"A word to honest doubters"
Formerly we would not permit ourselves to be convicted by the Spirit of God. We sought rather to avoid every serious reminder of sin in our consciences. Now we turn to God and tell Him the whole truth where we formerly tried to conceal ourselves from Him. Now we desire to be reconciled to God and have even the smallest sin forgiven; formerly we tried to avoid reconciliation, or else tried to compromise with God and our own consciences and get away as easily as possible.

What a change of heart!

Here comes the sinner, formerly thoughtless and frivolous or self-satisfied, now humiliated and crushed by the truth, poor and helpless. Behind him towers his sinful life, heaven-high in its accusations against him. Within him is a heart filled to overflowing with sin, a heart which loves sin and not God. And, worst of all, he is unable in his own strength to change this heart of his.

Here he comes, wavering, groping, shy and fearful, because he feels that he can not come to God in this condition. But Jesus beckons to him and says in His friendly way: “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Then the sinner takes courage and goes directly to the Saviour with all his sinfulness.

He is saved.

For now, since Christ has died for sin, a sinner need do nothing more to be saved than to conceal or spare no sin, but lay everything before the Saviour. “If we confess our sins; He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I. John 1:9). “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

BOOK SIX

The Choice

“Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.”—Matthew 7:13.

“No man can serve two masters.”—Matthew 6:24.

“Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God.”—James 4:4.

As I observe the people I meet, I notice that there are two distinct classes who have made a definite choice of the course they are pursuing in life.

They are the avowed believers and the avowed ungodly.

Both of these classes live a life which shows that they have made a clear and definite choice.

But between these two groups is that great mass of human beings which has made no choice, which does not will to make any, and which is even afraid to choose.

It does not surprise me that they are afraid.

Everybody has a native fear of a great and decisive choice, that is, a choice which involves many and far-reaching consequences. There is something within us which seeks to avoid all choosing. We do not care to burn the bridges behind us. We want a way open for retreat in case too many difficulties should arise.

This fear naturally becomes doubly great when a person is confronted with the most decisive choice of all in life:
the choice of one's relationship to God. There are numerous decisions in a person's life which entail many and far-reaching consequences. There is, for instance, the relationship in which a child chooses to stand toward its parents. The old Mosaic words: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth," are an eternal law for mankind, which no child can violate and go unpunished. The attitude which a man chooses to take toward the law of the land is also a decisive factor in his life.

But the relationship in which a person chooses to stand toward God is, without comparison, the most important of all. This is because of the simple fact that God is God.

Because this choice is the most important of all, it is feared more than any other; and for that reason people try to avoid it.

These people who live midway between the avowed believers and the avowed ungodly think, as a rule, that it is not necessary to make any choice.

They do not desire by any means to break with God. Their life is woven together with God in such an intimate way that life apart from Him is unthinkable.

In the first place, they are, like all other people, religious. They have within themselves a hidden longing for eternal things, a secret attraction toward the source of their being. A capacity for God, a desire for God, lies deeply imbedded in all of us.

When our soul left the hand of God, our creator, He put His stamp upon it and marked it for His own. This mark of ownership can not be removed by any one, either in time or in eternity. Even if a person loses his soul, becomes eternally lost, he can not escape consciousness of the fact that his soul is God's rightful possession.
with the deep problems of life and their soul-life is allowed to express itself untrammeled by reflection and prejudice.

Some time ago in one of the countries of northern Europe a man died who had been a leader in the cultural life of the nation. He lived as an atheist and died as such. But after his death a few small slips of paper were found scattered throughout his otherwise well arranged posthumous papers. On these slips of paper he had from time to time committed to writing the distressing cries of his soul to the God whom he had persistently denied.

Verily, the soul of man is religious!

God has, however, not only endowed us with religious capacities and longings. He satisfies those longings. We were baptized as babes. At that time He met our soul’s religious needs, and that even before we had asked Him to do so. Such is God.

In a mystical, wonderful way He planted the deepest and finest roots of our being deep down into His own being. We received life in God in a wonderful way. During the first two or three years we lived a quiet life as God’s children, under the constant influence of the living God, undisturbed by our surroundings.

As self-consciousness began to develop, we met earth’s most beautiful revelation of the love of God in our dear mother. There is none like mother, so tender and mild, so beautiful and good. No one understands like mother. No one forgives like mother. No one is as patient as mother.

And never was mother more dear than when she lifted her little one into her lap at eventide and began to tell about Jesus. Those were the best hours we experienced. She told us the story so gently and so simply. Every-

thing was so real and came so close to us. It seemed as though Jesus was walking about in the room.

In this way Jesus entered quietly into our little daily life and knit our soul to Himself by a thousand strands of gold.

Then came the happiest day of all the year, Christmas Eve, with Christmas trees, Christmas candles, Christmas joy, and Christmas gifts. When the lights had been lit and all had been seated about the table, father stepped solemnly over to the bookshelf, took down the big, old Book, sat down, and read the most wonderful story of all that can be read here on earth. I imagine that you can still feel a little of that which passed through your soul and body as the impressive words penetrated the stillness: “And it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled...”

Time passed.

The day came when you were to start school. Mother accompanied you, and you went with many a strange and anxious thought. But your teacher was kind and good, and you began to like her from the start. At first you were always well-behaved and industrious. Later on you became a little naughty perhaps, at least occasionally. Not so, however, during the period of religious instruction. It was different from all the other classes.1 There you could not be unruly, because the teacher spoke of Jesus in such a way that you often felt as though He were present in the room. Your heart was softened, and you repented bitterly of the evil you had done.

Again time passed.

You enrolled in the pastor’s confirmation class. You

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1Christian instruction is given in the public schools of Norway.
were perhaps fortunate enough to have a pastor who knew how to speak to your young heart. When he spoke, it seemed as though God drew very near to you. You experienced a great deal during those months of preparation for confirmation.

Your confirmation day came. You were to stand before God and the congregation and witness the good confession. I do not know how you felt that day. I do know that to me it was a day full of seriousness and earnestness. I desired to “renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways.” I believed in the Triune God. Such was most likely also the case with you.

Soon afterwards came your first communion. That moved you even more. You stood in the presence of the greatest mystery given to man on earth. You wept like a child, and scarcely knew what was happening as you accompanied your father and mother up to the altar to receive the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord.

How true it is that God enters our life by many various pathways, and binds our soul to Himself by many tender bonds!

Time passed again.

Life is many-sided. It is not all sunshine and play. Dark, heavy shadows began to descend upon your home. Was it father who became ill? How everything was changed! Father was so quiet during his illness. You all became very quiet, too. He wanted you to read and sing for him often. You heard him pray to God. As a rule he said very little. But now and then he would say a few words to you about God, words which went to the very marrow of your bones. At such times he would weep, and you would weep, too. But it was all so quiet and peaceful.

One day the pastor was summoned. Father desired to partake of Holy Communion. You no doubt remember what a solemn hour it was. The room had been given a festive touch. Father lay happy and full of anticipation. Soon the venerable servant of the Lord came with the holy sacrament. An atmosphere of assurance and peace was noticeable even before he began to speak. You sat and looked at your father all the time. When he had participated in the sacred repast in preparation for the long journey, his countenance beamed with inexpressible and glorified joy. Deep down in your heart you thanked God because He can thus refresh and strengthen a soul in the midst of the terrible death-struggle.

Then father died. A few days afterward his dear body was lowered into the depths of the grave. Then, too, God drew near unto you in your sorrow, and spoke these mighty words: “Blessed be God who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” He told you that you would see your father again on that great resurrection morn when all who are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they shall come forth who have done good unto the resurrection of life.

Time passed again.

You were engaged to be married. At last your wedding day came. God was with you and made the day the happiest one in your life. He met you at the altar, and promised you that if you would open your hearts and home to Him, He would make all the bright and beautiful dreams come true which you had dreamed about your home and wedded life.

The following year you were given your first-born. Great was your joy. Again God entered quietly into the
midst of your happiness. Soon the little one was to be baptized. I presume you felt as I did when we brought our first-born to the baptismal font. It was as if God said to me: "Now the little one is not yours alone any longer; he is mine also. You love him, but I love him even more. Together we shall now in love guide him into a good and happy life and into the very kingdom of heaven itself."

On the way home from church I felt as though we had received the little one as a gift from God a second time.

This and a great deal more we all experience. Some of my readers have already experienced it. Others have experienced only a part of it. And it is only a matter of time, perhaps, and they will experience the remainder.

Thus God weaves Himself quietly and tenderly into human life. He knits by a thousand strands the finest and deepest life of the soul to the living God. Every festive and solemn occasion in the inner as well as the outward life of such a person has been blessed by God.

It is therefore inconceivable for these people to think of breaking with God and living without Him. They desire to keep up their connection with the God of their fathers and of their own childhood.

They go to church, occasionally also to the Lord's Table. They are, as a rule, very much interested in questions pertaining to the church and to Christianity. They are generous toward the poor and liberal givers to the various branches of Christian work. They are numbered among the pastor's most faithful supporters in the congregation; he never appeals to them in vain.

Such are the people who live midway between the avowed believers and the avowedly ungodly, and who seek to avoid making the great and decisive choice.

That is the way they appear from one side.

But they have another side, too.

This side is not so bright, and therefore not so easy to speak about. But if I am to be faithful to the truth, I must say a few words about this side also.

They love the world.

That is what the Bible says about every life which will not permit itself to be directed by God. These people love worldliness and can not think of living without it. They love an easy, comfortable life, and seek to avoid as far as possible all serious and heart-searching questions. Regarding personal advantage, personal honor, and, in doubtful instances, what others might say, are the determining factors in their life, both at home as well as away from home. They do not look to God or their own conscience for guidance, but do as the majority does.

They love that worldly life in which people help each other to pamper their flesh in refined and respectable ways, by means of entertainments, amusements, society life, and a social life in general in which the truth both in word and in deed is carefully suppressed, according to a general agreement known as "good etiquette."

No open ungodliness is allowed, no excesses of any kind. Everything is respectable and proper. They are good, honorable, capable people, an asset to their own home as well as to the community at large.

But they bend their energies and their goodness toward this one goal: to unite God and worldliness. They try to maintain a balance whereby they need neither to break with God nor offend the world. Not more worldly than that they can associate respectfully with the pastor and
the church, and not more Christian than “good etiquette” will permit.

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Then comes Jesus with His mighty and inexorable: “either-or.” “Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby.” “No man can serve two masters.” “Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God.”

It is Jesus who has put this “either-or” into life.

He has drawn the real line of demarcation between people. We, too, distinguish between people in various ways. We divide them into the rich and the poor, according to the amount of money they have. We classify them as educated or uneducated, according to the knowledge they have acquired. And we look upon them as cultured or uncouth, often according to the clothes they wear.

But neither clothes nor wealth nor knowledge constitute a real basis for classifying people.

Jesus has pointed out the real difference between them. The old prophet foretold it as early as the time of the Saviour’s birth: “Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34). Which is exactly what happened. He went through the nation and divided it into two groups: those who heard Him unto salvation and those who were offended in Him and thus lost. In like manner Jesus has passed through mankind down through the centuries, and has divided men into two classes: those who chose to follow Him and those who chose to reject Him.

They may otherwise be as closely bound together by ties of blood and friendship as it is possible for men to be: parents and children, brothers and sisters, husband and wife, friends and comrades. When Jesus comes, He sets up an inner wall of separation between those who humble themselves before Him and those who reject Him. Even though they work together side by side every day, eat at the same table, or lie in the same bed, nevertheless, their lives are separated by a great gulf.

The different attitudes which men take toward Jesus is the real mark of separation between them. This separation is also to be an eternal one, Jesus says. On the great day at the end of time this separation will become openly and irrevocably manifest. Jesus Himself portrays this in the judgment scene (Matthew 25:31-46): As the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, so shall He separate the human race forever into two groups: those who accepted the Saviour and those who rejected Him. “And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Scarcely any other passage in the Gospels shows us more clearly how conscious Jesus was of putting the eternal and inexorable “either-or” into human life. He is the rock in the midst of the stream of life by which the human race is to be divided into two classes.

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Jesus puts this “either-or” before the individual also. And He does so without asking our permission. He compels no one; all of us are at liberty to choose the attitude we wish to take toward Him. But He sees to it that we are brought face to face with Him. He does not ask our permission for that, either. He sees to it that no man is permitted to walk the broad way to eternal perdition without first having been confronted with his only Saviour.

It appears to us often as though men pursue their un-
saved course fairly undisturbed. They seem to sin thoughtlessly and carelessly, without even a thought of sin or punishment, soul or conscience, death or judgment, God or eternity. But, God be praised, such is not the case.

I remember an incident from my childhood days which even now speaks to my heart. We were a group of lively boys, and we did a number of things which deserved punishment. But father was busy outside the home, and he could not always attend to these things every time it became necessary.

But at times father would come in and punish the young offender. I shall never forget those times no matter how old I become. He came in such a quiet, kindly way. He was so irresistibly kind. He would take the little offender up into his lap, and there I would sit wriggling like a worm. It was so unbearable to look into father’s kind, grieved, tear-filled eyes. For now I had to look him in the eye.

That is also the way of Him who is the Father of all that bear the name child in heaven and on earth. He suffers His children to sin for a long time and to despise His love. But the day finally comes—for which everything has been made ready. He summons the transgressor into His presence and says: “I must have a word with you before you proceed any farther upon your unsaved way.”

That person has not been born who must not at such a time stop and listen. Everything quakes beneath one’s feet. Confronted with the living God, the sinner becomes filled with holy anxiety. His soul trembles with unspeakable fear and terror. A blazing light is focused upon his sinfulness. Old sins and new rise accusingly against him, like a mountain of indictments which threatens to fall upon him and crush him. Sins long since forgotten come to light again and pain the soul like an open, smarting sore.

At such times, however, a person does not only see his sins; he also sees his Saviour. To a thoughtless person that is almost worse than to see his sins. He now learns to know what Jesus is like. Up to this time he has not known Him very well. He has gone through life with the ordinary caricature of Jesus impressed upon his superficial soul. He has thought of God as a strict Lord, Who was hard to deal with and Who understood and cared little about human misery or happiness. He would, perhaps, even prefer to deprive men of whatever joy they might be able to wrest from their brief and weary sojourn in this life. And finally cast them into everlasting torment in case they did not comply with His strict requirements concerning repentance and regeneration, and many other things which are both unreasonable and impossible to understand.

The sinner is now permitted to “see” his Saviour. He sees that Jesus is neither hard nor gruesome nor unreasonable. Wounded and bleeding, the Saviour approaches the human offender, not to scare, nor to scold, and still less to torment and destroy. He comes to you. He comes because He cannot endure to see you waste your brief years in sin and lose your immortal soul. He comes to tell you where it will all end if you continue. And He tells you that He can save you and transform your life into a new, rich, and happy one, if you will but admit Him into your life.

The hardest thing for you, however, is to look into the eyes of Jesus. He does not speak a harsh or reproachful word to you, but sees, of course, your inner distress. And
every time you are almost persuaded but fail to follow
His urgent call and your own conviction, you see his tear-
filled eyes resting solemnly upon you.

Verily, the love of Christ is the hardest thing for that
sinner to face who clings to sin and will not choose Christ.
From that day sin is no longer a pleasure. Sin becomes
harsh and bitter. Henceforth it feels like going to one’s
own execution whenever one permits oneself to be drawn
away into the old life and into the old companionships.

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Such a soul is confronted with the choice.
It is absolutely clear to him now that it is impossible
to unite God and worldliness. It is clear that it is not
efficient to be somewhat religious; that no one is saved
merely by seeking God; that no one can enter into the
kingdom of heaven merely by circling around outside of
the narrow gate. One must enter in through the narrow
gate. He sees now that Jesus is right: “No man can
serve two masters.” “Whosoever would be a friend of
the world maketh himself an enemy of God.”

He sees it now: A person becomes a Christian, not by
longing, nor by hoping, nor by waiting, nor by thinking,
nor by talking, nor by sighing, nor by weeping. Nay, a
choice must be made. It becomes evident that the course
he is now pursuing will never lead him to the desired
goal. He must decide whom to follow: God or the
world.

But this is also what is hardest for that person.
What shall he choose?
If he chooses God, the world will turn against him. If
he chooses the world, he will have to break with God.
Both are equally hard. To break with God is impossible!
And the thought of incurring the disfavor of the world, of
facing its cynical smiles, mockery, its condescending sym-
pathy, is equally intolerable.

In such a time a person weeps many bitter tears.

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There is also something almost exasperating about this.
How can a mere choice entail consequences as high as the
heavens and as far-reaching as eternity? One moment
an unsaved soul; the next, saved. Merely by a choice!
I admit willingly that this is remarkable. But it is true,
nevertheless. May I at this point underline this remark-
able aspect of the choice in connection with repentance?

First, let me point out that this choice, like all other
choices, involves but a moment’s time. This lies in the
very nature of a choice and can not be otherwise. I may
deliberate upon and consider a choice for years. The
actual choosing, however, is not a matter of two moments
but one.

This moment’s choice results in an epoch-making change
in my life, both for time and for eternity! That this is
remarkable can not be denied. At one moment I am an
unsaved soul; in the next, saved. At one moment I am
a debt-laden soul, temporally and eternally; in the next,
entirely free from guilt. At one moment I am, according
to the Scripture, a child of the devil; in the next, a child
of God. At one moment I am walking the broad way to
perdition; in the next, standing in the midst of the nar-
row gate on the narrow way which leads to the fair
homeland of heaven.

How can such truly great and remarkable things fol-
low as the result of a mere choice?

Permit me first to answer thus: This is not due to the
choice in itself. And for that reason it does not depend
upon the clarity of your thought, the intensity of your
feelings, or the exertion of your will while making the choice. Nay, the saving virtue of the choice is due to something else entirely. The saving virtue lies in the new relationship to your one and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, into which your choice has brought you.

Jesus says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

The saving virtue of the choice lies in this, that you choose to open your soul to Jesus and let Him enter with all His saving power and do the work which He, better than any one else, can do in a sin-laden and sin-burdened soul.

Notice now the necessity of the choice.

Jesus stands at the door and knocks; that is, He makes it known that He desires admittance. What do men do when Jesus knocks? They do one of three things.

They may listen with indifference and obstinacy to His earnest and tender call.—And in case their hearts become too restless, they try to drown out the knocking at their heart's door in the noise and tumult of which a worldly life is so full.

Or, they go to the door, open it slightly, and begin to negotiate for peace with Jesus. Their hearts are so restless and full of misery that they know there must be a change. They must have peace with God. But they want it at the lowest possible price. Consequently, they try to negotiate, to make a bargain with our Lord. They desire to be saved, and they sigh and cry and yearn very fervently for it. But they tell the Lord what conditions. They want to be saved without repentance. They want to be saved, but without breaking unconditionally

with sin and their worldly life. They want to be saved, but without yielding themselves unreservedly and giving Him full sway.

Many stop here. Especially in our religious age. People are satisfied with seeking God instead of pressing on through the narrow gate and finding God. The little religious awakening which they have experienced and which nowadays is elegantly styled "religious experience," they use as a cloak every time the Holy Spirit of God through their conscience demands a genuine conversion.

Or, thirdly, they do exactly as Jesus asks them to do. They open the door to Him that He may enter in. In that moment that soul is converted.

What takes place at that moment is this: That soul chooses to stand in an entirely new relationship to Christ. One no longer tries to drown out His knocking at the heart's door. One no longer tries to negotiate a compromise with Jesus. The soul has chosen to open the door, that is, to surrender to God without dissimulation, without artifice, without conditions, and without delay.

People speak of a converted person as one who has surrendered to God. It is an excellent expression, perhaps the best expression we have for characterizing the quintessence of conversion.

What does it mean to surrender?

We know that from the war. He who surrenders, first lays down his arms and then throws up his empty hands to let his foe know that he will no longer use weapons against him. He delivers himself up disarmed, asks no terms, and thrusts himself upon the mercy of the other.

That is what takes place when a person is converted. He first lays down all the weapons he has used against
God and his own conscience. He then surrenders himself to God’s merciful dealings, without naming any conditions or making any demands.

The paths are now open into the very innermost recesses of his soul. He does not try to hide any of his sins. Everything, old sins and new, small sins and great, is candidly and unsparingly acknowledged before God. The sinner desires to spare no sin nor smuggle any into the new life of fellowship with God. Everything to the light! All relationships, all habits are laid openly before God in order that He may decide whether they are sinful or not.

It is easier now to say how the choice of one moment can entail such enormous consequences.

Because Jesus has died for our sins, nothing more is necessary on our part in order to be saved than this one thing: not to refuse Jesus admittance, but to open our heart to Him when He comes to us with His great salvation and knocks at the door for the purpose of making us partakers in it. He enters and begins to sup with our soul, according to His promise in Revelation 3:20.

In the first place, He gives us full remission of sin, which He has won for us by His own precious blood. Then He gives us new life by His Spirit. A holy life, which manifests itself in hunger and thirst after righteousness, in smarting pain and grief at offending God, in an inner sense of impotence with respect to sin, which draws the soul to the cross and to the heart of Jesus, and in a constant feeling of our inability to do good, which gives the soul no peace except when beholding Jesus. And, finally, He gives us peace and joy in our hearts, as much as is compatible with our spiritual development and growth in grace.

Some of my readers are perhaps saying to themselves: “This applies to me. I have always avoided the choice. But I have for some time been aware that I must choose. My soul is longing, yea, crying out for peace with God. Now and then at least. But I can not. I dare not. What would my friends and acquaintances say if they were to hear that I was converted? The mere thought of their smiles of derision and their commiseration is enough to frighten me.”

Indeed, my friend, we are cowards. Cowardice is one of our lowest and vilest traits. There is scarcely anything which shows us more clearly how sin has destroyed our soul-life. It is terrible that man can forget God, his Creator and Father. Still worse that he transgresses His will and resists Him. But worst of all, it seems to me, is this, that man is ashamed of God, even when he is convicted of sin and knows that he can not be saved except by surrendering to God. Then not to dare to do so because it is a shame to be a true Christian!

To be a half Christian is not looked upon as a shame; on the contrary, it is considered quite compatible with the highest degree of culture. But to be a whole-hearted Christian, one who gives heed to God and not to man, is considered uncultured. How the truth has been perverted in our enlightened and cultured age!

People are not ashamed to swear and curse. Nowadays even women take the name of God in vain and know full well that they are not committing a breach of "good etiquette." But to mention the name of God seriously and lovingly, of this they are ashamed. There are without a question not a few people who would rather be looked upon as scoundrels than to be known as living Christians.
What good does this do me, you ask. I am a big coward. Tell me if there is any hope for a man like me.

My friend, I am glad to offer you a Gospel which holds out hope for all who will honestly come to Christ. There is only one class of people which Christ can not help. It is those who are not sincere when they come to Him.

Let me tell you that I was just as much of a coward as you. Perhaps that might give you a little help and encouragement. We are all cowards. Jesus knows us. And He is not surprised at our cowardice. He is prepared for it. He does not expect either you or me to have courage of ourselves to break with the world and surrender to God.

One thing, however, He does expect: that we come to Him and tell Him honestly how cowardly we are. And ask Him to give us the courage we lack. Do this and you will see what Christ can do for you. All who have been saved so far have been thus helped. That is the way He helped me, too. It was as if He said to me: “Now put your trembling little hand in mine, and together we two will go to the people you fear so much.”

And I went with Him. And all went well. Some of my friends began to cry when I began to tell them what God had done for me. Others listened to me patiently and said when I was through: “Well, just stick to it.” Others, again, looked upon the whole thing with a skeptical smile. But that, too, could be borne.

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I can imagine that here and there among my readers are some who are saying: “This does not apply particularly to me. I am past this. Fear of men no longer keeps me from making the decisive choice which I know I should make. Conditions in my home are what hinder me.

We get along so well in our home. True, neither of us is perfect, but we live together beautifully and harmoniously. We share everything and are very intimately attached to each other.

If I should become a true Christian, what would become of our home? It would be ruined. Our mutual confidence would come to an end, because we would no longer be sharing the same views with respect to life’s most important questions. By my new life I would bring discord into our idyllic little home. And I do not know what that might lead to. Perhaps our little home would be broken up, because my husband could not endure to have me live the richest and deepest part of my life apart from him. Might there not also be a danger that I might drive him farther away from God and even, perhaps, make it impossible for him to be saved? He might become so bitter toward God and Christianity that it would harden his heart completely.”

In reply to this I would say first: I understand well your thoughts and your fears. A good home is certainly worth preserving by all the means which can stand the test of the light of God. God bless both you and your good home. Might we have many such homes among our beloved people!

But then I must also tell you what Jesus says in this connection: “He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). I know that deep down in your heart there is something which tells you that Jesus is right. You should not be compelled to ask any person, not even those nearest to you, for permission to be in the right relationship to your
Saviour. Any one who demands that you act according to his and not your own conscience in this matter does not truly love you.

Furthermore, I have something else to tell you: “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house” (Acts 16:31). You and your house shall be saved; this is the promise of the Lord. How is this to take place? When you believe on the Lord Jesus, that is, surrender to Him without taking counsel with flesh and blood. You will be saved first. And through you the rest will be won also.

The Lord would like to enter your home. He has been knocking a long time already. He must gain entrance now through you. If you for the sake of peace in the family do not dare to take the step, perhaps your idyllic home life will come to an end with you two going arm in arm to eternal perdition. But if you repent now, you will be able to help your loved ones into life in God. Then your home will afford you an even deeper and purer joy than you have heretofore had.

Assume bravely the trials and difficulties which you will encounter at first; until you have won your loved ones. The Lord will be with you each day with His invisible power and guide you in all your ways.

Furthermore, it is by no means certain that you will encounter as much opposition as you beforehand fear you will. Many married folk have been happily surprised, when one finally confided to the other that he or she had been converted, to hear the other reply immediately by saying: “God be praised that such is the case with you, too. I have had this in mind for a long time, but I have been uncertain as to how you would take it. And for

that reason I have not been able to make myself say anything to you about it.”

Gracious God! I thank Thee that I have made the choice. And I thank Thee for each step I have been permitted to take upon the narrow way in Thy footsteps. I thank Thee for the blessed joy of being a Christian. I pray Thee for those who have not made the choice, and who stand fearful and anxious before the narrow gate of decision. Thou who didst help me to choose, help them also. Especially those who feel in their conscience that they ought to make the choice now. Give them a vision of Thee, Lord, that they hesitate no longer, but cast themselves forthwith into Thy pierced hands. Amen.