

Our way out of „Babylon“

It are *experiences* that shape us, that we learn from and that change us.

For me personally, *one such experience*, that triggered *something lasting* in me, was a unique encounter with God during my time in India:

I woke up one night and immediately felt *His very strong presence* in the room. But not, as usually, in a gentle, pleasantly light way, but in a heavy, burdensome way that *in this form* I had never experienced so intensely before. I immediately asked for the reason for *this tremendous burden on His heart* into which I felt myself being taken in, and thereafter experienced how He revealed to me in the Spirit *His burning desire*, that **“His people”** - *literally* - **come out “of Babylon”**.

Again, I asked *what this means*, “to go out of Babylon” and realized how *in a single moment* He clearly showed me three things in which this becomes *very concrete*. Where “Babylon” is reflected *also in our own soul and in our own lives*. Where He *also* invites *each one of us* to see things differently, to think and act differently than *the rest of the world who does not know Him*. To repent and return to *what we are called to*.

Scripture makes it very clear that we are currently living in a world that is *fallen* because of sin. It calls *Satan* repeatedly its “prince”, “ruler” or even its “god”. (Compare John 12:31, 16:11, 2Cor 4:4)

Jesus Himself declares: **“My kingdom is not of this world”** (John 18:36). And *even us* God has rescued **“from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.”** (Col 1:13 NIV, also for *all further bible quotes*, if not stated differently)

All this shows that there is a *deep, fundamental conflict* between *the kingdom of God* and *the kingdom of the world*, which are *irreconcilably* confronting each other.

In the Bible this contrast is also reflected in two cities:

On the one hand, *Jerusalem*, the holy city of God, the city of peace.

And on the other hand, *Babylon*, the city of men who proudly raise themselves to the place of God. Who say: It is *us* and we *do not need a god!* *Whose character* is expressed from the beginning in the *ambitious desire to build a tower that reaches up to heaven, in order to make a name for themselves* **“lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”** (Gen 11:4 ESV) Wherein *the endless greed* and *the ambition for ever more* becomes apparent, of which *the world today* is as full as never before. A pursuit of unity and peace, but on a *wrong foundation without or even against God*.

The name “*Babylon*” literally means “*confusion*”, which *likewise* could not better describe today’s world, where one is exposed to a constant “onslaught” of *distraction, advertising, consumption, entertainment and various temptation*.

We see *quite practically and currently* how God is increasingly excluded from *politics* (confer Psalm 2), which, however, can only *go astray* without a healthy subordination to Him and His Word.

Even *theology* is radically subordinated to *human reason* in the name of the “Enlightenment”; whereby *the proud, own wisdom* replaces *the humble submission to God’s word*.

But if we exclude *God, the source of all good*, from our society, then generally *nothing good* can come of it. Because *sin* will always continue to produce *still more sin*, until it reaches a point where it gives birth to death. (Confer James 1:15) Unfortunately, we are currently moving *exactly towards this* in many areas. Where, *for example in entertainment, libertine sexuality, pornography, etc.*, the *creature* is worshiped, not *the Creator* (confer Rom 1:25ff.); where *fornication* is declared more and more as *the norm* and is even proudly celebrated; where *in hundreds of thousands of cases* even *unborn life* is “sacrificed” *on the altar of false worship* to our “*present idols*” such as “*our own will, our freedom and material/financial prosperity*”. Which are *the things* that are *most important* to us, that *we are living for*, that *shape our behavior and our decisions*. That *replace God* for many of us.

In the last book of the Bible, God *calls out to His people* in the light of *this Babylon*, that is, *this sinful system*:

“‘Come out of her, my people,’ so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.” (Rev 18: 4f.)

In the following, I will illustrate the three points that God gave me to *realize* in the said night; regarding where “Babylon” also has a grip on *us* and what this “coming out” means for us *in concrete terms*:

1. God or the ego on the throne?

The first aspect is *the pride, the self-exaltation, and self-centeredness* that our society is *full of* today, and by which *likewise the body of Christ* is influenced. This *unbiblical understanding* that *I - instead of God - am* in the center of everything and that everything has to serve *me*.

What keeps us from *really surrendering our lives completely to HIM and concretely submitting to His perfect leadership*, which is *fundamental* to entering into *His kingdom*.

However, as long as *our ego* rules, that is, *the patterns of our old man*, we resist God's offer to *renew us in our thinking, determine us, and fill us with His Spirit*. And our life produces *the same fruit as that of the rest of the fallen world*; as James explains:

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You (...) do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God?”
(James 4: 1-4)

It is crucial for us *to understand here* that any preference of *own rule over our life, based on merely own wisdom*, is still consequence of our fallen state. Where once, in the Garden of Eden, *we humans* began to choose *distrust, own knowledge* and *independence*, rather than *“humility, trust* and *relationship with God”* as we had *originally* done. When the serpent whispered to Eve:

“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.” (Gen 3: 5f.)

This, however, continues to this day, where *we too* are likewise still in danger of *facing a wrong counterpart instead of God* and listening to his corrupt voice; where *we too* are manifoldly tempted to this moment by *lust* and *own wisdom that distrusts God*.

There is a battle raging *also within us* between “spirit” and “flesh”, whereby we *either* listen to *God's Spirit* or to *our flesh*, which opens the door *wide* to the enemy, who wants to keep us bound by *lies and sin*.

**“For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other (...)
Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”**
(Gal 5:17; 6:7f.)

The truth is: We just cannot love *both* at the same time *God* and *the ways of this fallen world*, which totally resist Him.

Just as John writes: **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”** (1 John 2: 15-17) - Whereby *the same sinful patterns in us, marked by the Fall*, are once again demonstrated.

For *God* and *His ways* are *so different*: Before Him *humility* is great, as well as *mindful listening to Him*; not *pride* and *own, soulish, ultimately demonic wisdom*, which James *sharply* distinguishes from *God's*.

Questioning: **“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”** (James 3: 13-17)

Our society is deeply influenced by this *own wisdom*; this *humanism*, in which *man* and *not God* is in the center of everything and decides what is good and evil, right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate.

It thereby does not penetrate *religion* any less, where we are *likewise* in danger of being solely under the gaze of *people* when it comes to evaluating things and making decisions. To fulfill the requirements of the *religious system*, rather than those of the *Word of God*.

Jesus even asks, **“how can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”** (Jn 5:44) By which He shows how much *faith* has to do with *fearing God and not men*; to “kneel” before *Him* and not *people* and *their expectations*.

Also *leadership* is *so completely different* with God! In the world, it is characterized by *domination and control*, while Jesus has set us an example of *great freedom, humility* and *“coaching through one's own example”*. **“Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors.**

But you are *not* to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Lk 22: 25-30)

It testifies to the difference of *how He lived* and also *calls us to live, equal to Him*: To know *how much* we have been given, *how great* our calling is, but as a result thereof *not to raise ourselves*, but on the contrary: To let go of everything and to *serve others in own humiliation!*

So, *in general*, we should always look to **Yeshua**, what *He* is like; what *His nature* is! - Which is *just the complete opposite* of that of the ruler of this world, who, *full of arrogance, in endless striving for self-exaltation*, says in his heart: **“I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God”** (Is 14:13)

Whereas *one of the few things that Jesus says about Himself and His character* is: **“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart”**. (Mt 11:29)

His gentleness and humility are thereby *not something sentimental*, but are shown *very concretely* in the way He lived:

If there has ever been a man who would have had *every right* to fulfill *his own good plans*, who would have been *wise and holy enough* to do that, then it was *Jesus*.

BUT *even HE* consciously chose *the dependence on the Father* instead. Chose *voluntarily out of love* to completely subordinate to *HIM*.

Even HE, the Son of God, testified: **“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”** (Jn 5:19).

“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.” (Jn 6:38)

“The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.” (Jn 14:10).

It was *“His food”*, *that what He lived for and what satisfied Him*, to do the will of the Father. (Cf. Jn 4:34)

Yes, it was *much more* than a *mere prayer* that He prayed back then in the garden of Gethsemane, when He said, **“not my will, but yours be done.”** (Lk 22:42) - It was *His life motto!*

Which, however, *by its nature*, applies to us as *His successors as well!*
“Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Lk 9:23).

But let us *first* understand: If *even Jesus, the perfect man*, chose this absolute devotion to the Father, ***how much more*** do *we* need to do it? *How much less* should we then go our own ways and consider ourselves wise in our own eyes? *How much more* do we need Him, His life, His wisdom, His power and ability? *How much more appropriate* is it for us *redeemed sinners* to humble ourselves, forgive and wash one another's feet?

Let us understand *how infinitely important* this is for us, that we perceive *Him and His nature*; that we are *made equal* to our Lord. That we receive *His character*, let us be shaped and determined by it. That we increasingly *look like, smell like* Jesus! - And *not* like the people full of the “pride of life” that are shaped by *the world and its ruler*.

It is *precisely that* which is God's highest goal for us, to become *uniform to Him*, ever more *like Him*; wherein at the same time *God's power* is manifested in us!

It has to do with *worship and adoration* to allow this *transformation process* in us. As well as with *believing that we are who He says we are*; with *faith* that He is in control, set above all authority and power; that in the end *He* will *judge* and change things forever:

“For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Lk 14:11)

“The Lord tears down the house of the proud, but he sets the widow's boundary stones in place.” (Pr 15:25)

For **“the Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”** (Prov 16:5)

It reflects the “cross”-culture, where simply everything is *different* with God than in the world:

Where you *gain* your life by *losing* it and *dying to your ego*. (Cf. Mk 8,35)
Where you are *strong* when you are *weak* and do not trust in your *own strength*. (Cf. 2Cor 12:10)

Where You receive *honor* by *humbling* Yourself.

(Cf. Lk 14:11)

Where You are *first* when you make yourself *last* and *serve* everyone.

(Cf. Mk 9,35)

You *win* everything by *letting go* of everything and giving it away.

(Cf. Mt 13: 45f; Mk 10,21; Lk 14,33)

Where You are *truly free* by being a *slave of Christ*.

(Cf. John 8:36, Matt 11: 29f.)

Nevertheless, we can never really change us deep inside *by ourselves!*

The solution and the path to change is always *gazing at Yeshua!*

We have to be *born again*, because our old man is not reparable!

We have to *die* with Jesus and *arise* as a new creation.

Implement this life-commitment on a daily basis and let *our soul - our thinking, feeling and willing* - be renewed just as much as *our spirit*.

- What is possible *only* in the *devotion to God!* In *remaining before Him*, where our thinking is being renewed in His presence and we can grasp His will *more and more clearly*.

Wherefore Paul gives us *the “practical guide”*, telling:

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”(Rom 12:1f.)

It takes *humility* to do this. To really *stay* before God *like a sacrifice on the altar* and *not* break out again at the first opportunity and continue our own way. But still, we can *trust Him* and dare to do it, for *one reason*, as Paul assures above: Because *He is good!! Empathetic and compassionate!*

It takes *fear of God, trust and patience* to wait for HIM and do only what He guides us to do; out of *His Spirit* Who is *Holy* - that means *different!*

The *center of it all*, what *matters* to God *out of love for us*, is this change of dominion: That no longer *our EGO* is on the throne of our heart and life, but *God!* That no longer *our thinking and willing* (keyword: “*but I think...*”, “*but I want...*”) determines us, but *His Holy Spirit*; Who will determine us *all the more*, the emptier we get of *our old SELF*.

This *change of dominion* is a crucial component of true conversion and true Christian life. It means, however, that henceforth *He is in control, not us!*

That we walk by **faith** and *not* by **sight and control**. That we are **dependent** on *Him* and not on *our own wisdom, our feelings and carnal will*.

This is undoubtedly a lasting challenge and certainly not always easy; surely time and again *a narrow door* through which we have to go, *a narrow path* on which we walk; on which, however, *through patience and perseverance*, we also *prove ourselves* and ultimately *overcome!* *Receive an eternal reward*, compared to which *all this* not even closely carries weight!

Because God means *only well* for us! He wants nothing but *our best!*

Yes, He is a perfect leader, Whose thoughts and plans for us are *even way better* than *our own ones* could ever be.

In general, *the happiest people at all* are *almost always* those who *do not constantly revolve around themselves, being warped inside themselves*, but who *look away from themselves*, towards *Jesus and others!*

Truly, it is *now* time to enter into the high calling that we have! Whose lives are not our own, but *His*, Who has bought us at a high price and has made us “**to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God**”. (Rev 5:10)

However, before *the high priest* back then could even *enter into the holy of holies* and intercede for *other people*, he *first of all* had to sacrifice a bull for *himself*. (Compare Num 16: 6,11)

So, in a figurative way, *we too* can only enter deeper into the sanctuary and fulfill our priestly calling if we “*slaughter*” *the “bull within us”* (which is even a bigger thing to do than the “*lamb*” afterwards *when we serve!*); die to this *bull-nature*, characterizes by *selfish will, lust, stubbornness, narrow-mindedness, hardness, impenitence, bossiness, accusation*, and finally again *pride!*

In the end, *the basic question* remains always:

“Do I trust God?”

“Do I really *concretely believe in His love and goodness* and act accordingly?”

If so, then I can actually *let Him enter into every part of my life*, let Him *rule over all my decisions*, as well as over all aspects of my *everyday life*; even those which are often still *highly competitive*, like the following *second point*.

2. Ruled by God or Mammon?

“Money rules the world” they say, and *unfortunately* there is a lot of truth in it actually. Again, *even concerning the body of the Messiah*, where money often times *likewise* still occupies a place that is simply *far too high for it* and that actually belongs to *God alone!*

For money (and material things) should *serve us* and not *rule us*; what it nevertheless *does*, if it has *too high a place for us*, if we make it a main source of our security and fulfillment, if we “serve” it and it binds us. Similar to *Jesus saying*: “**Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.**” (Jn 8:34).

In general terms, we *already now* begin to see *to some extent* the curse of “*mammon*” *being master*, for *one example only* in *health care*, when a doctor works *more for his own earnings* than *for the well-being of the patient* and *what really serves him*.

Nonetheless, these *selfish, anxiously grubbing, greedy patterns* are hidden *also within us* to some extent.

Which is why God wants to liberate *His saints, sanctified in the Messiah*, that we simply increasingly *trust Him completely* in this area *too*, and we do not let it become a reason for us to *distrust Him* to a certain extent, shut ourselves up from Him and separate ourselves from Him. Let it thus become an obstacle that prevents us from *fully entering into His kingdom!*

He wants to free us from *paralyzing anxiety* and *own control* in an *orphan-spirit*, which makes us believe that there is no FATHER; which believes the lie that *we would be lost* without own control; that *in the end* we would always *stand alone* and that *nobody* would help us but *we ourselves*.

But the truth is: *There is* a living, powerful God! El Shaddai, Who is a *Provider*. A loving Father, a good Shepherd, who is capable and willing to give everything needed, not only to the *birds and flowers*, but *still incomparably more to His children*; as Jesus admonishes *all of us, who are often likewise still* “*of so little faith*”:

“**Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, (...) what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no**

thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Lk 12: 22-34)

I may testify myself *how true* it is that God is *absolutely faithful* in caring for His children who follow Him by faith and serve Him as obedient as they can. Whose heart has been freed to be set on the *eternally significant treasures*, since it is continually experiencing: *It is true*, in deed God somehow adds also *the other things* to us, as impossible as it may sometimes *seem at first!!*

How different *Jesus' view of money* is and how *He* advises us to deal with it is further shown in the parable of the “Shrewd Manager” (compare Lk 16), who knows that his time is only *very limited* and therefore begins to use *what is handed over to him for the moment* to make himself *friends for eternity*, by discounting people’s debts.

This however, Jesus takes as *a model for us*, how to deal with money!

- Oh, how different is *His wisdom* and *His righteousness* compared to the one of *the world* and *the mammon!* What *low estimate of money by itself* He advises us to have! While yet, recognizing the high value of *using it now cleverly* and *giving it away!*

He makes it clear that *we too*, as “**foreigners and strangers on earth**” (*Heb 11:13*), should consider ourselves as stewards of a **strange, non-permanent good**, by which God tests our hearts and will judge us accordingly.

By which is only revealed whether we are faithful, reliable, and capable of Him entrusting us with *incomparably more* in His eternal kingdom.

When Jesus explains: “**The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.**

I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?

“**No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.**

You cannot serve both God and money.” (Luke 16: 8-13)

I think that most of us *out of the flesh* usually still want *both of it* and think that *we personally* could actually *manage this balancing act* to serve *both*

in a certain compromise.

But Jesus means it *just as He says it*. For as long as *the things of the world* rule us and money is our “Lord” to some extent, we are never free to trust God *completely* and to serve Him freely *with everything we have*.

Money and material things thereby always have *something binding* about them.

Everything we possess demands a certain amount of *attention* from us and takes *at least some possession* of us. It thereby inevitably also keeps us from giving God *so much more time, lifeblood and trust*.

Not least because of this Jesus even says:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. (...) But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.” (Lk 6: 20,24)

God's kingdom is just so *twisted!*

Yes, **“the wisdom of this world is (quite often) foolishness in God’s sight.”** (1Cor 3:19)

Jesus even warns us against paying too much attention to *provision!* - Which is pretty much against *everything* that we are taught from an early age and what thus appears to us as *the most reasonable and responsible thing to do!* But Jesus **“said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;”** and subsequently tells them of a man who had made a great profit and thereafter said to himself, **“This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.””** (Lk 12: 15-19)

What *bigger and more desirable goal* is there in the world than *exactly that:* To have acquired a good pension and to finally be able to say to oneself: *Now enjoy life.*

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” (Lk 12: 20f.)

It is this *selfish, greedy amassing purely for us personally* that keeps us from pouring ourselves out for a greater goal and gathering treasures that *remain*. Paul even refers to this *pursuit of money and material things* as *“idolatry”* and says:

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” (Col 3:5)

And it is indeed necessary to recognize this *hidden danger of the love of money*, which is in truth a door to *so much evil*, as Paul *elsewhere* speaks about *certain servants of God*, who *already back then* proclaimed a kind of “prosperity gospel” and **“who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”** (1Timothy 6: 5-10)

It shows *the greatly underestimated danger* of what Jesus calls *“the thorns in the field”*:

“the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things” (Mk 4:19), which are pressing *likewise on us*, threaten to choke the seed of the Word of God, and *not rarely* prevent us from *bearing fruit* for the kingdom of God.

Even for *a whole society* this *proud and self-centered “well-being mentality”*, combined with *despising the poor*, can become *deeply fatal* and cause God's judgment, as He speaks:

“Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.” (Ez 16:49)

Although we do not usually have the poor *right under our noses*, yet, it are *many* who produce for us *our clothing, food, building materials, etc.* under profoundly inhumane, exploitative conditions; at what *the holy, righteous God* is *far less indifferent* than most of us usually are.

James even warns *the last generation*: **“Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you**

failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.” (James 5: 1-5)

These words are hard, but they make us aware of *the seriousness of all these things*.

The way we deal with money is thereby basically *nothing else than a natural way to show love*; which reveals *very practically, whether we love, or not*.

Because: **“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”** (1Jn 3:17f.)

“For God loves a cheerful giver.” (2Cor 9:7) ... Because *He Himself is exactly that!*

And He rejoices dearly when His children *perceive His nature, believe His truth, pursue His ways and grow into His likeness!*

In the end, everything comes down to *one thing*:

Who is *“lord” over us and our lives*.

In the “Kingdom of God”, already *the name* indicates that *God alone* is King and Lord there and wants to be the same *for us too* - for *our own well-being and greatest blessing!*

That is why He invites us to *trust* Him and His goodness *in just everything, even in the area of finance!* (Not because He wants our money - *oh, how ridiculous and devilishly twisted is this thought* - but because He wants *simply nothing* to stand between us.)

For if we **do not do this**, we **distrust** Him, we **close ourselves up** before Him to some degree and detach from Him in a way that is not good!

This is *another reason* why Jesus explains *how difficult* it is for the rich to *enter the kingdom of God at all* (compare Matt 19: 23f.), As they always tend to have **reservations** about doing God's will **completely**, even with their finances.

But Jesus wants *all of us* to come into *true freedom* in *this important area* too; because it is the yearning of the Father that, *according to His Kingdom which will last forever*, we will *already now* learn and walk **its ways**.

Which have to do with **receiving freely** and **giving freely** according to His

guidance. - *Because we trust Him!* - Not only with *our eternal salvation*, but also for *our present provision*.

So that we get involved in *this wonderful principle, this wonderful circuit* that actually *works!* Because *He is God, Who knows what He does, is capable and absolutely faithful*. Whereas His kingdom will *still* manifest *all the more* the more *each member* gets completely involved in it and *Jesus' body* really *does* what *its head* wants and guides it to do.

For us, this means walking by **faith**, not by **own control**; in **positive dependence** on God, *as Jesus already lived it like no other*, and not in **unhealthy, harmful, ultimately destructive detachment** from God.

Thereby He just wants to *completely change our thinking* and lead us into a *fundamental change of principles*. Because:

The *righteousness of the world* says: “I *give to receive* something for it!”

It is characterized by **calculation** and **control**.

The *righteousness of God*, on the other hand, says: “Everything has been given and will be given to you, so that *you too* can and should be willing to give everything!” *In complete contrast to the above pattern*, it is characterized by **trust** (connected with **obedience**) and **freedom**.

But *right into there* our Father wants to lead us. Because He loves us and wants to give us *everything* with Jesus! (Cf. Rom 8:32)

The *vanishingly small price in comparison to that* is just *our whole life*, which we no longer withhold from Him, but open to Him and confidently allow His perfect rule in it.

3. Dominated by God or by our sexual desire?

The *third point*, finally, that God has shown me, where He is *so passionate* about us to surrender our lives *concretely also in this area* and where He desires His people to be *so completely different* from the rest of the world, has to do with our *dealing with sexuality*.

We live in a time where *the temptation to sin* and *the general acceptance of it* is maybe greater than *ever before!* Fornication, *roughly speaking sexuality outside of marriage between a man and a woman*, adultery and even *child murder in one's own womb* have almost become *the rule*. - To the intangible grief of God. Not only in *pornography, which is already so widespread*

among children, the excessive contempt for God's instruction *not to desire the wife of one's neighbor* culminates today.

However, *even back then already*, Jesus made it clear that *living holy and according to God's standards* will be a *challenging fight* for us, and that all of this is about a *life-and-death issue*, when He speaks:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.” (Mt 5: 27-29)

Even if *the world and the carnal church, which preferably would like to dismiss God's instruction as outdated*, do not want to hear it and *in inner rebellion* **“band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, “Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.”** *God's word stands!* And, according to Jesus, **“it is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law. “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”** (Luke 16: 17f.)

These clear words of our Lord only show *how important* this topic is to God and *how much* we are challenged in our time.

Still, we *never* manage to change ourselves enough *by our own strength*; but the solution is *coming to HIM!* The *dying of our old man* and *living as a new creation*. To let ourselves be changed deep within *by constantly looking at Him*. So that we become *more similar to HIM* and consequently *less similar to the world*.

Change is *only ever possible in the power of His Spirit*, but nevertheless, it also requires an **active part from us!** That we are willing to *cooperate* with His grace, do not turn away from *worshipping Him* and *fill ourselves with His Word*, which will produce in us *the desire and the ability* to simply *be like Him: Holy*. As He says, **“consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.”** (Lev 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16)

The key to this is *once again* only this:
To recognize **who we are** in Jesus and what an *immensely high calling* is given to us by a holy God.

As Paul explains: **“But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”** (1Cor 6: 17-20)

And truly, *we too* have been *bought expensively* by Jesus, to be *holy to Him* and *among all nations* **“his people, his treasured possession.”** (Deut 7:6)
Let us understand, **“dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”** (1Jn 3:2)

We may now know: **Yeshua** is the way! *In Him, in gazing at Him, in the loving communion with Him and abiding in Him* we are changed!
This, in turn, requires - *as in any relationship in which we want to grow* - our decision to say **no** to *many other, non-beneficial things*; and to concretely take the time for Him Personally, *e.g. in silent, listening prayer*, and for His word.

As *children of the Most High* and *heirs of His eternal kingdom*, we can always know: *We are not missing anything!* We have got *the whole fullness of God* in Jesus! (Cf. Col 2:9) So that in this *vanishingly short time*, we can confidently leave so many things aside for the moment, to look at *Someone Greater* and to care for the *eternally important things*; because *momentarily* there is simply still *a race to run* and *a fight to fight*. Which, however, will be *infinitely profitable!*

More than anything else in the reward that we have *in God or Yeshua Himself, through Whom* and *for Whom* everything is created. To Whom *everything, even all our longing*, only *points to* in the end; in Whom is *our highest fulfillment* and *everything yet* to be satisfied in the deepest.

Yeshua is *The Groom!* Every love story in the world is just a *reflection* of what *God, the author of Love, Who is it Himself*, will bring about in full reality: *The greatest wedding of all time*.

HE comes! HE is *glorious!* And He's wooing for you now. For your heart. For **your love** that is *real*, just as *His is*, which *He* has already proved to us.