. This arrogant attitude toward the Jews was also adopted or at least not corrected by most of the free churches. Oh yes, there was a kind of surface treatment every time. This was absolutely necessary to distinguish us from the others, but were we ever really prepared to go more deeply and let ourselves be fundamentally changed? That would be absolutely necessary, to remain with the picture of the tree. I mentioned that when Christianity was made the state religion, thus separating us from our Jewish roots, a new tree had emerged. Believers from the nations were no longer those who were grafted into the natural olive tree, connected to the root and viable. An uprooted tree lacks strength to survive and bear fruit.

In Luke 3:9 we read

*„However, the axe is also already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire!“*

Another image for the church is a train. The train has many carriages with different furnishings. We can compare the carriages with the different churches and denominations. Some people have changed cars during the journey. Different cars, fresh style, new people, etc. In the end this brings nothing, as long as the train is traveling in the wrong direction. As a church we have been travelling in the wrong direction since the 3rd century, we have not been on the right track. Changing the car is of no use. We need emergency braking, repentance, re-orientation according to God's Word, then choosing the biblical way.

Christianity is the largest world religion with 2.2 billion believers. Every third person on earth professes the Christian faith, more than a third of all people are baptized. With more than 1.1 billion believers, the Catholic Church is by far the largest and especially the most closed group of Christians. More than every second Christian worldwide is Catholic. All Protestant groups together comprise 37 % of Christendom. 12 % of all Christians belong to the Orthodox and Oriental churches. The Russian Orthodox Church is the second largest Christian church in the world, with about 100 million believers, or almost 5 % of all Christians. What imposing, impressive figures!

But if we see Christianity as God sees it, i.e. as a rootless tree with an axe

already laid to the root, a train going in the wrong direction, or a lukewarm church that He will spew out, then we should be seized by a holy fright! This can only lead to a reversal, to repentance. We have led people into „our“ churches, congregations, ministries and works, instead of to Jesus Christ. Often they are loyal to the institution and not to the Lord, who gave everything for them. We have bound them to us, and they follow us instead of becoming followers of Jesus Christ.

But today Christians are again coming together in the Holy Spirit. These find their way out of ecclesiastical bondage and entrust themselves to a loving Father God. He does not allow any of His children to burn in an eternal hell with never-ending pain just because they do not have the right dogma (Roman Catholic), the right baptism, the right whatever. Every day is a new opportunity for them to continue in active faith, which means: acknowledge your wrongdoing, ask for forgiveness and forgive others, make amends as far as it is still possible, and do not sin in this way any more. This is true repentance according to the Bible.

Every day there are more and more believers who no longer belong to any church, but who ask themselves what the true „ecclesia“ (the called out one) is. (This Greek word, by the way, is only used in the singular!). Could it be that the following word of the disciple/seer John has something to do with it?

Revelation 18: 4

*„Come out of her, my people, so that you do not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues.“*

The verse quoted here of course applies not only to the two large „people’s churches“ (the Roman Catholic and the Swiss Reformed), but just as much for any other kind of congregations, Christian ministries and works, for all those who are involved with the “Harlot of Babylon”. This harlot is the direct opponent to the Bride of Christ. All those who are not born again, filled with the Holy Spirit and unequivocally belong to Jesus, commit spiritual fornication with this harlot. Jesus Christ thus calls once again for departure, exit, exodus.

In this case, we would find ourselves at the beginning of an unprecedented exodus, far exceeding the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt or the Reformation in drama and finality. It is about His one worldwide body of Jews

and Gentiles. And we are so close to His return that we must realize that the door might suddenly close and there will be no more way to get in. Are things really that bad for us? Isn't this greatly exaggerated? We are supposed to love and not condemn. But this is not a matter of my personal assessment and viewpoint, rather of what is written in the Bible. It's not that Jesus and I are on one side and the church on the other. I, too, am on the side of the church, I'm a part of it. And yes, things are so bad for us. He even says

Revelation 3:15

*«I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm - neither cold nor hot - I am about to spit you out of my mouth».*

Lukewarm water is obtained by pouring cold and hot water together. The cold water symbolizes the world. (Selfishness, lies, greed, fornication, unforgiveness, etc.) The Bible warns us of mixing the worldly with the divine:

James 4:4

*«You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God».*

Well, for heaven's sake, if things are so bad, why doesn't God do something about it? Such thoughts make clear how little we know God and His Word. Otherwise we would know that HE explicitly points out such a scenario to us in His Word (Revelation 16:15). Furthermore, HE has repeated it over and over again through prophets whom HE called and sent. HE still wants to bring back, awaken, liberate, restore, equip, send. Do you want that, too? Jesus already spoke 2000 years ago about his followers being excluded from the church (or leaving voluntarily?). About horrors, upheavals and catastrophes which will come upon us to an extent that nobody can even begin to imagine.

Of course there have always been wars and terrible natural disasters. But never before on such a scale or without long breaks; covering such large areas or the whole world. Everything is affected - the sky, for example (ash cloud over Iceland and Europe, special constellations in the heavens), the earth (earthquakes, famines, streams of refugees, epidemics/Covid 19), the sea (tsunamis, oil spills, death of many fleeing people). Not to mention increasing wars and terror attacks.

Where is God in everything? What is He doing? On the one hand He reveals Himself to people directly. He appears to them in dreams and visions, in larger numbers than ever before in the history of mankind. On the other hand, HE seeks people who simply obey HIM and are ready to do what HE says. It is the same with blowing the trumpets. God himself spoke, commissioned, authorized and sent. He is not indifferent to the state of his world, his people and above all his church!

With a personal example I would like to show how much the Father is still interested in this very thing today. He wants to wake us up! He wants to bring us back to himself; he wants fellowship with you and me. He wants to share his heart with you and me. That is why He repeatedly sends people who call for repentance, for example those of us in the Abraham ministry. Here is the story of this ministry, beginning with God's call and commission in 2009.



### **“Blow the trumpets!”**

The picture with the priests blowing two trumpets was given to me in 1996. The German artist did not know me, had never heard of me. He painted it based on a prophetic word that God gave me in 1994. My wife Regula sent this word to him with the request for a prophetic painting for my birthday. On the back of the picture the painter wrote the following:

„The Lord has given Werner a vision which - like the sound of a trumpet - awakens, encourages and gives powerful, new hope!“

I received the two silver trumpets shown on the photo in 2009, 13 years later. They were sent by a German brother who said the day would come when God would send us to the nations of Europe to blow them! This brother also gave us the biblical basis, Numbers 10:2+9.

At first everything developed absolutely without our own involvement. The previous year, European prayer leaders suddenly announced at a prayer meeting that now was the time to blow the trumpets in all countries of Europe! My heart was deeply moved and shaken. But it took another two years before God spoke to me clearly and distinctly through the verses

from Numbers 10:2 and 9 during a time of prayer and fasting. He then definitely gave us the mandate to go to every nation of Europe, blow the trumpets and pass on His word to His church. And that is exactly how it happened! We started in March 2010 with four meetings in Switzerland - in Basel, Chur, Bellinzona and Geneva.

Why start in Switzerland of all places? Why us, Jesus' body in Switzerland? We are called to be watchmen! (And this is quite obviously the purpose of my life, if you consider the way it developed). In addition, in order to remember and to see a connection, think back to the year 2003, when the Lord called us to the Jungfrauoch (Top of Europe). Together with more than 100 prayer partners from all parts of the country we proclaimed Psalm 24 over every nation of Europe, over Israel and over every canton of Switzerland and blew the shofar (ram's horn). And now the time had come to physically travel to each of the 50 nations of our continent, stand on the ground there, blow the trumpets and proclaim Psalm 24 with local brothers and sisters! Isn't that ingenious? Is God not unique? Yes and Amen to that!

What is God's intention? What drives Him to this wake-up call? Clearly his love for us! By blowing the trumpets and proclaiming God's Word, explicitly at this time, our Lord wants to make Himself heard once again. He knocks once again on the doors of our hearts and churches. Let us finally come to our senses and wake up! Dear friends, this is not about a bit of encouragement so that we can manage for another few weeks. For that there are Sunday sermons, seminars, workshops, Bible schools, conferences and much more. This it is a matter of life and death! Heaven or hell. Inside or outside. To be written in the book of life or not. All or nothing!

In order to make me at least partially understand the seriousness of the situation, the Lord showed me pictures like a short video clip of a catastrophe such as during and after a tsunami or earthquake. Terrible destruction, dead and injured people everywhere. Penetrating sirens of fire department, police and ambulance. Then in big red letters a word over the whole scene and God's voice pronouncing it: „Emergency! My church is in a state of emergency! Emergency situation! But they do not notice it. They do not believe it. They do not understand. Therefore blow the trumpets as a wake-up call and an alarm!“ This shocked me deeply! (can be seen also in English as a DVD on [www.verein-abraham.ch](http://www.verein-abraham.ch))

The church is sick. Seriously ill. We are in a state of emergency. Emergency! Several members of the body of Jesus are functioning, individual organs look good and are healthy. But if a cancer cell has settled down somewhere and remains undetected, if we ignore it, it will form metastases that weaken, make sick, and cause limbs to die. This always affects the whole body! God, the Father, sees His whole body and HE does not want even one limb to suffer and perish. Therefore HE calls, HE seeks, HE advertises, HE blows, HE speaks!

As a rule we do not like to be startled. Our comfort zone is our fetish! This applies not only to those who sleep deeply and soundly, although this is the time when it is most easily understood. Perhaps this is what happened to Jesus' disciples when they fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane (and were later awakened by HIM) while their Master and Lord was going through the worst struggle of His earthly existence. I find this a strong prophetic image for our time. The three disciples with the closest, most eventful and deepest relationship to Jesus, who were therefore very close to Him and to what was happening, were simply sleeping - even though one of the most dramatic and world-changing events was taking place right in front of them. Part of Jesus' church is now in the same situation, in similar dramatic circumstances. And we sleep, too...

We can also be suddenly startled in the midst of great activity. Not only during relaxed leisure activities, no, also from serious work, creation, working for the Lord. It seems more difficult to be startled and interrupted from such activities than during sleep. Permanent resistance to any awakening, however, leads in both cases to death. Let us listen to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Revelation 3:1-2

*„I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die.“*

A strong, truly startling, gracious, merciful and loving word! Jesus is not indifferent towards HIS church (you and me)! He is not indifferent to our condition! Nor does he enjoy „chastening“ us, seeing us sleep or die or letting us believe that we are alive - when we are dead! Our Father-God does NOT want that! Therefore He calls us to wake up, in order to first of all gain a longing, a deep desire for HIS glorious, holy, life-changing presence! So that HIS Holy Spirit can awaken us as a result.

So from 2010-2013 we set out from Switzerland to visit all 50 nations of Europe in order to preach this wake-up message and blow the trumpets. (I will go into this in more detail later.) We were blessed and sent out by apostolic leaders of Switzerland. Afterwards (2013-2016) we traveled, again with the blessing and a letter of recommendation from European leaders, to all continents of the world to do the same in the North, South, East and West. In between, in 2013, the Lord sent us on an 800 kilometer-long prayer march to Israel. There, too, we blew the trumpets as an alarm and wake-up call and proclaimed Psalm 24, just as we had already done at the Top of Europe in 2003.

When we sought God's intentions for the Abraham ministries in early 2016, we understood that the king of all kings also wanted the trumpets blown from the ends of the earth (Psalm 2:8b)! Therefore we flew to Greenland in August and to Antarctica in December, so that the trumpets would sound from there also, and to preach God's heart message. HE is preparing for the finale, for the wedding of the Lamb - His only begotten Son. A decisive aspect of these preparations is that HE wants to prepare HIS bridal congregation.

Ephesians 5:27

*„... and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.“*

For this, in turn, HE needs our full attention; our readiness for repentance and our obedience! Love shows itself (also) in obedience!

John 14:23

*„Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.'“*

Now to the biblical basis of the trumpet initiative from Numbers.

Numbers 10:2

*„Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out.“*

Numbers 10:9

*„When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by*

*the Lord your God and rescued from your enemies."*

Then where should we now go?

1. This threefold awakening is first of all inward, a return to the center, to the Lord himself. For only there, and only from there, will we be light and salt, will we do the things that Jesus did - and greater things! (John 14:12) Only from there will we be filled with this peace of God which the world does not know, but which it ardently seeks and will find with us. Only there we will be enabled to love God and ourselves in such a way that the world will recognize that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that there is no other way to the Father. (John 14:6) How does this happen? Back to the first love. (Revelation 2:4)!

*"We love because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19*

Back into a deep, intimate love relationship. He wants us to know Him. To have an inkling of what He did on the cross. What He redeemed us from. Into what state He has put us. Let us seek Him. Let us spend more time with Him. Let us gaze at Him. From this will ultimately flow a joyful, passionate willingness to surrender and obey, not only to the Lamb of God (my Savior), but also to the Lion from the tribe of Judah (my King), my Bridegroom!

2. Back to His word! In and through God's Word we know Him more and more. We meet HIM in the Word because He is the Word!

John 1:1

*"The Word was with God and the Word was God!"*

A hunger and a deep love for God's Word - this is what God wants to give us again. So that our thinking, which is deeply influenced by the spirit of the world (humanism), may be changed and we become mature sons and daughters. Sermons, explanatory books, seminars are all good, but no substitute for the pure Word of God. Fresh manna for each of us, every day!

3. Back to an understanding of our roots! (Isaiah 11:1). One of the most tragic aberrations of the church is that it has separated itself from its roots.

John 4:22 *"Salvation is from the Jews."*

Romans 11:18 *"You do not support the root, but the root supports you."*  
From botany we know: A rootless tree dies!

From Numbers 10:9, we must all deeply realize that we are in a war!

Ephesians 6:12

*„Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms!“*

Fight!?!? What do we do about this?

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

„We cannot afford to ignore this word! The most contested battlefield on earth is ourselves. A permanent battle is underway inside us. Our flesh absolutely does not want what God wants (Galatians 5:17)! Our soul, the emotions, wants to dominate and guide us. We must learn to live in and through the Spirit of God and discipline our soul, body and thoughts. Therefore we need the Holy Spirit under all circumstances. God, our Father, offers us this support and help. That is also why we should blow the trumpets. „Let ME hear and I send you help!“

It doesn't matter what state I am in at the moment (deep sleep, just dozed off, spiritually dead, deaf, blind, lame, tired, burned out, disobedient, lukewarm, very agile, church planting, healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead, interceding, shepherding sheep, etc.). The fact is: I can do all this without Jesus.

Matthew 7:22-23

*„Lord did we not... in your name.....! I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!“*

HE calls you and me! All of us! Do we hear HIM? Or are we sleeping or too busy to hear HIM? (From the brochure: „Blow the Signal to Depart“ W.W.) To announce this everywhere was the mission. What a crazy, humanly useless waste of strength, time and finances, some may think. But we no longer judge only from a human standpoint, we simply obey and do what HE tells us (John 2:5)! But that is not enough. That was just the first round. Three years later (2019) the Lord spoke again regarding the trumpet message. „Write the message in the form of a letter to my church, translate it into the seven most spoken languages of the world and send it out.“

Of course we were obedient this time too and did what the Lord had called us to do. It was a joy that we not only received translations into the seven most-spoken languages, but that the „Letter to the Church“ is now translated into 20 languages. I would like to pass on this message from the Lord here in its entirety, because it describes in great detail the heart's desire of our Father and of Jesus.

## **Letter to the Church of Jesus Christ**

„He who has an ear, hear what the Holy Spirit says to the church!“ (Revelation 2:7)

Author, recipient and greeting

Werner Woiwode, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to all who have received the same precious faith with us through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be given to you ever more abundantly, in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord! (cp. 2 Peter 1:1-2) What I am, I am by the grace of God alone, and it is He Himself who revealed Himself to me as Father 34 years ago. This was preceded by a life-changing, radical encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Within an instant, after a deep breakdown, I was freed from 15 years of alcohol and drug addiction. I was born anew! This letter is about a message from Jesus Christ to his church. To those who actually belong to it, but also to those who think that they are part of the Lord's church and do not realize that they are outside.

These are the Lord's words that I heard:

My church is in a state of emergency! My body is seriously and mortally ill. You don't believe it. You don't even see it because you are asleep or too busy. It is the sleep of self-righteousness, self-content, selfishness, self-determination and lukewarmness. Others don't hear because they are driven, imprisoned in religious, fleshly, soul-driven activity. I want to bring all of you back because I love you, because you should belong to me and so that you become what you should be and do that to which I have called you! I will equip you anew, for in your present condition many of you are lost who are convinced that they are saved. There are 3 areas in which you must be awakened to true life and to which I want to return you.

First area:

I have against you that you have left your first love. Turn around and return

to your first love! For you have left me, the fresh spring of living water, and instead have dug holes in your stinking cisterns. Come to me, all you who are burdened and heavily-laden. I will refresh you. I will take up residence in you. "Remain in me and I will remain in you" (John 15:4). I want to call you back to this deepest of all love relationships. My Father and I deeply long for a relationship of this kind, through which we want to reveal ourselves to you. "Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). The better and more deeply you will know me, the stronger and more passionate your love will become. You often receive a lot of information about me and the Father, but you are far from knowing us. There is only one way to get to know and love someone: by spending time together. We are waiting for you and want to spend time with you so that you can get to know us. I have never left you unaware of what it means to love and know me and the Father. "He who has my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me" (John 14:21). "If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love" (John 15:10). The opposite is just as clear and unambiguous. "He who does not love me will not obey my teaching"(John 14:24).

So the measure of your love for the Father and for me is not how often you affirm your love to us or how wonderfully you sing us songs of praise and adoration. Nor how much good you do over and over again, but it is your joyful obedience to my commandments. What is hidden behind the label „Christian“ is deeply shameful. What is inside is not the same as what is written on it. You call yourselves Christians, but in you there is little or nothing of me to be seen and recognized. I knock once more at the door of your heart and ask to be admitted (Revelation 3:20). Many of you leave me standing outside the door. Some of you allow me to visit you from time to time as a guest. But I do not want to be allowed to visit you as a guest from time to time. I am the owner! I own the „temple“ - be it your body or the whole church. It is my church, my body, and you are to be living members of my body. You can therefore only have me completely or not at all. And in the same way you can only put yourselves entirely or not at all at my disposal. At the end of time those who claim to believe in me but are not willing to give up their lives completely to me will become the greatest enemies and persecutors of those who are my true disciples. I tell you quite clearly: "He who wants to keep his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25). „Therefore, beloved ones, hear and prepare yourselves to depart. Get up and return to me!"

Second area:

I have against you that you have turned away from my word. Return to my word. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:1-3). These first verses should already overwhelmingly show you what my Word is all about. They should convict you and lead you to a greater hunger for my Word. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory" (John 1:14a). Here it becomes very clear that the Word cannot be separated from me. He who separates himself from the Word separates himself from me and the Father. If you would like to know us better and more deeply, then this is done primarily through my Word. Here you read, hear and see who I am, how I am and what I do. It is an open view into my heart, my thoughts, feelings, my character and my being. How could you ever get to know and love me without knowing and loving my Word? Day and night words invade you in all variations: TV, newspaper, SMS, WhatsApp, mails etc. Each and every one demands your attention, penetrates your thoughts and makes you slaves and prisoners. From this hectic, disorientated, addictive state, which is steadily increasing, I call you back to my Word. To the tranquility of my eternal Word. To words in which my creative power dwells - in union with the Holy Spirit. I speak and it becomes! As urgently as you need me myself, so you need my word.

Many of you have the word, but do not hear and read it. Others even read it, but do not do what it says. Thus it becomes completely worthless and ineffective. "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). "You know that everything will pass away, but his words will never pass away. They have eternal validity" (Matthew 24:35). How will you learn and increase in knowledge without my word? „All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In the increasing darkness, how can you be sure that you are and remain on the right path? "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105). You see, if you turn away from the Word, you will never become mature sons and daughters of your father. You will go astray; perhaps you will be lost forever. Which of you really wants that? The consequence of this should be a turning to my word. „Turn around, set out and return to my word".

Third area:

I have against you that you have separated yourselves from your roots. Return to an understanding of your roots, to the Jews, to Israel. „For salvation comes from the Jews“ (John 4:22). Beloved children, your brother Paul explains in his letter to the Romans what your roots are. First he makes it clear that I have by no means turned away from my people. „I ask then: Did God reject his people [Israel]? By no means!... Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel envious“ (Romans 11:1+11). Then he explains my action against my chosen people Israel and the faithful from the nations with the image of the natural olive tree. Israel is this natural olive tree. Because of its disobedience some of the branches of this tree have been broken off. Thanks to my grace you, too, the believers from the nations, are now grafted as wild branches onto the branches of the natural olive tree and now live from the same root. But at the same time I warn you not to place yourselves above them. For „You do not support the root, but the root supports you“ (Romans 11:18). It should be clear to you, beloved sons and daughters, that you grafted branches must be connected to your roots in order to be viable.

The church Fathers deliberately separated themselves from all Jewish things. My living congregation, which initially consisted only of my people Israel, but which was later joined by non-Jewish followers of mine, became a dead church because it separated itself from its Jewish roots. With that, the congregation lost all its strength until today. You have the name that you live, but you are dead (Revelation 3:1). Replacement theology was born and, beginning in Europe, infiltrated my church worldwide. It says that the Jews/Israel were cast out and condemned by me and now you, the Christian church, have been given their place by me. This is a terrible lie and heresy. I, the God of Israel, already promised your father in faith Abraham and his seed (i.e. the Jews/Israel), „And I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse.“ (Genesis 12:3).

It is a terrible tragedy that you have not only separated yourselves from your roots, but have also become a curse for them. I have never made a secret of my plans and intentions for them and for you. „But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off [and lost] have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For Jesus is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility in his flesh. He created the two (Jews and Gentiles) in Himself to be one new man, to reconcile the two in one body with God, through the cross, by which he put to death their hos-

tility. For through him we now both have access to the Father through one Spirit" (Ephesians 2:13-18, excerpts).

Together you are the one new person, my church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles who believe in me, Jesus Christ. You belong together, a family with the same Father, the God of Israel. I myself have dearly purchased and made possible this reconciliation through my death on the cross. But what have you as the „church“ done? Instead of loving, honoring and embracing them, you have cursed, betrayed, rejected, rejected, dishonored, spread lies about them, persecuted, mistreated, murdered and downright slaughtered them. And this in the name of me, the King of the Jews and their returning Messiah. What have you done? What a terrible wrong you have done to them!

The hatred, but also the indifference towards my chosen people Israel is unbroken to this day. You must not tolerate this in my congregation, you must expose it and root it out with stump and stem! After all, you are „My firstborn. The apple of my eye.“ You probably cannot measure in all depth what you are doing to me and the Father when you stand against your older brother and what terrible consequences you will suffer as a result. Therefore, beloved children, I urge you, „Come, set out, turn around and return to an understanding of your roots.“ End of the Lord's message.

„The time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done“ (Revelation 22:10-12).

Blessings and greetings: „May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Brothers [and sisters], ... I charge you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you“

(1 Thessalonians 5:23-28).

End of the letter to the church of Jesus.

Beloved! This is God's message to us! Today, now! Nothing new under the sun. This message is thousands of years old and yet it is valid until He returns. It is more up-to-date than ever before because the world and parts

of the church have become more godless than ever, just as our Lord Jesus foretold.

I realize that this has always been the case. This earth is a permanent theater of war. We are now digitally connected as never before. On the one hand, this makes it possible to sow very blessed seeds in various ethnic groups and to bring the gospel to every nation, no matter how closed it is. And there the Spirit of God also blows mightily. On the other hand, it has never been easier to seduce and manipulate people and thus lead them away from God, to error. In addition, there are natural catastrophes of an unprecedented scale of intensity and frequency, as well as worldwide epidemics.

The Bible tells that the whole creation is in labor pains (Romans 8:22). The last phase before a birth begins with the onset of labor pains. A joyful moment, but also very painful. And these contractions increase in frequency, the intervals become shorter and the pain increases. Shortly before the birth it is usually almost unbearable, but it continues anyway - until the child is finally born. The comparison with our situation is obvious. The whole creation is in such contractions, including ourselves. The contractions come in waves, increasingly severe, in shorter intervals, more intense, more painful. In the end are the birth, the return of Jesus, our Savior and King, the Millennial Kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth. There will be bliss and joy! But until then it will be the most contested time this earth has ever experienced. „Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short“ (Revelation 12:12).

## **The church in our days**

Matthew 16:2-3

*„When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.“*

This was Jesus' answer to the „theologians“ of his time who wanted to trap him by asking for signs and wonders. On the one hand, Jesus pointed to his own work, which was constantly accompanied by signs and wonders. But on the other hand, He also set this in a much larger context. The Torah

already contains myriads of clear references to Him. The Pharisees and Sadducees could not understand or put in context and accordingly could not correctly judge anything - although they did nothing but study the Scriptures! Doesn't all this seem very familiar to us? Even we, the church of today, cannot correctly judge the times and what is happening before our eyes. An example is the return of the Jews to Israel from all over the world (aliyah). The establishment of the state of Israel, in the place that God had promised, after almost 2000 years! And that Jews recognize Jesus Christ/ Yeshua haMashiah as their promised Messiah, turn to him and are baptized in his name without discarding or denying their Jewish nature (Ezekiel 36). That Jerusalem is again under Jewish rule.

All this was explicitly predicted thousands of years ago! Through prophets of God, filled with His Holy Spirit. For thousands of years none of this was seen or heard. „But when the time was fulfilled...“ God acted. Not because the circumstances just then seemed then according to human judgment, but because HE had fixed this time, before all calculation of time. It has to do with fulfillment. Before Jesus Christ returns a number of things will surely take place, so that Scripture will be fulfilled in everything.

Luke 21:22

*„For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written“.*

Why is it that the vast majority of the church cannot judge the times correctly? Because they know neither the Scripture (Bible) nor God. This is exactly the phenomenon we have considered in the previous chapters.

But there are also churches (Christians) who hear and read the word, but do not integrate it into their everyday life. They read the newspaper, for example, and consider world events in its light. These people basically differ from the world only by going to church on Sunday - but they are not the church! They waver between both sides (1 Kings 18:21). They want to be in the church, but they also want to stay in the world. We already said that this cannot possibly work. Since the spirit of this world has such a strong impact on the church, we should look at the people of Israel to see what this means. „Completely destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, as the LORD your God commanded you“(Deuteronomy 20:17). Why didn't God allow the Israelites to live with the Canaanites?

„Do not let them dwell in your land,“ God warned the people of Israel, „or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you“ (Exodus 23:33).

The prophet Moses later declared, „It is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is going to drive them out before you“ (Deuteronomy 9:5)

Were these nations really so bad? In the land of Canaan pagan practices were common, people lived immoral lives and sacrificed small children. The Bible scholar Henry H. Halley observed, in that area archaeologists found „many clay vessels with the bones of children sacrificed to Baal (an important god Canaanite god)“. The whole area was a huge cemetery for newborns. Canaanite worship included debauchery, which was considered a religious rite performed in the presence of their gods. They murdered their first-born children, who were offered as sacrifices to these gods. The whole land of Canaan had become like Sodom and Gomorrah on a national scale. How horrible, we may think. On the one hand, of course such rites totally repel us. That is inhuman, we think. Nevertheless, we surely also have problems that God orders the Israelites to destroy these people! Finally we sit back and think, how good that such times are past! In general, such things are no longer practiced today. We have become more civilized.

Really? Our present world is in no way behind the Canaanites of old. Abortions, formerly forbidden and punishable by law, are now state-protected, legalized murder, even financed by health insurance. This is done year after year by the thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions worldwide. Decades ago this was unthinkable. Regarding debauchery, I am convinced that there was long no such a decay of decency and manners, again legalized by the law, as today. Homosexuality was not an issue during my youth, nor were abortion, pornography, trafficking, pedophile rings, (forced) prostitution, modern slavery, etc. To the extent that we have turned away from God and set ourselves up as the measure of all things, we tolerantly run towards the abyss. What repulsed us 40 years ago, e.g. that two men or two women can marry and have children, is now considered normal. Back then, they would have been prosecuted and punished by law. Today it is exactly the other way around. Whoever speaks out against such a development or refers to the Bible will be prosecuted and punished!

A quote from Dwight Longenecker precisely describes this process of decay. „First we ignore the evil. Then we allow the evil to happen. Then we legalize the evil. Then we promote the evil. Then we celebrate the evil. Then we persecute those who still call it evil.“ We are confronted with develop-

ments that overrun us like a tsunami of dirt, garbage and sick thoughts. Under the guise of progress and freedom, we are now mutating and degenerating into slaves of our insatiable desires and lusts. Without God, man strives only for the greatest possible satisfaction. The Canaanite gods and practices, as well as our present attitudes and thoughts lead us to sin against God. That is the reason for this absolute radical necessity to take action! In this respect, God has not changed at all (He doesn't anyway). He has, in my opinion, become even clearer and more zealous in and through Jesus regarding temptation. Making common cause with it is not the way - not even concerning our favorite sins, which are then called „peccadilloes“....

Jesus says in

Matthew 5:29-30

*„If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away...If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.“*

Jesus does not advocate literal self-mutilation, but unyielding self-denial regarding morality. Not mutilation, but dying is his way of sanctification (John 12:25). And dying or „taking up one's cross and following Jesus“ means rejecting sinful behavior so resolutely that it has died for us and we for it. All this is only a small glimpse of the world's darkness. It should find us, as followers of Jesus, radically alert and praying because as already mentioned, we are in a tremendous spiritual struggle. It is the battle between two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God with the King Jesus Christ - and the kingdom that man wants to establish without God, directed by Satan himself.

But let's be honest. Which of us Christians even notices this, is alarmed and really indignant and saddened by it? We have grown accustomed to it, have let ourselves be lulled by it. We have not resisted, as is good and right and as Jesus told us.

Hebrews 12:4 *“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”* How grieved is our Father's heart about our condition? For it is God's burning desire to save man from harmful, deadly misconduct and separation from HIM. Today people with the label „Christian“ in general do not live much differently than those who obviously want nothing to do with God. There is often just as much intrigue, lying, divorce, adultery, denunciation, cheating and fornication. We welcome the world,

embrace it, think like it and act like it. Of course, this is not true for everyone, but it is for a large part of today's church. What does Jesus tell us about the world and our attitude towards it?

John 15:18-19, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." There is no question that we are to love persons, because our Father does, even to the extent of loving our enemies! But we should have nothing more to do with their way of thinking and living.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

A clear guideline, right? We must honestly ask ourselves: How much do I love the world? And how much does the world love me and why does it love me so much? Because the more clearly we walk with Jesus, the more we stand by Him and His word, the more we will irritate, be misunderstood, provoke to anger and hostility, rejected, hated and finally persecuted. We should not try to avoid this. On the contrary, if it happens, we should recognize and accept it as a joyful privilege (Acts 5:41). The mixing of the church with the world is one of the problems we must deal with increasingly. One reason for this is certainly the rapidly spreading digitalization of our world. Seldom if ever can we keep up with this development. In my childhood (born in 1952), we didn't have a telephone, let alone television. But today, of course, children grow up with their cell phones, through which they have access to all kinds of dirt, hate, violence and fornication. Usually even without parental control. As adults we can also bring everything freely into our rooms and consume it without others noticing. Of course, this makes us even as Christians all the more vulnerable. Jesus knows about our danger of being seduced. Therefore He warned us urgently and repeatedly about it. He warned also of secrecy, because ultimately everything will come to the light (Luke 12:2).

Scripture says quite clearly that the last days before the return of Jesus Christ will be marked by increasingly massive prophetic deception.

Mark 13:22-23

*„For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect - if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time“.*

In addition to being mixed with the world, we will be misled by „wolves in sheep’s clothing“ (Matthew 7:15). The perfidious thing about these false prophets is that they are in our midst; they look and speak like us, are often charismatically very attractive, even work miracles and are very successful in binding people to themselves. One wonders how such a thing is possible and how one can distinguish God’s genuine prophets from the false, self-appointed ones? The starting point again is: The more we are grounded in God’s Word and consequently know God better, the less seducible we will be. On the negative side, the same applies: The less we know the Word, i.e. God himself, the easier it will be for us to be seduced. We hang our flag after every new „star“, if he has just enough YouTube viewers. Sermons, books, initiatives, and trends make the rounds among us as fast as lightning. We can hardly keep up with the pace and absorb everything. With all this holy (or rather, hopeless) activity, how can we still find time to immerse ourselves directly in God’s Word? But that would be exactly the commandment of the hour.

Acts 17:11

*„....they (the Bereans) examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true“.*

In Jeremiah 23:11ff the Lord says the following about the prophets: «Both prophet and priest are godless; even in my temple I find their wickedness,» declares the LORD. „Therefore their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and there they will fall. I will bring disaster on them in the year they are punished,» declares the LORD. This is what the LORD Almighty says: „Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They keep saying to those who despise me, ‘The LORD says, ‘You will have peace.’ And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, ‘No harm will come to you.’ In days to come you will understand it clearly. I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied».

There have always been "prophets" who prophesied to God's people, although they were not sent by Him. It is striking that they always proclaimed „peace, peace“, although the true prophet of the Lord had proclaimed exactly the opposite. People then and now prefer to have their ears tickled. „All is well. Peace. You need not change; peace.“ No one is talking about repentance, conversion, brokenness and such. We can remain like this and continue as before. Basically nothing has changed since Jeremiah's day. It's still all about keeping people safe. Confirming that they need not change anything, least of all themselves. Peace! Everything is O.K.! Instead of calling people to repentance and conversion, as Jesus did, and seeking the Lord in silence.

Isaiah 30:15

*„In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. You said 'No, we will flee on horses'“.*

But we occupy people in the church. Always diligent, always on the road, busy with some initiative somewhere.

But here is another problem we must look at briefly. Doing things from the Holy Spirit, under his dominion as opposed to doing our own thing in the flesh. Without being permanently available, nothing works for us today. Websites, info letters, YouTube messages, thousands of flyers electronically mailed or printed. This is in part an unworthy courting of attention, such as every theater and circus does to fill its performances. They, just like the rest of us, need financial support to keep everything running! However, if we believed that God provides for us, personally as well as for the church and ministry, we would not need to beg for „survival aid“. If we can't do without it, it might be time to stop, because God might not care about it as much as we do. I don't mean to say that all this is necessarily wrong, we just handle it this way. It is only to show that we are in danger of working without the Holy Spirit. Then the fruits that the Lord wants to see are lacking. From Matthew 3:1-8

„In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, 'A voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where

he was baptizing, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance!'" Is this not the exact opposite of all our fruitless efforts? John worked without a website, iPad, iPhone, without a circle of friends, WhatsApp, supporters, not a single flyer, invitation, nothing! None of the things on which we now rely so heavily. But he had God and the Holy Spirit's working. And this without worship time, tape, amplification or zoom transmission. God was simply there! With Jesus it was of course the same. He never attempted to gather as many people as possible around himself and then preach a shallow, inoffensive gospel. People came in droves, no matter where He was. And Jesus made no attempt to spare people or his reputation. He accepted the fact that many deserted Him because of some of His words. John 6:60 + 66 „On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching! Who can accept' it? From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.'" But the Holy Spirit was on Him and glorified the Father.

Here is an 18th century example from John Pollock "George Whitefield and the great Awakening".

„On October 23, 1740, just before 9:00 a.m., Nathan Cole was working in the field when a rider galloped by and shouted to him that Mr. Whitefield was preaching in Middletown. Cole dropped everything and ran home to tell his wife to get ready. He then ran to the pasture to get his horse as fast as he could, for fear he would be late. He and his wife got on the horse and rode off as fast as the horse could go. They rode as if they were fleeing for their lives and were afraid all the time that they might be late for the sermon. The fields were deserted; it seemed as if every man and woman was in Middletown. They rode on, in an ever-growing throng of riders; no one said a word until they entered Middletown and Cole saw countless people standing close together in the square in front of the old meeting house on the edge of town. The clergymen walked like a black phalanx across the hastily-erected wooden stage on which Whitefield was to preach. As Cole dismounted and knocked the dust off his coat, he looked down at the river and saw ferryboats going back and forth quickly to bring whole boatloads of people. Everything, people, horses, and ships, seemed to be running as if their lives were at stake. The other riverbank was black with people and horses.

Whitefield stepped forward onto the stage. A young, slim, lean man in front of a few thousand people, with a bold, fearless expression on his face.

And when Cole heard about how God had been with him on his journey across the land, a solemn mood seized him and filled him with trembling fear before he began to preach, for he looked as if he had been clothed with authority by the highest God. And when Cole heard his sermon, his heart was wounded and God's blessing broke his old foundation and he realized that his own righteousness would not save him. The divine arrows pierced Cole's heart and he experienced an intense conviction of sin that lasted for two years. Afterwards, he was miraculously reborn anew. This is the example of a single person, but thousands came to a new life that day, after their hearts were pierced by God's Word, like arrows.

And how did the twenty-five year old Whitefield describe this event in his diary? „Preached to about four thousand people at eleven o'clock, then again in the afternoon in Wallingford, fourteen miles past Middletown. That's it. Nothing unusual, a day of service like any other. What a glaring difference to our day. No advertising, just a man riding by briefly. People set out as if their lives were at stake. That's exactly how it was and they had understood it. A young man, chosen and called by God, preaching without any fuss, without heating things up, working up a mood or a light show, just the simple and unadorned Word of God. And the Holy Spirit was there. How we would be overjoyed if this happened today! We would have something to talk about for months. Of course it would be broadcast via livestream, like so many of our events. And maybe we would also write a book about it. Do you notice anything? How often do programs replace God's living presence? We try very hard, but nothing can replace the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Why don't we just stop all this, declare our bankruptcy and admit that God has long since withdrawn from our churches and most of our events? What must God do in order that we finally gain insight? That we no longer carry on as if... What methods does He still have to get us out of „our rhythm“, out of lethargy or over-zealousness, out of rebellion and traditional religiosity?

And suddenly the Corona virus appears! My first reaction, after the epidemic was declared a pandemic and nearly all habitual life came to a standstill worldwide, was to thank my heavenly Father. From my point of view it was an answer to prayer. I can well imagine that you are now shaking your head in outrage, not understanding. Please let me explain why I consider this Corona crisis an answer to prayer. What set us in motion in 1994 was the Father's heart cry, „My people do not pray! They are a prayer-less people. Go and call my people to prayer.“

Isaiah 56:7c „For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations“. This is what we did then and during all the following years. And there has been much movement regarding prayer. As Corona spread there was suddenly a prayer explosion! It was prayed like never before! There was literally a flood of prayers, requests, proclamations, appeals and initiatives. We have been praying for 25 years for the church to become a praying church. Now in this crisis our prayer seemed to be fulfilled. Therefore we gave thanks for Corona. Despite the drop of bitterness over the lack of repentance in the biggest online prayer meetings. But everything with a name in the Christian scene was there.

Another thing we have been praying for decades was, „Father, do whatever it takes to waken us so that we come to our senses, repent and become a people that knows you, longs for you and loves you more than our own lives.“ I saw this request now also heard, through Corona. What a unique opportunity for all of us, inside and outside the church, to stop, pause and turn to God! In the middle of the theater all over the world, including religious theater, God pulled the plug and suddenly it is quiet. God has sab-bathed us. There has probably never been such a standstill in our entire lives, not even during the war. The media, whose *raison d'être* is to inform the people, took Corona as just what it had been waiting for. They not only inform us day and night with shrill sounds and lurid pictures, but also manipulate us through fear into a certain attitude. First there was a hysterical overreaction. The so-called experts and media stars did not agree at all, whether professors, doctors or virologists. The media and the government determined which opinion was broadcast, which was mentioned only in passing or not at all. This is called opinion making. Here are a few figures on the subject. The Spanish flu of 1918-1919 caused 40 million deaths. Every year between 250,000-500,000 people die from the flu. Isn't worthy of a special report. Ca. 1,000,000 people have died of the Corona flu so far? Really? It was frightening and at the same time fascinating to see how easy it is to quickly bring mankind under control through fear. Quasi overnight the emergency law came into force and incapacitated the citizens. Unbelievable!

What interests us ardently as Jesus' followers is, of course, the question of how to judge the whole thing spiritually. Where is God in all this and how does HE see this scenario? As already mentioned, with a few exceptions, the case was clear for the church: enemy attack! We must stand up and authoritatively pray and fight against it. Christians loudly and vehemently proclaimed, „This cannot possibly be from God. God is not like that!“ So

it must come from Satan. But I cannot see it like that. We all believe that God is almighty and that He rules sovereignly. This is clearly evident from His Word. Nothing and no one can stop Him from fulfilling His plans and intentions. Not even the devil.

Elsewhere we looked at various statements of God/Jesus, which explicitly show that He Himself sends wars, catastrophes, drought, floods, locusts and epidemics. If we categorically deny this side of God, reject it, refuse to believe it, this exactly reveals our major problem: We do not know God! Our indignant exclamation „God is not like that“ should truthfully be „We do not want or accept that God is like that.“ Beloved children of God, our Father is the sovereign ruler, creator of heaven and earth, to whom all things belong (Psalm 24), who was and is eternal, strong and omnipotent, just, true, jealous and kind. This is how He presents Himself. We cannot tinker Him together at our own discretion! What understanding do we have of God and Satan? Can Satan think of something that our God does not know???? Our Father could have prevented this if He had wanted to! But He did not! He wanted it; either initiated it himself or let it happen.

This reminds us of the story of Job. It would have been a small thing for God to prevent Satan from approaching him. Job was after all a God-fearing, pious man, in contrast to the church of today. But no, Satan was allowed to take away everything Job loved, and that within one day - with God's permission! Sickness, rejection, accusations etc. followed. Everything in us wants to cry out: „God is not like that!“ The core of this whole story of suffering is Job's statement

Job 42:5 „My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.“ Beloved brothers and sisters. That is exactly what it is all about! We know Him only by hearsay, whether it is right or wrong. God wants us to know exactly as Job knew and to see Him! This will fundamentally change our outlook, even if the circumstances remain the same temporarily. In the end, for Job everything became much more beautiful, better, more glorious. And that is ahead of us, also, if not immediately here on earth, then at least with absolute certainty when Jesus returns and we can be with Him and the Father. And this is the will of the Father: that we should be with Him! Here and now, then even more so! For this HE sometimes takes drastic measures, disturbs, interferes, calls attention to himself, again and again, as long as it is still possible.

Thus I understand the Corona crisis as an intervention of God, unfortu-

nately connected with existential economic and health suffering, even to death. As terrible as it is for those who are affected, God's love ultimately has all persons in mind; this emergency stop gives them the opportunity to get out, to take a different path, to humble themselves, to repent and turn to Him.

Job 33: 29+30: „God does all these things to a man - twice, even three times - to turn back his soul back from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him.“

None of us can even begin to imagine what God must see and hear because before Him everything is revealed. Nothing happens without His direct notice; even our most secret, hidden deeds are present to Him. Some of these deeds that become public shock and horrify us. We feel disgust and are stunned. Yet we see and hear so little. God not only sees all these things, but HE knows our hearts and thoughts, which according to the Bible are full of murder and poison. This is the result of our turning away and our rebellion against Him. We read similar things early in mankind's history.

Genesis 6:5-8

*„The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth - men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.“*

Although God always knows the thoughts of our hearts, and it was therefore completely clear to Him that we would not improve, that we would not and could not change, He gave us this promise in

Genesis 8:21-22

*„Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease“.*

But this promise was not all; God also sent a way out of this dilemma, out of all hopelessness: the Redeemer! HE, Jesus Christ, the only one who can

save us from our desperate situation. The Father gave this gift to us lost, rebellious, godless and evil people. Why? Because He loves us unconditionally and has therefore thrown us a life-saving ring so that we do not perish in the wickedness of our heart.

Romans 6:23

*„For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.“*

But what have we done with this gift? Until now the great masses have ignored it, rejected it or never heard of it from us. They are more rebellious, more unrestrained and evil than ever before in human history, mocking God to His face. But God's love is for all people. That is why He tries to warn us over and over again - and „the world“ as well. But we are unreasonable, proud and do not want to listen. Will we remain like this? What else should or can He do to draw our attention to Himself? I published my thoughts on the Corona virus in an article in the Abraham News, which I will repeat here:

### **Coronavirus. Blessing or curse?**

Isaiah 45:6b-7

*„... I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster. I, the Lord, do all these things.“*

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

*“When I shut up heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land, or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.“*

Revelation 3:15-19

*«I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that*

*you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock."*

A call for purity, not only for hygiene

In Psalm 24:3-4 King David asks

*„Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.*

The prophet Joel gives a command to blow the ram's horn (shofar) to call together God's people to repent and seek him, because „who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing?" (Joel 2,1+14). We should all understand the coronavirus as a heavenly shofar that calls us to seek God and test our hearts. Let us follow James' advice

James 4:8

*„Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."*

Jesus himself teaches that a clean heart is more important than bodily hygiene and washing hands, because it is our heart that defiles and deceives us. (Matthew 15:16-20)

Of course, in no way does this mean that we should disregard any advice or hygienic and legal regulations regarding this virus. But it does mean that we should cleanse our hearts with as much and even greater determination, because this will have an impact on our spiritual life today and in eternity. God „pulled the plug" so to speak, so that we finally attain understanding. We, by this I mean first of all us Christians, the church - and then, of course, the non-Christians, those who still do not believe. All of us should and must come to our senses. Our God, Lord and King Jesus Christ is cleansing HIS temple once again. That is you and I, who are a temple of the Holy Spirit. And this is HIS whole church, the temple of living stones. God no longer allows Himself to be ridiculed by desecrating HIS name, disgracing it and dragging it into the dirt.

Times of shaking!

The prophet Haggai proclaims

Haggai 2:6-7

*„This is what the LORD almighty says: In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations...."*

The Corona crisis makes it very clear how fragile our whole world trade system, our society, ultimately our entire life is. Basically, we control little or nothing. Fear and the state control us increasingly. May we realize that only One has total control: God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And HE has good, eternal, wonderful plans and intentions!

Revelation 21:5

*„He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'*

Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" These shocks will hopefully unleash a hunger for God - and the church of Jesus must be prepared for this. The passage which Haggai illustrates is expressed in another way in Hebrews 12, where the reasons for the coming shakings are given.

Hebrews 12:26-27

*"at All things will be shaken, so that what cannot be shaken may remain."*

*"Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens so that what cannot be shaken may remain."...*

Jesus already spoke of safe building in the parable of the house on the rock in

Luke 6:48 (a man who hears the word and does it...)

"He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came (e.g. in the form of a virus), the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built."

A few more unshakeable things are

-The Word of God

Mark 13:31: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

Jesus himself

1 Peter 2:6 "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame".

Hebr. 13:8

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Romans 10:11 "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

- Everything that belongs to the Kingdom of God is unshakable, including our works for the Lord.

Motivation 1 Corinthians 15:58

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain!"

This is only the beginning of the birth pangs

If we really read the Word of God and take it seriously, we come to the conclusion that this is only a small foretaste of what is to come. The Hebrew prophets and the New Testament speak of a time when God will judge the world harshly because of its injustice and rebellion against God. And this trial will begin at the house of God. I think that the coronavirus pandemic is not God's actual judgment, but a harbinger of what will come on an even greater scale if the world does not repent. In this sense, the coronavirus is a sign of things to come, when certain plagues will destroy the earth and yet mankind will not repent (Revelation 9:18-21). But it is also a reminder that now is still a time of grace, in which the following applies.

Joel 3:5 Acts 2:21

*"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

It is a wake-up call to the church to recognize the time in which we live and to behave accordingly. We in the Abraham Ministry have been calling for 25 years, especially the church in Switzerland, but also worldwide, to wake up and repent - most recently with „The Letter to the Church of Jesus“.

Urgent call to prayer. Not to anxiety!

All of this must now finally drive us to prayer, into the arms of the Father! Not to seek protection, full of fear and despondency. We know that HE is our protection, umbrella and shield, what should we fear? No, from there we want to step into the gap and pray that people will turn to God and be saved. That the name of Jesus Christ will be sanctified and glorified and that His royal rule will spread! Now we have time for this, let's buy it! We also have the unique opportunity as a married couple, as a family, to come together and realize what we have in common. Family will indeed become family again, just as it was originally intended. We will make a difference to those who do not know God because we are full of love and this love of God drives out all fear. We are full of hope and peace in every situation because our hope and peace is a person, the Prince of Peace Jesus Christ. We will always be ready to help wherever help is needed. We will be true

ambassadors in Christ's place! Thank you Father for these opportunities. Please, please do not let them pass by unused! (End of the article)  
Back to the Corona crisis, whether God caused or „only“ allowed it. As already mentioned, all public life was shut down, as it was said. In this chapter we will consider primarily the churches' reaction. Governments declared a state of emergency, banned all gatherings, including of course church services and other Christian events. Wherever possible, work was done at home, school was at home, so it was best to stay in the house without visiting or receiving visits. What at first seemed like a nightmare (regardless of whether or not it was necessary) was, on closer inspection, a unique, blessed opportunity to seek God, spend time with Him and His Word and pray, alone, as a married couple and/or whole family.

This reminds one of the Israelites' situation in Exodus 12

„That same night they are to eat the meat....Do not leave any of it till morning. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning!“ God's people received strict orders to slaughter one flawless lamb per family, to paint its blood on the doorposts and to eat the whole prepared lamb that same evening. A wonderful image already pointing to the true, blemish-free and sinless Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. They had to eat it whole. This indicates that we can only have the Son whole, not a part of Him that we like and tastes good. All or nothing. What a wonderful opportunity that we had to close our doors and have fellowship with the Lamb to realize how infinitely precious and delicious HE is.

Acts 1:13-14

*„When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.“*

We were not allowed to form such large groups, but the focus is on „joining together“ - in prayer! It must be said again that due to the difficult circumstances, we were given an extraordinary, unique opportunity to persevere unanimously in prayer in our upper room (apartment, house), to make the most of the time, to use it so that Jesus' royal rule would spread more than ever during this time.

So these were occasions for the church that could also be called „gifts from heaven“. Did we recognize them as such and use them accordingly? How did we react? There were many good and blessed ideas, opportunities, meetings, conversations and developments where we were ready to receive

ve and implement the impulses of the Holy Spirit. We are very thankful for this, also for the useful technical aids.

On the other hand, it was precisely these technical aids that became a stumbling block which prevented us from turning to the wonderful possibilities described above. The flood of Christian services, broadcasts, sermons, prayer initiatives, etc. via digital channels, which had been unmanageable even before Corona, now broke through all the dams to a wild, uncontrollable oversupply. Before Corona we used to go to worship services to see brothers and sisters, to sing and pray - now it was all sent directly into the living room. What a blessing for those who are not (any more) mobile, right? Of course, but then these are mostly older people who also have no Internet access, so they were rather few. (But now this group in particular had nothing at all: no church service, no fellowship, no encouragement in this frightening time of loneliness).

For the vast majority, on the other hand, it was like reading a menu. Which church service do I consume today? Then we get our coffee, make ourselves comfortable and have a look. If it doesn't really „taste“ good, we just change the channel. There is enough choice. In my opinion, an attitude of dependence and non-commitment has been encouraged and strengthened. Instead of using this unique opportunity to challenge church members, encourage and guide them to meet in families, small groups, in homes and apartments to read, share, pray together - in other words, to do what the first church did - we created church services to hold on to our flocks. According to the motto: „Everything is possible for those who have the necessary technical equipment“.

It may be our present desire to upgrade technically. But then we should use the equipment to instruct church members to grow beyond infancy and become mature, independent disciples of Jesus, no longer hanging on the intravenous feeding of the pastor, priest, preacher or leader. In any case this will be only a short period of time in which we can use these technical means. The day will come when Jesus' true followers will no longer allowed to use them. The virus virtually forced us to meet as the early Christians did. There could have been a dramatic but beneficial change; a paradigm shift, a transformation of our thinking and understanding of church. By and large this has been lacking, hasn't it? Did we ask the Lord whether we should proceed as before, did the Holy Spirit have a say in our decisions?

It was also the time for prayer initiatives. Never before have there been as many prayer meetings - at regional, national, European and global level - as during the Corona crisis. Hallelujah, finally? In general it can't be bad if there is more prayer, can it? No, not really, but here too we must take a closer look and realize soberly that not all that glitters is gold. At some of these zoom meetings, one could not escape the impression that it was very important for the initiators to emphasize repeatedly how many thousands of people participated and, above all, to point out the diversity. It no longer seemed important whether the participants were even born-again followers of Christ. In my opinion, the number of participants does not say the slightest thing about whether God himself was the initiator or the Holy Spirit was present.

For example, on one single day I participated in three „global“ prayer initiatives, all of whom certainly meant well and felt called by God to do this. They either didn't know about each other, or didn't think it was relevant to join together (I had asked). I am not saying that one should not hold such events. But leaders with access to many Christians worldwide should also use their influence to fundamentally call, encourage and motivate to follow what Jesus Christ says about prayer in Matthew 6:6, among other things. „When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you“.

Many of us have never learned to pray in this way. But there it must begin, there it must have its source. In the room means the deep, loving relationship between the Father and me. This is what it is all about - not „only“ prayer, but what we mentioned at the beginning: the center, the most important thing, our absolute focus, God's central concern. His heart's desire and deepest longing: the fellowship between HIM and you! Prayer is often reduced to approaching Him and asking for something we need. But prayer is basically just conversing with the Father. What moves my heart and above all the question: what moves HIS heart? Listening and speaking, an exchange, not just a monologue of my requests and wishes. 'Communication' in contemporary language. We should have also pointed this out in the time of crisis. From this position, we can go out and pray together with others. Our attitude is decisive and it is formed in the room, alone between the Father who is waiting there and me/ you. There the decisive, truly important and central thing happens.

At this point I would like to weave in another personal experience because it demonstrates that this is indeed God's priority. It underlines what the Father and Jesus are concerned about, in everything, first and foremost, i.e. what their deepest desire is, what they are deeply longing for.

I received an invitation to a prayer meeting in Cape Town with international leaders. You can't imagine how it affected me/us. It was a personal invitation, not to an open conference but a meeting of prayer leaders and others from all over the world. I didn't even know how I received this „honor“, but I assumed that the Lord was behind it and opened doors for me. Reason: our prayer march through Switzerland. The fact was that I was invited to this meeting of international leaders. Wow, of course I was very happy. Everything was right on time, so I registered and prepared the trip: flight, accommodation, vaccination. It was really a special situation. Challenging, exciting and full of expectancy.

A few days before the departure my heavenly father spoke to me during my quiet time. „My son, I don't want you to travel to Cape Town. Stay here and spend time alone with me.“ You cannot imagine what went on inside me at that moment. Uncertainty, because I thought that everything was arranged by HIM and now suddenly a complete turnaround? What is this supposed to mean? „Do as He tells you!“ So I cancelled everything and did not fly to South Africa. Instead, I withdrew to a vacant house belonging to friends. When I entered the house and closed the door, I heard the father ask, «My son, what do you expect from this time? Should I give you a fresh, new vision? To confirm once again what you already have of me? Do you expect powerful visions, dreams, prophetic signs, miracles?“ „Oh yes, Father! That sounds wonderful. I am ready.“

A moment of silence followed. And then again my father's words, „Or is it enough for you to simply be with me?“ Dear brothers and sisters, you may not be able to imagine what this triggered in me. My eyes filled with tears because I was convicted by my father's love. I was deeply ashamed of my heart's attitude. I was so sorry. How could it not be enough to be with the Creator of Heaven and Earth, to have fellowship with Him? Not coming with any concerns, needs and desires, as urgent and pressing as they sometimes are? What broke me in that moment was not only realizing my wrong attitude, but also realizing my blindness and ignorance regarding my Father's heart. This is His desire, His deepest longing: to be sought and loved for His own sake!

Does this mean that we just missed it and gambled it all away? I don't think so because as I mentioned before, this was not the end, but only the beginning of ever greater and stronger shakings or birth pangs. For these challenging times, we need more and more role models by which we should orient ourselves. „A role model is a person or thing that is seen as a directional pattern or example. In a narrower sense, a role model is a person with whom a person identifies and whose behavioral patterns he or she imitates or tries to imitate“ (Wikipedia). Our perfect role model is clearly Jesus Christ, whom we should follow, who dwells in us through the Holy Spirit and through whom we are increasingly transformed into the image of Jesus.

John 3:30

*“He must become greater, I must become less.”*

The Bible is our manual. How and with which people did God bring HIS kingdom to earth and spread it? They were those who before the world had no value, nothing to show for themselves. Significantly, despised shepherds were the first to know about Jesus' birth. It was fishermen who were first called to discipleship by Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

*„Brothers (and sisters), think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were influential, not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.“*

Plainness and simplicity, as in the early days of the church, would be good for us again today. The straightforward, unadorned proclamation of the good news must be returned to the center.

1 Cor. 1: 22-23

*„Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.“*

We try to appear wise and prudent, and in doing so we override God's wisdom. We have turned the simple, childlike gospel into an inscrutable

labyrinth of „teachings“ that confuse us more and more and remove us from Jesus. „Dear Peter, without Bible school you were let loose on people, but you were full of the Holy Spirit. That is why 3000 people came to faith at your first sermon. Brother Johannes, you should have done your bachelor's degree after all, maybe you would have been spared the banishment on Patmos. Oh faithful Stephan, perhaps a prayer seminar at the Online Academy would have saved you from being stoned to death.“ We teach, instruct.... The Pharisees send their greetings. We offer much information on how to pray, evangelize, speak prophetically, dance, paint, interpret dreams - and of course how to preach: correct structure, attitude, voice etc. etc. Where is this leading? Could it be that we have been abandoned by the Holy Spirit and now have to fill or replace this vacuum somehow with tireless activity? We are breeding an unnatural specialization and following the methods and trends of the world.

The same happens regarding the generations. Of course, times have changed and we, as followers of Jesus, have to „adapt“ in some things as long as it is not against God's word. But other things we not only take over from the world, but also cultivate them with enthusiasm. Instead of promoting generational co-operation, today we must strictly separate. Here the men meet in the evening, there the women for breakfast, the seniors in the afternoon and the boys at any time - the main thing is to be alone! And of course, there are offers tailored to the needs of each group: play groups and stories for the little ones, adventure campfires for the wild guys. „How am I a good and faithful helper to my 'wild man'“ for the women. Knitting and telling stories about the good old days for the seniors. Just being cool, having fun, that's the way it goes for the teens.

All this is not necessarily wrong, but it does not bring us closer. It rather supports and promotes individualism. Natural learning through fellowship is out and must also be replaced by planned activities. Which then logically don't work very well, the „success“ is lacking because we have become quite strange to each other. What a pity if young and old can no longer „profit“ from each other, from the wisdom and goodness of age, the freshness, risk-taking (or enthusiasm) and energy of youth! In this area, too, we had a unique opportunity with the Corona crisis to re-learn at home, as a whole family, what it means to live with and for each other. And what is true for the natural family is all the more meaningful for us as a spiritual family. Joel 2:28-29

*“Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams,*

*your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."*

Thus we should serve one another and together also those who do not yet know Jesus. Here is a personal example which demonstrates the extent to which God uses children if they aren't simply occupied with hearing Bible stories and with crafts, as is common among us. The following is a report written by Hanna Woiwode.

«From August 3 - 6, 2007 our family and two members of our house church participated in the children's prayer conference in Chennai (India). „I knelt on the floor while about 40 little girls crowded around me to put their hand on my head or at least my shoulder. I heard them all praying in their language, like little machine guns: without a dot or comma, with such power as I could only wish for. In between, English sentences like: „Receive the fire“ or „You will see great and mighty things“. Tears were ceaselessly running down my face. Could this really be true? That there are 4- or 5-year old children kneeling and tearfully praying for other children who still live on the streets? Or praying for their country? Or even for MY country? About 2000 children had gathered here, celebrating Jesus together and dancing wildly in praise, or just as fervently and passionately interceding for a certain cause.

It touched my heart deeply when I saw how the smallest to the biggest children stood there with closed eyes and raised hands to pray for all kinds of things and situations. I could see that prayer for these kids is not a boring duty or something to get over as quickly as possible. You could feel that they know 100% to whom they pray and that they love and know exactly this Jesus. There was such a lively relationship visible that my own longing for this friendship with Jesus increased enormously. The vision behind all this work is that each of these girls should one day become a leader, go out into the nations and shake the world with Jesus' love. The fulfillment of this vision can already be seen very clearly in the Royal Kids (children from this ministry). There are only a few adult caregivers for the children because the older ones usually take care of the younger ones and this works wonderfully."

It happens to and through children, boys and girls, men and women, old and older, poor and rich, craftsmen and intellectuals! The Lord wants to use us all as the community of saints, not as separate splinter groups.

Simple and yet powerful disciples of Jesus. In Iran, for example, the church of Jesus is currently growing more rapidly than anywhere else in the world. And this movement of the Holy Spirit is led mostly by women. Not a long-planned human strategy, but the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit. What signs and developments can still shake us so that we perceive it as „God speaking“ and then draw the right conclusions?

On April 15, 2019, something happened that caused worldwide horror. The 850-year-old Notre Dame in Paris was ablaze. It was fascinating that everything in the nave burned or melted away. The only thing that „survived“ in the ruins and looked like a memorial, a pointer of God, was the cross! From my point of view, it was a hint from God to return the message of the cross, and thus to Jesus Christ himself, the center of our attention, instead of focusing on church buildings or other religious superficiality.

In the past there have been many other signs (blood moons, developments in Israel, the Concordia disaster in the Mediterranean etc.) through which God „courted“ our attention - up to the current Corona situation. Have we heard? Have we understood? How long do we want to harden our hearts? How long will it take until we move from hearsay to seeing? In the end, has everything remained the same? Do we simply continue as before, without any consequences? After all, it was and still is an event of global dimensions that has affected and influenced our lives like no other before. What will our reaction be? What will your reaction be?

The emergence of organically growing communities

I would like to show two possible reactions, based on the Word of God. Acts 2,22-23.32-33.36-39:

„Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and they said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise is to you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Before Peter even began to preach, something decisive happened.

„When they heard this sound, a crowd came together and in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.“ (Acts 2:6) Something totally extraordinary happened, something unprecedented, something horrifying and frightening! People ran together to be there, not to miss anything. They had never experienced anything like this before! And immediately there was much speculation, discussion and opinions. Doesn't this remind us very much of the beginning of the Corona crisis? We gathered almost non-stop in front of the television sets, computers or cell phones. Many let themselves be frightened, but we did not want to miss anything at all. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke primarily about who Jesus had been and what miracles He had done. His sermon culminated in his accusation that his audience were murderers. The reaction of the accused was astonishing, „Dear brothers, what shall we do?“ What they heard pierced their hearts! They were struck, affected, shaken because a mirror was held up to them and they were ready to look in it with open hearts and minds. No “yes, but....” No excuses, just the simple question: „What should we do? What can/must I do?“

That is one possible reaction. Now let's look at another totally different one:

Acts 7:51-60

*“You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him – you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it.’ When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, „Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.”*

Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, just like Peter. In his defense speech, he presented to the accusers the whole story of God with Israel, even more detailed than Peter. Stephen's speech also culminated in the accusation of murder, just like Peter's. And here, too, the listeners' hearts were pierced. But these did not ask what they should now do, but gnashed their teeth against Stephen. They murdered and eliminated him.

These two reports speak very strongly to me and should do so to all of us. They demonstrate the two attitudes which the proclamation of the Gospel has always encountered, from the very beginning until today. And these attitudes, including their consequences, will exist until Jesus Christ returns. Peter's Pentecost sermon meets with many open ears and hearts, and his call for repentance and baptism is answered by 3,000 people. There must have been tens of thousands in Jerusalem at that time, so by no means all those present were affected or followed the invitation, even though the Holy Spirit was so obviously and strongly working. There were others who remained indifferent or even mocked, as we know.

The scenario surrounding Stephan was different. Full of the Holy Spirit, he proved from Scripture that his accusers, the religious clergy, had resisted God's Spirit repeatedly. The false witnesses accused him,

Acts 6:13-14

*„This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us“.*

They have always existed and will always exist, the self-appointed guardians of the churches, with their customs and traditions. They will continue to gnash their teeth and persecute Jesus Christ's totally dedicated servants. „You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!“ (Acts 7:51) What a sharp, absolutely clear statement.

Since Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit, one could say that the Holy Spirit himself spoke these words. To persist in such an attitude leads straight to ruin. And God wants to prevent this under all circumstances because He loves us and wants to free us from this imprisonment. Jesus came to save! Could these sentences also apply to us today?

Acts 6:14

*„For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.“*

Acts 7:1

*“Then the high priest asked, ‘Are these charges true?’”*

This critical, stubborn attitude ultimately is typical not only of the elitists of that day. Oh no, it is about the eternal struggle between our flesh and God’s Spirit! It affects every person before he or she even comes to faith in Christ. And it affects every Christian until his last breath on earth.

Galatians 5:17

*„For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.“*

We remember the word we mentioned at the beginning.

*„We say: I am rich, and have more than enough, and need nothing!“* This is our own carnal perception speaking.

But Jesus the King speaks, *„You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor and blind and naked.“*

To whom do we give our ear? Whose words can strike and pierce our heart? Let us remember that Jesus explicitly addressed these words to the church, to us and not to the world. Why does Jesus speak to you and me in such a way? This is hard talk. Couldn’t He say it in a softer, nicer, more paraphrasing way instead of so directly? Jesus’ motive is clear.

Revelation 3:19-22

*„Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent! Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!“*

It therefore demonstrates His love for us when He rebukes and instructs you and me. Since we are all loved by Jesus, His word is also for all of us. Here we would like to focus on the guidelines Jesus gave his followers, those

whom He sees in such a perverse and lost state. We should, no if necessary we must always return to this point: „It pierced their hearts and they asked: „Dear brothers, what shall we do?“ Repent was Peter’s answer. Jesus began his public ministry with the call to repentance. And here again, in the text above, our Lord and King approaches us with this request. We must realize that nothing in the life of a Christian is as fundamental, as life-giving, as liberating and as glorious as repentance. For most of us this word has to do with condemnation, sackcloth and ashes, pressure, judgment and death. It exerts little or no attraction on us. The truth is that repentance is a gift from God. Without it, the sinner cannot be born again and the follower cannot be renewed. It makes new, restores. It is the essential step to salvation. It begins in the darkness and leads into the light. It begins in captivity and ends in freedom. It begins in death and leads into life. It makes the unclean pure and the unholy holy. Penance draws the line between heaven and hell. God forgives only those who repent. Self-deception holds us captive, repentance redeems. Therefore we may be grateful from the heart for everything that comes to light! (Luke 12:2)

King David is a prime example of this. He was not aware of any guilt, although he committed adultery and cold-blooded murder. How can one do such a thing and not even feel guilty, we might ask? When God sent the prophet Nathan to David to bring his sin to light, David’s reaction was the only correct one. He did not try to gloss over, cover up, twist. Clearly and straightforwardly, the mirror was held up to him (this is God’s goodness and love). He realized what he had done and it pierced his heart. And he threw himself on the Lord, asked for mercy and repented (Psalm 51). And God was and always is ready to forgive when we approach Him in such a humble and repentant attitude.

The person who is truly willing to repent says, „God, you are right, I am wrong. I deserve to be judged by you, and it would be thoroughly justified if you would pour out your wrath upon me. But instead, I ask you to be gracious to me, to purify me, renew my mind and give me the grace to be obedient.“ True repentance always bears much fruit. The salvation of a lost person through repentance and faith is a heavenly transaction of the very highest order. And the deliverance of a bound Christian through repentance and faith is an event which endures. Unfortunately, many Christians do not distinguish between repentance, a gift of God that brings about lasting change, and remorse, a human emotion that never goes beyond guilt feelings and regret. Those who only regret remain bound for years,

even though they „repent“ over and over again. But true repentance frees the prisoner permanently. For we read

John 8:36

*„If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.“*

Perhaps we need to correct our thinking here. So let us be ardent and repent, as Jesus offers and commands us. Our Savior and Redeemer cares for us by convicting, correcting and instructing us in the right way. Hallelujah! Thanks for this! A repentant heart is an ear-opener and with this attitude we hear what the spirit of the church says, as well as Jesus' knocking. An unrepenting heart, on the other hand, closes our ears to what God is saying and we hear the voice of our flesh all the more clearly. As long as the time of grace continues, anyone can still accept the Son of God in his life, despite all of Christianity's infidelity/ignorance. He will thus obtain all the promises made to overcomers! While parts of Christianity are „spat out“ (if they do not repent), he will be gifted by Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks of this in every letter to the churches (Revelation). „To him who overcomes, I will give...!“ Giving is thus closely linked to overcoming, one of our Lord's central concerns and absolutely necessary to reach the goal.

## **Overcoming**

“Overcoming“ can also be translated „to win“. An overcomer is a victor. The words „overcoming“ and „winning“ indicate struggles and obstacles which must be defeated or overcome. We are saved by grace but we attain the goal, the transformation into the image of Christ, only when we overcome! What and how must we, you and I, overcome?

The flesh: (Romans 7:5)

The unredeemed man is spiritually dead and lives wholly in the flesh, i.e. in his earthly, human disposition and fallen nature. This state leads to ruin. But as born again persons we live in the spirit (Romans 8:9). From the doctrine of spirit, soul and body we know that we are not simply a spiritual being, but also have a soul and a body. The spirit, the soul and the body have their will and want to dominate and determine our existence. The spirit is heavenly, but the body is earthly. In our will, which is a part of the soul, we decide to whom we want to give space. To overcome is therefore to decide in the soul that the spirit is to be master and that the flesh must subordinate itself. If we do this, we will live (Romans 8:12 and Galatians 5:16+17). If we do not make this decision, the flesh will automatically take over and won't even need to be overcome. The fleshly condition always takes over when

the Spirit is unable to reign. Then the „works of the flesh“ are revealed, as listed in

Galatians 5:19+21

*„Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.“*

To overcome does not mean fulfilling God’s will by our own strength and effort; no one can accomplish this. Nor can we overcome through the law, which appeals to the „flesh“ and is therefore too weak (Romans 8.3). We must overcome the work of the flesh through the Spirit, which is the new path that God has paved and on which we are successful. When we decide for the Spirit and for obedience to God, the law of the Spirit of life comes into effect and frees us from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8.2

*„Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.“*

Because Jesus has overcome in everything, we too can overcome through and in Him. After all, we put on Christ when we were buried with Him in baptism. The confession of this fact is a very effective weapon against all kinds of temptation. Jesus said, „It is written“, and with this He overcame Satan. But on the Cross, when He took our sins upon Himself, He was as silent as a lamb. Thus by His suffering and death He conquered sin, death and hell. This victory is now available to us and we glorify God and our Lord Jesus Christ when we claim it and become overcomers.

The world:

These are all influences and temptations arising from what is visible or material. Jesus was shown all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Then the tempter said to Him, „All this will I give you if you will bow down and worship me.“ Jesus completely overcame in this point, also, and gave glory to the Father. The kingdom of the Father, which He had in mind, has much more glory than all the kingdoms of this world together. Let us set our priorities correctly when the world makes us offers. As soon as we start striving for earthly power and glory, we are on a dangerous path. Our lives should demonstrate that we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth.

Hebrews 13:14

*„For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come“.*

Colossians 3:1-4

*„Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.“*

As long as we live in this world, we also have earthly needs. The Lord knows them and Scripture says that God offers abundantly to all for enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17). He does not want us to worry about the future and our livelihood. We may enjoy the things He gives us to live without having a guilty conscience. But as soon as we begin striving for riches, we are in great danger. Covetousness is described in Colossians 3:5 as idolatry, which brings the wrath of God on the sons of stubbornness.

1 Timothy 6:9-11

*„People who want to become rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this.“*

1 John 2:15-17

*„Do not love the world, or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and it desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.“*

According to John 16:33, Jesus overcame the world. Thus believers also have authority to overcome it.

1 John 5:4+5

*„Everyone born of God has overcome the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.“*

Satan, the demonic powers and false teachings:

Satan often appears like a roaring lion and pretends to have tremendous powers. But in reality he is completely disarmed and defeated by the victory of Golgotha. If we know this, we can repel his attacks with the shield of faith and put him to flight with the sword of the spirit (Ephesians 6). Because Satan has no more power over the believers, he tries to use cunning and seduction. We must be on our guard against this. His servants, demons or people who spread false teachings, often appear as angels of light or as deceitful apostles. (2Corinthians 11:13-15). If we are alert to the Holy Spirit and hold on to God's Word, we can overcome even these cunning attacks without harm.

1 John 2:13+14

*„I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you and you have overcome the evil one.“*

1 John 4:4

*„You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them (the false prophets), because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.“*

Revelation 12:11

*„They overcame him (the accuser of the brethren) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.*

Fear:

Fear is a form of unbelief, a distrust of God's speaking and acting. Fear can completely paralyze and block us. God does not want us to be afraid, that is why the Bible repeatedly says, „Do not be afraid!“ The thought can rise in us that something bad will happen, that God will not help us or that we will die of a disease. It can also be accusing thoughts or the fear of being left behind at the rapture. (The latter can be justified if we do not walk in the spirit.) Let us orient our lives by the Spirit and reject fear in the name of Jesus, because often it is a spirit of fear. Trusting the Word and total love for the Lord drive out fear.

1 John 4:18+19

*„There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.“*

Evil:

Whatever evil men do to us, we are to overcome through good.

Romans 12:21

*„Do not not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.“*

Reason:

Our reason is good and blessed if we apply it in the right place. But if we put reason in the place of faith because we want to know God and understand His counsel, we are using the wrong tool. Reason can be a great obstacle in the life of faith. That is why we should take all „reason“ captive to obedience to Christ. We overcome when we subordinate our thoughts to God's statements.

2 Corinthians 10:4+5

*„The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.“*

Persecution and suffering:

When we speak of overcomers, we also think of our brothers and sisters who are already suffering persecution for the sake of Jesus' name and yet are still holding steadfastly to their faith. We ourselves are probably already closer to this than we want to admit or are aware of.

Overcoming through our words:

It may be that we do not have good feelings and our living conditions are unpleasant. In such situations the temptation is great to begin speaking negatively. It is important to keep our tongue in check and to overcome it in our speech. We read in

1 Peter 4:11

*„If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.“*

Most of us speak many words every day, but what is their content? Do we prove ourselves to be God's spokesmen or do we just talk the way we feel at the moment? If our speech expresses nothing but our feelings and opinions, then our words have no effect against the enemy. But if we make the words of the Bible our own, we overcome Satan through our speech.

Revelation 12:11

*„And they overcame him (the accuser of our brethren) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.“*

In Psalm 91:2 we read that he who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty, that he may say to the Lord, „My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.“

We can overcome only by faith. On the one hand we have faith in our hearts, but also in our mouths, in our words.

Romans 10:8-10

*„The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.“*

2 Corinthians 4:13 „I believed, therefore I have spoken. With that same spirit of faith we also believe, therefore speak.“

It is important that we do not reverse this scriptural order by speaking first and wanting to believe afterwards - then we will succumb instead of overcoming.

Overcome by the blood of the lamb

Revelation 12:11

*„And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shirk from death!“*

„And they overcame him.“ Note the personal conflict of the believers with the enemy. Their weapons in battle were the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (or confession). Moreover, they were fully committed to the fight - until death. What does this mean?

I understand this text in a very simple and practical way. By personally confessing what the Word of God says and what Jesus' blood does for us, we overcome Satan. These three weapons - the blood of Jesus, the Word of God and our personal testimony - become effective when we use them together. Overcoming is something personal, and each one of us has enough opportunities to do so where we live. Let us recognize these opportunities as a way to glorify God, not as a tiresome bother.

Romans 8:37

*„In all this we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.“*

Besides the call to „overcome“, Jesus gives further important and central instructions in each of the letters, to each church.

Revelation 3:22

*„He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!“*

Here it is important to first clarify whether the Spirit possibly says something different than the Lord Jesus. In the book of the prophet Isaiah we find at least three remarkable prophecies about the coming Messiah. These clearly show us the truth that everything the Lord teaches or does is from the Holy Spirit.

1.) „The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of power, the spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord“ (Isaiah 11:2) This prophecy makes it clear, especially when we continue reading, that everything He did or said was in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2.) „Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations ... He will establish justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope (Isaiah 42:1-4).

3.) „The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor“ (Isaiah 61:1-3).

The Lord himself opened to this Scripture in the synagogue of Nazareth and after reading it aloud He said to the listeners, „Today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears“ (Luke 4:21). From these passages it is evident that

everything the Lord says, speaks, teaches or does is of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks and acts through our Lord Jesus.

John 10:4b

*„His sheep follow him (the shepherd), because they know his voice.“*

Which then are „his sheep“? They are those who have entrusted their whole lives to Him. Those who have opened the door of their hearts after hearing his knocking. Those who have repented from their hearts and have taken a different path. Those who were born again and filled and sealed with the Holy Spirit. Those who love Him more than anything else and everyone else in the world. Even more than their own lives. Those who, because they love Him, hear His commandments and follow them. Those who from love and joy agree to His absolute kingly rule in and over their lives. They hear His voice, recognize it and follow the Good Shepherd as best they can and wherever He leads them!

All others will be lost for eternity unless they repent and turn around. Our attitude and our actions have consequences. Jesus tells us very clearly that He will spit us out if we do not repent. Jesus' loving honesty helps us to know where we stand and what to expect, depending on our attitude. Is there a „too late“? Of course there is! Jesus himself points this out several times, for example in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. It will also be too late if someone dies suddenly. We should, must, can be ready to meet Him, our King, at any time.

Is there even a „red line“ over which, once crossed, one cannot return? There is also an example of this.

Mathew 12:31-32

*„And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.“*

In order to understand these words of the Lord Jesus well, we must consider the context in which they were spoken. In Matthew 12, the preceding verses describe how Jesus Christ healed a man who had been blind and

unable to speak due to demonic possession (v. 22). The miracle was so impressive that the crowd asked in astonishment if Jesus was the Son of David, the promised Messiah (v. 23). This greatly annoyed the Pharisees. They, who had decided to kill Jesus (v. 14), saw their reputation dwindling. They could not deny that a miracle had happened, so they unceremoniously attributed it to the power of the devil, claiming „It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons“ (v. 24).

To consciously ascribe the manifest working of God’s Spirit to the prince of demons, the devil, blasphemes the Spirit. If someone speaks against the Spirit in this way, he will

Mark 3:29

*„never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin“.*

Whoever is guilty of such a monstrosity crosses a divinely drawn line and places himself forever outside the grace of God. A shockingly serious fact! Let us look at another stirring event documented in Jeremiah 14 and 15.

“This is the word of the Lord to Jeremiah concerning the drought: “Judah mourns, her cities languish; they wail for the land, and a cry goes up from Jerusalem. Although our sins testify against us, do something, LORD, for the sake of your name. For we have often rebelled; we have sinned against you. You are among us, LORD, and we bear your name; do not forsake us!! This is what the LORD says about this people: “They greatly love to wander; they do not restrain their feet. So the LORD does not accept them; he will now remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins.” Then the LORD said to me, “Do not pray for the well-being of this people. Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague.” But I said, “Alas, Sovereign LORD! The prophets keep telling them, ‘You will not see the sword or suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place.’ Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds. Therefore this is what the LORD says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine. Then the LORD said to me, “Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ tell

them, 'This is what the LORD says: Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.'

You have rejected me," declares the LORD. "You keep on backsliding. So I will reach out and destroy you; I am tired of holding back. I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the city gates of the land. I will bring bereavement and destruction on my people, for they have not changed their ways.

Jeremiah 16:10-13

*"When you tell these people all this and they ask you, 'Why has the LORD decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the LORD our God?' then say to them, 'It is because your ancestors forsook me,' declares the LORD, 'and followed other gods and served and worshiped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. But you have behaved more wickedly than your ancestors. See how all of you are following the stubbornness of your evil hearts instead of obeying me. So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.'"*

Beloved brothers and sisters, if these words of God cannot shake us, then we already have hearts of stone. God does not speak here to the world, to the nations and peoples who did not know Him. No, He speaks to and about „His people“. The people among whom He has chosen to dwell and through whom He will reveal Himself to the other nations, as well. Instead, His people turn away from Him and act just like all the rest. Yes, they behaved even worse than their fathers. God sent drought (famine), the sword (wars and anarchy and epidemics). The God of Israel not only allowed this, no, HE sent it among His people.

Does that sound familiar to us? Drought, famine, fire, wars and epidemics such the plague, Spanish flu, AIDS, up to the current Corona pandemic. And even though He may not have sent everything explicitly, He allowed it and did not prevent it. Even then the self-proclaimed prophets spoke: „All will be well, no hunger, no problems will befall us, peace in this place“. But they lied. The Lord had not sent them, he had not commanded them to speak! They „prophesied“ out of their carnal disposition and said what the people wanted to hear. What was good for the soul and tickled their ears. Do we not hear the same message today? „All will be well. No problems. We are right. Millionfold revival is at the door. Peace, peace.“

2 Thessalonians 2:10b+11

*„.....because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie...“*

God even went a step further and said in

Jeremiah 15:1

*„Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people.“*

Is that crass? Do we know this God? Do we love this God? Terrible, we surely think, how merciless and loveless. Have we even once tried to understand, to sympathize with how God is? What makes Him resort to such a measure? I still do not speak of the world that does not want Him, rejects Him, is indifferent to Him or even openly opposes Him, does not know Him. No, I speak of His people, of the church. Of you and me. Can it be that we too have crossed a line? That things can no longer be stopped or averted? We know that the Lord did not end with that word then. In Jeremiah 16:14-15 He reveals His future intentions.

*„However, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when men will no longer say, ‚As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,‘ but they will say, ‚As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them. For I will restore them to the land I gave to their forefathers.“*

We live today in this time to which the Lord pointed. So eventually everything will turn out all right for us, correct? The Lord carries out His plans and intentions and nothing and no one can or will be able to hinder Him! But how much suffering has the people of Israel had to endure in the meantime, how many had to die because of their obstinacy and disobedience to God’s commandments? God always means well with us! He wants to prepare us for Himself and His wonderful intentions and plans. Beloved, this is not about a bowling club’s trip to Mallorca. It is about the wedding of the Lamb! About eternal fellowship with the holy, unique, indescribable, sovereign creator of the universe! Do we have any idea who and what is waiting for us?

And everything happens of our own free will. We can want it or not, but we must be aware of the consequences.

1 Peter 4:17

*„For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?“*

It was and remains the eternally same principle that we reap what we have sown - from the time of Jeremiah through Jesus' three years of service on earth to the present day and the end of this world as we know it.

Luke 19:41-44

*“As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said,“  
If you even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and will encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.“*

Do we honestly believe that God did not and does not care how we as a church have represented HIM on earth for the last two thousand years? Have we sanctified His name? Did we first seek His Kingdom (His royal rule)? Did we seek and act according to His will? I am deeply convinced that we have not even begun to imagine, let alone understand, how low we have sunk or how far we have strayed from God. It applies to us also what Jesus said to and about Jerusalem. And Jesus weeps over us, as well. Maybe we think all that was in the distant past and above all, before Jesus died on the cross for our guilt. Now the new covenant and other laws apply. All is well. Peace, peace! Now you hear them again, the false prophets who suggest and try to convince us of this. What does God's word, that is, our Lord himself say about this?

Hebrews 10:26-30

*“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be pu-*

nished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has trampled as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge, I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people". It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

We know the truth, Jesus Christ. We derive life from the cross. Do we nevertheless belong to those who „trample the Son of God under foot“? And also for us today, in a certain sense a similar promise applies - the gathering together, as God promised at that time only to the Israelites (Jeremiah 16:14). But through Christ, His promise now applies to both of us.

Ephesians 2:14-22

*“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself the one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”*

God calls and gathers His people from Jews and Gentiles to make them a dwelling for Himself. It must become a holy temple, since the Holy One himself dwells in it. Nothing and no one will be able to prevent God from carrying out His intentions. That is absolutely certain! In the end, there is only one all-decisive question: Which of us will be there and will in the end belong to God’s household? It is His will that all of us come to the knowledge of the truth, i.e., of Himself. He offers love and grace to every person. We all know, however, that a large part of mankind does not want Him and rejects Him (or has never heard of Him).

John 1:10-13

*“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the*

*world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."*

God's plan and strategy has been established since eternal times. And it is equally certain that time is running out. Therefore the commandment of this hour, which is as urgent as probably never before in history is "Repent while it is still possible!" This is God's call to all people, but above all to His church. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Luke 5:31). The Lord says it in all love, but also in all clarity: „My body (the church) is in a state of emergency. For you think everything is fine and you need nothing. Yet you do not know how poor, blind, miserable and lost you are.“ God's call to repentance comes together with His summons

Revelation 18:4-5

*„Then I heard another voice from heaven say, „Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.“*

The harlot of Babylon, in contrast to the Bride of Christ, denotes the totality of all false religions, churches and church systems that lead to one world religion. (Revelation 14:8; 17:5; 18:21). While these religions differ, they all have one thing in common: They lead people away from the only true God (Deuteronomy 4:35) and from Jesus Christ. For this reason, God's Word urges all who wish to be found in the book of life to separate from misleading religions, including secular, lukewarm Christianity. Jesus clearly says, „Go out of her“ (Revelation 18:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

It is not that in the end God will perhaps turn a blind eye, or even better, both eyes. He is patient, long-suffering and very good, but cannot tolerate sin or cooperate with it. He can never be linked with sin. Hence this very sharp separation. Our king calls us out. Out of everything and everyone that wants to prevent us from coming to Him and following Him. In a way, we are in a final, worldwide exodus. What and whom do you have to leave? Of course, each one of us must examine this question prayerfully for himself, based on God's Word. It could go so far that God calls us to leave our churches, to go out of them.

I mentioned at the beginning that the church, detached from its natural roots, has developed into a new, independent tree (replacement theology), to which the axe is already laid. God calls us out of an unbiblical, carnal and emotional church model, where the world's influences have taken over. A church that, to use the image of a train, is on a wrong track on its way to the abyss, at least thus far. The shakings will continue, increasing in intensity, bringing to light what is still in the dark and causing much to collapse. Do you remember what has come to light in the church lately?

Ephesians 5:10-12

*„Find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.“*

Jesus Christ wants to set us free. He wants to make us sons and daughters who no longer receive milk but solid food, so they can attain their intended maturity. The whole religious church system will fall because it is part of the Babylonian world order. Yes, there are the exceptions and new beginnings that have been a blessing for many. Thank God! But it has always been individuals or small groups who were responsible for this, those who sought God, took His Word seriously and suffered from the discrepancy between His Word and church practice. People who begged on their knees for God's intervention. And God heard them. Often, however, these people were then expelled from the church and persecuted by it.

What then is the biblical church model? In the beginning, Jewish believers still met daily in the temple and broke bread in their homes, where they also followed the apostles' teaching, ate together and cultivated fellowship. Jesus had already prophetically pointed out that the temple would be destroyed. This more or less forced the church to meet only in the houses. The church was born, based on the apostles and prophets. Elders were appointed and the fivefold ministry was established. This church structure survived every persecution, the church of Jesus even grew under attempts to wipe it out or control it.

This is still the case today. Where born-again followers of Christ are oppressed, persecuted and even killed, the church grows! The believers meet in house churches that cannot be controlled, as is now the case in China and Iran. We know from our Lord Jesus Christ that at the end of the time in which we now find ourselves, there will be again be persecution,

on an unprecedented, worldwide scale and intensity. Our rights will be increasingly curtailed. We will be put at disadvantage, ignored and discriminated against in all aspects of life. We will no longer be able to practice certain professions. We will no longer be able to live and travel as we wish. We will no longer be able to buy and sell. We will be cast out and in the body of a global, godless society we will be like a virus which must be eradicated. We will consider ourselves lucky if we can meet in the houses as long as possible.

Shouldn't we prepare ourselves now and begin forming house fellowships? Not too many people, not too far away.... This kind of fellowship is not only biblical, but also has very basic economic advantages. There is no need for a building, no employees, no expensive equipment that has to be bought or rented. What is needed are mature followers of Jesus, who serve others with their gifts (1 Cor. 12). Where we encourage and challenge each other. Where we do not go into the church, but are church! Where we use the money to help brothers and sisters who are in need and not „to keep the engine running“. Where we send out missionaries, if still possible, give travel money to apostles, support prophets who visit us, set evangelists free, etc. God's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36)! So the church must not be built on worldly systems. Even if they supposedly work well, they are often enticing, seductive, addictive, corrupt and false. „Go out of her...“

It is truly time that we once again make Jesus Christ our role model and God's Word our standard! That we once more recognize the glory of the Gospel that surpasses everything. Let us hear the amazing words of Charles Wesley, enthralled by the majesty of the Lord and totally inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit. „You deaf people, hear Him! Silent ones sing! You are freed to praise. See, blind men, him who brings you salvation! You lame, jump for joy!“ How shall the deaf hear the Lord, the mute sing His praises, the blind see the Savior, or the lame leap for joy? How can we ask them to do something that they cannot do? But that is the very essence of the gospel!

Luke 18:27

*“Jesus said, ‘What is impossible with men is possible with God.’”*

The Gospel is God's power. It is the Gospel of the impossible. It commands dead people to come alive and living people to die. It commands unbelievers

to believe and to look at him whom they cannot see. And it urges selfish sinners to let go of what they want to keep. The Gospel takes the standards of this world and turns them upside down. It proclaims the victory of God through the crucifixion of His Son and tells us that we are strong when we are weak. Most believers of our time have never seen or heard this Gospel in all its beauty. We have lost sight of the preciousness of truth (Jesus Christ). Do we still know whom we are dealing with? But the glorious Gospel cannot and will not remain bound. It can no longer be held back. The miracle of this message is simply too overwhelming. Jesus Christ must be proclaimed again, „all inclusive“.

Is this perhaps too radical, too revolutionary for us? „A revolution is a fundamental and lasting structural change of one or more systems, usually abrupt or in a relatively short time.“ (Wikipedia). Jesus Christ set a revolution in motion like no one else before him ever did, nor will anyone ever do it after him. In this sense, Jesus Christ was and is a revolutionary, a radical with His radical love for people. Being radical, however, begins elsewhere. The most radical thing a person can do is to put his obstinance, pride, arrogance, rebellion and stubbornness on the cross. To surrender his life to God, admitting that he needs help to live and to die. Radicals have always had to swim against the current. Someone had to act boldly and make a fool of himself in the eyes of many in order to break new ground.

How much we need such holy radicals now! Over 400 years ago, William Tyndale dreamed a dream that could not possibly come true and for which he was persecuted and even killed. He believed that the Bible should be available to every person in his own language. That was his „dangerous“ request!. He sacrificed himself for this difficult undertaking, had to flee from his native England and hide in Germany to continue his translating. He was finally caught, strangled and burned at the stake by the hypocritical traditionalists of his time. The Bible has now been translated in whole or in part into more than 3000 languages. True believers all over the world thank God for this. But when people like Tyndale - and John Wycliffe before him - set out to promote this work, they were rejected, laughed at, rebuked and even killed. Isn't that amazing? A person who yesterday was branded a heretic by traditional society is today celebrated as a hero. It is imperative that we learn our lessons from this. We must turn away from tradition when tradition has turned away from truth. May God's holy remnant rise up - full of gentleness and dependence on the Lord!

When George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers were born again in the first half of the 18th century, they concluded that this new life must be proclaimed in the churches. But most of the „clergy“ were still dead in their sins and did not want such a thing to be preached in their midst. Can we imagine and understand this today? Welcome to reality..... As a result, Whitefield came up with a grotesque idea. He decided to preach in the open. Even John Wesley was shocked. „It’s a crazy idea,“ he said. Wesley later admitted, „The salvation of souls almost seemed to me a sin if it had not taken place in a church.“ But young George Whitefield prayed the thing through, went to work and opened his mouth - out in the open! Soon tens of thousands were saved. Revival blazed in the land! And it was exactly the same John Wesley who years later could say, „The world is my church!“ What seemed so radical yesterday is normal today.

Some may be waiting for someone else to do something. No one wants to be the first. We shy away from the reactions of those around us. We don’t want to rock the boat - even though it is already full of water and doomed to sink. Do such considerations also prevent us from acting? Pressure from our contemporaries suppresses and suffocates us. Let us listen to what Catherine Booth (who founded the Salvation Army with her husband) had to say about this: „In my opinion it will be revealed on the great day of reckoning how so-called Christian friends, more than all other influential forces put together, have caused blessed undertakings to be crushed, leadings of the Holy Spirit to be disobeyed and hints of the Spirit to be stifled.

We should desire to be influenced by God himself! We do not need independent rebels. God seeks servants who subordinate themselves. But someone has to take the initiative somewhere and somehow. Someone must take the first steps. We need to rediscover the purity and simplicity of the Gospel. Who will lead us back to the Word of God? Everything is ready for us, if we would only look for it. The truth (Jesus Christ) will serve as our light. Who will be willing to leave behind everything he has and lead in a new direction? Paul says in

Philippians 3:8

*„I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I might gain Christ.“*

We need mothers and fathers, students and professors, cleaners and gar-

bage collectors, intellectuals and uneducated people, children, young and old, couples, families and singles who are discovering anew what it means to follow Jesus and take up one's cross. God is looking for holy disciples who are totally devoted to his Son and willing to give up everything for him. The Lord is forming new vessels - vessels that are ready to receive His glory and reflect it.

The apostle Paul, for example, had died for the things of this world. We also need this attitude, as we read in

1 Corinthians 7:29-32a

*„What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short! From now on those who have wives should live as though they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not their to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. I would like you to be free from concern.“*

The apostle admonishes us here to turn our undivided attention to the Lord, for time is short. Paul said this over two thousand years ago, but which one of us still believes it today? The Christians of that time lived in expectation of the present age's fulfillment. They expected the return of their beloved Lord. Do we live in constant expectation of the things that are about to happen? Then the fads and trends of our time will leave us cold. All this will pass away.

Have we already reached the point where the things of this world no longer appeal to us? Of course we may use them, but they should no longer dominate us. Then we won't collapse as soon as they are taken from us, e.g. now during the Corona crisis. We should become free and independent of the enticements of this world. On our own we will not be able to achieve the necessary attitude. In fellowship with others, God provides the strength, prayer and support we need to break the power of this world within us. Then we can say with Paul,

Ephesians 5: 15-16

*„Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.“*

We need each other in order to enter into this freedom, which can be found only in the authentic relationships of a true church. Life in fellow-

ship is a gift of God that has the potential to render this world's power ineffective. The Lord Himself calls us to think about what is above, where our treasure is.

Colossians 3:3

*„Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.“*

Heaven is not just biblical poetry, but a very concrete and realistic goal to which we are heading and which should motivate us to be blameless when Jesus returns. These words apply to us

Matthew 5:48

*„Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.“*

God invites us to make this standard our own. Not only in our outward behavior, but above all inwardly, in those areas that no one can see, where we give free rein to our thoughts and feelings. For this, however, we need a community of saints where we can honestly admit our faults and weaknesses. Where hypocrisy is not necessary, because the truth may be spoken and responded to with love and mercy. Where we receive support and grow in sanctification. Where spiritual gifts can develop freely. A community that grows together towards Him in all things. We need to create space and opportunity to meet face to face and not just stare at the back of the head of the person in front of us while someone in front is speaking for everyone. In our faces we should recognize the Lord's glory, so that we can be transformed by the Spirit of the Lord with ever-increasing glory.  
2 Cor 3:18

The means by which God leads the saints to perfection are the saints themselves who live in authentic, living relationships with one another. They stand up for one another, work together, exhort one another, and tell one another the truth in love.

Proverbs 27:17

*„Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.“*

If we want to grow in all things to Him, Christ, who is the head of the church, then all this must again become the church's daily experience.

Colossians 1: 27c-28

*„Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and tea-*

*ching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ."*

Does that sound too radical, too fantastic, too aloof, too unrealistic for us? This was the attitude of Jesus' followers when the church was founded. It was said that they turned the world upside down. Jesus was their role model. He came into the world, but was not of the world. He had absolutely no fear of contact with sinners. This should also apply to us. It is not about perfectionism (freedom from error), but about our willingness to let Him dwell in us. In this sense, become a radical, a revolutionary for the cause of our King! Such persons were and are always ready to go to such an extreme that they give their lives for their convictions, even to the point of death. In our day God is again awakening zeal for His house in us (John 2:17 and Isaiah 42:13)! Our King, Lord and Savior was consumed by passion for God and His interests. Let's be quite clear once again, this is not about perfectionism but about zeal for him and the only right thing!

Many Christians were deeply moved when Billy Graham read the following letter written by an American student who had turned to communism in Mexico. He wrote the letter in order to explain to his fiancée why he had to break off their relationship.

» We communists have a relatively high accident rate. We are the ones who are shot, hanged, lynched, tarred, feathered, imprisoned, slandered and ridiculed, thrown out of our position, who are made to suffer in every possible way. A certain percentage of us are killed. We literally live in poverty. We give every penny to our party, except for the most basic necessities needed to keep us alive. We are described as fanatics. We are! Our lives are governed by one great factor that overshadows everything: the struggle for world communism. We communists have a life philosophy that cannot be bought with any amount of money. We have a just cause for which we fight and a clear goal for our lives. Our own little egos are subordinated to the great human movement, and although our personal lives seem hard and our egos seem to suffer from subordination to the Party, we are amply compensated by the thought that each and every one of us contributes to something new, true and better for humanity.

There is only one thing about which I am deadly serious, and that is communism. It is my life, my work, my religion, my hobby, my treasure, my wife and lover, my bread and meat. I work for it during the day and dream of

it at night. This confiscation is constantly growing and will never decrease. Therefore I cannot maintain any friendship, love affair or even conversation without bringing it into relationship with this power that leads and directs my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas and actions according to how they influence the goal of communism and by their attitude toward it. I have been in prison for my ideals, and if necessary, I am willing to stand before the firing squad for them.«

(Extract from the book „True Discipleship“ by William MacDonald)  
What eagerness speaks to us from these lines! What rejection of the world with all its temptations. And this for a dead ideology, for a false goal! May our desire be awakened to be filled with such zeal for the house of the Lord, for Himself. I am aware that there is also a danger in this. We might think, „I could never do that. Makes me give up completely. I'll never get there. I might just as well throw everything away.“ I can only say, Hallelujah, if you have come to realize this! YOU can't do it! YOU can never do it yourself! This is the only correct realization and it is totally promising! Turn to Jesus and ask Him to do it, to make it increase. It is a process that starts with the fact that you must make a decision and recognize who HE is! In the same measure that you know Him better and deeper, your zeal, your love, your passion for Him and His Kingdom will grow!

Another possible danger is that we become “zealous, but without knowledge,” as Paul said of the Israelites in Romans 10:2. We urgently need deeper knowledge about God the Father and about Jesus Christ in order to direct our zeal in the right direction. Otherwise we will become zealots from our flesh and our soul. We know what Jesus says about such people from the incident when Peter wanted to prevent Him from going to Jerusalem to be crucified. Peter was zealous in his commitment to the Lord, but without knowledge. Therefore he acted out of a humanistic „desire to help“.  
Matthew 16:22-23

*„Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‚Never, Lord!‘ he said ‘This shall never happen to you!’ Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’“*

Dear brothers and sisters, we are living in a time of events that we never thought possible, affecting every area of life and society without exception. Representatives from politics, economy, science and the church are searching for solutions and ways out of the dilemma. As followers of Jesus

we know that there will be no salvation without the Savior Jesus Christ. But the world wants to do it without God! How proud and arrogant we have always been, still are and probably always will be.... In Revelation 9 we read about what happens when the sixth trumpet is blown.

Revelation 9:13-21

*„The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.*

*The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.”*

This whole scenario seems like a Hollywood thriller. Totally unreal, freely invented, too thickly applied to be true. And yet it is! This is the reality mankind is heading for. Thank God, this is not the very last scene. A third of the people will die as a result of these catastrophes (plagues). Unbelievably, the rest of humanity is also unwilling to repent, humble themselves before God, turn around and turn to Him. This is God’s reality, which He communicates to us through His servant John. It is all difficult for us to bear.

But we must admit that His view, which is true, does not correspond to ours. As already mentioned, our view is characterized by wishful thinking and humanistic imagination. This wishful thinking sometimes produces strange blossoms.... But when we read the Bible, know it, and recognize God’s plans and intentions in it, then exactly what God predicted would happen does happen. If this is so, then we sometimes pray against God’s intentions. We could call together prayer leaders from all nations to pray against evil (the evil one), to bind him, to throw him out (wherever), to

stop all this, etc. This will never happen. As many times as Satan has been bound, we are slowly running out of rope. It is of no use. Jesus therefore gave us parables to clarify something.

Matthew 13:24-30

*„Then Jesus told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the us wheat with him. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”*

With the parable of the wheat field and the weeds, Jesus makes clear that He has a completely different perspective than we often have. He is more focused on the wheat and less on the weeds. In order for the wheat to reach full maturity and not be accidentally pulled out or damaged when weeding, He lets the weeds grow with it (v. 29). Good and evil exist side by side. So Jesus had the inner certainty that everything will be good in the end!

Verses 36-43

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

That gives us composure. Jesus does not allow the weeds to dictate what

he says and does. There are always voices that call for early weed-killing. But we cannot create or pray for a pure society outside the church. The parable encourages us not to let our behavior and thought be dictated by fear of evil, but to focus on the good fruit (verse 29). The Lord Himself determines the day when good and evil are separated. Then the righteous will shine like the sun (verse 43). Good and evil must mature so that it becomes evident. We will not be able to upend or hinder divinely foretold and determined developments. This does not mean, of course, that we should not pray or should never bind and release, which we are authorized to do. But all this must be done in the right attitude and as members of His body. We often simply overshoot the biblical framework set for us.

Another prayer field that we cultivate in a carnal way is Jesus' prayer for unity

John 17:21

*„...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.“*

This verse is often misused in a general way to pray for unity or ecumenism (the totality of Christians and churches) - even of different religions. Unity as Jesus prays for here is based on His relationship with the Father. People who live their relationship with Jesus and the Father on this personal level are called to such unity. (It is possible only through repentance, conversion, acceptance of Jesus' sacrificial death, rebirth, filling with the Holy Spirit, giving of life and following out of love). Without personally becoming one with Jesus Christ and God the Father, we cannot become one collectively. But those who are connected with Him in this sense are already one, because Jesus asks the Father for it. It must not be a „unity in the flesh“, as we often wish for, because it would be so nice (and simple). It must be out of and in the Holy Spirit.

John 1:12-13

*“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.“*

We are all creatures of God, but we become His children only by receiving Jesus into our hearts and by the new birth that follows. Ecumenism outside of this unity is wishful thinking; it misses God's standard and is therefore

ineffective and meaningless.

Another example of wishful thinking concerns the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh. Many of us desire and expect this event in our time. Most biblical commentators agree that this event will not take place until the Millennial Kingdom. Here is an extract from a sermon by E. Schrenk:

„The apostle Peter sees on the Feast of Pentecost a fulfillment of this great and glorious promise. But if we look closely at the above words, we immediately realize that the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem can be only an initial fulfillment of this promise. If we do not want to empty the words „all flesh“, we have much more to expect than what happened on the first day of Pentecost. Yes, thank God! But the first question is, when will the Holy Spirit be poured out on all flesh? We will have to answer this question firmly: not before the millennial kingdom. Antichristianity, which is developing increasingly, is no ground for a Pentecost for all flesh. We do enormous harm if we, in our imagination, raise expectations that are not fulfilled. It is very disastrous if we rely in our work and hope on God’s great deeds which will only come to pass when, according to Revelation 20:2.3, Satan will be bound, so that the Spirit of God will be able to rule freely, as it is impossible now. The obstacles for the Spirit of God are now very great. We should rather long for the glorious time when there will be order of the Holy Spirit under our archbishop Jesus Christ.

Author: Elias Schrenk (September 19, 1831 – October 21, 1913) German theologian and revivalist preacher of Pietism.

I agree with this opinion, since an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh at this time would simply run counter to all the developments and predictions given to us through Jesus Christ himself.

Luke 12:32

*“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”*

Matthew 7:13-14

*“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

We are children of our time. The environment influences us. Even though

we are not of this world, we live in it for a few years. Thus we are gradually and unconsciously pulled along by the pace of the time; we cannot completely escape the flood of information. The opportunities to gain information seem limitless. Everything can be called up without interruption. This also applies to Christian information - sermons, seminars, conferences, books, CD, DVD. Everything is ready to be clicked on day and night. Many things are sent to us even though we had nothing to do with it. That's why this trend has crept in on many of us, to consume as much as possible, to consume the latest news, listen, see, read and forward it immediately. Much of this is certainly not bad or wrong, but if it replaces the personal relationship with Jesus or our own Bible study, then we should curb the consumption of all this news. On the other hand, it can be a blessing to find good, encouraging and helpful material this way. „Wisdom is needed!“ So many things demand our attention. Life's pace increases, becoming more and more shrill.

Where should I put my eyes, my gaze, my thoughts, my attention?  
Hebrews 12:1-3 answers.

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

What wonderful advice from our Lord! We should look at Him, even more, fix our eyes on Him! This happens when we immerse ourselves in His Word, ponder it and ask the Holy Spirit to explain it to us. Thus we fix our eyes on Him. Or when we see Him in our brothers and sisters. Then our souls will not tire and will be protected from burnout. This is certainly good news for everyone, especially for priests, pastors and leaders, who are so often at the limits of their strength. And they are only trying to do justice to an unbiblical model of leadership.

In addition, when we pray we must urgently look at and listen to Jesus. How did He Himself pray? What did He say and teach about prayer?

Matthew 6:6

*“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your*

*Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

The secret is prayer in secrecy. Jesus himself gave us the ultimate example of this.

Luke 5:16

*"But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."*

Unlike the religious leaders of his time, He did not pray in order to be seen by others. He prayed because He wanted to have fellowship with His Father. Seen in this light, prayer always has its own reward: communion with the Father. In the „Lord’s prayer“ Jesus gives us a model of how prayer leads to deeper, more intimate fellowship with the Father.

Our Father in heaven

The first words of Jesus’ prayer must have sounded incredibly scandalous to the disciples. With all the things they had thus far learned about prayer, this was certainly not one of them! They had not even been allowed to pronounce God’s name, let alone address Him as „our Father“! But this privilege now applies to every true disciple of Jesus! It always amazes me deeply and gratefully that I can come through Jesus to have fellowship with the Father. That in itself is a miracle - to be allowed to turn directly to the Creator of heaven and earth! To be at peace with Him who is the beginning and the end, to be on familiar terms with Him who is the origin of all life, to be allowed to call Him ABBA (Daddy) - incredible! How much reason for gratitude is hidden here?

Hallowed be your name

God cares about his holy name! If it is important to Him, it should also be important to us! For example, He Himself says to the Israelites that He will act among them for the sake of His holy name (Ezekiel 36:21). To pray this petition means that God is given the glory that belongs to Him alone. When I pray this, there is nothing blurred, nebulous or unclear. I pray fervently that I myself will sanctify His name, day and night, permanently. Everything that I do, think, or even omit serves the purpose that His name be honored and called holy. I want to be vigilant not to drag His name into the mud, use it in the wrong way, or expose Him to ridicule.

Your kingdom come

His kingdom came to earth in and with Jesus. This request is primarily for God's reign to begin in our hearts and from there spread to all areas of our lives. It is about a change of reign. There are only two „kingdoms“ on earth: God's and Satan's. We serve either one or the other, even if we are not aware of it. When we pray for God's kingdom to come, it also means asking that God may use our testimony to spread it. In His name we should „colonize“ the world with His glorious Kingdom! It is built in the midst of the visible world, not to be seen but to be experienced.

1 Corinthians 4:20

*„For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.“*

Romans 14:17

*„For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.“*

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

This means first of all to recognize God's absolute sovereignty. Thank God the world is under His control and not mine. We would probably have really big problems if God gave us everything we ask Him for. The truth is that we do not know what is best for us. Our requests come from a very limited field of vision and are often mixed with self-interest. "Your will be done" includes the daily acceptance that our will must be subordinate to His. It should comfort and strengthen us, as well as make us rejoice that the God who created us certainly knows what is best for us. And not only for us, but also for our neighbor - because He always has the whole in view! So when we walk in His will, we also experience what He has promised - not a panacea for every need, but peace in every kind of storm. How is His will done through us?

1 Thessalonians 5:18

*„Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.“*

Ephesians 5:20

*„Give thanks always to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.“*

1 Thessalonians 4:3

*„It is God's will that you should be sanctified.“*

Romans 12:2

*„Do not conform any longer yourselves to the pattern of this world, but be transformed [in your being] by the renewing of your mind. Then you be able to test and approve God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.“*

1 Peter 2:15

*„It is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.“*

Give us our daily bread today

I thank my Father that He cares for me. He has promised that He Himself will provide for the birds, and how much more will He provide for us if we make the affairs of His Kingdom our first priority. (Matthew 6:33) I pray not for myself alone, but for my large faith family. It is not only for me, but for us. And when I hear or see that other family members are in need, I try to help as much as I can. But I find that the greatest blessing and consolation from this request are far more profound.

John 6:35

*“Jesus said, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty again’“.*

Jesus Himself is the bread of which He Himself says that he who eats (receives) Him will never be hungry again. Every person is born with this hunger for true life. We attempt to satisfy it with everything possible. However, we always remain hungry, thirsty and empty until we receive and accept Jesus. Only then is our hunger for life satiated. Jesus says in

Matthew 4:4

*„Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.“*

Every person should have access to this bread!

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

This request also leads me each time first of all to thank God deeply that He has forgiven me. He was nailed to the cross in my place. He took God’s wrath upon himself so that it would not fall on me. We know God only to

the extent that we know what He has saved us from. This does not mean that I can no longer become guilty. This can and will happen from time to time. Then we sincerely ask for forgiveness from God and the people it affects - and we will be forgiven. (1 John 1:9) In connection with this request, I always pray also that God will search my heart and bring everything to light - precisely that which wants to hide, of which I am not even aware. Everything must come to the light, so that I myself may become free and those who are guilty toward me may also be freed.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

The church father Augustine called Satan the „God’s ape“. Luther titled him similarly „God’s devil.“ We must neither over- nor underestimate Satan. He is defeated but still has a certain time in which to do his mischief. When Jesus was tempted by Satan, God could simply have prevented it, since He rules sovereignly. But He allowed it, even initiated it (Matthew 4:1) in order to demonstrate that Jesus would not fall to the temptations and would not sin. And He makes this possible for us too! Just as we can resist all temptations here on earth through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, so surely will we one day be delivered from all temptation because the tempter himself will be thrown into the lake that burns with fire (Revelation 20:10). For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever This brings us back once more to the fact that everything is in Him, in Jesus Christ. In Him we have everything and without Him we have nothing. It all revolves around Him. It all comes from Him. It all goes to Him. What wonderful words we read about this in

Colossians 1: 15-20

*„The glory and the work of redemption of the Son of God. He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on cross.“*

Halleluja! Amen!

Therefore it is an absolute necessity that we are and remain in Him becau-

se without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5) relevant for His Kingdom. Fruitless, dead works (Hebrews 9:14) which burn (1 Corinthians 3:15) - a chasing after wind.

What should we do now, Jesus? That is a good question. His answer was and is

«Repent and....”

“Return to your first love.”

„Return to my word.”

„ Return to an understanding of your roots.”

„Come out of it.” ‘It’ is the Babylonian church system that is bound to the world.

„Gather in your homes, eat together, celebrate the Lord’s Supper, read the Word, worship God and do as He tell you”.

We will see developments much more crass than the Corona crisis. They will be more shocking, more drastic and even more sudden. There will be phases of apparent calm and recovery, only to proceed all the more vehemently, like birth pangs. We must prepare to bear all this and to be salt and light in everything. Only a direct relationship with our Lord and with our brothers and sisters will make this possible. Churches and church systems as we know them will be shattered by the shaking. Recognized prophets are already talking about this today. A time will come when true followers of Jesus will no longer be allowed to meet in public, nor will it be possible to hold church services and prayer meetings over the Internet. Therefore we should be so thankful for this trial run during Corona. It is a time of preparation. Now we can still use the time to voluntarily prepare for a completely new situation that is ahead of us. Our Father is waiting for us with open arms, as in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15). This son ended up with the pigs, where he came to his senses, then returned to his father and confessed his guilt.

This is a call of love from the Father: Come back! He woos, calls and waits for us with open arms! Let us not starve in a foreign land! We are not hopeless or despondent. On the contrary, we know that our salvation is near! (Luke 21:28). We should not be afraid, despondent or sad. On the contrary, we are courageous, undaunted and full of joy because we know what/who ultimately awaits us and who is with us every day until the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20) We are not discouraged and bitter, no we know that God’s kingdom is spreading in a unique way. No question about it. The harvest has been ripe not only since our generation, but for two thousand years!

And in all this time until today, millions of people have been saved. We have been living in the end times for two thousand years - not just for ten or twenty. But now everything is coming to a head. Since Israel became a nation again and the Jews are returning home, the hands of the world clock are ticking louder than ever. We know all this. We can hardly imagine how much Jesus is concerned about bringing back the sheep of His flock which live in apparent certainty of their salvation, but are lost, spiritually dead.

Revelation 3:1-3

*"I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent."*

What a loving, gracious and concerned Father who is looking for us with open arms. Will we set out and return to Him? Will we be willing to stop snorkeling in shallow water, on the surface of our Christian activities, and instead dive deeper to find Him in the depths, to recognize Him, to love Him? He is waiting for us - in the chamber, in the deep.

Dear brothers and sisters! In the end, you yourself are responsible for what you believe and above all, whom you believe. There are thousands of opinions, suggestions, advice and well-intended tips. You yourself must seek and know the Father and Jesus Christ. He will reveal Himself to you because He promised to do so. (Jeremiah 29:13+14) Do not rely on the insights of even the most anointed sermons, deeper insights or prophetic impressions. Test everything by the Bible and keep what is good. Read the Word of God yourself. Make sure that you are filled and sealed with the Holy Spirit and set out to know Him together with your fellow believers. God bless you abundantly for this.

1 Peter 5:6

*"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."*

1 Peter 5:10-11

*"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."*

Revelation 22:12

*„Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.“*

Maranatha, come Lord Jesus!

For questions, information, reports, articles please go to the website  
[www.verein-abraham.ch](http://www.verein-abraham.ch)

We can also be invited to preaching services or seminars. See website for address.

Translation: Susan Wiesmann

## **ATTENTION**

Some time ago I heard about the following incident: On the flight of an EL AL machine from Zurich to Tel Aviv there was much noise and confusion on board because everyone had something to stow away somewhere. So it was quite chaotic. The voice of the captain, who wanted to welcome the passengers, was almost lost. But when everyone heard him say: „Welcome aboard the flight from Zurich to Moscow“, it was immediately silent - the captain had the full attention of all passengers. This was exactly what he had intended! After he had made the destination clear, he could calmly pass on his instructions and information. A successful and amusing way to get the attention of a group of people entrusted to your care.

It is increasingly difficult to direct people's interest to something so that they are actually willing to take in and think about what they have heard or seen. I hope and pray that you, dear reader, will give your full attention to this „announcement“ of our Captain Jesus Christ. That you are all eyes and ears for what you read and hear, because we are all on a journey and it is absolutely necessary to know where we are going. Will we arrive at the right place and how do we get there? God's word is our safest compass and we want to point this out over and over again.

## **About the authors**

For more than 25 years Werner and Regula Woiwode have been full-time leaders of the Abraham Ministries, based in a small town in Northern Switzerland. They have been married 34 years and have 2 adult children, as well as 3 grandchildren. The Abraham ministry is that of prophetic watchmen, prayer and reconciliation. The emphasis has always been and still is to call God's people to return to their first love, to God's word and to an understanding of our roots. For this ministry the Lord has sent us to about 100 nations. With this publication, God also wants to once again make his heart's cry heard by all men and especially by Christians.

