

Among the first Christians

Book 19

Max Seltmann

Recommended chronological reading list:

(with regard to Jesus' life in flesh and Spirit, up to the time of the book of Revelation. All books are written by **Max Seltmann**, unless otherwise indicated. The book marked with **bold**, is the book currently opened.)

1. Childhood years of Jesus (Jakob Lorber)
2. Book 1 – John the Baptist
3. Book 2 – John the Apostle in his youth with Jesus (Love overcomes Part 1)
4. Book 3 – Jesus' Life
5. Book 4 – Jesus' Life
6. Book 5 – Jesus' Life
7. Book 6 – Jesus' Life
8. Book 7 – Jesus' Life
9. Book 8 – Jesus' Life
10. Book 9 – Jesus prepares for His ministry Part 1
11. Book 10 – Jesus prepares for His ministry Part 2
12. Great Gospel of John, Volumes 1 – 10 (Jakob Lorber)
13. Great Gospel of John, Volume 11 (Leopoldt Engel)
14. Book 11 - Good Friday
15. Book 12 - Judas Iscariot in the beyond
16. Book 13 - On the road to Emmaus
17. Book 14 - The Risen One!
18. Book 15 - The New Life in man
19. Book 16 – At Bethany – story of Theophilus
20. Book 17 - Ascension
21. Book 18 - Pentecost!
- 22. Book 19 - Among the first Christians**
23. Book 20 - Divine guidance of the first Christians
24. Book 21 - The chamberlain from the Orient
25. Book 22 - The God-spark and Saul's conversion
26. Book 23 - Awakening the Divine life
27. Book 24 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 1
28. Book 25 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 2
29. Book 26 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 3
30. Book 27 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 4
31. Book 28 - Naeme
32. Book 29 - John the Apostle as a guide (Love overcomes Part 2)
33. Book 30 - John the Apostle as a guide (Love overcomes Part 3)

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1. The raid

It was past midnight - in the firmament, the stars shone in full splendor, and the earth was filled with the delicious fragrance given by flowers and bushes.

A bent old man hurried through the night with panting breath. What did he care about the beauties of sleeping nature. He believed he was being pursued! For hours he strove forward and tired and weary he prayed again and again to his Redeemer as the only Savior: "Oh Jesus! You merciful one! Give me only so much strength that I may reach my goal." At last he had reached it; with loud thumping he awakened the inhabitants; and when he faced his friend, weary, the latter asked in amazement: "Oh Father Eusebius, you here in, the night, what is the meaning of this?"

"Let me rest" - sighed the old man - "only then can I tell you of the great distress and sorrow that has so cruelly assailed us."

Bernhart, a tall, strongly built man, carefully led the weary man to a comfortable place in the house and spoke comfortingly: "Be welcome with us, in the name of the Lord! Whatever heavy thing you carry on your heart, I am glad to help, as far as it is in my strength!"

"Brother in the Lord! I thank you for your loving word" - Eusebius answered him - "but we are truly hard to help. My two sons and my daughter Ruth have been carried away as prisoners by the temple henchmen with brute force, and I too am being persecuted by them."

The family was horrified to hear this sad news, but then Bernhart recovered his courage and said: "Oh brother, where all human help seems hopeless, the Lord can still work miracles! Let us ask Him for advice and instruction, then this difficult trial will also pass, and we may only praise and glorify the Lord even more."

The old man straightened up: "Oh friend, you know that I do not easily become discouraged, and so even today I firmly believe and hope in the grace of our Lord and God and the infinite love of Jesus in all my distress! But what shall I do? - how to help my poor children? How long am I to endure this bitterest uncertainty? Oh how hopeless all this looks today!"

Bernhart tried to get a clear thought and began: "Oh Father Eusebius, you know that the Lord can only be with those who give full credence to His holy words and have complete trust in His love and omnipotence. But if our faith becomes weak, we strengthen the enemy!"

You know that Peter was once freed from the deepest dungeon. (*Acts 12:6-8). Will not your children also have to prove themselves in the strong faith in Jesus' saving power now? But first become calm, that we may place ourselves wholly in the presence and under the protection of our holy God - and then tell. In the meantime, my wife will prepare a morning meal for us."

And so the old father Eusebius told the friends: "Yesterday, a caravan passed by our house and the leader imperiously demanded water from us in larger quantities. Without mistrust, we gave them some of our precious water - but they also demanded bread and

vegetables, which I had to refuse because of our small supply. Then they got rough, there was a loud exchange of words, and the guards entered the house curiously.

My children, who were standing with me, approached the wagon, from which wailing laments could be heard. They saw many prisoners, tied miserably by hands and feet with ropes, and learned that they were fellow believers. Naturally they became excited, they wanted to help, and since the unfortunates were unattended, they at least wanted to ease their situation a little. One of the guards noticed this and uttered loud cries of warning. A fierce scuffle ensued with the armed guards and in a short time, my two sons lay wounded and senseless on the ground.

When Ruth wanted to make an effort for her brothers, she too was bound by the guards and thrown into a wagon, and so were my sons, and when I threateningly confronted them, they also tried to overpower me. Only with cunning was I able to get to safety, as the leader suddenly wanted to leave in a hurry. "But we'll make up for what we didn't succeed in doing today," they shouted into my hiding place and drove off in the direction of Hazor.

When at last all danger seemed over, I locked my house and hurried the long way to you. Oh Bernhart, now I seek comfort and help from you."

"Strengthen yourself, old father" - said the latter, shaken - "I have powerful Roman friends, with their help I shall surely force the release of your children."

2. Ruth's trust in God

The caravan of eight wagons, harnessed with mules, had cumbersomely started to move again. To each wagon belonged a driver and a guard, in addition some armed men followed at the end. The owner of this caravan was Elim, a greedy Jew, who was hired by the temple council to secretly bring this transport of prisoners to Sidon, under the supervision of the fanatical priest Assir.

In the evening, when the animals were visibly fatigued on the difficult road, Elim urged them to camp, but Assir wanted to go forward; he feared that the captive children of old Eusebius, whom he knew, might still cause him inconvenience.

At last the tents were pitched in an outlying grove and fires were lit. The tight fetters on the hands and feet of the prisoners were loosened somewhat and they were given a thin soup with dry bread.

Ruth requested to see her brothers, which Assir granted. Deeply distressed, she knelt by the bound wounded and asked for water. Joseph had a deep wound on his shoulder, while Joram could not move his right arm at all and felt great pain.

"Do not complain" - Ruth comforted - "for our need is also the Lord's need, and our lot is entirely in the Almighty's hand. Jesus alone can be our Savior. He will find ways and means for our deliverance. But in order to be able to obey His instructions at the right moment, you must also become full of hope and courage!"

She now received the water, and soon the wounds were cleansed, but could not be bandaged because there was no linen to be had. That night, Ruth was allowed to stay with her brothers; with deep sorrow in her heart, she remembered her caring father, and so she prayed unceasingly to her Jesus, the great Savior in all the needs of her heart.

Toward morning, the camp was bustling with life; Ruth wanted to get water, but the guard barred her from going out, as the chief leader had strictly forbidden it. "There is a new danger looming" - Joram said to Joseph - "and we are defenseless against these devilries."

"Do not remind me of my impotence" - Joseph replied despondently - "I would most like to die!"

But Ruth earnestly objected - "I cannot believe that you want to die already! How can the Lord begin to help us? I am indeed very sad, but I cannot despair, for we are never completely abandoned! And how vivid before me is the grace of God which we have been privileged to experience through the apostle Peter!"

"Oh Ruth" - said Joram - "to lie here bound, to know you here so defenseless, and to be ignorant of father's fate, makes my heart cramp and despondent."

"Do not worry about me" - Ruth answered strongly - "my great hope is based on the Risen Lord, who is so eager to help anyone who is suffering, if only he turns to Him in supplication and faith!"

A guard asked the girl to leave the tent now, but Ruth declared that she wanted to stay with the sick brothers. He then grabbed her hard by the arm and pulled her out. The

brothers looked after her in horror. Joseph groaned loudly. Joram wanted to go out, but the guard asked harshly: "Where to? - no order has yet been given to leave the tents!"

"Friend, I know you are only doing your duty here because you are in the service of the temple" - Joram replied sternly - "but you will not be forbidden to get some linen for my sick brother. The whole arm looks black and brown, even though the wound is on the shoulder."

"Let me see" - said the guard - "I am somewhat knowledgeable in wound treatment!" Then he said confidently: "The wound is not dangerous, in a few days the arm will be healed. You should not have minded our business, then nothing would have happened to you."

Ruth was taken to a tent where three young Christian women, completely broken in spirit, were still huddled on the ground. Full of compassion, she asked these poor people, "Why are you trapped here?"

Hesitantly, one replied: "Why are we here? We do not know! Only that we took part in the silent meetings of the Nazarenes is punished by the temple as a crime against the law, and all are guilty of death who agree with the new faith."

"So you are Christians" - Ruth said, and asked in amazement: "Do you not believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can save you from this terrible situation?"

"We no longer believe in salvation, for then Christ would have had to free us while we were in prison, when we prayed so much" - the speaker replied - "because of all the maltreatment we have endured, life has no value for us now."

Ruth looked at the three of them seriously, then said sorrowfully: "You must have had a bad school to think of your lives in such a trivial way! Although the prospects of salvation are small for me too, I dare not think small of my life. For it must be something great - our life on earth - otherwise the Savior Jesus would not have taken upon Himself the death of the cross for our salvation. But how can God help you if you have given up on yourselves? As long as a breath lives in me, I will hope and not stop believing in His glorious help."

Then one of them asked: "How long have you been in this company, and why are you here?"

Ruth answered: "Since yesterday, because I and my brothers wanted to free you!"

"Then you do not yet know what awaits us" - spoke the same one again - "but that you may become acquainted with the thought, let me tell you: because we are young and of respectable stature, we, like the young men, are sold, and know not into whose hands we fall!"

"Nevertheless, I believe" - Ruth answered boldly - "that the Lord will yet bring everything to a good end! But we must be careful to preserve our health so that we can remain resilient at all times."

3. The suffering of prisoners

A horn call sounded out in the camp. One of the prisoners explained: "Now we'll have another thin soup and a piece of dry bread; in the meantime, the tents will be loaded and we'll be tied up again so we won't escape."

The guards led 40 prisoners, including ten young women, to the center of the camp to eat. Ruth realized with shock that all these Christians actually had no will to live; how dully they moved; yet how greedily they devoured their bread!

"It is time to shake them up!" - Ruth decided; she too was hungry, but she first prayed aloud: "Lord and God! You see our need and want to test us to see if we are worthy of Your love and grace! So strengthen us with this food, that it may become strength in us and that we may stand firm until You make us free and glad again! Amen!"

Then she calmly drank her soup - and already the guards came and dragged the helpless people to the wagons. Ruth went along willingly, saying to herself: "Resistance is useless here - a waste of strength; I must remain clear, so that I may recognize the approaching help of the Lord!"

The distribution on the wagons was better today, but the bonds were the same as the day before. The area around was deserted and completely undeveloped, therefore the wagons were left open, a benefit for the prisoners, who, however, showed no sense for the peculiarity of nature.

Ruth was different. She carefully memorized the area and thought about how she could gain the freedom she longed for. At first she had tried to talk to the women, but her fellow sufferers were also too exhausted externally. Therefore, she made her Savior her only confidant and prayed silently in her heart: "Oh Jesus, how difficult they make it for You to help them! And how easy it would be for You to help us, if we would all be more attentive to Your instructions! It is very bitter to pass this test in trust in God, but the more glorious will be the solution that You will surely bring for all of us! Therefore strengthen me and all these unfortunates, for Your glory's sake!"

The sun burned hotly; the agonies grew greater, and even the companions seemed to grow dull and listless. Ruth alone resisted this weakness with all the thoughts at her command, as if her salvation and that of her brothers depended on it. At last came mountainous country, overgrown with hardwoods, and in the shade of mighty trees, a halt was made.

A new process began in Ruth's soul, she became more and more active and said to herself: If any salvation is possible, I must contribute to it! And she realized: "What I now feel as a new strength in me, must be a consequence of the weakness of my enemies. They will probably make only a short stay here and then try to get out of the country quickly."

And so it was, for in haste they set out again, and not even the bonds loosened for eating were made tighter. Ruth might have been able to free herself-she did not; the guards were to be lulled into peace of mind.

The way became more difficult, then they came into the mountains. On the left and on the right, high rocks were overgrown with low trees. When Ruth could no longer keep a

lookout all around, she now observed the guards and noticed that they were still walking behind the wagons in their lazy way; she did not see the two drivers. With much difficulty she managed to cut off a narrow hem of her dress and throw it on a tree branch. Then she watched to see if the guards noticed it. Seconds became minutes for her - will she succeed or not, her heart trembled; in any case, Jesus can bless my doing! Finally all the guards had passed - no one had noticed! After that a fatigue also came over her, she forgot her environment and struggled in her mind to muster up new power, because she suspected danger and wanted to be armed!

Progress became slower and more laborious - the hours crept by; at last, at a suitable place, a halt was made and the same process as the night before was repeated. Ruth was fetched by a guard to the leader, Assir. She went along voluntarily, because she wanted clarity about it: What will become of us? A small tent was erected in front of his wagon and Ruth was pushed into it.

Sitting on a box, Assir awaited the girl and began: "I have sent for you to speak with you, so that you may be clear about your future destiny. You were seized together with your brothers when you were trespassing on other people's property, and according to the law, you have become a slave to us. But I want to show mercy before justice and not destroy your future and that of your brothers; but it depends on whether you are willing to fulfill the conditions and respond to my wishes."

Proudly Ruth answered: "Is it also the law that I should answer you bound? And what shall my performance be? We have not trespassed against your property, since these captives are not yours after all! You have overpowered and robbed them, and as robbers you have also entered my father's house and taken us as welcome booty!"

Laughing mockingly, Assir said: "I had thought that your arrogant nature had collapsed and that you would be glad if I offered you a means to return your brothers. Will you then voluntarily be my maid? Otherwise I will force you - as my slave!"

Ruth stared at him speechless - Assir stepped to the tent exit and whistled; a guard came hurriedly and Assir commanded: "Uncover the upper body of this serf of mine!" Ruth cried out, but she could not resist, as her hands were still bound. Assir further commanded: "Get me the younger one from wagon number 2, but bound tightly, for this one is not to be trusted!"

Ruth was cowering in the back of the tent, trembling all over. The brother was brought before the mighty one - proudly he stood before him and with icy looks he looked his tormentor in the face.

"I have also sent for you, as here your sister (at this he lifted the tent), it is now up to you to induce your sister to serve me voluntarily, then you will both regain your freedom! Or I force her as my serf - but you will then be sold."

Joram replied excitedly: "By what right do you command us? And out of what power do you dare to make this request at all? Like criminals you have struck us down and deprived us of our freedom. You, as a willed servant of God, use such ungodly means?"

At that moment, Assir snatched the whip from the guard and mercilessly struck the bound Joram, whose upper body was completely naked as with all such prisoners. Joram, as well as Ruth, cried out loudly - but laughing coldly, the rageful man said: "Now you have experienced a small test on your even more haughty brother - next time you will get it yourself."

Joram had collapsed in pain. Assir went out and ordered the man to be brought back, but this was somewhat difficult, since the unconscious man had to be awakened first. Not wanting to cry out loud when the bloodied Joram was brought back, Joseph bit the tent cloth in impotent rage; he felt at the end of his strength.

Full of fear and terror, Ruth cowered in the corner of the tent. Through this scene of horror she had suddenly forgotten all good intentions - she even forgot the Lord. Flaring up, she thought only of escape to take revenge! But she knew that the camp was always well guarded and that was the only reason why the prisoners were allowed to move around more freely. But none of them showed interest in the hard lot of their fellow sufferers. So from there, no-one would want to help her!

Assir came back from the fire. "Come here!"

he ordered her. Ruth didn't want to - that's when he reached for the whip. But now her pride flared up. She rose, and full of calmness she strode toward him. Assir looked at her - her proud beauty captivated him and so he grabbed the ropes and freed her hands. Then he said slowly but commandingly: "Go to the fire and get the food for me! Whether you get anything, depends on yourself."

She obeyed and only wondered at her calmness, inside all anxiety and fear had suddenly disappeared. The guards were amazed how this beautiful and proud girl went so calmly to the fire where the cauldrons were hanging and requested the food for the leader. She received a bowl full of vegetables and a spoon and brought it to her tormentor. Assir let her taste it, but his eyes did not turn away from her. Then he handed the empty bowl to the waiting girl: "Get your food too, you shall not complain of hunger."

Ruth proudly stood up and spoke in a calm tone: "No! - I will not get any food! And do not think that I am still afraid of your whip, this terror is already over! And if you strike me dead, I shall fear no more!"

"You want to rebel? Girl, I tell you: do not provoke me! Remember, only my will is valid here, and what I want, happens!"

"No!" - said Ruth with firm determination - "as long as I can still think, I am master of my will, and now I take my strength directly from God! Earlier I was weak and deeply frightened - but now the certainty of God's help has come to me and I tell you: You can torture people in your devilish way with satanic means and hound them to death, but I, who am a confessor of the Nazarene, tell you still in the face of death: You will not bring me so far that I will ever doubt Divine assistance."

Laughing derisively, Assir replied: "Well, that would depend on a trial, my daughter."

"And I answer you that not your will, but God's, will determine what is to be done with us!" - boldly and with earnest confidence contradicted the girl.

No longer able to think, Assir grabbed the whip and wanted to pounce on the proud girl. But the girl was faster - and quickly went out of the tent. The guard, not suspecting anything, was pushed aside. Ruth hurried as fast as she could under a wagon and in a few moments, she had disappeared into the forest.

Assir, inflamed with rage, struck the guard and shouted: "Bring the girl back or I'll beat you to death!" But when another guard saw one of them lying on the ground almost as if dead, he took courage and said: "You are not our master, only subject to you! But if you do not

remain reasonable and dare to strike one of us again, then you are no longer our friend and you must expect to be whipped. What you do with the Christians, God will judge, but what you do with us, we will settle with you ourselves!"

At that moment, Assir took a swing and was about to strike, but the guard was quicker and struck him down with his fist, so that Assir fell down senseless. He quickly took the knife and the whip from him, tied him up and said to the others: "Now it is up to us whether we will break the tyrant or he will break us. If you wish, we will deliver him to the authorities as a prisoner, because he has gone far beyond his authority."

When Assir regained consciousness and saw himself bound, he roared with rage, but the guard gave him a push and said sternly: "We have decided to no longer recognize you as our leader, since you treat us, who are like you servants of the temple, as if we were your slaves. What you do to the prisoners, you could do to us, but since you wanted to apply your methods to us as well, you have now become our prisoner. We will hand you over to the next court and we will be able to prove slave desecration, robbery and even attempted murder against you. Therefore we will stay here, send two messengers to Hazor and demand to know what is to become of the caravan with the prisoners."

The bound Assir was pushed onto a cart and all his shouting and screaming found no sympathy. Asa, the stout-hearted guard, went to Elim, the owner of the caravan, and said to him: "Elim, you have just experienced how much tyrants are worth! Will you submit to our leadership, your reward will be yours; admittedly, we have to stay here for 5-6 days until a new leader comes who will carry out the orders entirely in accordance with the supreme temple council. Assir we will hand over to the authorities to be brought to his just punishment, and in this case the temple knows no consideration!"

Elim made no reply, he knew that there was not much to be earned in this transport now, for Assir had assured him of a large extra reward. A new guard service was established, and the lot of all the prisoners was visibly lightened, but no-one could learn the reason. Joseph and Joram received better care, but also the news that their sister had escaped.

4. A mission from the Lord

On this painful day for the prisoners, Cornelius, the captain of the Roman occupation forces in Caesarea, suddenly saw an angel standing before him as he was performing his morning prayers. Cornelius had often had the grace to receive revelations, and now this messenger of God spoke to him: "Cornelius! The Lord has need of you and says to you through me: Prepare some of your people and send them under a faithful servant to Hazor and Kedes. At Hazor they are to intercept three messengers who are going to the chief temple priest to get fresh word about the fate of captured Nazarenes. These messengers are to be held captive until they are willing to show your people the way to this prisoner transport! Then the Nazarenes are to be freed, but the leaders of the caravan you are to judge yourself according to your laws! God's grace and blessings be with you!"

A greeting with the hand - and the angel was gone. But Cornelius said in his heart: "Lord Jesus! You know, I give my life to You, if You wanted to demand it! So be it done, for this commission is entirely in Your will."

Then he went upstairs to his faithful friend Achibald, who never really wanted to accept Christianity, and said to him: "Achibald, today I demand a great service from you! Listen: an angel stood before me and delivered to me a sacred commission from my God to free captive fellow believers whom the temple wants to drive into misery and slavery!"

"Dear Cornelius" - Achibald replied - "this commission is supposed to have been delivered to you by an angel? I doubt very much, but gladly will I serve you, and so determine what shall be done!"

Cornelius now ordered: "Take 20 men, well mounted and equipped, take money for a week, but little food, since you must ride in the greatest haste. Between Hazor and Kedes, intercept three messengers of a death caravan and force them to lead you to the captured Christians. These are to be freed at once; but the leaders you bring here bound for judgment!"

"Dear Cornelius, should all this be truth which your angel has reported to you, then I too will believe in your God Jesus!" - said Achibald, full of wonder.

"So go with God, and His grace be yours" - Cornelius still replied.

When Cornelius returned to his study, he had second thoughts: "Achibald wants to become a true Christian, if everything turns out to be true. But how if I am wrong this time?" Then a tender voice spoke in his heart: "Cornelius, believe, and you will be happy! Your eternal Father is also happy when His child trusts Him. But where there is still doubt, there may also be failure."

"Lord! Forgive me!" - said Cornelius, moved - "I believe Your word and trust in Your grace. And holy be Your revealed will to me."

In scarcely an hour, Achibald reported himself ready to ride off with his people; Cornelius said to them: "Listen, my comrades, the commissioner for this expedition is God, the Eternal! In order to fulfill His will completely, unconditional devotion to this work is required. I know that it will lead to a good success, but the success should cause more than only the consciousness that we have fulfilled our duty! Therefore, may God's blessing rest visibly on all your activity, because I am not the principal, but only the

mediator. So ride in the name of my God, who is also yours! Keep your honor pure and always remember that God has hired you! So be it!"

Achibald gave the order to mount, held up his arm, and like a wind-bird they rushed out of the courtyard. Cornelius, however, blessed them with his right hand: "So ride in the name of Jesus and be carried by His Spirit! That Your name may be glorified, You great and yet so lovely God!"

As long as he could still see his people, he kept his arm raised, then he said to himself: "When we went into battle, I was not so moved as this time! It must be something very great, if one is allowed to carry out something for God.

5. Help arrived

Since the sad events required swift action, all Bernhart's servants were awakened at dawn to quickly feed the horses and then take old Eusebius home again. "For your people must know that, in spite of your misfortune, the state of affairs must be properly managed" - concluded Bernhart, and so the two friends rode with four well-armed servants toward the dawning; day.

Since the stables of old Eusebius were far from the house, his servants could not be of any help to him yesterday, and the maid had immediately fled in fear. "Violence is not to be thought of" - spoke Bernhart - "although I am a Roman citizen. But we can send two servants to Caesarea to Cornelius, the occupation commander, and ask him for protection and assistance in liberating them. Since we assume that the caravan will move to Sidon, we want to reconnoiter in the meantime where they are camped; and since they have only a day's lead, move behind them daily. Then in 6-7 days at the latest, with the help of Cornelius' people, the liberation could be enforced."

Eusebius wanted to ride along, but Bernhart refused, since in his old age he was no longer able to cope with the exertions of the hurried ride. "But in the meantime you can pray and remember us with intercessory love. For if we now pursue this Jewish temple-mob day and night, we will sometimes have no time to pray rightly! And yet we know, without the Lord's help, no real success is possible."

Bernhart now wrote a short letter to Cornelius and inculcated the whole matter into his faithful servant Joel: "Deliver this letter personally, stay overnight only with Roman subjects and do not get involved with any Templars on the way, because you cannot trust any Jew today! The greatest caution is in order here, therefore guard the secret and be a true fighter for the people affected by suffering and misfortune! Brother Dan be your companion. Ride sharply, but provide enough water for the horses."

So they separated; Joel and Dan rode to Caesarea, while Bernhart with the other two servants and two pack horses followed the wagon tracks of the caravan. By noon they had reached the place where they had camped the night before, but they allowed themselves only a short rest here. Then they continued to follow the tracks of the wagons, until in the evening, exhausted, they had to think about rest. The whole area was deserted, almost no vegetation and above all - no water to refill the depleted water supply in the tubes. Bernhart tied the horses to a yoke in military fashion and wrapped a long rope around himself so that the animals could not get away from him.

So the night came, shining stars greeted the earth and wonderful silence surrounded the lonely Bernhart. Once again, he thought about what had happened, then he felt released from all earthly things; it was as if his soul hurried to the One who created heaven and earth to receive a new influx of strength and courage. "Oh Lord Jesus, You my life's longing, how glorious You must be as soon as all separation has departed from us! But how dim our eyes must still be, that we recognize so little of Your glory! I feel You - You are with me! But I must be blind, otherwise I would have to see You, for Your holy hand now touches my hair. Oh You my Jesus! My God and my Lord! Let me look into Your eyes only for a moment, then I am strengthened, and I will always be aware of Your love and grace!"

Then the Lord stood before the supplicant in a white robe and said: "My son! I could not resist your longing request, therefore I have touched you, so that you may see Him to

whom you give your love and trust. Behold, I am present and with all of you! And in all those who live according to My words, My promise shall be fulfilled: that I am in them, and they in Me! Not the earth and all that is on the earth shall be the separating thing, but only a man can cause separation, if his love for the earthly is stronger than for Me! Use My promise rightly, and heaven descends to you and your earth!"

"Lord, what shall I do?" stammered Bernhart.

"Believe Me, and love all truly! My Jesus-Spirit creates redemption and a new life in you! But this Spirit I cannot give you, because He must be born from your faith and your neighborly love! So do according to your love for the sake of your brothers.

The appearance of light had disappeared, but his heart was glad. "Oh my God! Nothing shall hinder me now to follow Your will completely! Yes, let me become a confessor and proclaim Your love and life-giving Spirit to many more!"

Then he felt as if many souls were crowding up to him and were listening to his words of thought - and so he spoke softly: "Oh you invisible beings, did you experience the great grace, how the Lord revealed Himself to me so full of love? If you too are imbued with childlike gratitude, then carry the message further into your spheres, so that the cold breath of evil may dissolve into the will for good! Rejoice with me with all your heart: God loves us! And be concerned for all those who have gone astray, so that salvation may come to them as well!"

Bernhart was restored to his natural state and felt so well and fresh, that they were ready to set off again at daybreak. Progress was now more difficult, since the ground at the foot of the mountain became more rocky. A servant noticed three horsemen coming towards them. Bernhart thought: "They don't look like robbers, nor do they have much baggage, consequently they have not been riding for weeks."

Then they greeted each other and he asked if there was any water to be found in this area.

One of them answered: "We want to go to Hazor, but we are as foreign here as you are, and we are already short of water."

"But you will hardly get to Hazor today" - said Bernhart - "for in two hours you will be in the great plain. Do you think your horses will last without water?"

"We must!" - replied the speaker - "we have had neither opportunity nor time to look for water, and must see how to get by."

"So God help you!" - replied Bernhart - "I should have been better provided!" Then they rode on.

"There is something wrong here" - he said to his servants - "it is madness to try to conquer this distance without a packhorse. We noticed it yesterday, how thirsty we and the horses were; we are certainly not serving soldiers."

The path became steeper and stonier; all of a sudden he was struck by a light-colored strip of cloth hanging from the tree. He pulled it down, looked at it, and said, "This strip hasn't been hanging here long; it's the kind of cloth our women wear - maybe it's supposed to mean something to us? We must be more attentive, this find is not without cause! I ride ahead now, and you follow me only in sight."

The arduous path demanded full attention. After many hours, he suddenly heard hammering on wood and carefully he dismounted and let his people approach. "In this lonely area, people are busy in the forest. We need to investigate if perhaps it is the caravan we are looking for? We will leave this road and go right into the forest, so that we will not be seen."

But soon they could go no further, the forest was too dense, too steep and not passable for horses. So Bernhart went on alone, following the sound - and suddenly he saw into a deep valley where people and animals were comfortably camped. "This does not look as if they are prisoners" - he thought, and approached with great caution. "Is it the caravan we are looking for? There is no sign of Joseph or Joram, nor is Ruth among them. I must learn more details, but how? That my God may give me!" Thoughtfully he went back to his servants and described his impressions to them. "But what could we three do against these many guards? We must have certainty and then ride back, since I had given Cornelius the Sarechto-Sidon caravan road as a rendezvous point; only with his men can we free our prisoners."

So the three of them looked for a suitable place to camp and fortified themselves with bread, figs and a drink of water.

Suddenly Bernhart listened and spoke softly: "Someone must be listening to us, I heard a noise - it would be dangerous if we were noticed by the camp guards."

But everything remained quiet. After half an hour, Bernhart said: "Now we will try our rescue in the name of the Lord; one stay here with the horses, one halfway, and I will try to get to the camp. Three short cries of a hawk mean: all is well, but two calls of a toad mean: highest danger! Then one helps the other."

Suddenly a figure stood in front of the three men and shouted: "Oh God be praised and blessed be his name! I am Ruth, daughter of Eusebius, and you are Bernhart, my father's friend!"

"Ruth! You? Where did you come from? How did you escape from the camp? It is guarded, after all!" - asked Bernhart, highly astonished - "We followed the tracks of your wagons at once, when your old father described your capture to us."

"Oh give me to drink and a blanket to wrap my nakedness" - and then she told of all the torments of the captives and of the fear before she found safety in the shelter of the forest. "When I realized that I was not being followed, I stayed close by and listened to all that was going on. The leader Assir is now a prisoner and lies heavily bound in his tent. This I know for certain, because his roar betray everything; but why three guards rode back, I do not know."

"Is there water here?" - asked Bernhart anxiously - "In plenty, but on the other side of the camp," said Ruth.

"Then we are relieved of that worry. But where are your brothers? I have not noticed them."

"They are lying wounded in two wagons," Ruth answered - "but we cannot free them, for high rock walls protect the camp."

Bernhart nevertheless considered a plan and finally asked: "Couldn't you return to the camp to observe everything with open eyes and bring your brothers the prospect of

rescue? Behold, we must first get help, for against these men, we three are powerless. But we have asked Captain Cornelius for assistance, and through his men we hope for your complete deliverance!"

After a long, long silence, Ruth slowly replied: "Well, I will make this sacrifice because Assir is a prisoner. But how can I be of use to you if the camp leaves tomorrow morning with an unknown destination? Will I be able to stay calm if you don't manage to be here at the right time with your helpers?"

Bernhart replied: "My brave Ruth! Why do you want to doubt all of a sudden? Bring the sacrifice and awaken new courage in your brothers and all the others! Our Lord and Savior Jesus will lead this difficult work through us to a glorious solution, since we have faithfully begun it with His help. And because I know that God has His hand in it, I am completely without worry. You too be so calm, no more harm will come to you! Behold, we have already met the three messengers today, they are going to get new orders in Hazor, what should be done with the caravan, since your leader is a prisoner. It will likely be three days before they are back, and then we will be back here too."

"Dear Bernhart, I am now making the most difficult sacrifice imaginable" - Ruth spoke slowly - "how I thanked God when I was free! Admittedly, without your help, I might have starved to death, but now to give up freedom again and go back to hell? It is almost too hard."

"Child" - answered Bernhart - "if it is too hard for you, then stay with us, but where shall we take you? For here in the mountains you cannot stay alone, since there are certainly wild animals in this area."

"So I'll go back then - for three days! But give me a knife, that I may at least have a weapon."

"Do it, my Ruth, for the sake of success! Be assured, God lets us experience His rich grace because we are of a pure and good will! Remember the word of the Master, which He left us: 'All things whatsoever ye would that I should do unto you, shall be done unto you, if it be done in unselfish serving love.' Let us also think of your Father, who prays so confidently for your deliverance and waits with longing for your return!"

"Now I know my way" - Ruth spoke with composure - "you can watch me as I am received." And after a short, fervent farewell, she went back slowly, praying; only when a glow of fire became visible, did she hurry faster.

Bernhart had followed her, he saw four guards sitting by the fire, and suddenly Ruth stood before them. They jumped up, recognized the girl and led her to wagon No. 2, and since nothing else happened, he went back to his servants.

6. Testimonies about Jesus' teaching

Bernhart's servants, Joel and Dan, were happy to perform an extraordinary service for their master and rode steadily toward their destination, Caesarea. In the evening, weary, they arrived at a large inn from which they heard a loud noise, for many Roman soldiers were sitting in the large inn. Joel went to the leader and asked for Captain Cornelius, to whom he had a message from his master.

Achibald listened intently and asked: "Who is your master and what is the matter? I am the commissioner to Captain Cornelius."

"Then may I give you this short letter which my lord, Bernhart by name, has entrusted to me to deliver to Captain Cornelius" - and with that, he handed the letter to the Roman.

Achibald read with great interest and had Joel tell him more, then he said: "You no longer need to ride to Caesarea, for I have received the same commission from Cornelius and we are on our way to the prisoners. Go with us and help in the rescue-work, for God Himself is our employer."

The old innkeeper had also listened and told many other things about how the Templars persecuted all Nazarenes with violence and arbitrariness, so that one's heart froze. Achibald asked: "My dear landlord, are you also a Christian and permeated by the truth of the Nazarene?"

"I am" - answered the innkeeper - "the Lord and Master Himself sat at this table and out of love and mercy restored health to my sick servant! Never will I forget that day, for from that day, I became a new man!"

Achibald asked tensely: "But, my friend, how can you reconcile this with your conscience, since by doing so you deny the faith of your fathers?"

"No, sir, it is not so" - replied the respectable innkeeper - "because my faith was not a true faith until this day! I was blind and did without free will only what the temple demanded of us. Only now I have gained light and clarity about my eternal God and His glorious Being, and through this I am now so glad and rejoice to be able to serve my God and Lord daily."

"I thank you for your confession, for it makes my mission easier" - Achibald replied - "It makes me glad when I hear from others a confession about Jesus, whom I do not yet know."

"Lord" - said the innkeeper - "do not be hasty and calmly pursue your mission in the ways of God, for where the Lord has a hand in the game, there can only be good success; but if one's own striving is predominant, there will also be disturbances. Blessed will you be if you realize that your God and Lord has hired you and given you a task that He could hardly entrust to another! For this I will bless you and your people! But you remember the honor that has come to you, that my eternal God and Father has already made you, as a Roman, equal to His children!"

Achibald was deeply moved, then he said goodbye and gave the order to depart. Hour after hour passed, the horses went out quickly, but in Achibald the words of the honest innkeeper gave rise to ever new questions and thoughts. At last he halted at an inn, and while men and animals were resting, he inquired of the innkeeper about the traffic on this highway. "Sir" - replied the dignified old innkeeper - "you are Romans and in the

Emperor's service, and for decades I have regarded you as oppressors and enemies of the Jewish people! But now that I have recognized the great salvation and count myself among the confessors of the great Master and Savior Jesus, I know who the oppressors and enemies of our people are. Caravans pass by here weekly, usually the Templars fill their tubes with water and also with wine and take it easy while our brothers and sisters lie languishing on the wagons. Once, when the wine I had drunk loosened my tongue, I learned from one such Satans-priest that they only send young men and women to the coast because good prices can be obtained for them there - old men and women are usually left to die - and why? Because they have been surprised by the hateful scouts and priests at their nightly meetings."

Achibald asked: "Listen, my dear landlord, as a Roman I have the greatest interest in all such happenings, but can you take it on your sacred oath that the Templars are making a business out of persecuting the Nazarenes? For only the emperor can grant the privilege to trade in slaves, but the temple, as far as I know, has not received any. Well, the temple has the right of punishment over traitors and those who violate the sanctity of the temple, but to impose death or sell slaves, that is an assault that must be punished!"

"Sir" - replied the innkeeper - "I stand by my word as I stand by my confession for Jesus, but to convict the Templars is difficult. It would be better if such caravans were intercepted and the legal acquisition of the slaves investigated, many a wrong and many a crime would be prevented."

Achibald thanked the host. They rested for a good two hours, then, after bidding a fond farewell to the honorable innkeeper, they rode sharply to Hazor. On the way they met a caravan led by a Greek and a Jew in priestly dress. Achibald had them stop and report on the goods from the priest and demanded clarification about the heavy guard.

Hesitantly, the Templar reported, but denied having any human goods. When the Roman gave orders to examine the goods, the priest admitted that he also had prisoners, but was acting according to instructions from his highest temple authority.

"It is good" - said Achibald - "but why did you want to lie to us? If you only fulfill your duty, not you, but the temple council is responsible for it! No Roman will prevent a man from doing his duty unless he acts against our laws! Let me speak to your prisoners!" And so he questioned those bound together as to their fault. Calmly and composedly, they answered that they were Nazarenes and would rather die than deny their faith!

He released them from their bonds and promised them help. But to the priest, he said earnestly: "Thank your God that these people gave you a good testimony and that you never used violence to be brutal or inhumane, therefore I will leave you in your service. But if you would promise me to encamp at the first opportunity and wait for my return, which may, however, take some days, I would offer you a service in return, in which you can certainly be pleased beyond measure!"

"Lord, you meet my wishes with this" - said the priest delighted - "with reluctance one is forced and must watch how injustice makes itself the wielder of violence. For if I were to rebel, I would suffer the same fate as these!"

"So it remains with our promise" - Achibald replied, and with a firm handshake both leaders parted.

Achibald was inwardly shaken. There we see Romans on order, having occupied the land, and yet this temple is a polyp stretching it's invisible arms everywhere. "Oh You eternal

God, I foresee Your greatness! I foresee Your wisdom, and I also foresee Your care! Oh How unhappy I would be now if I had persuaded Cornelius not to attach so great importance to this angelic apparition. Oh Lord! Let me finish Your work in Your Spirit, that I may profess that my will now serve You!" He stopped, beckoned Joel and Dan to him, and said: "Listen well! I have some serious questions to ask you. Much - very much - for me depends on your answers. Are you ready to tell me the truth in all things?"

"Yes, Lord, if it serves you, ask about anything you want, only not that I deny my faith, for I too have become a Christian!" - replied Joel with finality.

"Your confession pleases me and eases my questions" - Achibald replied. "So, why did you become a Christian? Was your faith no longer enough for you? And what advantage do you now have as a Christian?"

Calmly Joel answered: "Lord, I did not become a Christian for the sake of external advantages, since I have a kind master in Bernhart anyway. This one is also a Christian with his whole family! But when I look back, as far as I can think, I must confess that my life has only been joyful since I took the message of God's great love into my heart with faith.

My parents were honest and respectable people and my sisters were subject to their parents, faithful to the Law of Moses, until my older sister wanted to marry a man of another faith. From that time on, we experienced much oppression from our temple priests until our land no longer belonged to us, but to the Templars. My parents died of grief and sorrow and we had to see to get bread and work. It was precisely through the mediation of the Jesus-believers that I came to know my present master, and by the way I and all the other housemates were treated, I became mad about my past life! I searched and researched until I found what can make a person truly happy!"

"Yes, my friend" - replied the Roman - "was it not because of you that you were not so happy in former times? Are you not perhaps somewhat infected by the nature of your master, that you now say, I am happy! But how would it be if you were in the employ of a Roman, for example, of me, where law and justice and the utmost severity reign, would you still think so?"

"Yes, Lord, I will always think so, because the joy that fills me is different from what it used to be" - Joel replied - "for this joy is of a heavenly kind, because it is nourished by the knowing that: I am carried by my eternal God and Father, who is great love and can only be love and grace!"

"Well, my son" - Achibald replied - "who taught you of these evidences of God-love and grace?"

Answered Joel: "His faithful witnesses, Peter and John. Not only did they confess it with their mouths, no, with their hearts and with their whole being, for the sick were healed, the possessed were made glad again, and seekers like me - happy! I wish for no better heaven than the one in which I now live! For it makes my earthly service easy and my tasks, whether large or small, valuable!"

"I thank you" - replied the Roman - "does your companion also think so?"

"Basically yes" - Joel confessed - "but whether he also lives in this joyfulness as I do, of course I cannot testify! But he loves Jesus, the Risen One, just as I do!"

"This is enough for me, my son! Keep to yourself what I spoke to you, because I first want to be at one with myself. For I begin to look at my life differently now!"

So now the whole troop rode on through the blaze of the sun and approached the city of Hazor. Larger estates and busy people manifested their industriousness and love of their ground. Achibald enquired from the owner about the quickest way to reach the road to Kedes.

"Sir" - replied the owner - "it is not easy to find; I will give you a servant to guide you, since just now the mule is still saddled; you will save time and the tiresome questioning."

"That pleases me very much, but I don't know how I could repay you."

"There can be no question of thanksgiving, since I am still a debtor to my God and Lord! Go in peace - and God's blessing be with you!"

Achibald thanked him exceedingly cordially; he let the guide he had received ride beside him, and by brief questioning, he learned that he himself, as well as his master and the whole house, were Christians.

Achibald asked: "My friend, how is it that you profess the new religion so freely? After all, it is dangerous, since the temple is a fierce opponent of apostates."

The answer was: "Lord, we do not fear the temple and its priests, since they are only weak people like us! But a confessor of the crucified and Risen One is a guide for many lost souls. If Christ had not risen from the dead, His teaching would be without power and our confession would be unfruitful. But in this way, through the living hope of becoming one with Him, we have been made multipliers of His life and Word and are filled with a great joy and power! There is nothing dangerous in this. At the most, we could be tortured, tormented or even killed according to the body, but all the more we would be freed from all that still hinders us in true discipleship!"

"Does your Lord also think and speak as you do?" - asked Achibald - "or is this confession of yours only your own life?"

Then the questioned looked at Achibald and said: "Lord, from your questions I hear that you have not yet experienced anything of Christ, you have at most heard of Him. Whoever has embraced Him with the love of his heart becomes a completely different, a new man, from whom everything old, acquired or inherited, which caused so many troubles, worries and loss of strength, disappears! How happy one come to look at the world, the people, the animals and the plants in a completely different way! It is as if everything calls to me: 'Come to Me, oh man, I need you!' Therefore you will also understand, how my master without thinking and considering, supported you immediately with service, because basically he serves not you Romans, but God!"

"Who taught you all this, since Christ has long since ceased to live?" - inquired Achibald further.

"We have no teachers, since no apostle has been with us for a long time. But love for our Lord, which we seek to realize in free service to our fellow man, always gives rise to new life in us. Therefore, our new religion is a life that seeks to alleviate the misery of people everywhere and searches for the causes in order to eliminate them completely!"

"How long have you been a follower of the Nazarene?" - asked Achibald. "Since the Savior and Redeemer restored my sight! I was blind through someone else's fault, and five years have passed since then. But I was ungrateful and believed it was natural that a Savior was only there to heal. Later, when I realized my spiritual blindness, I searched for my Helper in all places, but every time I was too late, He had already moved on!

Four years ago, I finally found Him in Bethany, and it was only there that I received a proper light on His nature, His teaching, and His great love for all people. Nothing could frighten me more than the thought of what would become of me if I lost His love? I would have to become deeply unhappy!"

The man fell silent. Also Achibald was deeply moved by the simple testimony of this ordinary man. Quietly they rode on, without haste; Hazor remained on the left, and when they saw the trade road to Kedes, the servant stopped and said, "Now you cannot go astray. There is much traffic on this road, and no lack of inns; but after an hour they cease, and you must make your arrangements beforehand, if you wish to spend the night. Yes, I advise you to do so, for then comes a barren plain that lies right between Hazor and Kedes. I now turn back, but all of you are dewed with the Spirit of my Savior and Redeemer Jesus, because by His grace I was allowed to serve you!" A salute with his right hand, and without looking back, the servant rode back.

Achibald said to himself: "Brother Cornelius, how happy you must be to serve such a Lord! But I? I must be even more blind than once this simple servant. What depths of thought were revealed to me and what courage of confession I had to experience! Oh Rome, what will become of your power and dignity, of your position in the world, if we would be overcome by Christ?" With his hand he wiped his eyes and then said: "Let's not call forth gloomy thoughts! Let us be guided by concern for the suffering people who are waiting for our help!"

He raised his right hand, and a subleader came riding hurriedly to his side; then he said: "Listen, I feel as if we must watch more carefully here in order to catch the three messengers we are looking for; so ride sharply ahead and stop individual horsemen, ask for the way and their destination, but arrange it so that you do not ride beyond the last inn, since we must also think of rest, and above all do not think of violence!"

"I understand" - the commissioner replied - "you will be satisfied." A push of the thigh, and away hurried the horse with the powerful figure.

Achibald thought again of the servant's last words: "I would be unhappy if I lost His love!" How deeply this love must be founded! Oh If I could also experience such grace and come out of all these thoughts of doubt! Oh Cornelius, I think you will not recognize your friend Achibald anymore!

So his thoughts went back to Caesarea and went again to Jesus, who, in Achibald's mind, was a most noble man. "Oh Jesus, if even Your followers and confessors speak thus, how must You Yourself have spoken!"

He let himself drift, but then became attentive to his people, who were giving Joel a hard time and wanted to deny him the Divinity of his Master.

Achibald had to smile when Joel said so calmly and confidently: "What does a man know about God and Divinity, if his heart is only attached to dead things? And what does a man know of the multiplicity of gifts and the subtlety of the very noblest trait of life, if he has never concerned himself with the unity in God and His all-pervading power? You are

soldiers and accustomed to obey, no matter what the orders are; but have you ever thought of what went on before in the mind and heart of the one giving the orders? Have you ever thought of the responsibility that every commander assumes and must assume? Above you, the commander also stands as a judge; but the commander carries his own judge in his breast. That is how I look at it in my life: By grace I became a called one and now bear high a responsibility for my actions, but only God is above my life. Because I am responsible to God, I now pay attention to my life and actions, since they have become my own possession, given to me by God."

A reasonable man said: "Friend, remember, we are soldiers, will-bearers of our emperor and representatives of his legality. It happens that we have to use the sword and we must not ask: does it cause suffering and pain? But what if your God commanded you to draw the sword like me - and kill?"

"Oh friend" - Joel answered - "precisely because man has departed from the true order in and of God, such corrosive conditions formed. Now, in order to preserve what is to be preserved, he called men who seek orders that put a stop to decomposition; and so it became necessary to oppose force where elemental power was striving toward destruction. But it succeeded only in part, because the bearers of this violence were also taken over by the evil spirit of satanic decomposition!"

We experienced this with our Master Jesus! It was not the temple, no, it was a Roman Pilate, who cleared the way for the Templars to switch and rage their corrosive hatred. Certainly, Jesus could have used force against force, but then He would only have proved His humanity and would be forgotten today! But in this way He let all violence pass over Him and placed Himself with the whole power of His love above all hatred! Thus He gave the proof of His Divinity, and against this Divinity, every other power will shatter!"

"You know" - said the soldier - "I would like to talk with you longer, but not on the backs of our animals, but at home with your master, who certainly thinks as you do. Our captain is also a noble man, loved but also feared, but he has never spoken to us in such conviction."

"Nor is it necessary" - Joel calmly replied - "since the new life out of God can never be received from without, but grows within us as love for the other grows. But if you will, you may quietly remain with us for a time, if your lord releases you. In general, wherever you go and stop for a while, you will find a great love for your neighbor! With us there is almost no one who is not seized by the Spirit of the Savior. The more the temple priests rage, the more they spread hatred and lies, the more they repel those who are still loyal to them. I wish you Romans would finally put a stop to this hateful activity."

"We are only soldiers" - the man replied - "and do not trouble ourselves with things that do not concern us. But I am immensely pleased to have heard something different for once, and I am really grateful to you."

7. The three messengers

Three horsemen on worn-out horses came to the inn of the Greek Hermes and asked for food and drink and for water and fodder for the tired horses. The innkeeper willingly instructed a servant to do so and entertained the three in the empty, cool inn. In the meantime, a Roman soldier arrived and asked for water for his horse; he learned from the servant that these three horses had not received anything to drink all day. Such torture should be reprimanded! "We can try this at once" - said the Roman; "in any case, I'll take a closer look at these animal tormentors."

He entered the inn, took a seat at the other table and asked the innkeeper for a cool drink, then he said to the three: "From where have you come, since your horses refuse to eat because they are so tired? This is unwise and may cause you great hardship, for horses are indispensable to us here!"

One of them replied: "We are acting according to orders and have not had the time or opportunity to take large quantities of water with us. Our mission is to Hazor; in an hour we will be at our destination, and the horses can already rest."

The Roman spoke sternly: "But I am an animal lover, and people who torture the animals entrusted to their care I cannot leave unrepentant! Where you actually come from, you have not yet said."

"We are on a mission from the temple and have no right to tell others about it!"

"As you think" - answered the soldier shortly - got up and went out, where he said to the innkeeper: "I believe we will rest here; you have enough fodder for 25 horses and as many people, haven't you?"

"Certainly" - the Greek assured him - "and if 50 men came, it would be enough!"

The soldier went out into the street. From a distance he saw his comrades, coming; a sign, and in a short time Achibald was on the spot. "I think we are at our destination" - he reported; "three suspicious men turned in here. There are their tired horses which are worth taking an interest in."

Achibald received a report, and then they both entered the guest room, where he looked at the three people. But the latter did not feel quite safe and wanted to leave. "I must talk to you" - said Achibald - "since you refuse to give my representative the information he is authorized to demand from you!"

"We have no information to give, since we serve the temple and act only in the sense of our supreme authority" - was his reply.

"Quite right, therefore you will not receive any reproach from me, but the way you deal with helpless animals makes us suspect that you do not act in the sense of your temple-masters. We Romans are the lords and guardians of this land and every injustice will be punished. So: where do you come from? And what kind of mission has become you? Still I ask you as a man, but if you hesitate or want to lie to us, then I stand before you as a judge, according to my full authority!"

The three were silent; these questions made them visibly uncomfortable and a hunch urged them to be careful.

Achibald went to the window in a moment and gave a sign - immediately three soldiers came into the guest room and he gave orders: "Guard these people well, I don't trust them rightly!" Then he asked again: "Have you come to your senses and will sincerely confess what your office and service is?"

Answered one: "Lord, we submit because you have the power, but I also ask that justice be done to us. We are charged to seek word from the chief priest of Hazor concerning a caravan companion awaiting our return; here is my order."

Achibald read, returned the letter and asked for more details, then he spoke: "No harm will come to you because of this, but I must convince myself of the truth of your report, because I also act according to legal instructions. You will not go to the temple chief, but ride back with us immediately; if your information is correct, then it is good, if you have lied to me, then woe to you!"

A terror settled on their faces and the answer failed to come, but Achibald calmly said: "Think it over until tomorrow morning - until then you are prisoners!"

In the evening it was reported to him: "One of the guards wants to have a discussion, preferably right now!"

"Bring him here" - Achibald replied - "but stay here until I'm done with him..."

"What do you have to say to me?" - asked Achibald sternly.

"Sir" - replied the temple servant - "I wish to tell what I have hitherto concealed, for I perceive that you, sir, will after all learn the truth as soon as we reach the camp."

"So speak! But remember, you have forfeited a degree of leniency because you have not been honest with me straightaway. Speak, then, the plain truth!"

Now the messenger revealed to Achibald from beginning to end all that had happened, and said in conclusion: "So judge us according to justice, and act according to your authority! We are but servants and must obey."

"Would you like to live a better life and a more humane existence?" - asked Achibald more mildly - "for this stroke of violence is not your first and, after all, not your last. Perhaps, if you wish, I could give your lives a different direction."

"Lord, I cannot speak for my comrades, but I would rather leave the temple today than tomorrow, because violence and cruelty are our daily experience. But if one of us were to rebel against it, the same would be done to us!"

"Well, I will help you" - said Achibald - "but you must also want to help me, so go get your two comrades!"

The man went and said to them: "Come quickly, I think we are experiencing great happiness here!"

Achibald reached out his hand to each and said: "We can become good friends if you are willing to show me the way to correct this great wrong. We Romans are not your enemies, but only enemies of all those cruelties that are happening in your country. In our protection, nothing can and must happen to you, but what happens to those who knowingly act cruelly, about that you are well aware. Therefore, lie down quietly now, but early we will ride back to your caravan."

"Lord, you will be satisfied" - said one of them again - "for I feel that today is a decisive day in our lives!"

8. Bernhart

In the camp everything remained quiet; the guards were no longer so careful with their vigilance and had fallen asleep toward morning. So they did not notice how Elim, the caravan owner, quietly climbed onto the wagon on which Assir lay bound and said to him: "Be quiet! No one must know that I am coming to you."

But Assir immediately ordered: "Untie me so that I can move freely! Couldn't you come earlier? And what happened in the first place? Couldn't you come to my aid? Or - what do you demand for my freedom?"

"You want to know quite a lot at once, and it is already better that you remain bound, otherwise I might take your place; so this be told you: Asa has taken your place and yesterday sent away three men to fetch replacements for you. Then the girl who had fled also returned and hurried to her brothers in the tent. Asa, however, apparently knows nothing of this, since the guards did not inform him."

Assir wanted to get up, but the ropes held too well, he pleaded: "Elim, by our friendship, you must help me to my rights, you know that you will certainly have no harm from it! Let me go free for only five minutes and you will see how the people obey me again! We must leave, no one else must enter this camp, if only for the sake of the two men and the girl!"

Elim replied: "You would like that, if I fulfilled your wish, and in Sidon you would say again: Elim, go home quietly with your chariots, I can get others at any time. So I'll give you my bill first: half of the profit and the girl who came back."

"Half yes, but not the girl, she stays with me!" - replied Assir in impotent rage.

"Is that your last word?" - asked Elim, his eyes twinkling - "think carefully what you say!"

"I'd rather give up the profits" - retorted Assir - "but the girl stays with me!"

"So you shall have neither profit nor the girl. Do not let the time be long for you, perhaps it is better to trade with Asa!" - said Elim calmly and silently disappeared from the wagon. Assir cried out loudly in anger and tried to free himself, but the bonds held.

At this time Bernhart awoke, but he thought he was dreaming, for before him stood a strange light-being. "Who are you, or am I dreaming?" - he asked, reaching out to the luminous figure.

"Do not try to touch me, for I do not wear flesh and blood like you, but to be of service to you, I am sent by my Lord and God, and I wish to discharge my commission; it is this: stay here near these people, for help is on the way. Before the Lord God was called upon for help, He was already taking action to do so!"

"What do we do now?" - asked Bernhart in amazement - "Shall we not do something to save the unfortunate?"

"Believe that your God leads everything in such a way that all of you can rejoice!" - answered the light being. "All your prayers and the many tears of those poor people have reached the highest heavens. So it is explicable that all forces there are also strained - to the glorious solution!"

"So we could have remained quietly at home?" - asked Bernhart in amazement - "and only rarely have we stopped to pray and intercede to move the Lord to help?"

"Oh no, you are very much mistaken, my dear human brother" - the angel replied - "through your earnest endeavor and through your will to act, you have indeed released the spirit of true love for neighbor and God in you! Now it only needs to be tested whether your will to act has sprung from your compassion, or from the true inner life of God. In all your endeavors, which serve the complete maturity of the God-life dwelling in you, only the true reason of your intentions comes into question, since God wants to see His own life mature in His children! If you are already one with God, the Eternal, then you are no longer just the willing one, but His Redeemer-Spirit pushes you to the helping action! Behold, we stand by you with our influence and have the greatest desire to help to remove that pernicious curse! But our help can only be and become help, if the true, living faith is present with you! The moment the slightest doubt arises in your breast, you hinder us and the power of your prayers is weakened. For the sake of the greatest work - believe and trust! So that what is cursed may be transformed into blessing. The blessing of God be with you!"

It was dark around him again as if the apparition had vanished into nothingness, but the words remained and became more and more alive in him. "Oh You good God and holy Father of all Your children! I want to believe and I will believe in Your all-love, in Your mercy and in the grace that I again experienced! Strengthen my faith more and more, so that I finally mature into what Your Redeemer-Spirit wants to see in me! Help me to find what is right and stand by me, so that I act completely in Your sense! For Your imprisoned children, however, I ask for Your Father's blessing!"

Then cries of rage resounded from the camp; Bernhart was disturbed by this in his devotion and already something wanted to stir in him, which very much constricted his joyful mood. "My Jesus! What am I supposed to do here? I feel so helpless against that spirit of hatred that I become directly fearful, although I know that You are with me!" It became again calmer in him and since the day dawned, he woke his two servants and reported to them what he had experienced in the early morning. "We must now stay here and wait, so care must be taken that our horses get fresh water first of all. As Ruth said, there is water on the other side, so we must go there with our horses. We need not fear those who guard the camp, for God is with us!"

So they left the place, and a quarter of an hour's walk further, a small channel of water trickled into a marshy meadowland surrounded by tall trees. Away from the great caravan road, they sought a camp, and when all was arranged, an early meal of bread, fresh water, and some dried dates was gratefully eaten. Bernhart now discussed with his servants to set up a guard service to watch the camp all the time. He himself went first and found a block of rock from which he could overlook everything undisturbed.

9. Great fright

The camp became lively; men and women walked around, it was a picture of peace. In the middle of the camp, people were struggling to get the fire going, and after a long time, a whistle sounded, and then the men and then the women came with bowls to get their soup. Ruth also came with her head held high and got her bowls filled, and everything happened with a certain calmness and security. Then Bernhart saw the men leave with dishes, probably to get water, and the camp was deserted.

Suddenly, angry shouts were heard - Assir raced among those who remained and threatened with the whip! "Where is Asa?" he roared at the people - "how dare you be against me? Speak, or you will feel the whip!"

Fearfully the people ducked, none saying a word; but in this silence, Assir came to his senses a little and now said more calmly: "People, listen! I want to forget what you have done to me; I also want to work to get better pay for you, but I demand obedience! Asa must go, because he caused you to become disloyal to me. Where has he gone?"

"The men went to fetch water, for the supply is running out" - was his answer. "The water is done already?" - asked Assir in horror - "with nearly eight days to reckon before we get to Sidon. Why are the prisoners running around so freely? They can escape and no-one will notice! The first thing to be done, is to tie up the prisoners!"

"I wouldn't do it" - replied a guard - "the poor people are so happy and grateful, after all, so we don't torture them! The first thing Asa did was to talk kindly to the prisoners and promise to treat them like human beings, and we did not have the least work with them yesterday. Is it so hard to be human? You don't lose any of your dignity as a priest and as the leader of this death caravan!"

"You don't understand" - Assir said - "just because you are set against me, suddenly nothing is right for you."

Grumbling, he turned away and looked into the tents, but when the prisoners saw Assir, they were suddenly quite disturbed. Assir rejoiced at their fright, then he went into the tent where Joseph, Joram and Ruth were staying and had to marvel that they were not afraid of the sight of him. Mockingly he asked: "Well, you fugitive, here you are again! Hunger must have driven you back again?"

"No" - Ruth answered proudly - "because I did not want to leave my brothers!"

"I think that where you are depends on my will! Do not think that I have given up my claims on you."

Then Joram jumped up and threatened: "But now, out of this tent! Even if you soon beat me to death, it will not happen a second time! That you know it: the tables could also be turned! Just one word to my fellow sufferers and you will be guarded by us! I know that Elim has set you free. I know that you have done this for Ruth. But I also know that God is watching and wants to atone for your crimes! Therefore leave us, or I will call all my fellow prisoners to fight against you."

And so Assir left the tent and said to Elim: "Those three can be dangerous to us; they know that you have set me free, and that the girl is to be the prize!"

But Elim smiled mockingly and said, "My friend, it is not about me, but about you! Bring me the girl and I will fulfill your every wish! If not, I will side with the prisoners, and the rest you can think of."

"So you, too" - said Assir in anger - "have taken the side of my enemies? You will have to pay dearly for that!"

"No more dear than you" - sneered Elim - "either you fulfill your promise or I act at my own discretion. You are a devil, I am no less; but you shall see that I can act honestly after all. But to prove to you that old Elim can be an honest man, I will get the three of them into my tent and onto my chariot. If you want to hinder me, try it; now I am sorry to have freed you!"

10. Elim

Elim left Assir, went to the brothers and sister and said: "I have just come from Assir, who is full of poison and gall against you. Therefore I want to take you in my protection. It grieves me greatly to have helped him to freedom."

Said Joram: "You are Elim and not much better than Assir! We will not accept your protection, since we have no use for it; but if you repent of your action and want to serve us, stay away from Assir and forget that you bargained for Ruth, my sister, as a reward for your behavior! We are Christians and cannot repay like with like, but wish that, if you are brought before a judge, you too may stand in honor. We want to forget what you intended to do and forgive your folly. But to become friends, you must try to prevent such crimes and restrain your greed for gold. Behold, you wonder that I know all this? But I know still more, and that is, that Jesus Christ will save us, and will require an account of you!"

Elim was as if dumb; only after a longer silence, he said: "You may be right, but can I help it that I am educated in such views from my earliest youth and know nothing else but acting and earning. I have not heard much good about Jesus, for the fact that He hated the temple and did away with its servants, was surely reprehensible. He turned many pious Jews into apostates and that is supposed to be something good? I do not fear Him! I know Him only as a rebel and I do not believe in His resurrection!"

"Elim, you speak like one who knows nothing better" - replied Joram - "therefore I forgive you! But if you were to experience what we have experienced, you might change your mind. In any case, we have never experienced anything good from the temple at Jerusalem and its servants, and the arrogance and greed of the priests there is almost beyond description!"

Now that we have received the truth about God and his eternal word through Christ Jesus, our eyes have also been opened to the house of Jehovah and his faithful servants. But the best testimony has been written on my back by the priest Assir, and as long as I carry this body, no art of the earth can take it away from me again. And now I ask you, can you name me one case where a Christian has acted as Assir did on me? I do not ask you to become a Christian, because you cannot, because your whole inner being refuses to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. But if you believe in Moses and accept his laws as God's laws, why don't you live according to them? We Christians live according to the teachings of Jesus and His laws of love!"

Loud shouts rang out from the camp; Assir had seen the returning water fetchers coming and hurriedly went toward them, now scolding Asa for leaving the camp without sufficient protection.

"Who has freed Assir?" - asked Asa excitedly to those who had stayed behind. "Is this the allegiance you pledged to me until we have a new squad leader?" And turning to Assir, he said: "To you we no longer render obedience, for you have abused the power you have been given!"

"Asa, be silent!" - threatened Assir - "you are the troublemaker and will have to answer to the council! You have broken your oath and caused those commissioned by the temple to be unfaithful. If you could no longer respect me as a human being, you had to respect the priest in me as the representative of the temple council, and you have forgotten this!"

Asa, who was too surprised by this turn of events, was of course no match for Assir, and seeing at the same time the indecision of his comrades, he asked them gravely: "Which of you confesses his oath? And which of you wants to uphold what we had decided?"

No-one said a word, and one look at Assir told him: it is futile to say anything more. He saw that Assir had won through the simplicity of the others, so he said to them: "I release you from the promise I made, although you will surely regret it soon!"

Assir jumped to Asa and shouted: "Be silent, or you will be guilty of rebellion! It is not for me to judge you, but the camp is open to you; you may go wherever your mind leads you."

11. Asa's turnaround

Asa went to Elim's tent, who had observed this event deeply shocked and said, fully contrite: "Your good will has played a trick on you, too, as it has played one on me, for I have freed Assir."

"Now you can also bear the consequences" - Asa replied to him - "I fear he will take cruel revenge! Give me a mule that I may leave the camp; I no longer feel safe!"

But Elim asked: "Better stay close to me, we'll wait and see what happens." And so it happened.

The day passed slowly, the Christians received their food as before, and the old spirit reigned again in the camp. Assir was inwardly full of hatred; but outwardly calm, and sent the people for water several times until the supply was replenished, then he went to Elim and said quite kindly: "Well, dear Elim, I would be ready again for us to think of breaking up; we cannot lie here any longer!"

When the sun began to set, the sky changed, black clouds quickly passed over, and at last a heavy thunderstorm broke out with thunder and lightning and pouring rain. Assir, full of fear, rushed into the big tent of the prisoners, who were crouching in the corners and praying for protection and assistance. It would have been easy for them to overpower their tormentor now, he knew, but their long imprisonment had made them utterly despondent.

When the storm cleared, Assir immediately alerted his men and had all the men bound again, relieved that he remained unmolested. Elim came with his servants and took the three brothers and sisters into his tent; he was anxious for them to forgive him. Assir said nothing. I can wait, he thought, there is reckoning in Sidon! The siblings found Asa in the spacious tent, and Ruth asked why he was hiding from Assir. With short words, they learned the truth, and so Joram said: "You have been like a friend to us, therefore let it be known: our friends are already on their way to deliver us! Call Elim in, that we may discuss the matter and that there may be no unnecessary commotion."

Elim came and was also informed, but asked to comply willingly to all Assir's wishes for the time being. "At the most 2-3 days can pass, then help and salvation will be there. The only thing necessary, should Assir want to depart, is a contact man; but it may be that one of our friends will be nearby watching the camp."

Said Asa: "So I could leave the camp quietly and keep a lookout. What is your friend's name?"

"Bernhart is his name, and is a great humanitarian! Look for him in the direction of the water spring. If you find no-one, there is more hope for us, for then all are anxious for our rescue."

Asa hurriedly left, because there were no guards on Elim's side. He wanted to use the time before it became completely dark and Assir would not notice his absence. He hurried forward and was stopped by two men, Bernhart and a servant, who were watching the camp. "Where are you going? Night is approaching!"

"Are you Bernhart, whom I seek?" - asked Asa gladly - "I am one of those in the camp, but fortunately sneaked out; but I must know who you are!"

"Yes, it is I" - said Bernhart - "we are encamped close by, and hope for help soon. The madman is again in possession of his omnipotence, so I am actually afraid for Ruth."

"No need" - answered Asa - "if you like, I'll get you the girl and her brothers too, but as soon as help comes, it would be an unnecessary burden for you."

Bernhart said: "By this I know you are our friend. But how would it be if we were to take advantage of the right to hospitality in the camp? We would be there, and with open eyes and ears we could see things that might be of service to us."

Said Asa: "Oh friends, that I do not advise, for Assir is suspicious and greedy. He would have no peace if he had not searched all your baggage. I think you should leave your scouting post, camp behind the camp and follow the caravan company in the morning. It must seem that you know nothing about this camp, the guards are only watching the prisoners. If there is any danger, you will be warned by the noise anyway."

Bernhart said: "So return and tell them the joy: 'God, the Lord, is mindful of your salvation!'

Silently Asa returned. The fires blazed up from the woodpile in the center of the camp, and so he saw Assir climb around Elim's tents. He stopped his step, curious to know what he wanted. Asa was frightened, the three friends were his target, they could betray themselves. He quickly went toward the camp, but in such a way that he had to be noticed. Assir looked and asked aloud: "Where did you come from? What are you doing in the forest?"

"Nothing that concerns you" - Asa replied coolly - "but I know why you are spying around here, you want to overpower the girl! But now I am her guard, having entered Elim's service."

Assir turned proudly and went to the fire; Asa reported in the tent: "I am back and have met your friend Bernhart! He sends word to you, Ruth, that the Lord God is mindful of your rescue!"

"Oh God! Be praised and blessed! Fear was about to rise in me again, but now I will be calm - and believe!"

Asa said: "Sleep quietly, I am awake! And should the sleep want to overcome me, then I will wake one of you, for one must be awake! And here are two swords for an emergency, which I have already procured in the afternoon. I do not trust the fox. And now sleep, while I watch!"

Asa sat down in front of the tent and now had time to think about his former life and his future: "What was my life in the service of the temple and the priests? A hardening of my feelings and sensations! And how do I stand before myself now? Like a corrupt person, not worthy of respect! Where will be my mother and my sister? I have been separated from them for years. Oh God, is there any help and salvation for such lost people? How You, God, must love Your believers when You tell them that You are concerned about their salvation! I believe that You, God, are everywhere except in Your temple and synagogues. Oh How must those prisoners love You when they even risk their lives for You!"

In the meantime, complete silence had fallen in the camp, when a singing started from a tent in which the women were sleeping. It sounded so beautiful, so sweet, even if the words were not understandable, the sounds penetrated his heart so deeply - he had to cry. Then he looked up to the starry sky, which shone in wonderful splendor, and thought: "Oh

God! For whom did You actually create all this? Certainly not for people, because how little they pay attention to the beauties of Your works!" More and more he delved into the mysteries surrounding God and His creation; but suddenly he could think no further; for the present in which he lived was too terrible. "Lord, everything breathes peace - the stars, nature, only humans do not! Why do You allow their wickedness? Your own children, Your faithful ones are the ones who suffer! Oh give me an explanation! If I think only of Assir, I am at the end of my faith in You!"

He got up, went around the tent, looked in, and seeing that the three were not asleep, he said, "If you are not asleep, we could talk outside the tent on this glorious night, for I have now come to the point of doubting God!"

They listened and marveled to hear Asa speak like that. Sitting outside the tent, Joram said: "Dear friend, your last word tells us that you have come into conflict with yourself, in that your quiet desire for true peace makes you feel the unsteadiness of your life so far."

"You call me friend?" - asked Asa in amazement - "and yet I was an enemy to you!"

And moved, he told how an inner conversion wanted to take place in his thinking, but then a dark cloud stood before his thoughts. "See, everything in nature is filled with peace, order and beauty; everything proclaims the wisdom of a great, wonderful Creator! But when I looked at myself and let all the pictures of the last week, even years, roll before my eyes, I had to say to myself: Unfortunately, all this no longer applies to people, because they only strive to make their lives more beautiful, at the expense of so many sufferers! Where is God? Where is His wisdom? His omnipotence? I am at the end, I don't know a way out with my thoughts and I don't want my life to go on like this."

"Dear friend Asa, it is good for you to be moved by such thoughts; this is the proof that God is wooing you and surrounding you with His Spirit. What you seek, thousands have found before you! They have honestly searched for a satisfactory answer and now quietly guard what has been revealed to them like a sanctuary! Only one thing I would like to say to you, you judge everything according to appearance, but not after the essence. You have knowledge of God, but you do not know God. You are now poking at effects, but you do not like to search for the causes! See, my dear friend, every word would be useless, if you could not believe me. But ask yourself and find out whether you can believe me. We, the confessors of Jesus, have also had to investigate whether we want to believe Him. Behold, it is bad to preach to a man full of error, false doctrines and wrong concepts. We would be like a farmer who bought a new field and, when he plowed it, found it full of weeds. Would he not be a fool to put good wheat into this field? He would say to himself: I must first clean the field from the weeds and therefore save the wheat for next year.

It is the same with me - with you. Your heart is full of false doctrines and wrong concepts; nothing satisfies you anymore, and you even want to destroy the last good thought of God. Every word of mine, no matter how true it seems to you at the moment, you would soon doubt, because your old man does not want to be renewed! You often had the opportunity to grasp the deepest meaning of the truth, but you did not want it! The impulse to investigate yourself more seriously and to complete what you lack, you will not succeed with, if you do not want to believe in God and His all-pervading Spirit.

Said Asa: "I have understood you well, but the last sentence: I should believe in God and His all-pervading Spirit, I cannot understand - because how should I be able to believe in God, who only want to rob His willing servants? If God had only revealed something of His all-pervading Spirit to His called servants, I must have experienced something of it in the temple!"

"Dear friend, you are bitter" - replied Joram - "but do not consider that many an honest servant of God faithfully and conscientiously fulfilled his duties and tasks. Think back to what you heard about the last high priest Zacharias. To this man it was given to speak no longer out of himself, but only from the all-pervading Spirit out of God! This high priest, the last of his kind, often communicated with angels like we communicate with each other now and received advice from them. Even today there are many people to whom God means the highest and dearest - and why? Because they feel imbued with a whole new life from this Divine Spirit!

You will now ask: What is this Spirit of God actually? This Spirit of God is the spiritual life penetrating all existence and enclosing all visible and invisible. This God-life surrounds us like the air surrounds us, invisibly, but nevertheless absolutely necessary, because without air, we all would have to perish immediately. Likewise, all the souls who want to go on pilgrimage through this earthly life without God and the new life out of Him, must also feel extremely unhappy.

Where God's being and working in all living things is revealed to an honestly seeking person as love, wisdom and power in glorious laws of order, can he still doubt the existence of God? As soon as our inner eye opens for all this holy life around us and our faith wants to see and understand it, the effect of this God-Spirit shows itself to us tangibly and soon also visibly, as something that sanctifies us! Only people who never took the trouble to think about it, like to build up their own life. Their orders do not lean on the Divine order and wisdom, and so the great disharmonies among people arise, which were so clearly before your eyes just now and made you doubt the existence of God!"

Asa had absorbed these words very attentively. After a long silence, Joram continued: "There is not a man in the whole land who does not know the laws and the ordinances of God, and yet so many prefer to live at the expense of others according to their own way, which is convenient to them. Just as there were faithful servants of God, steeped in the truths of God's teachings, there are also unfaithful ones who call themselves servants of God but are dominated by a completely different spirit. But our efforts must increase precisely because of this, to hold on to the fading life of God with all means in ourselves and in others.

That is how it was with me! So it is with all who honestly strive to remain faithful to God! And the reward was not lacking. The awareness of His constant presence created miracles of new powers, strengthened the weak faith, filled the heart with joyful confidence and revealed more and more new life in and from God. Since Jesus Christ entered my earthly existence, God's love, grace and mercy have also been revealed to me, making me His child. The fact that we have to suffer so much here now, does not detract from my faith in God, because faith only becomes a living faith through trials. What grows in man through such faith, is only his true life, is his property, because it is won through struggle. What is gained through struggle, is a true gift of God, because the power with which I struggled became evident to me as God's power!"

Joram suddenly fell silent; he felt that these words of his were spoken from a higher influence and that he himself still had to think about them.

Asa, like a hungry man, had absorbed everything deeply. At last he said: "I think I could understand you, since you spoke as a man to a man! But how would you, Ruth, answer me?"

"Not much different" - said Ruth - "only I would say to you: "You are poor, because you have not yet come to know this love of God, and yet you have constantly passed by the

miracles of the most holy love every day. Is it not a miracle that the people, to whom you were also a jailer, do not resent you? Is it not a miracle of most holy love that we, who are so close to death, already know: Salvation is coming and is very near! Is it not a miracle beyond miracles that we of all people may instruct you to enter into the Spirit of redeeming and merciful love? Oh my friend, I have experienced the miracles of glorious and holy love!

Yesterday evening, when I directed my steps back to the camp, how difficult it was for me at first! But when I thought of my brothers, who needed encouragement, I felt better, and when I was able to scurry into the big tent without being bothered, I experienced the greatest miracle of Divine love, because the message: Help is near! - triggered in us a feeling of gratitude to God, which sanctified us in the most wonderful silence! But when I consider the deep suffering you inflicted on us, it must have been hard, very hard, and Father will suffer even more than us! But if it is possible that your mind will change in order to reach also this high and glorious goal, then this too would be a high purpose and a miracle of these our Divine trials! Therefore we also forgive Assir and hope that he also still would want to change!"

"Let us not talk of the other" - Asa replied - "but remain on our subject. Who knows where I can be tomorrow, since Assir wants to destroy me! Therefore I would like to leave as soon as I can, preferably with Bernhart, and enter his service. With him, I could perhaps find peace of my heart!"

Said the serious Joseph: "Asa, you have not been a jailer for us and have not made everyone's hard lot more difficult. For this I want to thank you, and that is, if you want, you can enter into service with my father, we would become friends, even brothers! Don't bother about anything, stay with us until salvation comes, then you will go with us and you won't meet Assir anymore.

The spirit in my old father's house is the same as in Bernhart's - it is the spirit of faith and love. With us, no-one is master and no-one servant; father is the head and the supervisor, but we are all of the same mind, no-one more and no-one less. We rejoice in our life! Everybody has sorrows, but we carry joy and sorrow together and always feel safe in the great all-love and all-mercy of our Savior Jesus Christ! Our hope for deliverance will be fulfilled, because what God has promised, He certainly keeps! And if the enemies would multiply like sand on the sea, God laughs at them and will prove to all that He is the Almighty!"

At that moment, Assir jumped in front of the tent where the four of them were sitting and shouted with scorn: "I will prove to you that God will not laugh and will prove to God that I am still!"

Assir was about to lunge at Asa, who took a sword in his hand, when Ruth said: "Leave your sword alone; God has no need of such weapons! Just now we experienced the consecration of His presence, therefore let us wait until the Lord intervenes effectively!"

Assir, full of rage, commanded the guards to tie up the four and not to let an eye off them, threatening: "I will really destroy their faith in God!"

"Do it anyway" - Joseph spoke very seriously - "we will see who is right!"

"Silence!" - commanded Assir, "or you too will come to know me like this!" Quickly they were bound; Asa felt intense pain and groaned loudly, but Ruth comforted: "I too feel pain that is almost unbearable, but no, we must not complain, lest we begrudge the triumph to

those outside. But the triumph belongs to our God and Lord Jesus Christ!" So they huddled together and longed for the new day.

12. The rescue

The camp came to life early. Assir was suddenly everywhere again and with zeal he urged his people to the greatest haste. In the wagon of Elim, a fright rushed through the people, one called and searched for him, but he was not to be found - Elim remained gone! But Assir acted as if he noticed nothing of it: "Quickly feed the animals and then go on, go on!"

The caravan had already been traveling for four hours when the mountains remained on the left and Assir, out of caution, deviated from the straight path to Sidon to turn into a bushy plain. He jumped off the wagon to let the caravan pass by. Then he was seized by terror - with the roar of a storm, a band of armed horsemen came and demanded that he stop. He wanted to flee, but where to in this bush desert?

"Who is the leader in charge here?" - shouted Achibald, for it was he who had caught up with the caravan.

"Here, it is I!" - spoke Assir proudly. "Since when has it been the custom for peaceful caravan companies to be halted? It looks like you want to use force?!"

Achibald had jumped off his horse and said coldly: "Since robbers and murderers are roaming the countryside, it is necessary to control. We Romans are the masters of the land and here is my authority! Tell, with what cargo are these wagons loaded?"

Replied Assir: "I do not allow myself to be controlled, since I am acting on behalf of the very highest; here is my authority!"

Achibald took the letter, put it in his pocket, and said: "If you had a clear conscience, you would have consented to an inspection at once, but because you refuse it, I will have the same done by my people; but first I will secure you."

With a quick wave, a soldier received the order, "Tie this man's hands behind his back and don't spare him if he tries to evade capture by running away!" With a strong grip, the man grabbed him and the next moment, Assir was a prisoner!

Now Bernhart rode up and reported: "Brother, the sick man has awakened from his severe unconsciousness and accuses Assir!"

"Who is Assir?" - asked Achibald - "he may come forward voluntarily."

"Assir was our leader and lies bound there," replied a guard.

"Then it is good" - said Achibald - "he escapes his fate no more." Now the inspection began, the prisoners being at once freed from their hard ropes.

Bernhart hurried to the wagons and called out: "Ruth! Ruth!" From one wagon sounded out: "Here! Here we are!" Quickly, the bonds were loosened. Rejoicing, Ruth fell into Bernhart's arms, then knelt in the sand and prayed aloud. The other liberated people watched devoutly and at last they too understood: this is salvation! Kneeling, they all gave thanks for this wonderful help, and with weeping and sobbing, they ended their prayer.

Achibald was deeply shaken; a great feeling of happiness flowed through him and so he too prayed: "Oh God! How I thank You that I was allowed to experience this hour! But

now that You have so graciously shown me Your eternal goodness, give me also the right mind to carry out this sacred mission to its end in Your will!"

Achibald now took Asa into serious interrogation. He wanted to see clearly in order to fulfill completely the will of God revealed to him. Out of consideration for the others, he had left the three emissaries of the caravan, who led him here, with the badly wounded Elim, so that not even the slightest appearance of betrayal should fall on them.

When the people had eaten something, they went back to the old campsite, where there was enough water nearby. Assir had to walk the whole distance; with a tight belt around his body, he was tied to the horse of his guard and when he was stubborn, he received a blow on his naked back. Everything took longer than expected, however, and it was not until late in the afternoon that the tents could be erected again. Elim lay in a heavy fever and for Ruth, her Samaritan activity began immediately, which forced silent admiration from Achibald.

After a meal together, Achibald called everyone together and asked: "What is to be done with you now? I am charged with resolving everything so that you yourselves and also God your Master may be fully satisfied. The servants of Elim will depart, having committed themselves to him; it is first of all you who are committed to the temple. I could punish you like your leader, but my friends have asked for your freedom. Therefore, whoever wants to entrust himself to me, shall not regret it.

Then Bernhart asked to talk with the brothers in faith about their future and soon this was all sorted out, too, because not a single one had the desire to return to the old homeland, because of the Templars! The women, however, had no more desires at all, Ruth was occupied with them.

Blissfully, Bernhart exclaimed: "My brother, my heart burns with love and happiness when I think how much suffering has now been transformed into joy! A heart full of love, and everything is solved as if by itself. All who wish to come to me, I receive with joy, and Joseph and Joram gladly take the others, for diligent hands are useful everywhere!"

"With this I agree!" - replied Achibald - "so I will take only Assir, and will soon dispose of him."

13. Ruth

Ruth came hurrying into the circle, and joyfully exclaimed: "Elim is saved! The fever has gone, he has fallen asleep quietly."

Astonished, Achibald asked: "How could this happen so quickly? Wound fever is difficult to get rid of and often ends in death."

Said Ruth: "Yes, Elim would have died, too, if the great Savior Jesus had not healed him! The first look at him told me: Only God can help here! And so I prayed to my Jesus until I received the inner certainty: He will be saved! Incessantly Elim spoke in fever and reproached himself about his wrong life, then I laid my hand on his hot forehead with a praying heart and I experienced anew - Jesus' presence! Elim became calmer and still said: "Oh these beautiful hands - and yet bloody, but like cool dew they gently blow me relief! Do not pull these hands away any more, dear one - dear one!" Now he sleeps, therefore let us give thanks to our Jesus, quite heartfelt thanks for the new miracle of His love!"

Achibald was quite astonished - he had never heard such sweet words before, then he asked: "My dear Ruth, are you firmly convinced that the Savior Jesus was so close to you that you could feel His presence, or could it also have been a sensory illusion? I am not asking to belittle your experience or out of curiosity, but because I am beginning to decide for Jesus Christ as well. But I want to be sure, and if I build myself a bridge from this world to God the Eternal, let it carry me and others for eternity!"

Ruth answered kindly: "Sensory deception can exist for earthly things, but not for eternal things, because I have turned all my longing, hoping and loving away from the earthly and towards the eternal. In doing so, however, I have not allowed myself to be guided by my intellect and my senses, but only by the impulses of my heart. My heart, however, can only feel affirmation, delight and happiness, or denial, disappointment and pain. I thank my Jesus, my God and eternal Father, that I have often experienced this feeling! If you truly want to decide for Jesus, then put your mind aside and let your heart's emotions speak, and you will then be convinced of the delightful truth of His presence without even asking."

"Dear Ruth, the Eternal Love means it well with you and has made you an armament for His Being! But now I ask you one more question, whether you can answer it or not, will not influence my decision! It is about this: I know Jesus only by hearsay and have not yet occupied myself much with Him, and if I now join the ranks of His confessors, I still lack so many important things! Yes, I suddenly feel so ignorant, although Cornelius has spoken much and often about Jesus.

See, what do I have of Jesus, since He is an inhabitant of the heavens and no longer visible to us earthly people! How could I now state with certainty: He is with me? Should I be content with faith, because His mouth once said: "I am with you always, even to the end of the world" - or should I vividly imagine that He is with me? Some of our deities still lives in me, although I have long since put the gods aside. If you could give me a satisfactory answer about Jesus' presence, you would relieve me of a great burden."

"Dear friend" - Ruth answered - "you ask deep questions, which I will gladly answer, but only as I feel in my heart. See, Jesus, whom I have indeed seen in His earthly life, and have also listened to His words, was nevertheless as good as erased in my memories.

What does such a young human child of 13 years think much about things that reach far into eternity! I was sorry for this dear man when the news came to our country that he had died on the cross! And again there was a message that He had risen from the dead! We listened to these speeches in disbelief, until later some men came to our father and told him that he had really and truly appeared to them and that they had now received the order from the risen Jesus to proclaim to everyone: He lives!

Dear friend, now we had no more ardent desire than to see Jesus, the Risen One, too! Every evening we prayed together: "Lord, honor us with Your visit, our hearts are burning with desire to see You once again and to be blessed by You!

The longing became more and more intense, until finally the great, blessed moment came: He was with us - in the middle of the evening devotion, and blessed us with His pierced hands! With His deep eyes, He looked at us so full of love and His mouth spoke the unforgettable words: "Never again be afraid, for I have overcome the world and all death, so that you may live with the awareness that I am alive and you want to live: I live, and you want to live through Me - a new life is formed in you, which is one with My life! My peace and My blessing be with you! I am now going home to My eternal Father, otherwise the new life could not arise in you! These words have remained with me! He spoke many other things - but this was completely enough for me.

Now, when I feel His presence, I am as if detached from earthly existence; this I experienced most clearly the night I escaped from Assir. Dark and alone in the deep forest, still filled with the horrors of the previous experience, I opened my heart to His great, helping love and clasped His outstretched hands in the spirit.

Then I heard within me the clear words: "Do not be afraid! I am with you! Hold fast your faith, then I can be your Savior!" The fearfulness of my situation disappeared, I felt as if wrapped in God's love and became calm and joyful despite my unenviable situation and knew: His salvation is near! If this should have been deception or only imagination, I do not know how I came to this inner peace and this wonderful feeling of power. And indeed, wouldn't you all be already looking for us?

I think that from what has been said to you, you have also received the answer, and therefore do not be surprised if we perhaps do not thank you enough, since all our thanks go to our Lord and Savior Jesus!"

Achibald had become silent; the simple, plain words went deep into his soul, which was hungry for light and truth. He was so deeply moved that he got up and went deeper into the forest. The men and Ruth looked at each other seriously, then she said: "Let me go to him, he only needs love, he has heard enough words!"

Said Bernhart: "Yes go, perhaps through you the Lord will succeed in winning him completely!" Silently she followed the Roman and saw him sit down on the forest floor and weep. "Oh God," - he prayed softly - "Your love almost bursts my breast, and yet my past desolate life stands before me as if to separate me from You and Your truth and from Your goodness, which is so overwhelming!"

Then Ruth laid her hand softly on his head and asked gently: "Why, my brother, are you making it so difficult for the Savior - what is troubling you that you still have to fight? Behold, the Savior's love is for all people! It paves the way for us to the all-loving Father's heart. What makes you so miserable and wants to separate you like a sinner from Him, the more than Glorious One, is atoned for on Golgotha! Not for His sake, but for our sake,

He let all this happen to Himself! And in this strong faith in His love for us human beings, His redeeming Spirit becomes a glorious gift to us!"

"Ruth" - said Achibald - "you speak like an angel, but too much of evil has happened! Wars have made me a cruel man, and already by nature I was harder than a stone. I have put love out of my heart, I lived only by truth and justice; but now I must see, that was not truth, but hard-heartedness toward those who had done wrong."

"Dear friend, the Lord sees your repentance and forgives you! He only asks: If you want to follow Me, then believe in My love, which also wants to fill you with My Spirit! In this Spirit, you will become the executor of My will of love! Therefore, look now at what I want with you and not at what the past has made of you!"

After a pause, Ruth continued: "Dear Achibald, I had to speak to you like this because I could not do otherwise! But if you can believe in these words that they were not my words but the words of the Savior, then you have broken down in your heart the last barrier between Him and you."

"Dear Ruth, you restore my confidence! If you now succeed in taking away from me the last doubt about the great all-love, then I know only one way: towards Him! Behold, I could well believe that He has atoned for my guilt and that I may breathe again like a liberated man! But the relationship remains the same: He, the holy God! - and I - am a sinful man! It could happen that I fall back into my former life and forget that He is God! - and I, as His child, am now obliged to Him! What then?"

"Brother Achibald, do not worry about what will become when the old man revives once again. As the sun gives light and warmth to each new day and forces the night to part, so with each day a new strength, a new energy of life will enter into you and thus make the image of His love more beautiful, so that you will always feel how blessed His love makes you! I don't know if you still have a mother, I lost my mother long ago; but since I carry the image of my Jesus in me, it is as if I have a second mother, who has taken over the love of my first mother, and therefore I may now be mother - to my brothers."

"Ruth! Dear one, now you were an angel to me and also a mother at the same time! I will never forget this hour and your help, as I want to entrust myself completely to the One to whom God entrusted all mankind! Oh now it becomes lighter around me, now I learn to welcome God's rule."

Said Ruth: "Now let us return, that the others may know how you are embraced by His ever-helping and so joyful love!"

When both returned, they heard melancholy and sweet songs from the hearts of the liberated, filled with gratitude and longing, which gave this evening a special consecration. Ruth went to the sick man. He was asleep and Asa was watching by him. Praying, she laid her right hand on his forehead, but so gently that he was not disturbed in his sleep. Bernhart and Achibald were moved by the picture that presented itself to them here: the feral sick man and the tender, beautiful girl.

Then, as Achibald and Bernhart walked quietly into the forest, he still said: "My brother, this child must be an angel, how cleverly she can defend her faith and how strong is her will for new life!"

"Yes, brother," Bernhart replied: "she is the good angel in her homeland, wherever help or comfort is needed, there Ruth is to be found!"

14. Ursus

The two were still talking about their experiences from earlier years and did not notice how far they had already moved away from the camp. When they reached where the forest turns into the bush, they saw a caravan camped some distance away and how busy people were going back and forth; an interesting picture for the two spectators.

"Where may they be going?" asked Achibald; "they cannot be coming from Judea, but from a port by the sea."

"Let us go there" - replied Bernhart - "we can be more reassured if we know who our neighbors are."

So the two went quietly; but the leader of the caravan must already have been informed, for he came to meet them and saluted: "Peace be with you! Be welcome to my camp which I have just made!"

"And also with you, for all eternity!" replied Bernhart. "Our camp is very near here; but had we not gone so far, absorbed in conversation, we would not have met."

"So I beg you, be my guests now" - replied the stranger in an exceedingly friendly manner; "I can send a messenger to your camp, so that the eternal ones may be without worry" - and so it was done.

Achibald gave his name and said: "Our camp is very special, because we have no goods, but people whom we want to return to freedom and joy. I am a Roman soldier and am under the command of Captain Cornelius in Caesarea. This one is Bernhart, formerly in Roman service and as of today, my friend. He owns a great ground, but at the instigation of his best friend, he has undertaken a difficult mission, which is now almost entirely accomplished, therefore we are on our way back."

"I am Ursus, the son and confidant of Demetrius in Rome, and am on my way to Jerusalem" - said the Roman to Achibald - "so we are countrymen." They stepped into the erected tent; here Ursus spoke again: "Welcome! I am glad to be able to welcome such dear guests."

In a short time Ursus knew everything that had happened from the mouth of Bernhart, who concluded his speech with the words: "We are fully satisfied with the success, only the guards of the cruel Assir worry us. We are Christians and want to act in the Spirit of the Savior Jesus, but may we believe these people without further ado? Being too trusting - has already brought much suffering to many."

Ursus, who listened to the whole story calmly but with great interest, said: "Oh friend, if you are sincerely concerned about these people, the Lord will already meet you with His help. Behold, I am gladly willing to relieve you of your worry, because I know that if I only have the will, the Lord will also show me the way! I also love Jesus, the Risen One, and have a part in the new life through Him! Therefore, I strive to order everything that approaches me in the Spirit of His love!"

So a few hours passed quickly and Ursus promised to settle the matter with the guards together tomorrow. Achibald was as if changed. "It becomes almost too much for me of love! That I should see such devotion to Jesus in a young Roman is beyond my

comprehension. Tomorrow I must know how Ursus actually came to be a Christian! Yet he seems to be the son of a rich merchant."

Bernhart again was grateful that the Lord had led Ursus into his path, for it was like Divine help for his tasks! It had become quiet in the camp of the liberated; all gave themselves up to rest without any worries because they knew: The Lord is now our guardian!

Only Assir had to endure some bad hours. Shunned by all, alone in a tent and heavily guarded, he pondered how he could free himself. He offered his guard a huge sum of money, but the guard said: "No, your gold is ours anyway. Don't bother, a Roman is incorruptible, to save you would be to deliver me to the cross!" On such an answer he was silent now, he knew, he had played out.

At daybreak, the fires were blazing brightly where the morning meal was being prepared, and Achibald was pleased to see such active life; his soldiers were busy with their horses. Soon the meal was consumed, then fresh water was procured, while others dismantled the tents and stowed them artfully.

Riding on a magnificent stallion, Ursus was joyfully greeted by Achibald and Bernhart. His first wish was to be allowed to see the sick Elim. Both accompanied him, called Ruth out and asked about Elim's condition. She said: "He is still sleeping. I have not seen his wound in the back since last night, for I did not like to wake him."

Ursus, who had come to the camp, spoke earnestly: "But I know the man, a low and avaricious character, who will ill repay your love."

Ruth looked at the young Roman and spoke boldly: "May he have been what he will, he has deserved our love, since he wanted to snatch us from the rage. It was precisely to save us, that he had to become the victim."

Ursus, who was looking at Ruth, said: "Your words are a sweet gift to me! Nothing can make me happier than to learn that a man has decided to do good and that his actions show that he is serious!"

Elim must have been awakened by the talking, for he moved and sought support with his hands to rise. Ruth was concerned and said, "Lie still, and we will help you as best we can."

"Yes, where am I? I must have had a long walk, I am still very tired!"

"Think of nothing now, you are in faithful hands who want to do everything for you."

"I do not feel so very ill" - said Elim - "only a little more sleep, and I shall be better; who are these three men?"

"They are good friends, who also hope and wish that you may get quite well as soon as possible."

"Good friends? Who could believe that! I could use some of them to help me, for I have made a long trek and have seen all the places where I am threatened and damned! As long as I don't have to go there again, it was terrible!"

Ursus said to Ruth: "Make a comfortable bed, and let me carry Elim out into the sun, that he may return to reality, his soul is still too much asleep with what has happened!"

Elim gladly let it happen. Ruth handed him some soup and then Ursus and Achibald examined the wound, which looked dangerous but seemed to be healing normally.

"The blow must have been stopped" - Ursus said to Achibald - "otherwise internal bleeding would certainly have occurred. Could you not send for this Assir now, that he may see that we are informed of everything!"

When Assir stood before the two Romans, defiance and anger wanted to flare up in him once more, but Achibald said sternly: "Look how you reward friendship! People who lie and deceive others can perhaps be educated to better things, but what shall I say when one wants to do away with his friend in a murderous way? We know everything! But what you do not know, I will tell you: That God has also seen all this and knows how you have blasphemed Him! This God has now given you into our hands and you will be punished by us. How the punishment will be, I do not know yet, but this I know, that you will not have enough tears to atone for your crimes!"

Assir spoke proudly: "What have I to do with you? If I have committed crimes, I demand to be brought before a temple court! I refuse to answer before pagans, I have acted in good faith!"

Achibald replied: "Assir, it is good, we also act in good faith! But if you hope to be brought before Templars, you hope in vain! Your measure is full! The tears and all the heartache and pain you have caused, have reached the throne of God, therefore God Himself gave us the order to make you harmless, so do not hope for anything good from us humans! Good could come to you only from God, and you have denied Him. If you still have something to say to us, now is your chance, because you will not hear another word from me!"

Assir was silent. Achibald gave orders to lead the prisoner away.

Ruth said: "Oh You good God, what guidance! What may be in store for him?"

Achibald said seriously: "Probably the cross! But it may also be that he will be forged on a warship as an oarsman; but this lot is even sadder than a speedy death!"

"Achibald, my brother" - said Ursus - "do not frighten their hearts! Let us say: Let it be done to him now, that he may yet be saved and share in the great work of the Lord! Behold, God is not pleased with the punishment of a fallen man, however great the sinner! The moment a strayed and fallen being - be it man or spirit - pleadingly stretches out his hands to God from the humblest heart, it is as if all guilt were forgotten. And the glorious God only will test him whether his request was only fear or holy seriousness of life! Therefore, whatever may happen, earthly justice must be granted, but love also shows other ways! I am now interested in getting to know the people whom you so gladly have taken care of.

"This can be settled at once" - Achibald replied - "I will call them." All the guards now came who were committed to the temple; their uncertainty and indecision could be seen on their faces.

Ursus said to Achibald: "Let me talk to the people; I am more familiar with it than you are; you are accustomed to command!"

Achibald was glad to have this work and worry taken away from him and Ursus began: "Dear people, you are 20 men and you are faced with the decision of whether your lives

should continue along these lines or whether you want to give your existence a new direction. Even though I am a Roman, I know exactly your living conditions and habits. Your brotherhood is the temple and you are servants of the priests, but your occupation is quite unworthy of a man. Say, do you want to remain with the temple, or do you want to seize an opportunity and renounce your brotherhood? I want to make you a proposal, whether you accept it or not, our present relationship remains the same.

Demetrius, my honored father in Rome, owns many settlements, these are occupied with proven and worthy friends, but workers are still needed, and these are sometimes lacking. Whoever wants to, can immediately move to my caravan, you will then receive Roman citizenship and the temple will be powerless against you. So whoever wants, come to me! But one thing to remember: we are all followers of the great Nazarene and Savior Jesus!"

One said: "Lord, there is nothing to consider, your words promise us help from the law-front and provision! That we are not Nazarenes is not our fault, but the fault of the temple; it cannot be difficult to become a Christian among Christians, because there are only advantages for us."

Ursus said: "You will often bless today's hour, because you can only become truly happy when the fullness of the great love of God is revealed to you!"

A horseman came, and when he saw Ursus, he reported: "Ursus, our wagons are ready to leave, only your approval is needed."

Ursus replied: "Drive up to these wagons here, in the meantime everything will be settled here as well. And now, dear friends, call me Asa, who is watching over the sick Elim."

Ursus looked at and spoke kindly to him, "Listen, dear friend, I know about everything here; your comrades have already entered into my care and I think I know you already so much that I may have great confidence in you. I could use you very well on my many and great caravan journeys, and I ask you if you would like to stay with me."

"Lord, you call me friend? I take great pleasure in that! Yes, I am yours, though I would have gladly gone with Ruth's brothers. Rule over me! You will find none more faithful, because you have counted me as a friend."

Ursus reached out his hand to Asa and said delightedly: "I call you Brother, because my heart urges me to do so! So listen: You know your comrades, take them in your care until their destination. I will take over Elim's caravan until he is well again. But now a question of trust: Where do the captive Christians come from and what goods do you still have on your wagons, are they legally acquired?"

Asa said: "Where the captured Christians are at home, I do not know. There are expensive silks and carpets loaded on three chariots, their origin is also unknown to me; I am afraid they are stolen goods of captured Christians. Where a Christian fell into the hands of the temple henchmen, their possessions were also lost to them."

Ursus said to Achibald: "But here great injustice is revealed! It is probably best that I buy the goods and you distribute the proceeds among the poor, so that at least the curse that lies on this property, does not propagate itself further."

"This I would gladly do, yes, I am glad that you want to settle everything so well!" - replied Achibald.

Misgivings had still arisen in Asa, therefore he said to Ursus: "Now you are my brother, but what shall I call you in the future? Friend and brother I dare not say, my past stands there like a rock of guilt that makes me shudder! And how shall I thank you set my life in order?"

Ursus suddenly became serious and said: "Asa, call me Ursus, as all others do. Look, I am not offended by your past, for what you have to make up for, you do not go to men for, but to the eternal God, who made His great love manifest to us through Jesus Christ, the Risen One! I hope that in the future you will start a new life, you will live joyfully and peacefully, loving and reconciling, and as a confessor of Jesus, you will be permeated by His Spirit, because the acceptance of His great love-sacrifice, requires the devotion of the whole man to Him! As Jesus once said to me: 'Come - as you are - I have also struggled for you!' - so I also take you and all and do not say: first mend your ways and then we belong together! Behold, therefore this great earnestness! Because it is our first duty to carry out the complete fulfillment of every love-move!"

Achibald was wonderfully calm; a world of beauty opened up to him, so he said to Ursus: "Brother, since my riding off Cornelius, so many proofs of God's wisdom and love have become apparent to me that I must fall silent! Your manner, however, is the greatest experience to me; I do not know whether to take you for a man or an angel. Your mouth speaks everything so freely and convincingly, and your nature transports me into a completely different world! Say, are you always like this, or only because you want to help me?"

Smiling, Ursus said: "I am as you see me, human and angel! Man - because I serve as man, and angel to those - whom I may free from distress and torments of conscience. Accept both as right, but that I may work like this, is not my merit, but God's great goodness and grace."

15. The victory of Divine guidance

Elim felt strengthened, the fever had subsided, and Ruth, beaming with joy, said to the two guides: "Come without timidity; he wishes to speak with you." So they sat down with the sick man and waited until he spoke, "Oh friends, you have come to me as sent from God and I thank you for your love and care. But I still want to give you an explanation about my wounding, and so listen: When Assir felt himself free again, and the prisoners were bound, he came, when it was almost night, into my tent, and desired to speak with me. We had hardly moved a few minutes away from the camp when he demanded that I willingly obey his orders. I, however, had decided not to serve him anymore, but to help the three brothers and sister, and I told him this openly. He was indignant about this and threatened me, and when I stuck to my resolution, I suddenly felt a hard blow in my back, then night fell around me. If you, friends, had not found me, who knows whether I would still be alive!

Assir is a devil as nothing more vengeful is thinkable, but I was not much better until this girl and her brothers made me see my great guilt! Then I saw the abyss before which I stood, but at the same time the saving purpose of God."

Ursus said seriously, "Oh Elim, if you had died now, do you know what would have awaited you? I know you have a great deal of good to do, and a lifetime of work and toil would hardly alleviate all the suffering you have caused to others. And because you did not live in harmony with God's eternal laws, you would have had to experience all this suffering on yourself. Now learn to see how God in His merciful love saved you from the abyss and allowed this wounding to give you the opportunity to start a whole new life!

What do you want to do? Will you continue to put your chariots and animals at the service of the temple? Or do you want to create for others? Your property would be preserved for you if you were to enter the service of the Roman Demetrius. Think it over and let me know in the course of the next few days. My destination is Jerusalem, but for now we want to go to Lake Moran, because that is where Ruth and her brothers live."

Elim agreed and so Achibald and Ursus gave orders to proceed. It was not until evening that they were able to stop at a favorable spot. The tents were erected cheerfully and quickly, and after the meal, the many people listened to Ursus, who told of God's glorious leadings on his far journeys. Not a single one remained untouched, but the inner life increased into a life in the tangible presence of Jesus, and Bernhart was also able to lead their hearts into the wonderful ways that God had opened up for him.

Finally, Achibald revealed to Ursus and Bernhart that there was still a great task waiting for them, since another caravan was hoping for salvation and deliverance nearby! Ursus immediately said with joy: "Let us send messengers ahead early in the morning, so that there is no loss of time or unnecessary search. We can even put many hands to work, since the Lord has so abundantly blessed our enterprises."

In the morning after breaking up the camp, all the people went cheerfully on their way, and when the company came to the inn of Thomas just before Hazor, Achibald ordered a stop and asked for the owner he knew. The latter came to meet him gladly; but when he first recognized Ursus, his joy was indescribable. All the wagons had to drive into the large courtyard, and to Ursus, the innkeeper said: "Let me only see to it that a banquet is prepared for all. You know that when we make each other happy, our glorious Master is also happy!"

What a joyful, colorful life now developed in the court and in the house, and yet everything happened in such joyful harmony that even Achibald's soldiers wondered: How do people come to do so much effort and work for all these strangers? But when the well-prepared meal of vegetables and lamb was served, one soldier nevertheless asked his guide why everything was so festive today, and Achibald said: "It has pleased God that we have carried out His mission so well and freed so many prisoners, hence this festive mood among all. And so you also may give thanks and rejoice in everything here!"

When the meal was blessed and industrious hands everywhere saw to it that nothing was lacking, the common joy increased so visibly that it was something Achibald had never experienced before, and he asked Ursus: "My brother, I have often taken part in great banquets, and we were also cheerful and full of joy, but I have never experienced such heartfelt joy among all!"

And Ursus explained to him that the joyfulness of these Christians could not be compared with the joyfulness in the world. "Here you experience an image of the joy that reigns when we have once found ourselves safe at home! Behold, our host allows himself no rest or respite, for in his heart blaze fires whose rays would gladden all. We also do not want to disturb him in it, because he lives out his joy in great service!"

"Yes, my Ursus" - asked Achibald - "but where does the simple innkeeper get the means to feed these 150 people and to care for all their animals?"

"Achibald, ask our brother Thomas himself!" - replied Ursus - "but don't be surprised at his answer, it will be: Nothing really belongs to me here, everything belongs to my eternal God, and I am only His lowly servant, but may dispose of this property as I please, in order to give Him pleasure with it! Behold, how it would burden me, if I missed something in it!"

Achibald was not completely satisfied by this explanation and asked: "We are human beings, after all, and we all depend on material things. If I give away everything in blind love, it can happen that I stand before nothing."

"Intellectually you are right" - Ursus admitted - "but Thomas is a true child of his and our God, and his love is by no means blind. He said to me himself: 'The more I once reckoned, the harder it became for me; but since I let myself be driven by my heart, I see blessing upon blessing everywhere!'"

[Achibald] "This is another miracle to me. And I cannot understand why for years I resisted acknowledging such glorious faith!"

[Ursus] "You see, Achibald, now you come to the core of our holy faith, and your eyes look into the truth and light of Jesus' teachings! It may have been difficult for Thomas to acknowledge Jesus, whom he once avoided, but when he experienced the miracle of His redeeming love, he was transformed and is now a blessing to all people here. There he comes towards us, now ask him yourself!"

Thomas came to the table and said: "Brothers, what joy it must be for our Holy Father, when He can say to His angels and the inhabitants of His heavens: Look upon the poor, dark earth, what a glorious band of light reaches up to us! No starry sky could offer Me more beauty than what the earth gives us now. Oh You Love! What will You still reveal to us! But you, friend Achibald, are not yet completely convinced of the so blessed Spirit of Fatherly love?"

Achibald replied: "You are not entirely wrong, but remember, all this is still too new for me. Unimagined things become reality, and what one hardly dared to believe, is a natural thing!"

"Once you are one in yourself with this Jesus-Spirit, then, my friend, all darkness will be revealed to you" - replied the host - "and you will clearly see to what glorious God you have given yourself! Behold, it is made manifest to us that God will choose us human beings to be His children! For this, however, the necessary diligence and the earnest will, proven in strong trials, must not be lacking on our part, otherwise the childship to be won, would not be so precious."

The conversation was interrupted - two soldiers and two people of Ursus, who had left early in the morning and, according to Achibald, had to search for the caravan, came back and reported that it camped an hour's walk from here and waited eagerly for Achibald. Achibald was pleased that here again the helping influence of God showed itself to him and asked Ursus and Thomas: "Shall we ride there?"

But Ursus replied: "Let us rather send two messengers there with the order that tomorrow morning, the whole caravan have to be here! Why do we want to go there, since they want to come here, and because we want to go to Lake Moran, it would be an unnecessary waste of time and energy"; and so it happened.

Preparations were now made for the onward journey, since Ursus' transport had increased enormously and there were only poor areas along the Jordan River. Elim was the most comfortable; Ruth cared for him like a daughter and her two brothers supported her in the best way. But it did not go well with Assir. He hardly touched the food, he heard the joy of the others, but he was alone and thought in impotent rage only of escape.

It was a wonderful evening, when the now rather large congregation gathered for devotion and Thomas described in his natural way the new life out of love, whereby a deep longing for such life began to germinate in some.

But Thomas was not only a preacher, he was also a praying man! Achibald had much to think about when Thomas talked with his God, put everything in such a childlike way to His heart and asked Him to send him new waves of power so that he could bless effectively; He concluded: "My Father! Yours is all power and glory! Let it become more and more conscious in me that I am nothing and have nothing! But I may do everything out of You, what You have poured into my heart out of the cornucopia of Your love and grace. Oh how happy You make us, when we realize that You have given us another opportunity, where not we, but You want to be the Giver of love and joy through us. May Your Spirit of Jesus and Your mercy with all who err, become our life - so that Your life may become the property of all mankind! Amen!"

And now let us all go to rest, which You, oh holy Father, do keep watch through Your servants and angels!"

Nothing disturbed the night, but before daybreak, Thomas and his house were already busy preparing a morning meal, which at the same time, was to be a memorial meal. When everything was ready, he gathered his people and sang the psalm: "Rejoice in the Lord! Serve the Lord! And be filled with joy! Recognize that He, God, is our Father and has made us His children! Enter the day with praise and thanksgiving, and praise His holy name! For He is good and His mercy endures forever! His faithfulness has no limits, but His love encompasses even the smallest and least! Hallelujah! Amen!"

Full of devotion, all the guests heard this holy wake-up call and in a short time they were happily united at the meal. Here it was given to Ursus to once again present the life of the Master in His holy love-campaign to mankind from an overflowing heart with moving words, so that all were seized by the breath that blew over from eternity into their earthly existence. Ursus ended: "I carry the highest price of His love in my heart and in my hand the sign of His mighty sacrifice! Oh My dear ones, what is the world to us without Him? Where would mankind be driven to without Him? So I see in the many sufferings of the earth, how they want to make people ever more powerless and smaller, like storm surges, until all courage has sunk and in their hearts, only a heap of rubble of terrible misfortune remains.

But what it means to have a Savior and a kind Father, who wants to see His children so happy, can only be felt by those who have been led by Him out of the greatest trouble and distress, as you have been in the last days! Therefore, let us never forget that He, our Father, loves us! Let it become a rejoicing in you: He loves us! Then your heart will be filled with thanksgiving and constant joy, and the new life can unfold in you! But You, glorious Father and Savior Jesus, be with us and around us as well as in us! Amen!"

A long silence made the harmony with the Eternal even more intimate, many an anxiety was released and all hearts became joyful and wide.

But one who could only with difficulty conceal his agitation, Elim, asked Ruth if he may say a few words. Ruth asked those present to listen to Elim, and so he said: "I must ask myself if I am still alive, or if I am dreaming. A few days ago I was a villain, and now I am living here as if in heaven! The deep wound in my back hurt, but what a pain it is for the inner man when I felt that I am excluded from the community of people who have heaven in them! Then I was helped and saved by an angel in human form! She, whom I wanted to sell at a high price to enrich myself, gave me her compassion and placed me in the arms of Jesus. Oh God, I deserved to be thrown into the fire! But now I can take hold of the holy hand that Jesus' mercy holds out to me and also wants to bring me help and salvation.

Yes, I want to be your brother, who wants to make good whatever evil he has done - and so I ask you: support me in this desire!"

Achibald suddenly stood up and rushed out, he did not want to soften in front of his soldiers! Everything in him was in turmoil, only out there he could become calmer! So he went on, and in the light of the young day, he saw the great caravan coming. His heart said: "Oh God! This is also a gift of Your caring love! Make me strong, that I may bear all these evidences of Your so visible mercy!"

"As far as your love reaches, so far reaches your strength!" - it spoke within him - "It is not I who can make you strong to bear, but to what extent you learn to give, you become the bearer of My love, My strength, and My Redeemer-Spirit!"

"Where did these words come from?" - he thought, then it sounded anew - "Only believe and do not ask, as I also believe you!" "Another new miracle!" he thought. "Why is man so blind and stupid that he does not see such signs and wonders? But now You, Jesus, have opened my eyes to see and gave me ears to hear; therefore, oh God, I heartily thank You!"

The wagons came closer and Achibald quickened his steps; he had been recognized and quickly the priest came and greeted him joyfully: "Lord, following your words and trusting in your love and insight, we have complied with your wish. All come to you voluntarily, for I

had released all the former prisoners! But they wanted to come to you, feeling that with you alone is safety from the temple!"

"I am glad that you believed my words and put this trust in me; you will not regret it! What shall I call you, and who is the owner of these many wagons and beasts?"

"Lord, call me Jonah, and Basil is the owner of the caravan."

"How many people do you have in charge?"

"Lord, there are 60 men and 20 women handed over to me as prisoners by the supreme temple council, and 24 guards in addition. I have almost no goods, but Basil carries on his own account some wagons with precious spices."

"Now, Jonah, listen, there are many people encamped in the distance awaiting you. I don't want to decide anything yet about those entrusted to you, but if you want to enter Roman service, I'll be glad to help you. Think about it and stop there at the big homestead, now I want to greet the liberated!"

Thus the wagons passed him by; the people had recognized him and greeted and waved, but the Greek Basil greeted very submissively, so that Achibald said to him: "Basil, fear nothing, you will have your reward! If we like to help the distressed, be assured that honest people will not be harmed by us. But be frank and true with me, if I ask you: do you need to take slave transports for the temple? Are there not enough Romans and Greeks who are glad to hire honest caravan owners?"

"Lord! You may mean well with me, but every man is his own neighbour, and merchandise is merchandise, dead or alive. It is only by the merchandise carried that my earnings are reckoned, therefore I have never made a matter of conscience of it."

Replied Achibald: "Basil, do you also know that these captured people have done nothing wrong and are prisoners only for the sake of their faith?"

"Sir, I haven't thought about it yet. After all, if innocent people are transported, it is not me who is responsible, but the employer. That's why I've never talked about it with the accompanying priest!"

"So, then, Basil, I think we shall communicate better yet; but there is already the temporary destination, afterward you will be further instructed."

When the many wagons stopped at the inn, everyone came out and greeted the new arrivals warmly. Achibald went with Jonah to Ursus, who immediately offered to talk with these liberated Christians about their future, and he easily succeeded in inspiring their confidence. "Those of you who wish to return to your homeland, come forward; for these discussions are for your sake!"

But no-one came forward, only one said: "Dear Lord, the homeland remains closed to us forever, because of the Templars - therefore you decide about us, how we could earn wages and bread with true human friends."

Then Jonah gathered the 24 guards hired by the temple council, and to them Ursus said, "Have you considered what will become of you?"

And Jonah answered him: "We have all long since tired of this bustle, and now know that we have been complicit in the many crimes, so we have never done violence to the

prisoners or deprived them of food and drink, as they can all testify to you. If it were up to me, I would gladly enter Roman service with my people to be rid of the temple for all time."

"Such wishes can be fulfilled" - said Ursus - "for my lord and father Demetrius can still employ many happy workers."

When Ursus wanted to return to the house, he was stopped by the many people who were witnessing a reunion between Asa and his sister Salome, who was a prisoner of the new caravan. Deeply excited, Asa exclaimed: "What joy, oh Ursus! My sister Salome, from whom I have been separated for 10 years, I have found here again!"

"Oh Asa, I too rejoice for your sake!" - said Ursus - "so stay together until the eternal God decides otherwise about you!" The others were also pleased with this reunion, and Thomas knew how to awaken in them the right understanding of this grace.

Three caravans were now formed: One of Ursus, who also took all these guards to himself, one for Bernhart and one for Joseph and Joram, and quite freely the men and women were allowed to decide. Then they took leave of the hospitable house and its owner Thomas, who blessed them all.

Achibald had to decide whether to travel with Ursus according to his inclination or to return to the place of his duty, because his mission was accomplished.

Ursus, however, promised him to come to Caesarea as soon as his business was done. So the friends parted with the resolution to use every opportunity to meet again.

Achibald rode back to Caesarea with his soldiers and the captured Assir, arriving there about noon on the next day. Cornelius, however, had already received word through his angel of the happy outcome of the mission and greeted them with joy: "My Achibald, and you my comrades! I am informed of all your doings and your beautiful success! But it is not I who thank you, but God, the Eternal, who thanks you! I may only convey His thanks to you.

But the greatest gift you bring me is the joy I read in your eyes! You have become witnesses of God's wisdom, love and mercy and I wish that you never forget this great experience! This is said to you by your captain and leader Cornelius. But whoever of you has the need to be advised and instructed about the eternal God's love and mercy, let him come without shyness and learn that I can also be a brother and servant to you! Today you are free - and in the evening, you are my guests! Bless you!"

16. Conclusion

The sun had already tilted strongly when old Eusebius once again let his gaze wander into the distance. There was a restlessness in his soul that grew stronger and stronger, and so he said to the maid: "I feel as if Bernhart is coming soon with the children." The maid did not take it so seriously, because these days were always full of restlessness for Eusebius; but suddenly he saw riders and wagons coming and asked excitedly: "Who is that? Is it Templars, or could it be Bernhart?" And before the maid answered, Ursus and Bernhart came riding up, jumped off their horses and greeted the old man.

The old man asked anxiously: "Where are my children?" but Joseph and Joram were already there and they embraced their father. Then Ruth also came with the wagons and Eusebius stood among them almost speechless with joy.

Ruth immediately reported: "Father, we are also bringing all the captive Christians and also a sick man; you will gladly keep them in our house, won't you?"

"Children, only that your are back! We will make room for the others. Who is this man here?"

"This is Ursus, a Roman, but one of our own, whom God has sent to us like a saving angel."

Ursus waited until the storm of joy had subsided. He was moved by all the joy, but he shuddered as he thought of it: If the Templars had succeeded in their robbery, what would have become of these noble men and the dignified old man? Eusebius saw his seriousness and apologized: "Dear young friend! Do not let a shadow fall on your heart, because in our joy we almost do not pay attention to you. After all, the joy of having us back is so great that it cannot be described."

"I, too, rejoice with you, my father!" - said Ursus kindly - "since I, too, was permitted to help accomplish this great work of salvation! When you shall know all, then no citizen of heaven will be more blessed than you, for all these hard trials and guides are a visible work of God and a miracle of God for all!

But, dear father, our people and animals need their well-deserved rest now; just let me arrange everything, for you are unaccustomed to so many people."

A handshake and Ursus went out; he had Bernhart's convoy and his people set up tents and cooking fires. "But you others, who now belong to this house, be patient; your brother Eusebius must first discuss everything with his sons."

After much effort, which was still necessary that evening, the prepared meal was happily taken and finally a general devotion was held. Eusebius still wanted to know many things, and so they talked until after midnight, and the old man finally said: "Oh God! How good You are! What would have happened to us without You!"

Ursus was also able to tell many a beautiful story about the young Roman Achibald and how he was completely permeated by this Divine Love that was visible everywhere and that blessed his mission.

Ursus wanted to give Eusebius a greater gift, because he now had to care for all the people, but the latter said: "My brother, you were a witness to our happiness when my

children, whom I had to consider almost lost, rushed back into my arms! Only God knows in what heavy sorrows I was, I would have died if they had not come back. Now God gave me my children for the second time and in addition 50 souls, whom I will gladly take care of in love! "Oh my Ursus, my brother! When God tests one of His children, He does not do it without purpose, and comes with His reward so rich as could not be expected. Keep what you intended for me, for you meet so many, many poor in your travels! But can you not rest another day and help me with the accommodation of the new housemates? My sons are still unaccustomed to it, and Bernhart must go home, for he will take the many others with him!"

"Dear Father Eusebius! I would gladly stay with you another day, but as long as I have not completely taken care of the Templar servants entrusted to me, duty calls me to the greatest caution! I will return later to bring back Elim's possessions. Just as today you want to love the newcomers like your children, so the supreme Jesus wants to be a Father to us! Be assured, in this loving and serving, you are relieved of all worries and your life is enriched daily! For where God knows that His child faithfully wants to bear loads and burdens, He already knows ways to make us happy. This I have often experienced, and only through that, was my heart able to love and give so richly!"

Early in the morning, Ruth and her sisters were busy preparing the morning meal, and then the hour of departure approached. Ursus took Elim's wagons and animals with him for the time being and promised to use everything that Assir had acquired, in the Spirit of love. So Eusebius blessed all the departing ones in the name of the Savior and Redeemer Jesus.

Ruth felt in her element again and took care of her old father and of Elim, who was almost healthy and could give good advice to the two sons to give new work and bread to the fifty people, and the word of Ursus: "Whoever lives a life of love and selfless service is relieved of worry!" - was also fulfilled here.

Thus a month passed. Then Roman soldiers came to Elim and asked if he was still in the house and reported: "In three days from today, there will be a trial here! We still have Bernhart and his two servants to summon here, and Joseph, Joram and Ruth are to be ready as witnesses!"

Elim, when informed of this, said: "This day will show us the reckoning of all these trials of ours and reveal our God's gracious providence!"

When the day came to decide Assir's fate, Bernhart appeared at noon with his servants, joyfully greeted by all. Then came the Romans Cornelius and Achibald in a splendid chariot and the soldiers who accompanied the procession a month ago. Assir was heavily guarded and was almost unrecognizable. Roman judges and scribes had tables and benches prepared in the courtyard and the court convened.

The first question was: "Assir, do you recognize us as a court?" Assir answered loudly: "No! I demand to be tried before a temple court!"

Said the judge: "Assir, you would have found lenient judges; but now only justice can prevail, for you do not want leniency!"

Thus Joseph, Joram and Ruth were heard. When Ruth wanted to keep silent, the judge said: "Ruth, you are standing here in the presence of God before the people whom God has hired as judges, you have the duty to report everything according to the truth. Silence and concealment does not save the accused from punishment!"

When all had been questioned, the judge asked earnestly: "Assir, what do you have to reply to this?"

"What do you want me to say" - Assir replied - "I am sure of death!"

"You are mistaken" - replied the judge - "we never want the downfall of a man, but offer a hand of salvation to every erring one. Though you lay all the blame on the temple council, we are dealing with you! You have ordered robbery, you have enriched yourself by fraud, you have cruelly maltreated the people entrusted to your care, and you have attempted the murder of your friend Elim! Once again I ask you as your judge: do you admit to being guilty?"

"I am certainly guilty" - Assir replied - "but the punishment belongs to the Templars who raised me to be that! What is it to you Romans anyway, if I allow myself to be robbed in the service of the temple? You Romans are nothing but robbers. Where are my people, where is my property? Robbed and stolen!"

"If you can't say anything better for your excuse, we'll close the interrogation, in two hours you'll hear your verdict!"

A meal was prepared, but joy would not arise, it lay like an mountain on all. Then the court met once more and pronounced the sentence: "Ten years in the galleys under the strictest guard!" Thus Assir was led away heavily bound; if he had repented and promised to mend his ways, he would have been sentenced only to 1-2 years in the galleys.

The old father of the house asked the Romans: " Be my guests for a few more days. To all this gloom also belongs joy, and this has truly entered my house with all the human children liberated by you!"

Cornelius now wanted to see the new housemates in their employment and was pleased to see how well Eusebius cared for his people. Achibald asked what he thought about Elim. Eusebius replied: "Brother, Elim has become almost irreplaceable to us! His wise instructions from his rich experiences have something about them that we do not have in us; I would like to always keep him here. But best of all, he has become a Christian such as there are few: great in silence, but helpful to all."

With the new workers, Eusebius was able to have simple, handsome wooden buildings erected from his forests to house the many; and now, following Elim's advice, he wanted to turn the many pastures into fields and garden land so that they could cultivate all the products needed to sustain and profit themselves.

Bernhart also reported of his new employees that they had settled in happily and contentedly with him, and Cornelius promised to visit him as well, which caused great joy.

When everyone had gathered in silence, Cornelius stood up and said: "My dear friends! I may consider today one of the most beautiful days of my life, because I was able to experience and see how wonderfully God shows us the ways to help and what wonderful means He puts into our hands, if we trust His instructions and use all our will to act for the liberation of our fellow men! The greatest reward for us, is the joy of having won two brothers, Elim and Achibald, as capable workers in Jesus' great work of deliverance from all suffering.

What purest joy it was for me when my young friend Achibald came to me beaming after the journey and said: "Your God is now also my God and your Savior has also become

mine! Now I have only one wish: to change my profession, since Christian and soldier can not completely meet in me.

Therefore, dear Eusebius, I have a great request to you, the fulfillment of which is very important to me. Achibald wants to become a farmer, take him into your house. It is only because of Achibald's future that we are still staying here, and if you agree with that, then I tell you: he is also coming with other intentions, but I do not want to talk about them."

Eusebius spoke warmly: "Be welcome with us, Achibald! You hardly suspect how happy you make me, and relieve me of my only care; you come and wish to be my son? What Ruth's mouth concealed, her eyes have already betrayed, therefore I say to you: What our Savior brings together, can only bring about good! Therefore come, my Ruth, and hold a feast for life! My blessing is and shall be wordless, because your courtship was also a wordless one! I feel it, a great task is still intended for you and a presentiment tells me that also a secret wish of our good God and Father will be fulfilled."

Cornelius was deeply moved, and suddenly an angel's messenger became visible to his eyes and he said: "Reveal our participation to your brothers, too! In all the heavens there is rejoicing, because finally again conditions are fulfilled to let arise new streams of blessings, new waves of life from the Spirit of true love and devotion to the great work of redemption. Eternal Love is concerned about many, many of your faithful children, who are looking for a refuge of rest out of need and oppression, and this you may help to create!

Acquire as much land as possible, the means will flow to you if you truly believe in success, and build not only in your heart, no, also on the newly acquired land, dwelling and resting places for the persecuted. For the evil in the hearts of those enemies of God tries with power to tread down green seeds, which the Lord as Son of Man has laid in the hearts of His faithful. Build not only a house for yourselves, where you can bask in His love; but build a house for the Lord in the hearts of those who know: All life is grace! Everything is permeated by the Spirit of His eternal creation and preservation! Do not be frightened by what is going on in the world! The more secure you feel in the care of your God and Father, the more you can soothe the wounds that the world inflicts! Dry the tears! Ease the pain! This is my wish and my greeting of blessing from my world, which reaches into yours!"

Cornelius was moved to silence - then Achibald asked, beaming with happiness: "Ruth, is it true - do you want to go through life together with me and be my wife and comrade?"

"Yes, Achibald! Since you has professed the Savior, I have professed you! Behold, the kind Savior once said to me: "Wait for the hour, which I have been holding in readiness for eternity! For to whom you would gladly be a companion, I must first prepare him, because as long as your image lives in him more than Mine, he is not yet worthy of you!"

And so the promise of my God has now been fulfilled! But let us serve the Lord and seek to discern His holy plan in everything that happens, then we will be blessed ones and may bless again!"

Thus suffering was transformed into the purest joy, pain and sorrow into great happiness, which the great God intended as victory for His tested children!

