

The Sound Doctrine

Teaching that leads to true fear of the Lord

Torben Søndergaard

Preface – written January 2004

“The Sound Doctrine” written February 2001:

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Today, three years later – written January 2004

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Torben Søndergaard was born in 1976. He was raised in a non-Christian family, but became a Christian when he had a personal meeting with God on 5 April, 1995. In 1996 he married Lene, and together they have 3 children. They are the leaders in their house church in Holstebro, Denmark.

Torben has worked as an evangelist/teacher for the last few years. Today he is having meetings around the whole Denmark, where he sees many people getting healed and set free. He is the author of three other books, has been on both the radio and TV many times, and apart from that he is the founder of the website OplevJesus.dk.

PREFACE

It is a great joy to be able to present “The Sound Doctrine”. This is a different and prophetic book that has not been written on the basis of a good idea, but out of a call from God. At the beginning of 2001 I experienced how God gave me the message of “The Sound Doctrine” one chapter at a time, each day for almost two weeks.

Since then I have been waiting for God to tell me when it was time to publish the book. He did that now, almost three years after I had finished the book, and at the same time He told me to write a preface and tell how it came into existence, as well as a postscript called “Now, three years later”.

“The Sound Doctrine” is not just a book with a message – it is also a testimony of how the true Word of God has changed my life. And I am sure that it will change the lives of many others when they receive this message.

The book is divided in the following way:

First, this preface that contains the testimony of how “The Sound Doctrine” came into existence and how since that time God has confirmed His Word in my life.

Afterwards follows the book itself, “The Sound Doctrine,” as I got it chapter by chapter three years ago. Finally, a postscript where I sum up and deepen the message and go into more details about the sound doctrine according to what God has shown me.

Longing to bear fruit

At the end of 2000, after living for a while in Ringkøbing, where we had been participating in the planting of an evangelical church called “Jesus Kirken” (Jesus Church), my wife Lene and I, together with our son Sonni, moved to Herning to follow a call from God.

When we came to Herning and were about to find our place there, I began to think more about my life and consider its fruits. In the surrounding churches most people knew me as a bold young man who was on fire for God and very active. Since I got saved in 1995, I have had a longing to serve God and have since then done many things to reach people. However, although I was very bold, witnessed to many people about Christ and was known for that in the churches, I discovered that

there were almost no lasting fruits of what I did. I could not think of one who had truly come to God through what I did, or who had been healed or set free from demons. Together with others I had probably prayed for one or two who were healed, but that was it. The more I was thinking about this, the more dissatisfied I became with the fruits of my life. I was not satisfied with the fact that the Christians thought I was doing a lot when there were no visible results to find.

One day while I was thinking about this, I read a parable in the Bible that became the beginning of a transformation in my life.

Then Jesus used this illustration: “A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed. Finally, he said to the gardener, ‘I’ve waited three years, and there hasn’t been a single fig! Cut it down. It’s taking up space we can use for something else’. The gardener answered, ‘Give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I’ll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. If we get figs next year, fine. If not, you can cut it down’” (Luke 13:6-9 NIV).

When I read this parable, I experienced God speaking to me. I felt that I was like this fig tree that did not bear fruit. However, the difference between the tree and me was that I had been without fruits not just for three years, but five.

When I realized this, I understood that something had to happen immediately! I could not continue like that. If I did not start to bear fruit then, I would be cut down, just as it was written in the parable about the fig tree. I said to God: “*Okay, I give you one year, and if I then do not bear fruit, take my life and cut me down – then nothing matters anymore*”. Maybe this sounds a bit too radical, but I had seen that God demands fruit in our lives and that we do not have any excuses.

40 days of fasting

Therefore, I decided overnight to fast for forty days and seek God, so I could start bearing the fruits in my life, as God demands. My fast began on 3 January, 2001. I began by drinking only water, but later I drank some juice and a little cocoa to get some quick energy, even though it is not the completely right way to do it.

In this period of fasting, I really experienced how God's Word became alive to me. I did not pray much more than I used to, but I read and studied the Word of God. I experienced that one scripture after another became alive to me, as if it was something new that God had just written. My friend, Flemming Berg, who is now the pastor of "Jesus Huset" (Jesus House) in Herning, also fasted in the same period. I remember that we sent messages to each other with all the new scriptures we suddenly found in the Bible. God did much of the same in his life as in mine at the same time.

After the forty days of fasting I was totally filled up with new revelations from God, and I was as filled with the Word as never before. I thought of the Word of God and meditated on it all the time – also while I was sleeping. It was a really special experience.

Shortly afterwards I felt that I had to express some of the things God had given to me so I sat down by my computer and started to write. When I wrote five or six pages, size A4, I stopped and thought: "*What am I going to use this for?*" It was too much to use for my website, www.oplevjesus.dk, and it did not fit the website either because this teaching was for Christians and not for non-Christians. At that time the website was aimed at non-Christians and there was no teaching for Christians there. Therefore, I did not know what to do with the things I had written.

While I was thinking about all this, God spoke to me. I will never forget it – it was so clear. He said three words to me: "Write a book!" I stopped, looked up and said: "*WHAT? Write a book? Do you really mean that? Have you forgotten that I got the lowest grades in writing and spelling when I finished school?*" This was one year before I wrote the booklet "Deceived" which has now been printed in several editions. At that time I was not used to writing long texts.

God did not answer my objections but spoke again and said just as clearly as before: "*You shall write a book, and I will give you one chapter each day, but on Sundays you shall not write – you shall have time off together with your family*". "Wow," I thought, "*I am going to write a book*". That was an incredible experience that I will never forget.

Writing the book

I finished what I had started to write, and then I received some scriptures that I was going to use the following day in the next chapter. I shut down the computer, and spent the rest of the day meditating on these scriptures and the chapter I was going to write the next day.

The following day I got up early and prayed, and afterwards I sat down by the computer to write the next chapter of the book. It was very special because I truly felt that God was leading me in what I should write, and while I was doing that, several things I had never thought of before were revealed to me. When I finished the chapter, I sat comfortably, read it and thought: *“This is good! This is God!”* Then, as the day before, I received what I was going to write about in the next chapter, and I found some scriptures which I meditated on for the rest of the day.

The next day I continued and again I experienced how God helped me to write the chapter. After I finished writing, I read it and thought: *“This is good! This is God!”* And so it continued on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

When we came home from church on Sunday, I remember walking restlessly around in the kitchen; I almost could not wait to write again. Lene did not like to see me so restless, so she said: *“Then go and write”*. She did not know that God had told me not to write on Sundays, and I had also forgotten it myself so I started to write the next chapter.

However, this time none of it made sense. The chapter was about sin in the church and I could see that it did not work as it used to the other days. I clearly remember how I deleted some text and rewrote it because it was not good enough. I also tried to copy and paste some parts of the text back and forth, but no matter what I did, I was not satisfied – it just did not make sense. I started to get annoyed because it did not work, but then it hit me what God had said: *“On Sundays you shall not write – instead you shall have time off with your family”*. I apologized to God, shut down the computer and went to be with my family.

The next day I started to write again and I began rewriting the chapter from the day before, and then it just came to me without problems. Again, after I finished the chapter, I read it and thought: *“This*

is good, this is the best I have written until now! This is God! You are sovereign, God!" I strongly experienced that it really was God who was behind "The Sound Doctrine".

That was how it continued day by day. I did not know how many chapters there would be or how the book would end. I did not receive the next chapter before I finished the one I was writing, so it was very exciting and it changed my life.

After almost two weeks I had written forty-two pages and the book was finished – I thought. My idea was to publish it immediately so I had my wife and some friends to proof-read it.

Was not to be published yet

After I had finished "The Sound Doctrine", I wrote a little about alcohol and why I do not drink it. I sent this to a preacher to hear what he thought of it. I thought he would agree with me in what I had written. However, when he read it, he called my friend, Flemming Berg, whom he knew very well. The reason why he called him was to get him to stop me from publishing it – not because he did not agree with my attitude towards alcohol, but because, as he said to Flemming, writing such a radical book about alcohol would create a lot of opposition. He thought that I was writing a whole book about alcohol. He said to Flemming that I was just a big boy and that I would not be able to handle the opposition I would get because of my statements. It was something he had experienced himself.

When Flemming told me this, I got a little insulted at first, but then it hit me that the preacher was right. What would happen when I touched upon all the radical issues in "The Sound Doctrine", for example that a person can get to a point where there is no forgiveness? Many would stand up and bring their teaching that tickles people's ears and then who would I be? I was just a big boy compared to them; I had not been to any Bible school, I was not an educated theologian and did not have so many years of experience as they did.

I was considering what to do because the preacher was right. While I was thinking and feeling sorry for myself, God suddenly spoke to me again just as powerfully as before. First he gave me a scripture from 1. Cor. 4, where we read that Paul went to someone in a church who was puffed up and arrogant, and when he arrived he would see whether they were just big talkers or whether they had the power of God – for the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God's power.

“I know that some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will never visit you again. But I will come – and soon – if the Lord will let me, and then I will find out whether these arrogant people are just big talkers or whether they really have God’s power. For the kingdom of God is not just fancy talk: it is living by God’s power” (1. Cor. 4:18-21 NIV).

“Wow, how big,” I thought. I called Flemming at once and told him what God had just said to me. I was totally excited, even though five minutes earlier I had left Flemming sad and not knowing what to do. I knew it was from God and I looked forward to experiencing it. The interesting thing was that at this time I had not seen anyone whom I had prayed for getting healed, and there were no lasting fruits of my life. Therefore, even though the preacher mistakenly thought that I was writing a whole book about alcohol, God used it to speak to me.

God confirms his word

Since the day when God said all this I knew that something would happen, and so it did. It was not even one week before I prayed for three people who got healed. I experienced very strongly how God let me get started with the things he had for me. After one good week I experienced for example a day when I was at home relaxing and then it came to me: “*Now something will happen*”. In the same minute I got a phone call. It was someone from the church who asked me if I wanted to go with him and talk to the people in the street. I said: “*Yes, I would like to do that*” because God had just told me that something would happen. The guy that called me came and picked me up, and we went downtown.

When we were about to park the car, I saw a girl walking with crutches together with her mother. I knew right away that it was her that God would heal. I jumped out of the car, ran towards her, told her that I was a Christian and asked if I could pray for her, and she allowed me to do that. I put my hand on her foot which was sprained, prayed a short prayer and told her that she should try to walk. She did not dare at first, so I told her not to be afraid because she was healed. Then she slowly tried to use her foot. She quickly realized that it was true, and that she had really been healed. I talked to them a little longer, and when they were about to go, the girl walked normally while her mother carried the crutches.

Since then I have experienced many things. In one year I prayed for about 150 people who got healed, and ten of them threw away their crutches. I have also seen many more people receive God and really surrender themselves to Him, and today they are living strong with God. They are the people that I met downtown, in the supermarket, the library and so on. At that time I was not a speaker, so it all happened outside the meetings or the church.

When God said that I should wait with publishing the book until He told me to do so, I thought that it would take a few months or perhaps half a year - but that was not the case. Finally after 3 years the time came.

There are many things that God has done during those three years. I have experienced many people get their life changed by God's power. I have seen many give their life to God, and even today are truly living with God; among others my parents and one of my elder brothers. When I got saved, I was the first one in my family to become a Christian. We did not have any traditions or any knowledge of God.

About one year after all this started, I published a little booklet which I felt I should write. It is called "Deceived?", and has now been published in the second edition, which is about 10,000 copies, and many of them are already sold. There have been at least seven people I personally know who got saved just by reading this booklet, and today they are living close to God. I have also heard of many others around the country who have got saved or met God through the booklet.

Since I wrote "The Sound Doctrine", I have also written another book, which will soon be ready for publishing. In that book I go even deeper into the Word of God.

I have been on the radio and TV many times, and people have become healed. Some of those that God has healed through me have told about it on TV.

On 16 October, 2002 I was in the studio together with Flemming Berg in a show called "19-Direct" on DR (a Danish TV-channel), where we talked about God and healing. As the show was coming to an end, I was allowed to pray for the viewers through the TV. The result was that many people around the country got healed in their living-rooms in front of their TV-sets. Because of those

healings, they talked about them the next day in the same show and they had an interview with one person who got healed through the TV. It was a lady from Holbæk who for many years had not been able to lift her arm because of a frozen shoulder, but when I prayed for the sick through the TV, she got healed and she could lift her arm without any problems. Since then I have met many around the country who have said how they or someone they knew got healed through that prayer.

On 29 October, 2003 God opened the doors into DR's "19-Direct" for me again. This time they showed how I prayed for a young man in "Jesus Butikken" (our "Jesus Shop") in Herning who got healed. He had one of his legs in a plaster cast, because he had partly stroked off one of the bones in his foot two days earlier. I cut the plaster cast and broke it off his leg because he had been healed, and the last thing they showed on TV was that he left the shop without the plaster cast, sock and shoe. He was not supposed to get rid of the plaster cast before one week later, and then he should have another kind of plaster cast on his foot for about eight weeks. He went home healed with both crutches in one hand. When this was shown on TV, "Jesus Butikken" and I personally received a lot of response from people all over the country who also wanted to be prayed for. Many have been healed and met God through this since.

There is much more to say of what God has done in these three years. He has really confirmed His Word in my life, as He said He would. Therefore, when I publish this book and some people go against it, I can ask: "*What about the power?*" For the kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God's power.

I am not saying this because of pride. I really fear God and know that I am totally dependent on Him because I can do nothing by myself so I am saying this with fear and trembling. I just want to get his Word out and I want us, His people, to come back to the sound doctrine. There is still much more to see and I have only seen a small of it. God has so much for all of us to take hold of. However, I am writing about my experience so that you can understand that God is powerful, and that He really wants us, His people, to come back to His Word as it is.

I know that I have received a message from God to preach, and what I am sharing in this book is only a small part of it. However, I believe that it will open up new doors for His Word. Since I wrote "The Sound Doctrine" I have come much further and I have seen and understood much more.

However, it started here, and I knew that I should not rewrite the chapters, even though I want to go even deeper in some areas. I have become more convinced and radical in the past three years, and I have become deeper rooted in the Word and in who God is.

Now the time came

After three years of wondering if I would ever publish this book, God spoke to me on 4 October, 2003 and said that the time had come. It was very special. I prayed and I did not feel anything, but suddenly God spoke and said that now was the time for me to publish “The Sound Doctrine”. He told me to add a preface to say how the book was made, and a postscript to sum up and go deeper into some parts of the book.

God also spoke to me about another book I should write. At first I thought that the messages in this new book should be published as teaching on a CD, but He wanted them to be published in a book connected with “The Sound Doctrine”. That book will be called “Life of a Christian” and consists of the following three messages: “Christians and Sin”, “Christians and Faith” and “Christians and the Supernatural”. It is a teaching about what faith and sin are, what they mean to us, and how the supernatural should be a natural part of being a Christian. It is a very good teaching, and through that God has revealed many things to me and to those I have been teaching it. It has already been a great blessing and I am really looking forward to publishing the book.

We are in great need of sound teaching in our country. We have teaching, but much of it is unfortunately something that pleases people instead of being the true Word of God or the doctrine which brings true and sound fear of the Lord.

However, now you can read “The Sound Doctrine” just as God gave it to me. I know that I experienced something that God has for everyone. When you get back to the book, you will get into the things God has for each of us. Receive the message and let Him come in and transform your life. We have to return to the essentials. Solomon ends the book of Ecclesiastes by saying:

“But, my child, be warned: There is no end of opinions ready to be expressed. Studying them can go on forever and become very exhausting! Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his

commands, for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad” (Ecclesiastes 12:12-14 NLT).

Enjoy the reading of “The Sound Doctrine”, and may God bless you through this message.

Torben Søndergaard

(“The Sound Doctrine” written February 2001)

INTRODUCTION

If we look at the Danish churches today – Lutheran and evangelical churches – we see that sin is not spoken much of. When we come from an evangelical church and tell someone how to become a Christian, then we can do it almost without saying what the problem really is; namely sin that separates us from God. We might mention a few scriptures about how we all have sinned and lost the glory of God and that we need Jesus. This is almost everything that is said about sin. Then we mention for example Romans 10:9-10 that if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. We pray a prayer and let the person repeat it – and then: *“Congratulations, you are a new creation. You are on your way to heaven. Now remember to pray to God, read your Bible and go to church”*.

In some denominations you do not even have to open your mouth to get “saved”. You just have to get a little water sprinkled on your head and then you belong to the Kingdom of God. Of course this is not how it is done everywhere, but people are mostly introduced to the gospel without mentioning sin. If it is mentioned, then most often it is not about repenting from the sinful way of living – which means specific sin – but turning away to a new life where you can do almost the same things as you did before. The difference is “just” that you are on your way to heaven.

The situation today is that in many cases we cannot see if people are Christians or not by looking at their lifestyle. The immediate visible difference might be that the Christian is a little more kind, does not curse and of course goes to church on Sunday. Actually “Christians” can do almost the same things as non-Christians. We can drink alcohol, but of course we do not get drunk, we can watch the same movies. We spend our time on the same things as people in the “world” do. Yes, we are almost like “the world”. You might say: *“But we have to be friends with people or else we cannot reach them. Jesus spent time with sinners”*. It is true that Jesus spent time with sinners, but the difference between Him and many Christians today is, that He did not compromise with sin in any way. It was not the sinners who influenced Him, but He influenced them. He spent time with them, but He was not a friend of “the world” (James 4:4).

I pray that everyone who reads this book will have his eyes opened to see the truth in God's Word, so that we will not continue to be deceived by this world and its god, "the Devil". God has a plan for each Christian and each church in this country, but I do not believe that we will get the breakthrough we long for before our relationship to sin is changed, in each of our lives individually and in the church of God in general.

What comes first; sanctification or revival?

1. GOD IS HOLY

"Obey God because you are his children. Do not slip back into your old way of doing evil; you did not know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be his children – is holy. For he himself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy" (1. Pet 1:14-16 NIV).

God is holy and He cannot have fellowship with sin. That was why He had to sacrifice Jesus in order to cleanse us from sin so that He could have fellowship with us again. For us Christians it is important that we do not continue to live in sin, but that we let God change us. If we still live in sin, we shall die.

"So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking with you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry. God's terrible anger will come upon those who do such things. You used to do them when your life was still a part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander and dirty language. Don't lie to each other for you have stripped off your evil nature and all its wicked deeds. In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you" (Col. 3:5-10 NIV).

Our life as a Christian is a walk – a walk towards the eternal life and the crown of righteousness that God will give to those who win. However, it is so important that we do not give up, or else we will miss the reward. Unfortunately there are many people who once lived with God, but do not live

with Him today. They had fellowship with Him, but now they will end up in eternal perdition. Make a decision now to reach the goal. Decide today that you are not going to lose the treasure which God has given you. Stretch out to get it. Reach for the goal, as Paul says:

“No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven” (Phil 3:13-14 NLT).

Let God come. Open up your life to Him so He can change you. Choose today whom you want to serve: sin, which ends with eternal perdition, or God, which ends with eternal life (Romans 6:20).

2. BASICS OF CHRISTIANITY

“So let us stop going over the basics of Christianity again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don’t need to start all over again with the importance of turning away from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don’t need further instructions about baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding. For it is impossible to restore to repentance those who were once enlightened – those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come – and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people to repentance again because they are nailing the Son of God to the cross again by rejecting him, holding him up to public shame” (Hebrews 6:1-6 NLT).

We read here in Hebrews 6:1 that the basics of Christianity for believers are *“turning away (repenting) from evil deeds”*. The most fundamental thing when becoming and being a Christian is repentance and faith. Sin was the reason why Jesus had to die for us.

“When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned” (Romans 5:12 NLT).

Jesus came with the message of repentance, and He passed on to us that we should go to the world and make people repent. *“No, that is not true – Jesus came with the message that we should believe in him, and that everyone who believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life”*. Yes, that is also true, but believing and repenting work together.

Repentance

At the beginning of the gospel of Matthew we see how John the Baptist came with this message:

“Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2 Amplified Bible).

He came with the message of repentance. You might say that it was John and that was before Jesus started to preach. Let us look at Jesus then. In Matthew 4 we see that Jesus is in the desert for 40 days and nights where He is tempted by the Devil. After 40 days He begins to preach, and let us see what He says:

“From that time Jesus began to preach, crying out, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17 Amplified Bible)

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus says that the kingdom of God is near and therefore they should repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). Here we see that firstly he talks about repentance, and then about faith. It is not quite the same we always hear in the churches today.

“Jesus says: I have come to call sinners to turn from their sin, not to spend time with those who think that they are already good enough” (Luke 5:32 Amplified Bible).

In Luke 15 we can read the story of the lost sheep and how Jesus leaves the 99 other sheep to go and look for the lost one. At the end we read:

“Jesus says: Thus, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one wicked person who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who have no need of repentance” (Luke 15:7 Amplified).

Therefore, there will be more joy over *one* sinner who believes than over 99 righteous ones who do not ... no, that is not what it says. There is more joy over one sinner who *repents* ... Obviously faith also has to be there because without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). However, faith is expressed through our deeds and repentance (James 2:14-26). Peter explains the message of repentance very well here:

“So then since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you are willing to suffer for Christ, you have decided to stop sinning. And you won’t send the rest of your life chasing after evil desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of god. You have had enough in the past of the evil things that the godless people enjoy – their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols. Of course, your former friends are very surprised when you no longer join them in the wicked things they do, and they will say evil things about you. But just remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead” (1. Pet. 4:1-5 NIV).

Therefore, to repent is to go from following the human lust to following God’s will, and thus no longer live a life of immorality, lust, wild parties and other things, as we did before we repented. This repentance will make others wonder and they will see that something has happened in our life.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus came with the message of repentance. Then what about us?

“And that repentance, forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47 NLT).

“And Peter answered them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness and release from your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38, Amplified Bible).

The message at the time of Jesus and today is repentance in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Let us ask ourselves if there is something here today that we as churches have lost. We often hear in our churches today that: *“Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”*

(Romans 10:13), but we rarely hear that: *“Those who claim to belong to the Lord must turn away from all wickedness”* (2. Tim. 2:19 NLT). Both scriptures are equally true.

Come to Jesus

When I believed in God in 1995, I heard no word of repenting from the sin in my old life. I just said: *“Jesus, I believe that you died for me. Come and be Lord of my life,”* and so on, and that was it. I was born again. At that time I did not know that it was sin that separated me from God, and that I should not continue to live the way I did before.

Of course something happened. I became a new creation and with time I began to repent for my old life. I held on to God. By His grace I had a strong meeting with Him when I gave my life to Jesus, which made me willing to lay down everything because I knew that what I had experienced was right. I had not left God at any time since then. I have had hard times, but I did not go back into “the world” where I came from.

However, that is unfortunately not what we see in many cases today. If all the people who say yes to Jesus in the streets or in the church held on to him, then things would look different. I think that one of the reasons is that we give them a gospel that is way too cheap – and in some ways false as well. We make everything sound so good and so sweet. *“Come to Jesus and you will be much happier. Come to Jesus and you will receive everything you ask for. Come to Jesus,”* and so on. And people say yes. *Why?* Well, it sounds pretty good. However, when they are told afterwards that they cannot continue to do the things they did before, and they find out that believing in God is not always so much fun, experience opposition and troubles, which will always come, then they backslide. *Why?* Can it be that they were not ready to lay down their old life and truly give their life to Jesus? If someone is born too quick and in a wrong position then it might end with a miscarriage.

If we face people who are in control of their life and feel happy, we sometimes think that we have nothing to offer to them. Once I spoke to a Christian friend who had a non-Christian friend, but he did not think that there was any reason to tell him about Jesus because he was all right. He had a good family, a good job and so on. He had spoken to him about Jesus once though, but his friend did not feel that he needed Him because he had a great life, which my Christian friend then agreed with. It is scary to hear something like this, but unfortunately it happens in many places. We forget

that they are sinners on their way to hell. I think that one of the reasons why we do not see just as many “successful” people saved, as we see for example drug addicts saved, is that we do not preach the true gospel. No matter how much money people have and how great their life is right now, they are still sinners on their way to hell. They need to know that they are sinners. People cannot repent and receive salvation until they see themselves as sinners. That is one of the reasons why we have the law:

“For no person will be justified in His sight by observing the works prescribed by the Law. For the Law is to make men recognize and be conscious of sin” (Romans 3:20).

The Ten Commandments

“Once a religious leader asked Jesus this question: Good teacher, what should I do to get eternal life? Why do you call me good? Jesus asked him. Only God is truly good. But as for your question, you know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother.’ The man replied, I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was a child. There is still one thing you lack, Jesus said. Sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. But when the man heard this, he became sad because he was very rich.” (Luke 18:18-23 NLT)

Here we see a person who comes and asks Jesus: *“What should I do to receive eternal life?”* Today we would say that you have to believe in Jesus with all your heart and confess it with your mouth. However, here Jesus talks about the law – about the Ten Commandments. *“Why does he mention the Ten Commandments?”* The rich man needed to see himself as a sinner. You cannot repent and receive forgiveness if you cannot see yourself as a sinner.

I once read an autobiography of Charles Finney, who is one of the world’s greatest evangelists. He came to speak in a town where one of the members of the local church council was not a born-again Christian. His wife, who was born-again, could not understand why her husband could not or did not want to receive Jesus. When she later spoke to Charles Finney, they came to the conclusion that her husband’s big issue was that he was so nice and kind and lived such a good and right life that he was righteous in his own eyes. This self-righteousness hindered him from getting saved. Charles Finney and this man’s wife prayed to God to remove the self-righteousness, so he could see himself

as a sinner. The following day when this man woke up, his self-righteousness was gone, and for the first time he saw himself as a sinner and was able to receive forgiveness. He repented and Jesus became Lord of his life.

One of the problems we have today is that we do not give people the true gospel about repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord and Redeemer – the message that we have to die to our old life and live a whole new and holy life so we do not perish forever into the fire of hell. Charles Finney talked about repentance. He spoke God’s Word as it is. Of all the thousand people he led to Jesus, there were only a few who did not reach the goal. Of course, it was not that he just spoke the Word, but he also lived a life in repentance, holiness, and prayer. He experienced that:

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”
(Heb. 4:12 NIV)

We can learn much by looking at his life.

Let us ask ourselves this question: *“Do we experience God’s Word as a sword? Or that God confirms His Word to us by signs and wonders?”* (Acts 14:3). There are probably several reasons why we do not experience this very often, for example lack of holiness and prayer. Can one of the reasons also be that we do not fully preach the Word of God? Let us be willing to lay down everything we have been taught until now, and investigate if it is in accordance with God’s Word.

“Test everything. Hold on to the good.” (1. Thess. 5:21 NIV)

3. THE SOUND DOCTRINE

“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. But you, keep your head in all situations.” (2. Tim. 4:2-5 NIV)

Verses 2 and 3 say: “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.” This time which the Bible talks about is now. We see it in our churches today.

In many denominations in the world today, they teach that when you get baptized as a child, then you belong to the Kingdom of God and everything is fine. That is a lie directly from hell. I know people raised in a Christian family who did not dare to drive for a long trip with their little child before he or she was baptized. What if something happened? Today many baptisms are held in hospitals, if you get a sick or prematurely born baby and you do not know if they will survive. You can call upon a priest who comes and baptizes the baby.

What a deception we are living in! Should a little water on a baby’s head make any difference? Then it is not up to yourself if you want to believe and get saved, is it? It is your parents who decide. No way. I am both baptized and confirmed, but I would still have perished if I had died before April 1995. *Why?* Because I did not live with God. I lived my “own” life in sin – without fellowship with Jesus. Most of us can see that what is happening in some churches is a deception. At the baby baptism you get to know that everything is all right now. And after a long life, when you die without God, the priest says at the funeral that we belong to God’s Kingdom through the baptism, but it is a deception. Unfortunately, 87 % of Denmark’s population, who are members of the Lutheran church, are not all on their way to Heaven.

What is the situation like in some evangelical churches? Are things going better there? What does the Word of God say? Is everything all right when you are baptized as an adult? Are you “once saved – always saved?” Can you perish when you are baptized with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues? Do we preach the Word of God, or is it a mixture of humanism and Christianity? Do we only preach the things people want to hear? *“But God is love.”* Yes, but do you not show love by telling the truth so people can be set free? I have one specific scripture in mind which says:

“Not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged by God with greater strictness.” (James 3:1 NLT)

Why will they be judged with greater strictness? It is because they are responsible for preaching the true Word of God. It is so important that we do not hold back the truth.

Much of the teaching I am writing here is very different from what we hear in the churches today. I know that the scripture quoted above is also valid for me. That is why it is important to be able to confirm everything from God’s Word. Often we use a scripture and have teachings based upon it, even if the scripture is totally out of context and has a completely different meaning. I will show you some examples later on. We must remember that:

“The sum of Your word is truth.” (Ps. 119:160 NASB)

I began to think about a study made in November 2000 in 92 state churches in Copenhagen which showed how preaching was done. That Sunday all the priests were to speak about Matthew 18:1-14 – a text which clearly states that there are only two ways out after this life: heaven or hell. However, the majority of the priests treated the subject vaguely, so that it was only in about one out of ten churches where the subject was really mentioned. For example, there were two places where the priests straightforwardly objected the message about eternal perdition. One said that verses 6-11 did not belong in the Bible because that was not a loving speech. Another one used the parable about the lost sheep as a proof that there is no such thing as perdition. Apart from those there were many other examples of misinterpreting the text. Read again:

“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.” (2. Tim. 4:3-4 NIV)

We are living in this time right now, but let us not just look at others. Let us look at our own lives and churches.

Conforms to godliness

2. Timothy 4:3 tells us that men will not put up with sound doctrine. But what is the sound doctrine?

“If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness...” (1. Tim. 6:3 NASB)

Therefore, the Bible tells us that the sound doctrine is one which conforms to godliness.

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.” (Tit. 1:1 NIV)

The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine which leads to fear of the Lord. Proverbs 1:7 say: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (NIV). I believe that this is the right place to begin.

The words “fear of the Lord” have just recently been revealed to me. In the first four or five years as a Christian I went to many services and heard many sermons, but these words had never really been revealed to me. Either because I did not listen well enough, or because they are rarely mentioned in the churches today. And if they do, then perhaps they get a different meaning from the one they really have. I do not think, unfortunately, that there is something wrong with my ears. Fear of the Lord is something rarely spoken of today.

Before we move on, I would like to share a testimony from my own life. I have experienced recently that God has been working in it. I feel that it has been under His sharp light, and all sin has come out. I have experienced a new dimension of God – as a holy God who cannot have fellowship with sin.

“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” (1. John 1:5 NIV)

I have received fear of the Lord which I had never known before, and that made me begin to live a more holy and pure life. I dealt with the sin I had struggled with before. And I experience that

perhaps for the first time I am really free from sin. I was set free when I received Jesus, but now I have stepped into a completely new dimension. For example masturbation is something many struggle with, and I fell in this myself again and again. However, I have experienced that after I got true fear of the Lord in my life, I became totally free. Not just in this area, but also in many other areas. Today I do not feel bound by sin. I am free to not sin. I could not dream of masturbating today – it is so far from me. It is sin, and I hate it.

Not sinning

The Bible tells us that we should hate what is evil (Romans 12:9), and that has truly become real for me. I hate sin. I can still do something which I later find out to be wrong, and God is still working on my stability, revealing new things that I should stop doing. However, today I do not fall into the same sin again and again. I used to watch something on TV which was not good, and I would repent, but a little time afterwards I fell into the same sin again. It is not like that anymore. Today I know that if I fall into sin, for example in masturbation or any other specific sin, I can lose my salvation. This sounds radical and you will probably give me a lot of scriptures to prove that this is unbiblical. Maybe you are saying: *“God is not like that. He is good and what you are saying is not from Him.”* I understand you, but the striking part is that after I had received this fear of the Lord, I experienced a total victory, thanks to which I do not dare or want to do anything which I know is wrong.

When you hear this, it might sound like living in total fear which stops you from lifting a finger in fear of doing something wrong. At first it seems right to believe, but the truth is absolutely different. I feel more free than ever before in relation to sin. Read Romans 6. I have got greater boldness towards God (1. John 3:21). I have dealt with sin which used to bind me. And the best thing of it all is that I have become *so* dependent on Jesus. I know that I cannot make it without Him. I have become *so* grateful for what He has done for me, and that has made me pray more and read my Bible more than before. I have experienced that God has opened my eyes, so that I see many things in a different way. That is also one of the reasons why I dare to write a book like this. I know that it will meet opposition because in many ways it defies much of what many people stand for and believe in today. I have therefore studied the Bible as never before to know if the book is really in accordance with God’s Word. Through this I have experienced indescribable freedom in relation to God and to sin. My prayer is that the readers of this book may experience the same freedom. I pray

that it may create true fear of the Lord in your life and not give you a wrong form of fear which the world comes with and which binds us even more.

“God is love. There is no fear in love.” (1. John 4:16,18 NIV)

The fear of the Lord that I have experienced is not the same fear the world gives. Fear of the Lord sets us free. I pray that through His Word God may lead us into what He has for us as individuals and as His church so we can come to the right place and see our country changed, as we believe and pray for.

Before we move on

Before we move on with the teaching, is it really important that you understand the difference between living in sin and happening to do something wrong or finding out later that what you did was not so good. When I am telling you that I have gained power over sin, it does not mean that I am never going to do anything wrong. I am still being brought up by God, and all the time He is calling me into a higher level of purity and holiness. There are for example things which I did just two years ago, but I do not do now because God has revealed to me that they were wrong. If I do the same things today, then I commit sin. Before I had it revealed as sin, it was not conscious sin (John 15:22).

The Bible also tells us about some specific sins, such as fornication, murder, lie, hate, envy and adultery etc. Everybody knows they are sin because our consciousness testifies that it is sin. Therefore, if you live like this, there is no excuse for it (Rom. 2:14-15). You can get so far that your consciousness gets ruined and you will not see sin as sin anymore, or that you will not let God speak to you about anything wrong. This does not mean that you will start to do the right thing. If you close your eyes to God's upbringing, it will end bad. The important thing is that we let God come through to us with His Word, so that our mind and judgement are being renewed all the time, so we can discern what God's will is and distinguish between right and wrong.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Rom. 12:2 NASB)

I will later talk about other areas which God proves to be sin through His Word. There is it important that you do not close your eyes but that you are open, so God can take you to a higher level in holiness and purity.

“And find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” (Eph. 5:10-11)

Throughout the whole book I will try to make a boundary between accidentally doing something wrong – sin that has not been revealed yet – and doing something that you know is wrong, thus living in “conscious sin”.

4. FEAR OF THE LORD

The word “eusebeia” is translated as godliness, for example in 1. Timothy 6:3 (NASB). “If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness...” This word can also be translated as piety, holiness or respectful fear of God. In another place it says:

“Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.” (2. Cor. 5:11 NIV)

Here to fear the Lord comes from the word “phobos”. This word means to get fear or terror. Then we can translate the verse this way: “Because of fear of the Lord we try to persuade men.”

What kind of fear of the Lord is it that I have experienced? It is not the kind of fear which is in the world. For example, I do not go around in fear that someone will come and kill me. Neither do I think that I am not good enough or that I cannot live up to this and that. It is more like enormous honour and respect, and at the same time fear towards God because of who He is – a holy God, who is also our good and loving Father. It is this respect and fear that makes you look up to Him and wish to please Him. You love what God loves, and hate what He hates (Proverbs 8:13). Therefore, you do not want or dare to do anything that God hates. Fear of the Lord makes you hate fornication,

lie, immorality and so on, and love what God loves, for example holiness, purity, helping people and witnessing about Him (John 14:15; 2. Cor. 5:11; 1. Tim. 6:14).

Through Him

How do you get this fear of the Lord then? You do this for example by discovering who God really is. I began to experience some of it when I heard a series of tapes which among other things talked about the reality of hell and fear of the Lord. The speaker was a pastor from USA. It was so radical in all ways. The message was not made soft. He gave the right name and taught about how it separates us from God. It made me start to see a side of God which I never had known before. God started to work in me, and I began to read and study what the Bible really says about God and how it all fits together. I realized that if we as Christians live in conscious sin, we are not any better situated than people out in “the world” who do not know Jesus. It created fear of the Lord and a whole new sharpness against sin in my life.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” (2. Peter 1:3 NIV)

As you see, it is through knowledge of Him as He really is, that we will get fear of the Lord. Therefore, in this book I will mention some various things, so you can let God’s Word show you who He really is. Now you could believe that it can create a wrong kind of fear inside of you if someone writes about sin in such a radical way. However, as long as it is God’s Word we hold on to, then it should not be softened – no matter how radical it is because God’s Word is truth. If there is a truth here that we have not obtained yet, then is it not about time to get hold of it before it is maybe too late in some areas? Let me say this again, as long as it is God’s Word, it cannot be too radical. Of course it has to be said in a right way because if it is not said out of love, it can create something wrong.

I only wish that people will be set free, just like I have experienced it. Even if there are people who misinterpret the things written in this book, so that it creates something negative inside of them, giving them a wrong kind of fear and making them slaves of the law, we should not hold back the Word of God, which is the truth. You should not soften the Word of God, just because you are afraid that people can get hurt. We have done that way too often, and as you can see, it results in

nothing good. The Word of God needs to be preached to people because it is the truth. Just look at the life of Jesus. People mocked Him and were mad at Him, just because He spoke the truth to them. He even experienced once that almost all of His disciples left Him because He spoke the Word of God radically, just as it was, and not because He had done something wrong. He just spoke the truth to the people, and it hurt:

“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven--not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever. These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it? When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father. From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, Do you also want to go away? But Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:57-68 NKJV)

Here we see that even Jesus would not and could not satisfy all people. He spoke the truth, even if there were some who did not like it, and went their way. It did not stop Him from speaking the truth to them. Although He knew that they grumbled about the things He said, He continued speaking. Finally almost everyone left. It is about time we stopped trying to satisfy people by only telling them what they want to hear because it is only the truth which sets free. We can also see that in the story of the rich young man:

“When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.” (Matt. 19:22 NIV)

Here Jesus did not give the young man the answer that he would like to hear. He did not hold himself back, so why should we hold ourselves back in fear of hurting people? Of course some can get hurt, but if we do not hold ourselves back, many more can also be set free.

When we continue with this teaching, we must let God reveal to us who He is through His Word, and be open and willing to be changed, even if it defies some of the things we are used to hearing, and in some ways seems too radical and too intrusive for us. Our desire as Christians should be to be more like Him, and to live the life that God has for us.

5. GRACE

Grace is a very important part of our Christian life. Without grace there would be no hope for us. Then we could just walk around in constant fear and wait for our deserved punishment. I will not use a lot of space to say what it means to be saved by grace because I am certain that we have often heard about it. However, I will try to show another meaning of grace.

“But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 3:21-24 NIV)

The words “justified freely”, used here, give probably the best description of grace. We are saved by grace – not because we are so good, or because we have done all kind of things. Therefore, it is not by living up to the law that we get saved, but by His grace we have freely gained access to God through our faith in Jesus.

“Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” (Rom. 4:4-5 NIV)

These verses are saying that if you work, you get paid for your work. However, we have received salvation through our faith in Jesus – not as payment for something that we have done. This is the great difference between law and grace.

”For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

(John 1:17 NIV)

The law came with a bunch of rules and commandments that one should keep, but as we know, no person has been justified by the law (Rom. 3:20; 11:6). That is why God had to create a ”better” way, so that we did not have to do a lot of things to get saved. That way is the way of faith (Rom. 4:13).

”Why are you now saying that it is by faith and not by deeds? That is exactly the opposite of what you have written before.” No, what I want to show you is that there is a difference between coming to God and living with Him. As I have been saying all the time, you can only come to God if you see yourself as a sinner, repent and believe. Then we can receive forgiveness and eternal life. We are saved by grace. I do not wish to go back to the law, where we have to do all the right things to get saved. God has once and for all paved a much better way through Jesus, and that is what we should hold on to. Without Jesus there is no salvation. We cannot possibly live righteously enough to earn our salvation. However, when we are already saved, things are a bit different.

People should also be cleansed

Let me give you a little example. God says that we should be fishers of men (Matt. 4:19), which means that we should ”catch” people into the kingdom of God. Just like with fish, you cannot cleanse people from the bad ”guts” before you have ”caught” them. As sinners we are undeservedly saved by grace through Jesus and therefore not by keeping the law. When we got ”caught”, we were still dirty and sinful. However, it says that God is holy, and that is why we should also be holy (1. Pet. 1:16). When we give our life to God and are brought ”ashore”, then He will begin to cleanse us because He cannot have fellowship with sin. As long as we are willing to let God come with ”the knife” and ”rip us up”, He can come all the way inside with His spirit and remove all the filth, and then are we living in grace. So, when God points to some dirt in our lives, we must open ourselves

and let Him cleanse it. It is so important that we do not abuse God's grace because if one is not willing to let God come through, it will go wrong.

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 3-4 NKJV)

Here he speaks about some who turn the grace of God into lewdness. He also talks about some who deny Jesus Christ, but we do not do that. As you see, it is possible to abuse God's grace, and I think that we can perceive that around us. I had done the same in some areas before I experienced the fear of the Lord I am writing about. I did things which I knew were wrong, but I thought that God is gracious. I was like that in some areas, and there are unfortunately many today who are also like that.

"God is a gracious God." Yes, He is, but be careful not to abuse His grace. God forgives sin in our lives when we come to Him, but we should not play with sin by for example thinking, *"God is gracious, so I can always go to Him later and receive forgiveness. There is no reason for me to throw out my TV, even though I see some wrong things over and over again. I will just ask for forgiveness later."* It is wrong to have this attitude. If you are like that, then watch out because one day it will go wrong. Let us not insult the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29).

Shall we remain in the flesh?

"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Rom. 6:1-2 NIV)

As you see here, Paul asks one of the frequently asked questions which come directly from one's flesh – trying to find any little door that is just a little bit open, so sin can creep in and fulfil you. Paul answers, *"By no means!"*, and you can almost hear him say: *"What are you thinking about?"* and he continues: *"We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"* The answer he gives is

understandable, is it not? He says clearly that we should not have anything in common with the flesh, not even if we are under grace. Why?

”Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:1-8 NASB)

”So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh- for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Rom. 8:12-13 NASB)

Paul says clearly that what the flesh wants is hostility with God, and if we as brothers of Jesus, Christians, who live by grace, live in obedience to the flesh, then we shall die. But hallelujah, he also says that with the Spirit's help we can put to death the deeds of the flesh and live. Let us see what those deeds are:

”Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 5:19-21 NASB)

Here we see what the deeds of the flesh are. Notice the ending of verse 21, “I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” If there is anything that is radical, then this is it. Paul mentions that if we, as Christian brothers and

sisters who live by grace, live according to the flesh, we shall die. Yes, he even says that he has mentioned it before, so it is not just another quick remark.

The grace teaches us

Let us go back to the grace for a second, and later we will go deeper into what the deeds of the flesh are. Rom. 8:12 said that with the Spirit's help we should put the flesh to death. Another scripture which explains this quite well is:

“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.” (Tit. 2:11-12 NIV)

Here it is written that the grace teaches as well. It teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live a self-controlled and upright life. It was sin that separated us from God before we received Jesus, and it is the same sin that will separate us from God today, after we have received the grace and salvation in Jesus. However, the big difference is that we have the grace which helps us live upright and not have to fall in sin again and again. This is the big difference between us who are saved and those who do not know God. We have the grace which teaches us to say no to sin and the world. It helps us live a self-controlled, upright and godly life in this world. Just think that by the help of grace and God's spirit, it is possible to live purely, free from sin. Hallelujah! When I realized this, something was set free inside of me and I felt that I had already overcome sin. I saw that by the grace of God it was possible for me to be free from any bondage of sin I had had before. Now, with the help of God's grace we can live up to the Ten Commandments and other things which people had not been able to live up to before the time of Jesus.

In the next chapter I will tell you more about what it means to overcome sin. We are bought into a life in victory over sin. *“No, you must be mistaken. We cannot live in victory. Like it says in Rom. 7, sin has power over us.”* Let us take a closer look at it, and see what God's Word says about that.

6. ARE WE BOUND BY SIN?

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” (John 2:1 NIV)

It is so important that we understand that our goal is not to fall and be forgiven afterwards, but *if* we fall, there is forgiveness for us. Therefore, the goal is that we should not fall.

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.” (Rom. 7:15-20 NIV)

Here we have just read a well-known part of the Bible which is usually quoted once in a while. These verses are often used as an excuse for one’s sinful acts. However, it is important that we should not just take a few verses out of the context and build a teaching on them. Unfortunately, that has been done many times with these verses.

Remember that “every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” (2. Cor. 13:1 NIV), and that “the sum of Your (God’s) word is truth” (Ps. 119:160 NASB). If we look at what we have just read and say that it is normal to sin because we are under sin and we cannot help it anyway, then we are wrong. It does not match with the sum of God’s Word. God’s Word clearly says that the power of sin is broken over us who live with Jesus. If we are in Him, we have power over sin. *“But these verses clearly tell us that it is sin which acts in him, and he cannot help it.”* Yes, it is true, but these verses explain Paul’s situation before he received Jesus. Without Jesus sin has power, and that was exactly why Jesus came – to break the power of sin.

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (1. John 3:8 NKJV)

You could say that the headline for the verses that we read before in Rom. 7:15-20, where Paul says that sin has power over us, can be found here:

“For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.” (Rom 7:5 NKJV)

He speaks about the time when he was in the flesh, before he got to know Jesus and when he was still a sinner. We see, therefore, that we are no longer sold to be subject to sin, as we were before.

“For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.” (Rom. 7:14 NASB)

Now, since we live with Jesus, we are free from sin, as it says in the previous chapter:

“And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” (Rom 6:18 NKJV)

“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” (Rom. 6:22 NKJV)

Sin has only that power over you which you allow it to have. Because of Jesus we are bought free from sin and its power.

Romans

Some time ago I studied Romans – especially chapter 6, 7 and 8. There among other things I read how from chapter 7, verse 7 it starts to speak about the old person – before Jesus – and ends with verse 24, where Paul says: *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* He asks who could rescue him from sin. After that we come to chapter 8 and read that Jesus can. In Jesus we are free from sin, and there is no condemnation in Him. Everything is now total victory!

One day we were going to visit some of my family in Jutland, Denmark. On the way there, I looked especially at Rom. 6-8. Not so long before I realized that Rom. 8 verse 1 and 4 go together so it

actually says: *“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Those, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”* (Rom 8:1+4 NASB).

It struck me due to the fact that there are many people today who just start quoting Rom. 8:1 instead of listening to God if they experience condemnation. God often speaks to our conscience (1. Tim. 4:2). If we walk according to the flesh, or live in sin, then we will experience condemnation in our hearts. That should make us repent for the sin we live in and receive forgiveness. Then we will be set free from the condemnation because we do not walk according to the flesh anymore. The scripture which says that there is no condemnation should not make us close our ears, but instead listen to what God might say to us in our conscience.

When we came to my family in Jutland, I saw a Christian magazine on the table. I picked it up to see if there was anything exciting in it. On one of the first pages there was an article where a young man wrote that as a Christian you live a double life because all the time you do wrong things. He also quoted the scripture from Romans 7 we have just read, and he continued saying: *“All week long you do a lot of sinful things, but on Sundays you can stand in the church as God’s child.”* I thought: *“What is going on? This cannot be true.”* I continued reading, and he said that he as a Christian experienced condemnation almost all the time and it was difficult for him to feel righteous. That is why he quoted the scripture from Rom. 8:1 which says that there is no condemnation in Jesus... When I read that, I thought to myself that it did not sound like he knew Jesus or lived with him. Of course you will experience condemnation if you live in sin. I said inside of myself: *“Oh God, you have to do something. There are so many people in the churches today who are being deceived, and if something does not happen soon, they will be lost.”*

It is finished

What Jesus did on the cross is finished. He won a victory over sin and death, once and for all (1. Cor. 15:54-55; 1. John 5:4). He paid the price – not for sin to have power over us, but for us to have power over sin because of what He did. Let us see what God's Word says, so that God can reveal through His Word what freedom we are bought into. However, let us first look a little bit at Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

We read in Matt. 5 that Jesus talks about the law, and how He says that He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). In Matt. 5 it is written in five places, "You have heard that it was said." He says they have heard that the law says this and this. He speaks about the law which Moses came with. He mentions five different things the law says: You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not give false testimony, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. Then Jesus speaks of some of the laws and commandments in the old covenant which He came to fulfill. If we read what He says about the different laws, we can see that He makes them stricter instead of breaking them. He wants a higher standard.

It says in the law which Moses came with that you shall not murder, but now Jesus says that if you are angry with your brother – some original texts include also "for no reason" – you will be subject to judgement. If you just say "you fool", you will be judged to go to the fire of hell. Therefore, the Bible says that if you say "you fool" to a brother or if you are angry with your brother for no reason, then you shall be found guilty. Here we also see that sin is not something we should treat lightly. That is why it is so important that we test ourselves all the time. If there is someone you are angry with, or someone you have not forgiven, then hurry up and repent. Do not go to hell just because you are too proud to forgive – or because you think that it is not you who should ask for forgiveness. It is very serious and not something we should play with.

Jesus says in Matt 5:27 that you have heard it has been said, "You shall not commit adultery." Committing adultery in the old covenant meant you had sex with someone that you were not married to, but look how it is written in the new covenant:

"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:28 NIV)

We see that now it is enough just to look at a woman lustfully to commit adultery. This also applies to you if you look lustfully at your boyfriend or girlfriend. It is sin to lust after them and have a desire for them. Just because you are "dating somebody", it does not mean that you two are already one. Your boyfriend or girlfriend does not belong to you before you are married. So hurry up and repent, if this is what you do... *"But it is not easy, because when we kiss, we get a desire for each*

other.” Yes, but the Bible does not say either that you should kiss each other when you date. Kissing arouses passions. It awakens a desire and a lust which is sin as long as you are not married. This is something we have got a totally wrong picture of in our churches in this country. We play with sin! If something does not happen, it will go wrong because sin separates us from God. If you desire someone who is not your wife, you live in fornication, and fornicators have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5). So if you are living with a desire or lust like that, you need to repent.

”If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” (Matt. 5:29-30 NKJV)

We must really start to see how radical God's Word is. Something like this creates godliness. Jesus says also in verse 20 that *”unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt 5:20). We should not play with sin, but pursue to live rightly.

Be perfect

However, as I mentioned before, there is hope. Before God opened my eyes and I got this fear of the Lord into my life, I fell again and again by looking at something I should not look at, but now there is victory. For example, I do not need to stay home to avoid looking at a girl and falling. This temptation and desire which had the chance to come through does not get the opportunity to do so now. You may now say that God cannot mean we should keep everything that is written here, that we should not look lustfully at someone else, that we must not be angry with a brother, and that we have to love our enemies and so on. However, when we are living close to Him and with fear of the Lord in our lives, then he helps us to do so:

”The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.” (2. Pet. 2:9 NKJV)

Hallelujah, God can deliver us from the temptation so we will not fall, but live as Jesus says at the end of Matt. 5:

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48 NIV)

It also says:

"He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1. John 2:4 NKJV)

Are we sinners?

If we are perfect and keep Jesus' commandments, it looks like it is really possible to live without sin. *"That is not true,"* you might say: *"We are in sin. All of us are sinners. Read yourself what it says in John 8:7, where there are some who want to stone a woman because of adultery. Jesus says that the one without sin should throw the first stone. And we see that no one throws because they are all in sin."* Yes, it is true that they were all in sin, but that was before Jesus died and showed His great mercy for us by winning an eternal victory over sin. This victory applies to you and me, so we can be free from sin.

"What about 1. John 1:8?" could be another question:

John says there, *"That if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."* (1. John 1:8)

Remember that the sum of God's Word is truth. In the previous verse John says:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1. John 1:7 NIV)

Jesus purifies us from all sin if we walk in the light. If He purifies us from all sin, then we have no sin. *"But Paul also says that he is a sinner."*

"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." (1. Tim. 1:15 NASB)

Yes, he *was* a sinner, even the foremost of all as he said because he had persecuted the church of God (1. Cor. 15:9). However, he says himself in the very same verse that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and that he was a sinner, what he says is in the past tense. The word translated as "am" in the original text can also be translated as "was" or "have been". In this context "was" is the best word that can be used for this translation because Jesus has saved him. Why should Jesus come into the world to save sinners, if we are still sinners after receiving Him? Therefore, the life which God has for us is a life in victory. Yes, we were sinners, but not anymore, if we do not walk in sin anymore. If we do that, then we are still sinners. And remember, sinners do not have access to God.

What does John say a little further?

"We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him." (1. John 5:18 NASB)

We read here that Jesus can and will keep us, so we will not sin. In 1. Cor. 10:13 Paul says that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability. What he means here is that because of Jesus' victory we as Christians can always resist any temptation. We will never be confronted with a temptation which is so big that we cannot resist it in Jesus. Therefore, it seems possible not to fall in sin.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1. Cor. 10:13 NKJV)

A few words of wisdom

"Come to your senses and stop sinning." (1. Cor. 15:34 NLT)

"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1. Pet. 1:14-16 NIV)

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." (Rom 6:12 NASB)

You might think: *"It is easier said than done. »Let not sin reign.« It cannot be done."* Yes, it can. In the next chapters I will show you how, and what it takes.

7. DO NOT LET SIN RULE

If you do not want the sin to rule, it is important to have the right attitude towards it. You must hate sin because if you love it, you will never become free from it. *"Love sin? Who loves sin?"* Let me tell you a little testimony that I once heard.

There was a man who had progressively attended church for some years. He smoked and had tried almost everything to become free. Many different preachers prayed for him, but it did not help. He was not set free. One day his friend became a Christian. The strange thing was that his friend was set free from cigarettes the same day he became a Christian. The man that still smoked said to God, *"What is happening? I have been attending church for so many years, been prayed for by so many different people and still I have not been set free. Then comes my friend, who has just got saved, and becomes free right away."* He was about to light a cigarette when God spoke to him: *"The reason why you have not been set free is that you love your sin."* Then he stopped, looked at his cigarette and thought, *"Yes it is true. I have loved sin."* After that he got angry with sin and threw his cigarette away. Then he became free, and from that day he smoked no more.

This testimony really pushes the right buttons. There are so many people in the churches today who walk in sin and do not feel that they can be set free, but the problem is that they love sin. God does not come and make you suddenly hate sin and become free. It begins with you. You must come to the point where you hate sin so much that you think that it is disgusting and sickening.

"Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." (Rom. 12:9 NIV)

“But how?” You must look further ahead than just to the short pleasure the sin gives you. You must start to see that sin has a consequence – not just now, but also in eternity.

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.” (Heb. 11:24-26 NIV)

We read here how Moses refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He was looking ahead to his reward. This is where we come in the picture. What Moses rejected was not a small thing. Pharaoh was the world's mightiest man, and if Moses had stayed with him, he would have been able to do everything he wished to. He could have got everything he pointed at, but he said no. Why? Because he did not just look at that “nice” short experience it would have given him. He knew that sin would have a consequence, and that one day it would bring death. He was looking forward to his reward and thinking further ahead. Let us do the same and think about eternity – yes, think that what we do here and now will have eternal significance. Where do you want to spend eternity?

Sin separates us from God

I realized that sin separates us from God, and that made me experience victory over sin. We will all stand before God one day, and if we are living in conscious sin, we will be judged. It does not help that we attend church, speak in tongues, read the Bible, work as a pastor and so on.

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1. Cor. 6:9-11 NIV)

Paul is speaking to us Christians. If you live like some of those he mentions here, it does not matter whether you speak in tongues, pray, read the Bible, are a pastor or experience signs and wonders –

you are not going to inherit the kingdom of God. Yes, this creates the fear of the Lord, but that is what we need.

Before we move on, it is important to understand that the standard we are supposed to live according to is God's and not human's. We are so busy looking up to other people and comparing ourselves with them. In some areas it is all right, but it is important not to take it for granted that people are living a holy and pure life because we see that they are being used by God. God does not withdraw His anointing and calling (Rom. 11:29). Thus, even the most anointed person in this country can live in conscious sin and be on the road to hell, while experiencing signs and wonders.

If there is someone that you look up to because he is anointed, and you see him do wrong things, do not think that if he can do this and that, it is all right that you do it, too. No, let us not look upon other people, but upon God and see how we should live according to His Word. Imagine that you start doing the same sinful things that you see other people do. It does not help you that the person who does that is a pastor or someone who experiences power and wonders.

If you are living in conscious sin, you will perish even if you experience signs and wonders. You can read in John 12:6 how Judas Iscariot, a disciple of Jesus, was a thief because he stole from the box. It says that thieves will not inherit the kingdom of God. However, we still see in Matt. 10:1 how Jesus gave him authority over unclean spirits and power to heal in the same manner as the other disciples. We can also look at Samson. He lived in fornication with a prostitute, but the power of God was still upon him (Judges 16). Just because people are walking in the power of God, it does not necessarily mean that we must live like they do, but as God says.

The Bible is extremely radical

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21 NKJV)

It is very important that we live right. This strong verse is written for Christians so it is about us who attend church and know Jesus. Let us be changed and not practice such things so we will not miss salvation. 1. Tim. 1:10 says almost the same, but liars are also included there. It means that if you as a Christian are lying, you will perish. It is not something to play with.

I will tell you a little testimony before we move on. One day I was picking up my wife at the office where she was working. When she stepped into the car and we drove home, she suddenly said: *“I wonder if I am going to get fired.”* I exclaimed: *“What? Are you going to get fired? Why?”*

She then told me that there had suddenly come a man whom they owed money. Her boss had hurried to say to her that if the man asked if she had transferred some money to him, she should just say: *“Yes, I have done that.”* This was not true so she refused to do that, as the man came in. She did not want to lie. Later on the man asked my wife if she had transferred the money to him, and she told him the truth: *“No, I have not, and I have not been told to do so, either.”* She got pretty nervous about what her boss would say when he heard this. When we came home, she called her boss because she had not spoken to him since. She told him that it was up to himself what he was going to do, but he could not make her lie, and her boss said it was all right.

I thought it was really done in a cool way. My wife is so cool. However, if she had lied, what would not have happened from the perspective of God’s Word: Liars cannot have entry to heaven. This is very serious and what my wife did was the only right thing. We must never lie! Not even just a tiny white lie. If you are living in a lie today, then hurry up and come out with the truth before it is too late because liars are not going to heaven. Remember who the father of lies is according to the Bible. It is the devil, and if we as Christians lie, then we are his children (John 8:44).

Let this touch you, and do not let a single lie come upon your lips. And if you get to lie one day, then there is nothing to do than hurry up, repent and tell the truth – no matter how embarrassing it may be.

“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am

holy.” Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.” (1. Pet. 1:14-17 NIV)

We are not going to begin living in the fear of the Lord before we start to see sin as something which separates us from God, and see that if we allow sin, then we cannot have fellowship with God and get our reward but instead will be judged. Remember, however, what I have written earlier: There is hope, for grace helps us and teaches us. As long as we are willing to let God come through to us, there is grace over our lives. If you get confused by reading the next part or you get a wrong form of fear, then go back in this book, and let God's Word work in you.

Do not play with sin

Here is a section which can give you something to think about, and which I have never heard in any church – but which is a part of God's Word.

“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.” We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1. Cor. 10:1-13 NIV).

We have heard the last two verses about temptations many times, but I do not think that we have often heard the whole context in our churches today. Why? Because we Christians have become

slacken. We allow sin. We do not dare to tell the truth because we might hurt somebody. Let that come to an end. Let the truth come out so people can be set free. Let God's Word work inside of us. Let this which we have just read here be a warning to us, so we will not set our hearts to do evil.

"For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:26-31 NKJV)

This is strong. If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. Such a scripture pricks the heart, and if you are thinking: *"It is me. I have sinned wilfully,"* then I just want to say that I have also done that once, but after I have received the knowledge of the truth, I have not sinned consciously or wilfully since I do not dare to play around with sin. Personally I have come to the point where this scripture applies to me. I believe myself that if I go out and consciously commit a specific sin today, I can lose my salvation, and then it is too late. Now you might throw a lot of scriptures at me, but remember that the sum of God's Word is the right thing. While I had been trying to prepare you for this throughout the whole book, at the same time I have shown what this recognition has done in me: I have become free from sin.

As I have said earlier, throughout the whole book I have been trying to make a clear line between sinning on purpose and getting to do something which you later find out is sin. I still get to do something which is sin because I am not perfect, but I am working on it. God is still working in me. All the time He is showing me something that I should work on. Sanctification does not happen in a second. It is a process which takes time, and that is why it is important to let God work in us all the time, so we can distinguish between good and evil.

“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” (Heb. 5:14 NIV)

I know today where I fell before, and I know what can make it happen again. However, it will not happen because I will not allow the flesh to take over. I know for example that impure sexual thoughts used to be a problem, and that is why today I do not look at underwear commercials or other things that can awake the flesh inside of me. Sin is not something we should play with. Remember, we are going to live forever in heaven or hell.

Cut it off and throw it away

“And if your right hand (friends, TV, Internet, alcohol etc.) causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body (friends, TV, Internet, alcohol etc.) than for your whole body to go into hell.” (Matt 5:30 NIV)

It is incredibly important that you do not have an open backdoor for sin. For example, why do you have satellite TV with a lot of programs if the only thing they show is junk? *“But I am not watching it.”* Then why do you have it? Let me try to explain what I mean.

If you for example have a good day and feel that God is near, then you do not think of doing anything sinful. You are very sharp against sin. If you are going to watch a movie, and there comes a scene which is not the best, then you hurry up and fast-forward, while you are looking away. You absolutely do not want to look at something wrong because you do not want to have anything to do with sin. And after you have seen the movie you just have bought, you put it back on the shelf and think: *“Good movie, there was just this one scene which was not so good, but I am strong, so I did not see it because there is victory.”* However, after five-six days you come home from work, and you are in a really bad mood. Perhaps the boss has been criticising you the whole day, and then you come home and everything irritates you. You walk around, mad at this and that, and you put aside all these things with God. In the meantime, while you are feeling sorry for yourself, you see the movie on the shelf, where you put it. However, suddenly you are not that strong as a couple of days

before. You turn on the movie, and instead of fast-forwarding the naughty scene, you are now fast forwarding towards it...

I know that this is something many people know. Maybe not the TV part, but what about the Internet, magazines, music, alcohol or other things? Are you aware that your home is your church? What would you do if Jesus came and said that he would like to be a guest in your house today? Do you have some things that are wrong? For your own sake, throw them away. I think that we as Christians should benefit from taking a big black trash bag and cleaning out in our homes, so we can get the back door closed for Satan.

I can say that our home is clean. I do not have anything which can make me stumble. However, I do have access to the Internet since I have a web-page about Jesus. I know that there are many who have fallen in sin because of the Internet. There is so much junk there and it is so unbelievably easy to get hold of any time. That is why I have decided that if I just once surf on one of the wrong pages, I cannot keep my access to the Internet anymore, which also means that I will lose my Christian web-page. Sin must have a consequence! *“Yeah, yeah, I have heard that one before. I have also said it once, and it did not hold.”* Make a deal with a friend, so that he gets into your computer from time to time, and checks what pages you have been visiting. Then you cannot just visit some pages without your friend knowing it. It is important to remember that God sees everything, also when we sin. If it is you I am talking about here, then repent and confess it to someone else before the flames of hell start to devour you. This can sound really extreme, but now is the time of grace – tomorrow it can be too late.

If you have true fear of the Lord in your life, it is not important to make such deals, but until you get it, it can be necessary. Having a good friend is worth gold. We all need a friend that we can trust and speak to if we experience a battle with sin, and that will not laugh at us, but help us and stand together with us.

In general, it is important to have friends. Choose the right ones that you will spend your time with. If there are some that influence you in the wrong direction, then drop them, no matter how nice you think they are. God is big enough to find other friends for you. Do not have “bad” friends. They are not worth it. Do not lose your salvation because of bad influence from so-called friends, even if

they call themselves Christians and attend church. I will address this later, but now let us go back to having the right attitude towards sin.

“Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.” (Heb. 12:15-17 NKJV)

8. HATE SIN

“Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.” (Rom. 12:9 NIV)

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed...” (Rom. 12:2 NIV)

“Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” (Rom. 13:14 NASB)

“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.” (2. Tim. 2:22 NIV)

Here we see what our attitude towards sin should be. As I said before, it is *so* important to have the right attitude. Sin is not something we should treat lightly. We should look at it as something destructible. We should not touch it or come near it. We must hate it together with what it brings, both in our own life and in our country. Our attitude towards sin decides what kind of victory we will have over it. If we treat it lightly, then we will not achieve victory over it. If we want to conquer, we have to get to the point where we hate it. Let us look at a section in the Bible which I think is really cool.

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give

thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1. Thess. 5:14-23 NKJV)

There are many words of wisdom to get here, but let us look at the ending where it says: “Abstain from every form of evil.” This is the attitude we are supposed to have because like I said before, our attitude towards sin decides which kind of victory we will have over it. And if we abstain from every form of evil, then: “The God of peace Himself will sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is strong. It means that if we abstain from every form of evil, then God will preserve us blamelessly. It even says that our whole spirit, soul, and body will be preserved blameless! In other words, it is possible to be without sin because He preserves us – spirit, soul and body! The original text has a little “and” between the last two verses, so it should actually be: “Abstain from every form of evil, *and* now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Make a choice

When we talk about abstaining from evil, you have to make some choices and get rid of things in your life which have a bad influence on you. It can be friends, Internet, TV, etc. I find TV to be one of the huge problems among the people of God today. Not only does it steal a lot of time, but it also gets many to fall in sin and ruins families and homes. We have chosen not to have TV – not because it is sin in itself, but because most of what comes out of it is sin. Its content is mostly nothing else than fornication, murder, shameless talk and much more, which God clearly states in His Word we should abstain from. TV brings a lot of dullness and lukewarm attitudes into the Christian homes. It has made people too dull to distinguish between good and evil.

TV is also one of the things that make people fall in sin again and again. You see something wrong and repent, but soon you end up in the same sin again. I know it. After I became a Christian, I have watched TV quite many times. When I say quite many times, then one of the reasons is that I gave it up after a great meeting with God, and after a while, when the circumstances were a little tough, I

plugged it in again. I did that many times, but now it is different because I have got the fear of the Lord in my life, and because today I know that I should not play with sin.

Today we have so much more time in my family for being together with people, and more time for God, prayer and reading His Word. Instead of spending an evening in front of the TV, I sit and read or do something else, and that is worth a fortune.

“Well, you could just turn off the TV.” Yes, but I have to confess here that I have not always been strong enough to do so. When we had a TV-set, I felt that it was hard to spend time with God because first I had to see what was on TV. It is easy entertainment and pastime. Time is something we have all received equally. We all have got 24 hours a day, and God wants us to manage that time properly.

“But it is not a sin to watch TV, is it? It is something everyone does so there cannot be anything wrong about that.” Good question. I will let the Word of God answer for you, so it will not just be my own thoughts and ideas. Then you cannot come to me and say that I am too extreme. As I have said before, there were some things I did two years ago which I do not do today. The reason is that God has been working with me and has led me into deeper holiness and purity. He wishes to do that for His whole church and come back one day for a pure bride – one who has kept herself unstained by the world.

“Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” (Jam. 1:27 NASB)

Higher standard

One of the things I no longer practice today is going to the cinema and watching movies because today I know that I should not play with sin. *“It is not a sin to go to the cinema, is it?”* No, it is not, and it is not a sin to have a TV, but it is sin if you fill yourself with the wrong stuff, if what you see is impure, or if it makes you live impurely. If you for example watch something sexual which creates a wrong desire in you, then it is sin. This is enough for committing fornication, and fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God.

When you dream at night, it often relates to something you have seen or experienced the last couple of days or even further back. Sometimes I dreamt about something impure and sinful at night, which made me wake up with a bad conscience. It really annoyed me because I got remorse towards God, and my day was ruined. One day I asked God why I could not control the things I dreamt about, and why I dreamt about something sinful. Then He said to me that it was because I lived in sin and filled myself with sinful things. Therefore I put my TV, movies and other things away because I knew that the times I dreamt about something impure, it was almost always something that I had seen on TV or in a movie. It is different today. I do not dream about wrong things anymore, and if something comes to my mind at night, I feel that I can control it. I know there are many who dream about impure things, and I just want to say to you that what you fill yourself with is often what you dream about at night. Therefore, if you dream about something impure, it is about time you started to give up some things and fill yourself with something else.

“In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they lumber in their beds, he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn man from wrongdoing.” (Job 33:15-17 NIV)

God's standard

It is proved that watching TV works in the same way as when one gets into a trance. You shut off the outside world and the real life, and you open yourself to all the influences that come through the TV. Why do you think TV-advertisements work so well? Because the influence goes right through. If you think that you cannot get influenced because you are strong and you can just turn it off when something wrong shows up, then you should think again. The opposite is proved.

The Bible clearly tells us that we should not watch and fill us with something which is wrong. However, before we look at what God says through His Word, it is important, as I also mentioned before, that you do not begin to imitate what others do. *“But my parents can watch those movies, and they are serving God. And there was this person in the church who recommended this movie or this program.”* Remember that the anointing and power do not depend on whether you live purely or not. What if the person who recommended the movie he had seen later fell in sin because of it?

Do not just look at others, but look primarily at what God says is right and wrong. We have to look at God's standard for his people.

The big problem about TV is that sin slowly sneaks in, and your limits get pushed more and more. When I started to date my wife Lene, her limits were very sharp in relation to what was good to watch and what was not. I thought that she was pretty delicate and that she should relax a bit. However, as time went by, I realized that it was not her that had a problem, but me. I was dull to distinguish between good and evil. I was influenced so much by the world – and other Christians – that I did not admit that what I saw came directly from hell. She was so sharp because she came from a family where they did not have a TV. This made her see right away if something wrong came up. She could notice what had a bad influence. Today it is the same way with me. I cannot stand watching certain things I used to watch before. The Spirit of God in me reacts immediately if I see something wrong. If you are thinking: *“Yeah, but I am not so delicate. I can watch a »good« action movie or something else without being influenced by it in a bad way. I am just stronger than you, so for me it is not a sin”* then I just want to say that you are wrong. What God’s Word says is wrong, *is* wrong. You are not stronger – it is just your judgment which is weak. You have become blinded by this world and its god, and he is slowly lulling you into sleep. It is time for you to wake up. That happens when you let the Word of God speak to you and transform your mind, so you once again can distinguish between good and bad.

The Bible says that it is a sin to steal, murder and fornicate. If we are completely honest, then is this not what most people are filling themselves with when they watch TV?

“He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises gain from fraud and from oppression, who shakes his hand free from the taking of bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes to avoid looking upon evil.” (Is. 33:15 Amplified Bible)

The Bible ranks the righteous one side by side with the one who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed and shuts his eyes to avoid looking upon evil. This means that we as righteous Christians should not watch murder, fornication or other sinful things. And how much is there left to see on TV if they do not show murder or sex? Not much! Especially in movies. Most movies today contain sex and murder, and usually both.

You can call me fanatical or whatever you want, but it is not me who made this up – it is the Word of God. If you want to be free from sin, then you must hate it and not pay to sit and fill yourself with it. Remember, the wages of sin is eternal perdition from God.

You might be thinking that I am only quoting the Old Testament, and that it is different in the new covenant – there is freedom there. Yes, there is freedom – but not to sin:

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.” (Eph. 5:3-7 NIV)

“But among you there must not be even of hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity (...) because these are improper for God’s holy people.” Do I have to say more? “These are improper.” Do you believe that God thinks it is all right to watch impurity and obscenity night after night on TV or even just one night? What it says here fits perfectly with the things shown on TV today. There is almost nothing else than impurity, greediness, obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking. God wants a pure and holy people.

More than enough

Do not play with sin, or else you will fall! Remember, it does not start with going out and committing fornication. It starts with seeing something and beginning to lust for it.

“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.” (Eph. 5:3-7 NIV)

If you live impurely as a Christian or a non-Christian, you will not inherit the kingdom of God. I want to say that if you just once fall into sin because of what you see on TV, then it is a sufficient reason for you to get rid of it. Let us read Matt. 5:28-30, but with a small paraphrase: “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your TV causes you to sin, throw it away. It is better for you to lose your TV than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your Internet connection causes you to sin, then cut it off. It is better for you to lose your Internet connection than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Fasting

One of the things which are good and necessary to overcome sin is fasting. I often fast myself. You can read in Matt. 6 that Jesus speaks about fasting in the same manner as He speaks about giving and praying.

“*When you give...*” (Matt 6:2)

“*When you pray...*” (Matt 6:5)

“*When you fast...*” (Matt 6:16)

Here we can see that fasting should be a natural thing for a Christian, just like it is natural to give and to pray. Notice that Jesus does not say: *if* you give, pray and fast. He says: *when* you give, pray and fast. Fasting is something which belongs in the life of a Christian.

When you step into a period of fast, what happens is that you force your flesh to obey. You refuse to give in to its will, and while you do that, you let your spirit take over. It is not much fun. It can hurt, but you will experience God’s blessing and the temptations which used to be a problem before will now disappear. You will experience a total victory over the flesh and sin because you refuse to give your body what it is normally used to receiving, and instead you fill yourself with plenty of nutrition for your spirit through fellowship with God in the Word and prayer. The spirit will then take over. There is an immense power in fasting.

“*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*” (1. Cor. 9:27 NKJV)

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” (1. Pet. 4:1 NKJV)

We will now go further and look at what our relationship towards sin must be in our churches. There is something about sin in the churches which is a big problem in our country. Sin hinders the power of God from breaking through, and we as individuals should know that if we have sin in our lives, we will not see breakthrough in the church.

9. SIN IN THE CHURCH

Some time ago I attended a meeting where someone shared a testimony. He mentioned that he had been to a service where he received intercession. The preacher asked him if he had been smoking because he smelled of nicotine, which he admitted. Then the preacher told him that he should be happy it was not him who was the pastor in the church where he went because then he would be thrown out. After the testimony the man started to thank the leadership in his own church for being as they were and not throwing him out because of smoking.

When we heard this, my wife turned towards me and asked if it was a compliment to the congregation. I thought that it was definitely not so. Quite the contrary! There is nothing to be thankful for if the attitude towards sin is so slack. Of course you should not get thrown out just because you once get to smoke a cigarette, but there is something here that we have lost. The Bible gives us some clear statements regarding sin in the congregation, but we have become humanistic and secular in so many ways that we have deprived God’s Word of power.

“But you cannot throw people out of the church just because they sin because it has nothing to do with love.” Has it not? What if one person in the church is living in conscious sin and you know it? Is it not the most loving thing that you can do to make the person aware of the problem? Of course I do not mean that we should throw out all the people who fall in sin. We must speak with them, so they can repent.

“But what if they do not admit that it is a problem, and do not repent?” Of course, it should not be necessary to exclude people from the church, but on the other hand I think that we have completely fallen into the opposite ditch and allow too many things. If there is one in the congregation who lives in conscious sin, is it showing love then if we allow it? What does it help if we allow sin and God does not? We can pretend that everything is all right, but it makes no difference. If people are living in conscious sin, then they are on their way to hell.

If people today are living in sin, and they will not repent, we do not exclude them from the congregation. Why? Is it because we want to be a big church? If they live in sin, and they will not repent, then it does not matter if they are members of a church or not. If you live in sin, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

“We wish to be many in our churches, so that is why we do not punish sin so hard because then they will just find another church where they allow it.” But is it not possible that one of the reasons for not having more members is that we allow something which God clearly forbids in His Word? Have we forgotten that we cannot lead people to God ourselves? They cannot come to God unless the Holy Spirit draws them (John 6:44). If we allow something which God clearly forbids, then it will hinder His Spirit from working as He could, and we will not see the breakthrough we long for.

Dangerous subject

I know that I am touching a very dangerous subject here, but I feel that God wants me to address this because it is a problem in our country. When the Bible says that people should be excluded from the church, we should not just think that if someone sins, then the person concerned must be thrown out immediately. We must judge in each case how we should deal with this since there can be various reasons for the sin. There might for example be something in people’s lives which must be broken first before they can be set free.

Let us look closer at what God has intended when speaking of sin in the congregation. Do not judge me and say that I am harsh and that I want to throw this and this person out because that is not what I wish. I have myself been in a leadership of a church where there have been problems with sin. I once stood and talked to a girl who was walking further and further away from God, and one of the reasons were some “wrong” friends she got. One day she visited my wife and me. We talked to her,

and I told her something, but she was just completely shut. I spoke harshly but in love, so she could understand that it was a big problem, but she would not listen. When she left, I was really sorry because it is so important that people do not perish. I was wondering if I was too harsh towards her, and it was difficult for me. It was not pleasant.

Some time later when we moved to another city, I felt that if I had to be in the leadership again one day, then I wanted it confirmed to be 100% sure because it is such great responsibility one has as a leader. Do not think then that I treat lightly what I mention here. I just want to add that today I do not feel that I was too harsh with her because now she will always know that there is something wrong as long as she is not living with God, and she will not forget what we told her. God has something to work with in her. I could have just chosen to be nice and say: *“What you are doing is not so good, but God is still with you, and we are still with you so do not be sorry”*, but I think that it would more likely hinder her from seeing the seriousness of what she was doing. No matter how much we say that it is not so bad, and that everything will be fine, it does not change the fact that it is actually bad and that perhaps the person is on the way to hell.

I believe that if we pay more attention to the consequences of sin in our churches, people will take sin more seriously. It will make them think twice before they do something stupid. It is better to be rebuked in time, even if it does not feel nice. If you live in conscious sin, you will perish. It does not matter if you are a pastor or attend a church. Let us deal with the sin as long as there is time because one day it will be too late!

The Word of God is true

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that »by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.« And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” (Matt. 18:15-17 NKJV)

We read here that excluding people from the congregation is the last solution, and hopefully it will never come that far. However, if we see a brother or a sister sin, we should not be indifferent (1.

John 5:16). We should be attentive towards one another. We should exhort and help one another, so that our brother and sister will not fall.

“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.” (Jam. 5:19-20 NIV)

It really means so much that we help one another and not just look at ourselves because when sin first comes into your life, it will dim you so you will not see the problem clearly anymore. That is why it is important that we help one another.

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal. 6:1-2 NIV)

Later I will explain more about standing together and exhorting one another, but first we must look at something else:

“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.” (1. Cor. 5:1-13 NASB)

These are very intense words that the man who committed fornication must be delivered to Satan but let us look at it now. When God comes with this commandment, it is not because He does not want the man to come back to Him. No, God wants all people to get saved. He does not want anyone to perish, and as we see in verse 5, the reason for excluding him from the congregation is “for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Even if we think that it was not a loving act, it is actually done with a loving purpose, which is that no one should perish. The reason why sin has such great consequence is that you will realize how big a problem it is, so that you can repent and come back to God. It is important that we start to be obedient towards God and not think that we know what is best because God is far greater than us.

It is easier said than done when you have to tell something to those who are living in sin, and maybe exclude people from the church, since it is humans we deal with. Nobody wants to get to do something wrong. As I said before, I have myself been in leadership in a church where we had to deal with one who did not want to realize that sin was a problem. It requires lots of wisdom, but what God wants from us is obedience, even if it sometimes may be uncomfortable.

A little

When Paul says that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough” then there is nothing else to do than to be obedient towards God’s Word. God is a holy God and He cannot have anything to do with sin. That is why it is important that we do not tolerate sin in our churches. We all have a desire to see a breakthrough, people getting saved, the church filled with people that shout to God for mercy, and people getting healed and set free. This is not something we can accomplish by ourselves. Only God can do it. No matter how much we try to see it happen in our churches, we

cannot do it ourselves. Only the power of God can do it, and I believe that there is a connection between not seeing the power of God we wish to see, and allowing sin in our churches.

Since we do not see much of God's power in our churches, we are trying to make people come in many different ways. We try to reach them by worldly means, for example with video-marathons and disco-parties. Youth meetings are about having fun, playing games and watching movies instead of about the power of God because we have become so desperate. Instead of repenting and shouting out to God, we let "the world" come into our churches, and we try to compete with "the world" so we can reach people in this manner. However, people do not need us to become like "the world". They need to see God.

If one starts to worry that some of the members of the church will leave and begin to go to another place, then one agrees for example that it is all right to drink alcohol, go to town and smoke etc., and the purity and radicalism which God wants disappear. When there are some who finally get saved and start to attend church, then they experience the same things they saw in "the world", just not as extreme as "the world" offers. Then they think that if it is the same they offer here as in "the world", they might just as well live in "the world", since it is more wild and more fun.

Do not eat with everyone

"I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one." (1. Cor. 5:11 NASB)

If a brother or a sister starts to live sinfully, we often handle it in a completely wrong way. Instead of showing how serious it is, by offering them to choose between sin *or* the fellowship in the church, we show with our lives that it is not so bad. Perhaps we say it is not so good that for example the person concerned moved in together with his/her girl-/boyfriend, but it has no consequences in the church. If we eat with them and have fun with them like before, then they will not see the seriousness of living in sin.

If for example my best friend considered taking drugs, I would do everything possible to talk him out of it. I would try to make him understand that it was the most stupid thing he could do, and in

this way he would be warned. If he still did not want to listen, I would try to save him by giving our friendship a test. I would tell him that if he wanted to take drugs, we could not be friends anymore, and I would hope it would make him consider it one more time. Then he could see the consequence right here and right now, and the choice he was going to make would change from being a choice between taking drugs and avoiding making me mad, to a choice between drugs and our friendship. If he still chose the drugs, I would tell him that if he turned around, I would be there as a friend again, but in the meantime I would not have anything to do with him.

I hope everyone can see from the perspective of this example that what I am doing is not so stupid, and that it exactly shows that I care about him. This is the same thing that Paul is talking about. It is not because one does not want to have anything to do with the person living in sin. It is to save them. Think about this next time you stand in a situation like this, and pray that God may show you what you have to do. In this way we avoid following our own humanistic and worldly way of thinking and instead start doing what is best for the person concerned in the long run.

Remove the wicked man from among yourselves

I think it is important when it says that we should remove the wicked man from among ourselves (1. Cor. 5:13) because the person who is living in sin will experience its consequence so he repents, but also because conscious sin in our congregations will affect the whole church and not just the sinner. Sin hinders, among other things, the Holy Spirit from doing what He wants. To understand this, we will look closer at Akan from the Old Testament.

You can read in Jos. 6:1 about how the Israelites were about to go to war, and how God gave the command to the Israelites whom from here we will designate as the “church”, how they should not take hold of anything which was banned. It was a command for the whole church. What happened was that a man named Akan took some of the things which were under the ban, and hid them in his tent, so that no one could see them. The consequence was that next time they were about to go to war, God did not go with them because there was sin in the church. This time it was a very easy opponent. There was not even any reason for the whole army to go to war – it was enough with just 2,000-3,000 men. What happened was that 36 men died, the rest fled, and the whole church lost their courage. Then Joshua cried out to God and asked why He had failed them:

“So the LORD said to Joshua, »Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst.«” (Jos. 7:10-12 NASB)

Here we read how all the Israelites were blamed, even though it was only one man, Achan, who sinned. We see that the punishment did not just fall on him but on the whole congregation, which resulted in 36 men getting killed. The story continues with how Achan and everything he owned, children and animals, got stoned and burned. After they had removed the wicked man from among themselves, they could easily beat those whom they had been defeated by before. Why? Because this time God was with them (Jos. 6:18, Jos. 7-8 and Jos. 22:20).

This is a serious story, and together with what we have read from the New Testament we see that sin in the congregation is not something to play with. That is why there is just another reason for standing together and helping one another so that sin will not have a right to get into our lives and churches. In the next chapter I will say more about the principle of standing together and exhorting one another.

10. LET US STAND TOGETHER

“But exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. 3:13 NKJV)

We all need one or more people for standing together. We need someone who is not afraid of telling us the truth if we are about to do something stupid, or if we have sin in our lives. The Bible talks a lot about exhorting and helping one another, and rebuking if one sees sin in a brother’s or a sister’s life. It is really important that we do this. Not always can or will one acknowledge sin in his or her

life. Often sin sneaks in slowly and unnoticed, and that is why sometimes one realizes it very late – maybe too late. Let us thus speak the truth to one another without wrapping anything up.

It is said that love makes you blind. So does sin. When it is already allowed in, it will be difficult to see it. You cannot see the problem anymore because your consciousness has been dazzled by sin. In such cases is it *so* important that you have someone who can tell you the truth, so you once again can see the deception of sin and become free from it. It must be someone you can stand with when you feel that Satan has come for a visit and you experience an intense battle because then you both can resist Satan's temptations. And if there is sin in your life, then it is also important that you have someone you can confess it to because the only way to defeat sin is by letting it come out in the light.

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1. John 1:7 NKJV)

In the light

As long as the sin is in darkness, God cannot work with it. That is why it must come out in the light by being confessed to someone. You need to have a friend that you can open yourself unto, one who will not start laughing at you but who understands how to keep a secret. One you can share everything with. These kinds of friends are unfortunately not those one has most of, if one has any at all. However, it starts when you slowly begin to open yourself and in doing so build up a confidential friendship.

Some time ago I heard a friend say that one day he experienced huge temptation relating to porn. He hurried therefore up and called someone, and asked if he would come over and stand together with him when he experienced the attack. The person came, and they attacked, resisting that temptation in Jesus' name and won. Most people probably would have kept the temptation for themselves so it would not come out in the light, which almost always results in succumbing to the temptation and getting sin into one's life.

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (Jam. 1:14-15 NKJV)

Remember, as I have mentioned before, that there is always a way out of the temptations, so that you do not have to give in. What my friend did by calling someone and confessing the sin so it came out in the light, is the only right thing to do if one wants to gain victory over sin.

The way he opened himself and said that he had experienced a battle helped me know today that if I need someone to stand together with, then I can come to him. Why? Because I know that he will not laugh at me since he experienced battles himself. We will all face battles.

It is important that you do not think you must be the only one going through these temptations and battles because you are not. Therefore, there is no reason for you to be embarrassed and think that you are weak, and fear what might happen if you mention your problem to someone. You should rather think about what might happen if you do *not* tell it to somebody. Remember that the only way to overcome sin is by living in the light – bringing everything to the light. Sin will eventually come out at one time or another. Is it not better then that it comes out now before it is too late? Remember that God sees everything – both when you are tempted, and when you sin. Thinking that it is probably best for you to hide it, or else someone will start to think this or that, is a deception straight from hell. As long as the sin is hidden, Satan has the power, but as soon as it comes out in the light, he cannot win. That is why it is so important that we open up ourselves for one another when we experience a problem and not just when we experience victory.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (Jam 5:16 NIV)

If you do not have anyone you can go to, work on finding someone – one that you know you can trust, and speak with him or her. Start to open yourself up. If you have friends who influence you in a bad direction, change them. Do not spend time with them. You are exceedingly influenced by those you spend time with. You become like those you socialize with. Therefore find someone you would like to resemble in the way they live their life with God.

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” (Prov. 27:17 NIV)

Face to face

For some time I used to meet someone every week, and we talked together and prayed for each other. What we did was that we took a piece of paper with 20-30 questions, which we then asked each other. In this way it was much easier to talk about the more “private” areas in our life. Some of the questions were: “Have you hurt someone with your words, either behind the person’s back or face to face? Have you given in to temptation in sexual issues? Have you had romantic fantasies about others than your spouse or have you read or seen sexually stimulating materials? Have you been under the influence of hash, alcohol or similar?” It may seem a bit stiff to ask each other questions from a piece of paper, but thanks to that it quickly became normal for us to talk about the more private issues, which otherwise would have taken longer time to dare to talk about.

Another good thing when meeting a person regularly is that if for example you are facing a temptation, then you know that soon you will have to stand face to face with someone, and you will be asked if you have done this and this and then you will have to tell the truth. This makes you consider things one more time. As Christians we cannot lie because liars do not belong to the kingdom of God.

There should be so much fear of the Lord in one’s life so that it is not necessary for another person to be involved before one reconsiders his actions when he is facing the temptation. God sees everything, also when you sin. If you sin, then that will have a consequence, no matter if others see it or not. However, being responsible before another person can help, so that you will see the consequence immediately. It can help you grow and learn to deal with the temptations. Let us therefore begin to open ourselves towards one another. It is better to become a little embarrassed than to perish. Remember that sin separates us from God. Let us begin to exhort one another, as Paul did, so we will not fall.

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.” (1. Pet. 2:11 NIV)

What has happened?

I will continue with a small testimony of how we need one another:

When I started to believe in God in 1995, I was an apprentice in a baker's shop. After I had been a Christian for about three-four months, I was about to go back to the technical school for 10 weeks together with some other guys I had been to school with earlier. There were especially three-four guys I hanged out with a lot, and usually when we were in school together, there was party and boozing for all the ten weeks. We used to be those who had to try everything, but now it was a little different because I had become a Christian in the meantime. That is why this time I felt that all of them should receive Jesus and start to believe. I had to take the train early in the morning, and while I was on the train I was praying and felt really excited. I arrived at the school, and my old friends came to me: *"What's up Torben, here we are again. How are you doing? Shall we go clubbing on Wednesday? There is cheap keg beer."* Suddenly I felt very small, and I did not have much to say.

The next day I did not say a word either about having become a Christian. I felt that it was becoming harder and harder for me to resist the temptations that were there. Wednesday came, and my friends asked if I wanted to go clubbing. Even though I had decided at home that I would not go, but tell them that I had become a Christian, to my own surprise I heard myself say: *"No, I cannot go today, but maybe tomorrow."* When I later came home, I felt completely wrecked, and everything with Jesus was suddenly so difficult.

What should I do? I knew deep down inside that they needed Jesus, and that it would not be good if I went clubbing. Luckily I did the right thing. I needed someone that could stand with me, so I picked up my phone to call my cell group leader, but he could not come. What could I do then? Well, I just called my youth leader and told him that I was experiencing a battle and felt very confused. He was going to arrive after an hour, so I began to clean up a bit. I was still very confused and dismayed, but when I was taking the trash out, I met two ladies from the church. They asked how I was doing, and I told them about the situation. They said right away that I should just stand firmly, and that God was with me and so on. After a few minutes with them and the trash in my hand, I was totally changed. I felt already that I had won. Some time later, when my youth leader arrived, I was really happy, and we talked a little and prayed together.

When I arrived at the school the next day, and the friends came to me and asked if I was going to the club with them the same night, I said: *“No, I don’t want to go clubbing because I have met Jesus and He has changed my life. You also need to meet Him.”* Then there was victory. After I had already said that I had become a Christian, there was no problem in resisting their offer. Two weeks later someone from my class came and asked me what had happened with me since I did not want to go clubbing anymore. We had a really good conversation, and a week later she met Jesus herself. But what would have happened if I had not called and met those ladies from the church? I do not know, but it would definitely have ended differently. You see, we all need one another. We all have something to give, and when we stand together, Satan cannot come in and beat us.

Upbringing hurts

Let us not be afraid of rebuking one another if we see something wrong. Let us say it. I know that it might not be the easiest thing to say, and it is not pleasant to be rebuked, either, but it is *so* necessary. For example, if I get to talk about someone behind their back or do other wrong things, then my wife will surely tell me about it. What usually happens then is that I get a little annoyed at her. Why? Not because she is not right, but because it hurts. My flesh does not like it, but after a few minutes I just have to admit that she is right, and I repent. It is not always so nice to be rebuked, but it is necessary if we are to reach the goal. Let us therefore not be afraid but tell the truth if there is sin in somebody’s life. That is the only loving and right thing to do.

“Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Heb. 12:10-11 NIV)

“And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.” (1. Thess. 5:14-15 NIV)

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ²Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal. 6:1-2 NIV)

11. NOW WHAT?

We have looked a bit at the sound doctrine and fear of the Lord, as well as grace and sin in the church and in our own lives. Now what? Well, I hope that God has spoken to you through what we have covered, that you have received a revelation of a new side of sin and what it does in our lives, and that you will get to experience more fear of the Lord than you have had before. I will then say as Paul:

“Exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” (1. Tim. 4:7-8 NKJV)

I can boldly say I feel that through this book God has called me to lead His church into holiness and godliness, which will make us see His power as never before. Much of the teaching I have written here is something that God has revealed to me through an extended period of time in sanctification and prayer. I can boldly say that this is a prophetic book for this time in our country. My prayer is that this book may help us Christians deal with the sin in our lives – as individuals and in our churches around our country because I am certain that sin is a huge obstacle for seeing the breakthrough we beg and pray for. The way forward for our country is prayer. I am convinced that we will see a breakthrough in the time to come in connection with prayer because we are about to realize that we can only win this battle we are standing in with spiritual weapon, which is prayer. *“Then why do you not write about prayer?”* Because before we get to experience that our prayers cause a major breakthrough, it is important that we live a pure and holy life in repentance. If there is sin in our lives, God does not hear us.

“Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” (Is. 59:1-2 NIV)

There have been prayed many prayers for Denmark through many years, but I think that we can pray from now on, and until Jesus comes again, without seeing the revival which we yearn for, as long as we allow sin in our lives and churches. I am also convinced that if we as church come back

to the sound doctrine, so that we get the fear of the Lord in our lives and churches and deal with sin, then we will start to see God's power as never before. We will start to see that sinners have a desire to get out of sin and repent, and that people are set free and healed.

God speaks to His church

Some time ago a prophecy was read out at a meeting that I had attended. One person in the church had got this prophecy and written it down. When I am writing it here now, I think it is a prophetic word from God – not to a certain church but to God's people in this country.

“The Lord says to the church:

I desire a people with pure hearts. I am tired of getting honour only from your lips, and not your hearts. I am a holy and jealous God, who cannot stand sin. I sent my Son to the earth, so that you can receive forgiveness for your trespasses, but you are playing with my grace. When you know a sin in your life, I want you to carry it to the cross and leave it there. It is not about whether you feel that you are ready to do this and that. The thing is that when my Holy Spirit moves in your hearts, then you **MUST** obey. It is a decision I want you to make if you desire holiness over your lives.

I wish to reach out to the whole world with my love and salvation, but you are in the way. I cannot come through with my Holy Spirit. You are not worthy to carry my glory and holiness out to the world because your hearts are filled with sin which is not dealt with. Do you think that I sent the most precious I have to this earth for fun and let him suffer so much under your sin that I had to leave him in the moment of death? **NO!** I did it out of love, and it hurts me so much when you take it so lightly. I cannot stand it. If you take your commitment to me seriously, if you treat your life in eternity seriously, **THEN REPENT!!!**

Oh, my children, do not harden your hearts, when I speak to you by my Holy Spirit and remind you of things. Make a choice and deal with it. It will hurt in your flesh, you will feel humiliated and displayed towards people, you will experience Satan's attack and his attempt to make you stop, **BUT DO IT!** Rather today than tomorrow. He has no right to speak into your lives when you belong to me!!! I long so unspeakably much to be allowed to permeate your lives. I desire to see my love and holiness through you shining out to this world. **THE WORLD NEEDS YOU.** You are my messengers, I do not have any other!!!

Oh, how I long for you to surrender EVERYTHING to me, so that I might be allowed to bless you and let you be part of the revival I am expecting to send over your country and your cities. You have had many words from me about revival, and you do not believe it anymore, you do not pray for it anymore. No, because you have hardened yourselves! The revival is here, but I am missing workers who will lay everything down for me to live a life that is holy and well-pleasing to me.

You hypocrites, you look at the outward things. I cannot use your traditions and rituals for anything. If you are not surrendered to me, then it is empty words and actions and even mockery towards my holiness. You have many skills, I have given them to you, but not to walk in your own power. I am led when I see it. You cannot accomplish anything if it is not me who is nr. One!!! If you will choose to repent from your sin, then you will see my glory break through and a revival rise over your city, yes even the whole country, but if you will not, then you have hardened yourselves and defied my commandments. You are no longer my servants, merely the hearers of the Word and not its doers.

Oh, how I cry, when I look at your hearts. If you would just let go of all your own and let me come through. I have so much to give you, and it is not me who holds back, but you who are in the way so I cannot pour it out. Repent today. Repent!

These are harsh words. It is something we should read a couple of times and really take it to ourselves. When He points at something in our lives, we must obey and repent, so God can come through. This prophetic word confirms much of the content in this book. God is a holy God, who hates sin. We should not play with His grace. God wishes to transform this country, but if we allow sin and live a lukewarmly life, He cannot use us. Let us not be a hindrance for God's kingdom breaking through by not repenting. Let us meditate on it and let God speak to us. Let us live a life in surrender and fear of the Lord where we humble ourselves before Him. When we live a life in surrender and in fear of the Lord, and then shout out to Him with the full power of our lungs, we will get to see a pouring out of the Spirit as never before.

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see

visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” (Joel 2:28-29 KJV)

When we read about this pouring which we also saw at Pentecost we can see that verse 1 begins with: “And it shall come to pass afterward.” When it says that it shall come to pass afterward, then it means that there happened something before what we have just read which had a meaning for this pouring:

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” (Joel 2:12-13 KJV)

You can read here that God urges them to repent. He urges them to turn with all their heart and cleanse themselves from sin. Then after they have repented for their sin, we read in verse 15 that they call together for prayer. Firstly repentance, then prayer, and then comes the result in verse 18:

“Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, and pity His people.” (Joel 2:18 NKJV)

Let us not be a hindrance

We need God to spare Denmark. Denmark needs God. In many ways are we living in a country which is worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. God desires to see Denmark transformed. Let us not be a hindrance to God by allowing sin. We have deceived ourselves much too long by believing that we can live as we wish and then still pray to Him and expect that He hears us. There have been prayed many prayers for our country, but we have not seen a breakthrough. Why? Because the conditions are not all right. I believe with all my heart that if we as His church step into what among other things I have mentioned in this book about living a pure life in fear of the Lord, and start to preach the Word as it really is, without wrapping it, then we will see a revival like never before. We must preach that sin separates from God, and that repentance from sin gives admission to Him through Jesus. Before we continue to cry out to God for revival, let us deal with sin, and we will get to see a transformed country.

“He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” (Prov. 28:9 NASB)

However, there is hope for Denmark because

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (Jam. 5:16 NIV)

The end

May God bless you in your life with Him. May you step into the life that God has for you. May we all be sanctified, so we, who are living with Jesus now and telling others about Him, may not perish but obtain the eternal life.

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1. Cor. 9:27 NKJV)

“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” (Rom. 6:22 NKJV)

And may we all bear the fruits that repentance requires, so we can be well-pleasing to God.

“Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves: (I attend church. I read the Bible and pray to God. I witness to people. I speak in tongues and so on.) ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Luke 3:7-9 NKJV)

“But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” (Acts 26:20 KJV)

(January 2004)

TODAY, THREE YEARS LATER

By getting a revelation of “The Sound Doctrine” and having my eyes opened for the fact that God is really holy and that He will judge sin and disobedience where it can be found, I have experienced freedom which is still the same after three years. I still feel this freedom from sin and boldness towards God which I did not have before. My whole life has been changed by what happened 3 years ago.

By the revelation of “The Sound Doctrine” I have got a deeper understanding of the whole Word of God, and I have also experienced that others have got the same when they heard the message of the book. Today I do not have to skip the places in the Bible where it says “sin against the Holy Spirit”, “sin towards death” (1. John 5:16), and where Jesus says that if the salt loses its power, it will never become salt again, and so on. All of this is connected together and it makes sense.

Until now I have taught the message of “The Sound Doctrine” only a few times since I experienced that it was not the time for it yet. However, it has been a great blessing the times I taught it, and from now on I will boldly say what God has given me, of course in the pace that He leads me in.

As an ending to this book, I will tell you more about what it means to lose your salvation, sin against the Holy Spirit, and how to get to know the truth. Remember, as I have said all the time, that there is a difference between getting to sin and continually living in conscious sin or sinning on purpose. If this creates a wrong form of fear in you, which I have also mentioned before, then go back and read the book from the beginning, so that you will get the right understanding of it.

This teaching should most likely make you see a need to surrender everything to God, which happened in me. I understood that I could not have a little bit of the world and a little bit of God, but that it was either one or the other. I understood that I should not treat my salvation lightly, but that it has been something I should work on with fear and trembling, as Paul says it in Phil. 2:12. I understood that 10 minutes in prayer to God here and there, while I am filling myself with a lot of other stuff, is not enough. It is really a question of dying to yourself and your own and of understanding that we do not live ourselves, but that we let Jesus be Lord in our lives in all areas

(Gal. 2:20). We really need to live in a close relationship with God, seek Him, get to know Him and free ourselves from sin, so we can endure the race ahead of us.

The Bible says that the sound or true doctrine is a doctrine which creates true fear of the Lord. Therefore, if this fear of the Lord is missing in our churches, it must be a sign that we do not preach the true Word of God and the sound doctrine, but just the things which itch people's ears, as Paul warns us:

“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.” (2. Tim. 4:3-4 NIV)

1. Tim. 2:4 says that: “(God) wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.” It says that God wants all men to be saved *and* to come to knowledge of the truth and not all to be saved *by* coming to knowledge of the truth. We must understand that there are depths to grasp – some things that will not come when we raise our hands during a service but by the revelation of God and His Word. Jesus says that we shall get to know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. It happens when we keep His word and acknowledge Him.

“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, »If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.«” (John 8:31-32 NIV)

Many who attend church today struggle with sin, and one of the reasons for this is that they have never really got to know the truth. Through the knowledge of the truth you will get true fear of the Lord, which makes you see sin as sin and understand what it means that sin has a consequence in your life, and that it is a holy and righteous God that we serve.

When you get this fear of the Lord and thus keep away from sin – meaning that you get the right attitude towards sin – what happens is that God frees you from temptations so it gets easier to overcome sin. However, if you are living in filthy lust and not listening to the Lord's rebuke, God will keep you in sin until the judgment day.

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.” (2. Pet. 2:9-10 KJV)

Therefore it is really serious that we as God’s people get the right attitude towards sin which comes through the acknowledgement of the sound doctrine.

Jesus also says that we should not fear Satan or humans, but that we should fear God.

“I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.” (Luke 12:4-5 NIV)

After He said this in the Gospel of Luke, He says that the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit shall not receive forgiveness.

“I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.” (Luke 12:8-10 NIV)

Sinnyng against the Holy Spirit is more than just denying the faith. It is sinning on purpose or continuing to sin consciously after one has learned the truth because then one blasphemes against God’s Spirit in one’s life.

Before, when people were under the law, they were bound by sin, but when you repent, get saved and come under the grace, you get released from the power of sin, and the grace and God’s Spirit helps you and teaches you to live a life well-pleasing to God.

“For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.” (Rom. 6:14 NIV)

That is also the reason why under grace you will get a harsher judgement (Heb. 10:29). That is why we read in the Sermon on the Mount how Jesus tightens up the law, so for example now it is enough to look at a woman lustfully in order to commit fornication with her.

We are often mistaken when we speak about forgiveness since we are forgetting two things. The first one is: We are saved by grace and not by works, but when we get saved, then it is different: We are not saved by works but to works.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Eph. 8:10 NIV)

That is why you must not be a sinner who comes and needs forgiveness for the same sin again and again your entire life, but as Jesus says to the woman who was caught in adultery:

“Go and sin no more.” (John 8:11 NLT)

If the woman continued in her sin, which then would be conscious, she would not just be able to come to Jesus and hear the same thing from Him again and again. Remember that when you are forgiven, something different is expected from you.

The second thing we often forget is that the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were all a part of the old covenant. It was before Jesus died on the cross and established the new covenant. The Holy Spirit had not yet come to the earth, and that is why there was still none who had sinned against Him. However, when He came on the Pentecost, it was not long before it happened. In Acts 5 we read about how Ananias and Sapphira agreed about sinning on purpose after they got to know the truth and were filled with the Holy Spirit.

“Peter said to her, How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord?” (Acts 5:9 NIV)

When the presence of God was so strongly present, the result was that they both fell dead right away. Sin is not to play with, and it says that after the incident with Ananias and Sapphira the whole

church and everyone who heard it were filled with great fear, and after that they experienced even more progress.

If we have already received the knowledge of the truth, and then sin on purpose or keep sinning continuously, knowing well what consequences it brings, then there might be no possibility for receiving forgiveness because you insult the Spirit of grace, or in other words the Holy Spirit.

“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only 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 of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:26-29 NIV)

Since one of the tasks of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world about sin, some think that sinning against the Holy Spirit is not to believe in Jesus. However, this scripture indicates that it is more than that. If it talks about someone who does not believe in Jesus and does not care about the truth, then he does not walk around with a fearful expectation of the judgement since he does not believe that there will be a judgement. This scripture says that we can come so far that there is no forgiveness anymore, even if we would like to get it because we have wasted the opportunity of receiving forgiveness for ever and ever when we have sinned against the Holy Spirit.

This should make us Christians realize that we must seriously treat salvation and what Jesus did on the cross. We have to see the need to live close to God and make sure that the wrong things do not come into our lives, and as a result hinder us from reaching the goal – the salvation of our soul. Therefore we must make sure that we keep ourselves on fire throughout our whole life and not let the deception of sin fool us.

I really wish that through this teaching people get to know the truth which will set them free. The problem with receiving this kind of teaching is that we often take our own experience and put it above the Word of God. We think: *“It is not like that because I know someone who lived with God*

for many years, later fell completely away from God and lived in conscious sin and after that came back to God again.” To this I just want to say that the Word of God is evident:

“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.” (Heb 6:4-6 NIV)

Many who attend the churches today have not really come to the knowledge of the truth, and many are living in a deception. They may have tasted God a little bit but they are not really saved. They have had an experience or a touch of God, but they have never really repented or laid their lives down to live with Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Remember also that the Bible says that you can come to the point where you can no longer receive forgiveness from God, and here it does not help that you attend a church. The church might say: “Come” but it is too late from God’s side. Therefore, it is about receiving forgiveness and not about membership in a church.

When we speak about receiving forgiveness, we must remember that there can only be forgiveness if the repentance is present. You do not get saved by raising a hand but only by true repentance and penitence. Charles Finney, one of the world’s greatest evangelists, comes up with a good definition of what true repentance and penitence are. It is from the book “Principles for Revival”, where he teaches how to lead a sinner to God.

“Penitence always involves hate towards sin. It is feeling about sin the same way as God does. It always involves renunciation of sin. Get sinners to understand this! Penitent sinners do not feel the same way as the non-penitent sinners think they do. The non-penitent sinners think that if they become Christians, they will have to stay away from parties, theatre, games and other things they care about. They think that they can never have fun again if they have to stop with these things.

But that is far from the truth. Christianity does not make them unhappy by excluding them from enjoyable things because the first step of becoming a Christian is to repent – to change your mind

about all these things. They do not seem to understand that a repentant person does not have any desire after these things; they have abandoned them and turned their hearts from them. Sinners feel that they would like to go sinful places and make sinful things in the same manner as they do now. Living as a Christian – they feel – will become a long, unhappy sacrifice. This is a misunderstanding.”

And then he makes this radical statement:

“I know some people who claim to be Christians who would enjoy going back to their old lifestyle if they did not have to fear for their reputation. But listen: If they feel this way, they cannot claim to be Christians; they do not hate sin. If they long for their old lifestyle, they are showing that they have never really repented because repentance always consists in changing points of view and feelings. If they had truly repented, they would have turned with disgust from these things instead of wanting them. Instead of longing for Egypt and wishing to go back to their old friends and companionships they would find their greatest pleasure in obeying God.” (“Principles for Revival”, page 280)

If you had been attending church and abandoned God once, and then came back again, then there are two different explanations. Either you had not really got to know the truth the first time and that is why now you came back to God, or you had got to know the truth the first time, and then there is no forgiveness, and you are living in false forgiveness. I think that it is most often the former case because when you come to the knowledge of the truth, you will not fall away but say as Peter:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68 NIV)

You will put your hand to the plough without looking back, and then you will be fit for the kingdom of God.

“But Jesus said to him, »No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.«” (Luke 9:62 NKJV)

If salt loses its flavour, it will not become salt again and it is no longer good for anything except for being thrown out. If you understand this, you will, as Paul admonishes us, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and you will not fall away or allow sin or disobedience in your life.

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” (Phil. 2:12 NIV)

Many treat their salvation too lightly, even when the Bible clearly says in several places that one should not do it. We should rather make sure not to come short of the grace of God, so that we will not be like Esau and lose our birthright.

“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. or you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.” (Heb. 12:15-17)

This is a picture from the Old Testament which the writer of the Letter to Hebrews uses to make a comparison with our birthright we have received through Jesus. Think about it! Even though he sought repentance with tears, he did not get a chance for it. As it says in Hebrews 10:27, the only thing left is fearful expectation of judgement to come.

“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.” (Heb. 10:26-27 NIV)

What we have just read about deliberate sinning can also be translated as:

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” (NKJV translation)

Do not try to see how much you can allow before it is too late!

Regarding the fact that you cannot always receive forgiveness, it only applies if we continue to sin consciously, and not if we happen to sin because then of course there is forgiveness. If we walk in the light and get to sin, then we confess it, and He is faithful and just and will forgive us our transgressions.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1. John 1:9 NIV)

This is the sound doctrine – the doctrine that creates true fear of the Lord, as you perhaps already can perceive.

“But what about the prodigal son? Is he not an argument for the fact that there is always forgiveness?” The prodigal son is not someone who had come to the knowledge of the truth and then fell away and came back again to God. It is a parable which Jesus tells to the scribes and the Pharisees who were offended because He was together with sinners.

“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying:” (Luke 15:1-3 KJV)

After saying this, He tells them more parables which all are a picture of the scribes, the Pharisees and the sinners. After all these parables we can read in Luke 16 that the scribes and the Pharisees at last walk away since they cannot stand hearing anymore. In the prodigal son parable the oldest son, who is a picture of a Pharisee, says among other things something typical for a Pharisee:

“But he answered and said to his father, »Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came (repented and came to God), who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.«” (Luke 15:29-30 NASB)

Does it not just sound like a typical Pharisee? “I have never neglected a command of yours.”

One of the problems in our country is that we are so fast to listen to people’s words. You raise your hand and say yes to Jesus and they tell you that you are saved and forgiven, even if you maybe do not feel peace in your heart. And then, when a teaching like this comes up, you get uncertain of your salvation. The reason is that you have built your faith on people’s words and not on the Spirit of God. If you had built your faith on the Spirit of God and not on what the preacher said, you would know that you had received forgiveness and lived right with God. Then a teaching like this would not shake you because the Spirit of God is in you.

“I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.” (1. Cor. 2:3-5 NIV)

Many people in the church today live in condemnation and do not have deep peace with God, and the reason is that they have not completely got through to God. In old revival stories one cried out for mercy until one got all the way through to God and experienced His Spirit confirming that everything was all right. One sought God until one was sure of receiving forgiveness from Him and becoming a new creation as God’s Word says. Today the priest or the preacher says: *“You have prayed this prayer, so now you are forgiven. Do not think about it anymore.”* Many buy it, even if they do not have peace inside. Then the priest may say that if you do not have peace in your heart, you should read Romans 8:1, where it says that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. It is true, but the reason for experiencing condemnation is that one is not in Christ.

Instead of quoting this scripture over and over again and hoping that the condemnation goes away, one needs true and sound old-fashioned repentance. It does not consist in repeating a prayer for forgiveness when one had not quite fully understood that there is no forgiveness without repentance. It is not just about praying a prayer, experiencing God and starting to come to church, but about getting fully through to God and achieving peace with Him.

Never build your faith only on people’s words, but on God’s Spirit because “the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Rom. 8:16).

May we all come to the knowledge of the truth which creates true fear of the Lord so we can live a life which pleases God, without deceiving ourselves.

I will end with this scripture:

“Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.” (1. Tim. 4:7-9 NIV)

I say again: Train yourself in godliness. Keep the truth in front of you and do not let other people's influence dull you. Read the Word of God as it is, and if necessary go back to this book, so you will be kept sharp and God-fearing.

God bless you

Torben Søndergaard