

## The Costs of inner Change

(1988)

So once a famous preacher came into my pentecostal church and he preached about *Change*: " God can change your life, your character! Do you want, that He changes your inner life?" He gazed intensively into the great assembly. "Yes, I want ! Amen and Hallelujah " was the lividly reaction of the audience. "God can do everything!" someone cried enthusiastically! Cheers were heard! "Yes, he can! God is great! Yeah"

The preacher smiled: " Well, good to hear that ", he said and made a short pause. "But are you also willing to pay the costs for such a change in your character? Maybe there will come problems and troubles in your life, when God begins his work in you. Are you willed to accept this?"

Again he gazed intensively into the assembly room. This time there was no Amen or Hallelujah. Only silence! After half minute he said slowly: "Thank you , brothers and sisters, that you are so honest!"

At that time I made a vacation stop in a friend`s house in the near of my home town Duesseldorf (Germany). For eight months I had been on pentecostal bible school in a small town and was on the way to Bremen, a big city in the northern part of Germany. There a practical year was planned.

One year ago in the age of 30 I had given up everything to become a "worker in the Lord`s vineyard"! So perhaps to serve as a preacher or a missionary in a foreign country. All seemed to be possible. I was absolutely decided to go whereto God would lead me.

Two days after the strange preach about the *inner change* and its *costs* I sat relaxed in my friend`s garden. I read for a while in the bible, but became a little bit tired and closed it. The warm sun on my skin, the smell of the flowers, a bird singing ... what a lovely day!

My thoughts went forward to Bremen. What would wait there for me? But I was never good in thinking forward, so my thoughts went back to the preach of the *inner change*. What had the preacher said: "God can change everything. Also your inner life. Do you want that?"

My shortcomings were always well - known to me. So why not? An inner change done by God sounded good! Perhaps I could serve Him later better after such a change. I started to consider it seriously.

Some minutes later I made my decision. I closed my eyes and prayed:" God, I want this change!" I was really surprised, when an intensive thought came in my mind: "Are you sure, that you are willing to pay the costs?"

To be honest, I was really a little bit shocked about this question. "What are the costs?" I asked. The answer came immediately: "Suffering!" There now was a pause, only the bird in the near did not stop his jovial song. Did he know about *suffering*?

"Yes, I am!" said I with a firm voice. In the next seconds I saw in a kind of day dream me walking into a bank, staying at a counter, taking money in my hands and leaving again the bank. End of the scene!

I really was puzzled. This all made no sense to me. Had I gone lost in my own silly thoughts? "Hm, I do not know!" I murmured to myself. "Better I write it down!" I took my diary and made a note of my "dialogue" with God!

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Two days later I left my friend's home and travelled to Bremen. I reached it on Friday evening and on Monday morning would start my work. So not much to become accustomed to the new situation. Most of the time I stayed in my flat. Only on Sunday morning visited the church assembly of that community. I introduced myself on the pulpit and they gave me a warm welcome. Especially the second pastor, called Walter, was nice to me.

On Monday morning I walked into the bureau of the first pastor. I got a warm welcome by the secretary, the pastor's daughter, and some easy works to deal with. The pastor was for some days on a journey, as I had already been told the day before. It was a quiet and nice start of my practical.

After lunch I went again into the bureau, when Monica told me: "Heiner, Sister Eberlein was here. The old lady needs some help. Could you please go to see her?" It where only some meters to her flat and a minute later I ringed at her door. After half a minute I heard from inside: "Hello, who is there?" "Ah, here is Heiner, the new trainee from the bible school!" A key was turned around and the door opened: "Please, come in! I have already waited for you!"

Sister Eberlein was a nice, old lady and I followed her into the living room. She walked very slowly supported by a walking stick and touched with her other hand sometimes the wall or a piece of furniture for orientation: "My eyes," she complained. "I just came today out of hospital. I have been operated on both eyes. Ah, it is no fun to become old!"

Now I noticed the two blinders on her eyes. "Two weeks I am not allowed to use my eyes," she added. "I feel so helpless!" We sat both down at the big table in her living room and I got a cup of coffee. "So, you are the young trainee of the bible school?" she asked curiously.

After some minutes of small talk about the bible school I asked her: "Sister

Eberlein, in bureau I was told you need some help. So what can I do for you?" "Ah yes", she said. " As I told you I came just today out of hospital. So I want you to accompany me to the bank in the city to get some money from the bank." She got on her feet and it seemed, that she wanted immediately start.

I was shocked! I imagined her slow walking and her blinders . How should this work ? "Sister Eberlein", I said calmly, " I do not think, that this is a good idea! You have difficulties with walking and you cant see anything in the moment!" " But I need the money!", she insisted. "Well, I know," I answered," but if you give me a paper of authority, I will go alone and get the money from the bank."

"Young man", she answered, " I need one thousand Deutsch marks. What if you loose that money? It is so dangerous today! So many evil persons! And besides, I don` t know you. Can I really trust you ?"

It needed some more words, but at last I convinced her and she gave me that paper."Please be careful!" she said again. "There are so many evil persons!" I got on my feet " Sister Eberlein, in one hour I will be back with your money. You will see!"

I was already at the door, when I heard her again: "Hello, please come back. I forgot something!" I went back to the entrance of the living room. "Could you please buy me on your way back a package of milk in the nearby super market?"

I left her flat with a feeling of relief. Luckily I had convinced her and now it was easy going. I took the tram and fifteen minutes later I was in the city . When I had found the bank I went inside and five minutes later I left it again with one thousand Deutsch marks in a small handbag.

When I was already in the near of Sister Eberlein`s flat, I suddenly remembered the milk. I looked around for a super market and remembered one, I had seen on an earlier walk. So I turned around in that direction.

In the super-market I took a trolley, put the handbag with the money in it and searched for the milk. After I had got it, I went to the cash register. There I had to wait in a row. So standing there with my trolley in front of me, a young woman standing in the row of the other cash register caught my attention. She was nice and attractive, an eye-catcher.

When it was my turn at the register I took the milk out of my trolley, laid it on the counter and paid with the money of my purse. Then I brought the trolley

back the other ones and left again the super market. So, everything was done and I took path in direction of Sister Eberlein`s flat. It might be after twenty meters, when suddenly a shocking thought came in my my mind: "The hand bag!" In my hands were only the milk bag! No hand bag! Shock!

As you will presume, the way back into the super market was in vain. The handbag with the one thousand Deutsch marks remained lost. " Here many drug addicts come in", said the woman at the registry. "They always need money. Perhaps one of them has robbed it out of the trolley!"

So may be it had happened in the moment, when I had watched the nice young woman. May be it was an addicted or someone else. But what could speculations help? The money was lost and I had to tell it Sister Eberlein. Suddenly I felt very calm inside. It just had happened and now I had to think, how to move on. I decided to go first back home.

In my flat I sat down and tried to think it over. But I couldn`t think clearly and therefore I switched on TV to distract me a little bit. A daily soap was on. Two young men were talking. One man said:" They have robbed me one thousand Deutsch marks today?" I stared at the screen in total disbelief. "Really", said the other young man, "or are you kidding me?" "No, it`s true!" confirmed the other one.

What a coincidence! They talked about a robbery of one thousand Deutschmarks and twenty minutes before exactly this had happened to me. For the first I realized clearly, that this had happened not by chance. And then came in a flash back that scene in my friend`s garden and the crucial question into my mind: "Are you willing to pay the costs?"

Hadn`t I begged God to change my inner life? And hadn`t I accepted *suffering* for it? And hadn`t I seen myself in a *day dream* walking in a bank and leaving it with some money? Suddenly it was very clear in my mind. God had shown me four days ago, what would happen. Realising this I felt lucky!

When I told Sister Eberlein about the loss, she clapped her hands together and shouted: "Oh, my god!" But then in the next second she became quiet, sat down on a chair and said with a low and friendly voice: "OK, it has happened! We cannot change it! But you will have to pay the money back!" Relieved that she took it so easy, I promised it at once. And so I did! Every month she got one hundred Deutsch marks from me till everything had been paid!

This was my start in Bremen and there followed nine more years with many good and extraordinary experiences, but also a lot of *suffering*. Obviously God had taken my prayer in my friend`s garden seriously.