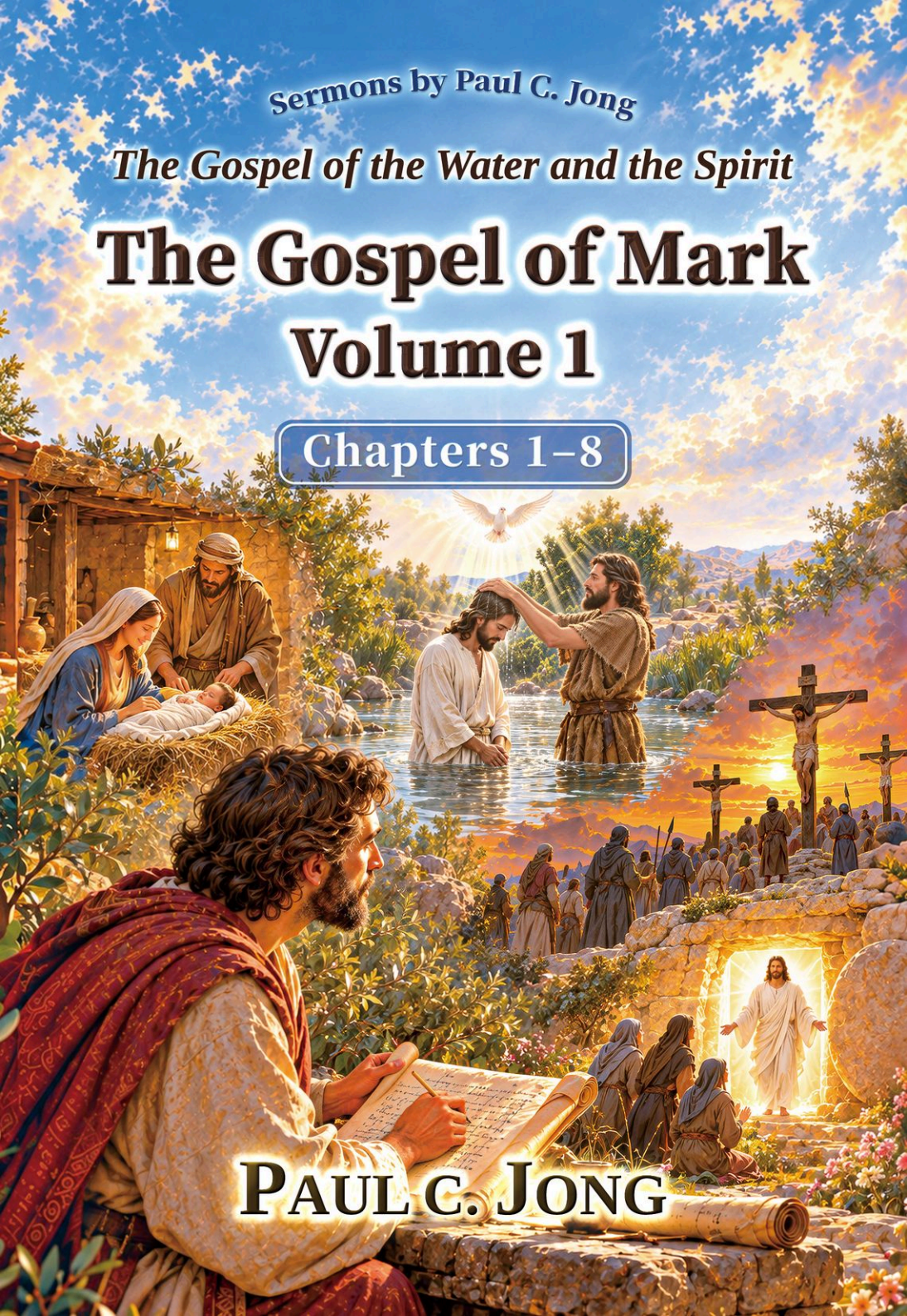
Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Mark
Volume 1

Chapters 1–8



PAUL C. JONG



“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1)

Mark places the beginning of the gospel not at the birth of Jesus but at the appearance of John the Baptist. This is because the gospel begins at the very place where the sinless Son of God received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore all the sin of mankind, and by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, He received the judgment for sin in our place and rose again from death. Jesus Christ is God in His very nature, and He is our Savior, who came to seek out sinners with the authority to remit sins. The assurance of salvation lies not in our own conduct but in what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who bore our sins and their judgment, has accomplished.

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Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Mark

Volume 1

Chapters 1–8

PAUL C. JONG



Hephzibah Publishing House
A Ministry of THE NEW LIFE MISSION
SEOUL, KOREA

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We offer a prayer of thanks to the Lord for giving us the Word of salvation and blessing us with the gospel of being born again by water and the Spirit.

I would also like to thank God's servants and brothers and sisters for their invaluable service in publishing this book. We all worked hard to write this book.

I hope and pray that this book will help many souls be born again, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude once again to everyone who worked hard with me.

I sincerely hope that the Lord will allow the gospel of being born again by water and the Spirit to be spread throughout the world through those who believe in Jesus.

PAUL C. JONG

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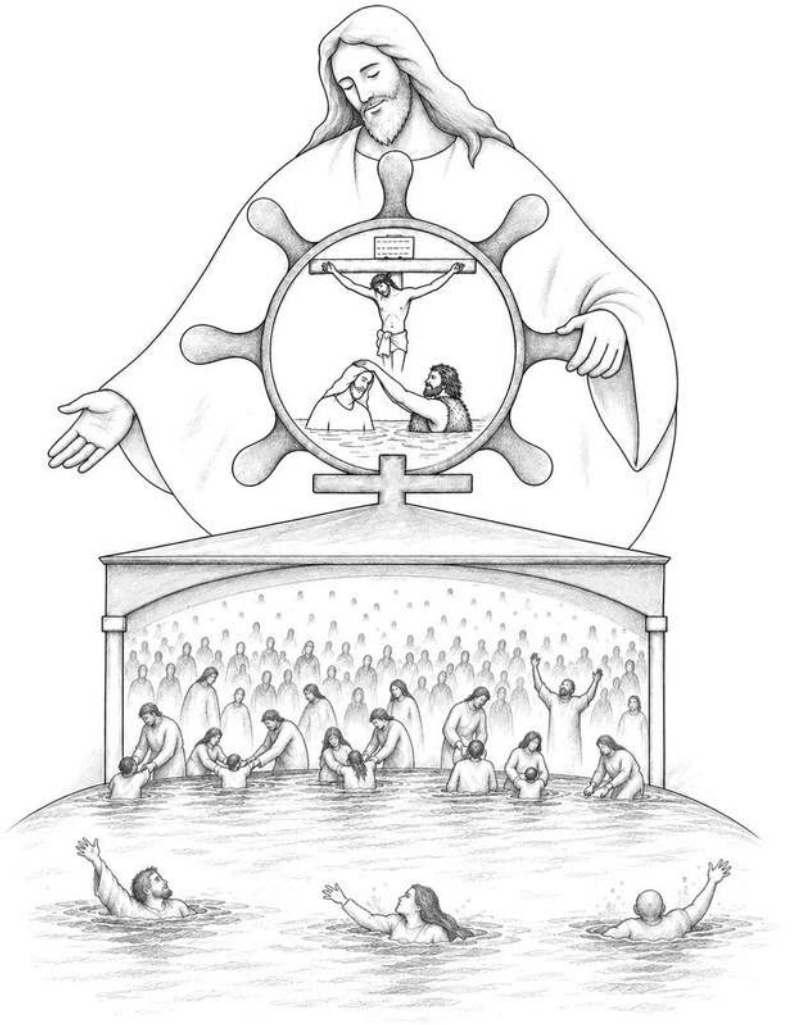

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Preface

The Son of God, who received baptism from John

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). The Gospel of Mark begins by making clear who it is that has saved us, and the person who stands at the very head of that gospel is John the Baptist. This is because God first sent John to prepare the way of the Lord, just as He had spoken through the prophet. John cried out to people to acknowledge their sins and turn back to God, while pointing to Jesus, who was coming after him. Therefore, if we have heard John's cry and come to know our own sins, we must now know how Jesus, of whom he testified, has solved those sins. The word of Mark chapters 1 through 8 contained in this book conveys precisely that.

Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering by the laying on of hands in the sacrifice of atonement of the Old Testament, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind. Those sins also include the sins of a whole lifetime that each one of us commits from birth until death. The sinless Son of God did not receive baptism in order to wash away His own sins; He received it in order to bear all our sins on His own body. Because there was this baptism, the meaning of the Cross also becomes clear. Because of those sins that had been passed on to Him, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment that we had to receive, and He rose again from death and delivered us from sin

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and death. If we believe only in the blood of the Cross and do not know the baptism, we cannot know how our sins were passed on to Jesus, and so sin remains in our hearts just as it is. That is why we believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, which He accomplished through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and become righteous not by our own deeds but by the grace of the Lord, who has remitted all our sins.

Acknowledge your sins before the One who remits sins

To the paralytic whom four men had let down after uncovering the roof, Jesus said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. The scribes reasoned in their hearts, asking who could remit sins but God alone, but Jesus knew their thoughts, and by raising the sick man and making him walk, He revealed before their eyes the invisible authority to remit sins. He is not merely One who has the power to heal diseases; He is God, who remits sins. And that paralytic, who could not get up by himself, is exactly what we are. Because we cannot remove our sins by our own strength, we can only receive by faith the remission of sins that the Lord accomplished once and for all. Therefore, like the four men who brought him before the Lord, we, too, must bring souls to the Lord.

The Lord, who has this authority, called Levi the tax collector and sat with sinners. Those who considered themselves righteous were displeased with that place, but the Lord made it plain that just as a sick person needs a physician, a sinner needs a Savior. The problem lies in the fact that people do not acknowledge themselves as sick. In Mark chapter 7, the Lord said that what defiles a person is not what enters from outside

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but what comes out of the heart. The reason evil thoughts, greed, and pride do not go away even when we wash our hands is that the very root of man is stained with sin. The Syro-Phoenician woman acknowledged even the words in which He compared her to a dog, and she sought His compassion, saying, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs" (Mark 7:28)*. In this way, the person who acknowledges his sins before the word also accepts the word of salvation that tells of how the Lord has remitted sins. However, knowing our sins does not make those sins disappear, nor can we pay the price of the sins we have already committed with tears of grief. Because the very Jesus who exposed the true state of sinners bore those sins, we stand before God in the righteousness the Lord has given, even while knowing our own faults.

Being near the Lord and believing in the Lord are different

In the parable of the sower, the Lord said that the same seed falls on the wayside, on stony ground, among thorns, and on good ground. For one may hear the word and yet not receive it, or let it go when hardship comes, or have one's heart taken captive by the cares of the world and the temptation of riches. Good ground is not there from the beginning; it is made in a heart that acknowledges its sins according to the word and accepts the word just as it is. The gospel of salvation is the same: we may remember the words "the baptism of Jesus and the Cross" and yet not know how that work is connected with our own sins. When we believe that the words saying all the sins of the world were passed on to Him include the sins of our whole lifetime,

the remission of sins becomes more than knowledge we explain to others; it becomes the grace that has given us life.

The multitude that thronged Jesus and pressed in on Him was great, but the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood relied on Jesus as the One who would heal her and touched His garment. On the other hand, the people of His hometown, though astonished at His wisdom, knew Him only as a carpenter and so rejected Him. This is why what kind of person we accept Him to be matters more than being near the Lord. The disciples, too, who had been afraid in the windstorm, were amazed before the Lord, who had calmed the wind and the sea, and said, *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:41)*. Because He is the almighty God, even as days when our feelings are at peace and days of fear come and go, we ground our hearts in the Lord, who said to the woman who was afraid and trembling, *"Go in peace" (Mark 5:34)*.

The disciples, who received the bread and distributed it yet could not rely on the Lord

Even after receiving the remission of sins, we need the Lord's care and teaching. The disciples received the bread from the hands of Jesus, distributed it to five thousand people, and gathered up what was left over, but when they met with hardship on the sea, they did not recognize the Lord and were afraid. Even after seeing Him feed four thousand, they worried that they had only one loaf in the boat. Because remembering the grace we have received and relying now on the One who bestowed that grace can differ this much, the Lord made them think again about what He had already done. For the number of loaves in their hands does not determine the Lord's power. We, too, when

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we look only at what we have, are weighed down by the thought that we cannot carry out the work entrusted to us, but each time this happens we must rely on the Lord, who saved us, and set our hearts right again through the word. Reflecting on the grace of salvation in this way is not an attempt to receive the remission of sins anew each time; it is in order to believe in the salvation we have already received and live today.

Moreover, the Lord did not tell His disciples to produce bread; He had them receive the bread He gave and set it before the multitude. Our place in preaching the gospel is the same. We have no power to remove other people's sins, but we can let them know how Jesus has remitted those sins. That is why we who have received the same salvation do not stop at merely keeping our own faith alone; we learn the word together and care for other saints in their weakness.

The way of following the Lord after confessing Christ

In Mark chapter 8, when Jesus asked who they said He was, Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29)*. But when the Lord taught about His suffering, death, and resurrection, he tried to block that way. Even if it was out of a heart that loved the Lord, when one puts one's own thoughts ahead of the salvation the Lord would accomplish, one ends up opposing the work of God. Therefore, the confession of faith in Christ must be accompanied by the faith that accepts the way He goes in order to save sinners.

Then the Lord said, *"Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*. This word does not mean that we should pay the price of sin with our own hardship. Since

the redemption of the Lord, who was judged in our place, has already been fully accomplished, now we who believe in that salvation lay down our own judgment and follow the will of the Lord. Just as John prepared the way of the Lord and testified of Jesus, to us who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit today the work of making the Lord known has also been entrusted. What we do is not to add anything to the salvation that Jesus has accomplished, but to preach what the Lord has done to those who do not yet know that salvation. Just as the Gospel of Mark opened the beginning of the gospel with John's testimony, now that gospel is carried on to other people through our testimony.

I hope that these words will clearly convey the basis of salvation to those who do not yet know the remission of sins, and that they will become strength for those who already believe in the gospel to live relying on the Lord. I hope that we will not hide the sins that come out of ourselves, but believe in our hearts in Jesus Christ, who has remitted all those sins, and carry out the work He has entrusted to us with thanksgiving, in the hope of waiting for the Lord, who will come again. ✉

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CHAPTER

1

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Where does a person who has realized his sins receive the remission of sins?

< Mark 1:1–8 >

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'"

The gospel begins with the promise of God

The Gospel of Mark opens the door of the gospel, saying, "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*"

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(Mark 1:1). After declaring the beginning of the gospel, Mark introduces the ministry of John the Baptist before describing Jesus' public ministry. The other Gospels also record the ministry of John the Baptist in different ways. This is because John the Baptist was the servant sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus and testify of Him. This is because John the Baptist is the servant who passed the sin of the whole world on to Jesus. It is the news that it was not we who found a way to solve our sins by ourselves, but God who sent His Son and saved us. Therefore, when we hear the gospel, what we must look at first is not how strong our resolve is, but whom God sent and what He accomplished through Him.

Through the prophet Malachi, God said, *"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me" (Malachi 3:1)*, and promised to send a messenger who would prepare the way before Jesus, that is, an ambassador, to put it in today's words. John, who cried out in the wilderness, is the one who came according to that promise. His cry was not true because people flocked to him; rather, because God spoke first and sent His servant according to His word, they had to listen to that cry. We, too, must not make a person's popularity or outward appearance the standard of salvation, but must examine whether the word being preached leads us to Jesus Christ.

Do not stop at confessing your sins

The people who came out to John confessed their sins and received baptism. They laid down the heart that had regarded itself as righteous and acknowledged that they had sin before God. A person who hides his sins and boasts of his own deeds does not seek the Savior who will wash away his sins. That is

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why John cried out for repentance and led people before the Lord. The word about preparing the way of the Lord leads precisely to this meeting.

However, we must distinguish between acknowledging one's sins and having one's sins washed away. Even if one realizes one's wrongs and is tormented, that torment cannot pay the price of sin. Nor does the fact that people received baptism with water from John serve as grounds that their sins were removed. This is because John's work was not to remove sins, but to point those who needed the remission of sins to the Savior who was to come. Therefore, if one speaks of repentance but does not actually preach the salvation that Jesus accomplished, a person who has realized his sins cannot know where he should receive the remission of sins.

John did not exalt himself. Let us read verse 7. *"And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose'" (Mark 1:7)*. Even though many people came to him, John knew that he could not become the Savior. He did not keep those who needed to be saved bound to himself, but turned them toward Jesus, who is mightier than he. What we, too, need is not a heart that relies on a servant as if he were the Savior, but a heart that believes in Jesus Christ, of whom the servant testifies.

Jesus gives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit

Let us read verse 8. *"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8)*. The Jesus whom John preached is the One who gives the Holy Spirit into the hearts of people. He does not stop at pointing out sins, but

actually washes away sins and causes people to become children of God. To speak of the gift of the Holy Spirit, we must first know how Jesus dealt with our sins.

The baptism John gave to the people was the baptism of repentance that made them turn from the wrong way and return to God, but the baptism Jesus received from John was the baptism through which John, as the representative of mankind and the high priest, passed all the sins of the world on to Jesus. Through that baptism, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. Jesus is not a sinner who came out asking to have his sins washed away, but the Savior who came to bear our sins. The sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives are also included in all the sins of the world that the Lord had transferred to Him.

Jesus, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, receiving in our place the judgment that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and completely accomplished our salvation. Because He bore on the Cross the judgment for the sins that were passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, the news of salvation does not remain a word that demands our resolution. It is the certain news that Jesus has washed away our sins. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become children of God. The Holy Spirit testifies in the hearts of those who believe that the salvation Jesus accomplished is true.

When we look at our own sins, we easily become discouraged, and when our own deeds look fine, we easily look for salvation in ourselves. In either case, if the basis of faith shifts to ourselves, the heart is shaken. Fix your eyes on Jesus, whom John pointed to. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not a reward given to those whose emotions have run high, but the grace

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given to those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord accomplished.

The testimony that reveals the Savior

John lived a life different from the world in the wilderness, clothed with camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey, and we who serve the gospel must also live such an extraordinary life as little John the Baptists, but our salvation does not lie in imitating the way he lived. What matters is what the servant of the wilderness preached to the people. John made people realize their sins and pointed to the Savior, saying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. When we preach the gospel, we, too, must not stop at boasting of ourselves or pointing out the faults of the other person. We must clearly preach Jesus, who bore sin and received the judgment.

God sent the Savior as He promised, and Jesus gave us the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. We who believe in this gospel call God Father as His children. So that the heart that has realized its sins does not return to the labor of establishing its own righteousness, believe in the Savior of whom John testified. The One who accomplished the remission of sins that we need and gives us the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ. ✉

Where does a person who has realized his sins receive the remission of sins?

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The Father was pleased with the Son, who received baptism from John

< Mark 1:9–11 >

"It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

The Son, who came to the Jordan River to bear sins

At the time when people who were confessing their sins were coming out to John, Jesus also came to the Jordan River. Although He received baptism from John in the same river, the reason Jesus came was different from that of the people. The people acknowledged that they had sin, and the Son of God came to have their sins passed on to Him. Among the people who were seeking the way to be saved, the One who would accomplish salvation came.

Let us read verse 9. *"It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the*

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Jordan" (Mark 1:9). The baptism Jesus received from John is the fact of salvation that our faith must hold on to. This event was not something achieved by the zeal of people who longed for the remission of sins, but something Jesus Himself did, going to John and carrying out the salvation that God had promised. Therefore, before endlessly examining our own hearts in order to wash away our sins, we must know what Jesus did.

Why Jesus received baptism from John becomes clear from the words He spoke at that time. *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15)*. All righteousness spoken of here is the work in which Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Just as in the Old Testament the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed the sins of the people on to it, the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus when John, a descendant of Aaron and the representative of mankind, gave baptism to Jesus. It was because it absolutely had to be done in this way and no other that He said *"thus."* The righteousness of God is not calling us righteous while leaving our sins as they are, but passing those sins on to the body of the Son and actually dealing with them. The lifelong sins of you and me are also included in all those sins of the world. This is why our salvation does not depend on the list of sins that remain in our own memory.

The testimony of joy that was heard from heaven

When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens were parted and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. Then the voice of the Father was heard from heaven. Let us read verse 11. *"Then a*

voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mark 1:11). The Father testified that the One who bore sins at the Jordan River was His beloved Son. The will of the Father to save sinners and the work of the Son who fulfills that will are joined as one.

We often look at our own lives and ask whether God will accept us. But if we place the basis of salvation on our own deeds, our judgment changes with each day we do well and each day we do wrong. Yet in the text, the Father in heaven says that He is pleased not with our deeds but with the Son, so the One toward whom our faith must be directed is that very Son. Because Jesus accomplished the work of salvation in which God delights, those who believe in that work do not need to strive to pile up their own righteousness and ask God to accept them.

Do not think of the Father's testimony apart from the baptism Jesus received from John. Jesus is not One who came before us only as a teacher who teaches great words. The sinless Son of God had our sins passed on to Him. This scene, in which the Holy Spirit came upon Him and the Father testified, shows that our remission of sins is something accomplished according to the will of God. Just as John and the people saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus, when we believe in this gospel and receive the remission of sins, God also pours out the Holy Spirit into our hearts and seals us. The Book of Acts, too, records the words *"for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)*. This is precisely the baptism with the Holy Spirit that John spoke of. Because the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit are given according to the will of God in this way, we cannot demand that God approve a method of salvation that we have made up as we please.

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He bore to the end the sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John

The event in which He had sins transferred to Him at the Jordan River is joined as one with the judgment He received on the Cross. Just as John testified, saying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*, Jesus, bearing that sin of the world, received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross as the price of that sin, and He rose again from death and became the Savior who has completely saved us. If we leave out the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, it becomes unclear why the sinless Son received the judgment for our sins on the Cross. It was because of those very sins that were passed on to Him through the baptism that Jesus shed His blood and died in our place.

Believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with your heart. To believe is to accept what Jesus did as your own salvation. Even if we were not standing together at the Jordan River at that time, we can know and believe that fact through the written word. Our faith is not creating anew the work that was accomplished in the past, but acknowledging that the salvation Jesus has already accomplished is true and receiving that grace.

Every time your sins are exposed, do not start by questioning whether you are qualified for salvation. Acknowledge your own wrongs before the word, but you must believe in the Savior who bore even those sins. The assurance given to us does not come from our own sinless lives. It comes from the word that the Son, in whom the Father was pleased, bore our sins once and for all. There is the remission of sins for those who believe in the righteousness Jesus fulfilled. Accept the word of the Father, who

testified from heaven, and give thanks to Jesus, who came to the Jordan River for us. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Live a life like that of John the Baptist

< Mark 1:1–11 >

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."' John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

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John the Baptist, who lived a life different from others in the wilderness

When we look at this word, John the Baptist appears. It says, *"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4)*. John the Baptist appears here, and it says that John the Baptist pointed out people's sins, led them in this way to repent, and so had them receive baptism, thereby guiding people to Jesus Christ; that he testified of Jesus Christ; and that, as for his own life, he lived in the wilderness, wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. He lived such a life and testified of Jesus in that way.

Up to now I have spoken to you a great deal about the role of John the Baptist. So this time I would like to speak about a different aspect rather than that. John the Baptist cried out the word of God in the wilderness like this, lived such a life, testified of Jesus Christ, led many people to Jesus Christ, and lived such a life until he passed away; speaking of the life of John the Baptist, I would like us to think together a little about how John the Baptist lived a life different from that of ordinary people.

When we look at the life John the Baptist lived, it is clearly very much differentiated from that of other people. First, John the Baptist lived in the wilderness. John the Baptist, too, must have been a human being, so he would have wanted to live where there were many people. Yet how could he have lived in the wilderness? Also, living in the wilderness, he could not have eaten well, and it says that the food he ate was wild honey. Wild honey is honey from the wild. And it says that he ate locusts, though we do not know how he ate them—whether he caught them and ate them raw or dipped them in honey. In any case, he

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lived eating what nature produced. He did not do anything artificial but ate what came from nature.

Meanwhile, he testified of Jesus Christ, pointed out people's sins in this way, and testified like this, and John the Baptist had to live this way. I think he had to testify of Jesus Christ in this way. I think that is how it was for John the Baptist. That is because it is written so in the Bible. I understand that it was so because only by living that way could he point out the sins of others, lead people to Jesus Christ, converse closely with God without belonging to the world, and fulfill well the role of a prophet. So this is understandable. Because his sense of the mission entrusted to him was so thoroughgoing, it is understandable that he had to live this way.

To serve the gospel, we must live a life set apart from the world

But as you and I have received the remission of sins, believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and now serve the gospel, you and I often suddenly feel in our hearts—though we do not know exactly what it is—that we cannot serve this gospel or follow the Lord while belonging to the world. It is not that you and I are trying to live a life really different from other people as we live after meeting the Lord, but we feel very much that in order to follow the Lord and to serve the gospel we must not live as others do, and that only by living a differentiated life can we spread to people this gospel that our Lord has entrusted to us and fulfill our mission. Also, in order to live that way, to serve this gospel, and to follow the Lord, there are many things in which we cannot live the ordinary life that ordinary people

pursue. There are truly many such things. Because we human beings are all the same, everyone wants to live the same kind of life; we want to like what others like, and we want to live that way. But as we serve the Lord and serve this gospel, we must not live that way, and unless we live differently from others, like John the Baptist—unless we live a differentiated life—we cannot serve the gospel. We reach such a conclusion.

So we struggle a lot, and there is much of this mixing back and forth, where we broaden our hearts and then narrow them again. So when you and I think about John the Baptist, it says that John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, and we first come to realize that we who serve the gospel are like John the Baptist. We come to realize that one comes to live that way because, unless one lives such a differentiated life in the wilderness like John the Baptist, one cannot fulfill the mission God has entrusted to him.

We are not John the Baptist, but we could at least be little John the Baptists. To live such a life, we come to live a life differentiated from ordinary people. And we cannot help living that way. By living that way we can follow the will of God; unless we live that way, we cannot follow the will of God. We come to a conclusion on these matters. It is a differentiated life.

In the old days, those like Samuel, who were called Nazirites, that is, those chosen before God, were called Nazirites when the vow was made, "If God gives me a child, I will offer that child to God." Nazirites—those given to God, those offered up—such people had to live a differentiated life. No razor was to touch their heads, they were not to shave their heads, and there were various other things. The life that those who have received the remission of sins, those who serve the gospel, live in this world is not exactly like that, but spiritually it is similar to such a life—

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roughly the same. There may be differences in the sense of being more active or less active, but I think that is how it is.

As I, too, believe in and follow the Lord like this, do you think that I would not want to live like the people of the world? I have all such desires too. And not only I but all of you have them as well. But if we live that way, is the gospel spread? Because the gospel is not spread, we cannot. Because if we live that way, the gospel is not spread. So we want to do that, but since we cannot, we do not. And we are unable to.

So we think of the Lord and try not to put anything else before the Lord, and at times we shake off, as if dusting off dust, all the dregs of the world piled up in our hearts, then set things in order, make repairs, and live again—there are many such things.

So our saints and our workers, too, must think about how John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, crying out the word of God, and lived such a life unlike others; and I want to tell you that in order to follow the Lord we must live a life like that of John the Baptist—this is the proper way.

We cannot follow the Lord while living like the people of the world

Otherwise, we can never follow the Lord. If we also do everything the people of the world do, and we also like everything the people of the world like, and act like those who chase after celebrities, how could we follow the Lord? If our hearts go that way, could we follow the Lord? Could we follow Him that way? We could not.

Today, while you are in this church, many thoughts of this kind and that rise up in your hearts; but truly, just as John the

Baptist lived in the wilderness and there carried out the will of God and lived that way, it is necessary that in the hearts of you and me there be a heart unlike that of the people of the world, unlike that of any fleshly person—a heart unlike others, a life unlike others; that we set our hearts to serve this gospel of the Lord, wash our hearts again, make them firm with faith, and truly make our hearts clean again before God by faith.

And if we do not have this heart that follows the Lord with single-minded devotion, how could we follow the Lord? That is what I am saying. Even if we want to follow Him, we cannot.

As for the young students, too, I am not saying that they are completely swept away by the things the children of the world like or by what is in fashion, but their hearts are drawn to them to some degree; even so, in order to serve this gospel of the Lord more than those things, they must guard their hearts, have faith, and live such a life—this is what is right. Although it is hard on the flesh, this is right. Unless we set our hearts on these matters and take hold of our hearts again like this, we cannot live this way. It is by doing this that we are serving the Lord.

But if we do not do so, we cannot serve the Lord. It is not only the children who are like this; the young adults are the same. The young adults still have such a heart. They have the desire to live just like ordinary people. That is true of the older adults, of the married sisters, and of the workers—it is true of all. It is not that they do not have such a heart. They all have it.

They all have it, but the question is whether we can follow the Lord if we live that way. Whether we can serve the gospel. Because we cannot, we live a differentiated life. We live crying out the gospel in the wilderness like John the Baptist. Dear fellow believers, if we could live like others, if we could serve the gospel while living that way, dear fellow believers, the gospel would already have been spread to the end of the earth.

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Dear fellow believers, is the gospel spread by living that way? It is not. Not a chance.

The pride of the world and the benefit of the gospel

Those who are not born again measure people by fleshly things and talk like that. But I do not want to live such a life. At the very least, we must live with a heart that is differentiated from the people of the world. Only then can we serve the gospel and fulfill the work God has entrusted to us. If we live just like the people of the world, we cannot serve the gospel. How could we serve the gospel?

The blessing that follows labor for the Lord

Dear fellow believers, if we were to live only for ourselves, if we were to act only for ourselves, what need would there be to do this kind of study, what need to agonize like this, and what need to live like this? Dear fellow believers, the Lord said to you and me, *"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8)*; but while living a life of serving the gospel in order to play the role of a witness, if one has the same heart as the people of the world, the Lord cannot use such a person, and even if He did use him, that person could not fulfill the work. So we, too, must put away such a heart early on.

To follow the Lord, there are hardships, there is one's own cross and self-denial, and there are all such pains. But how great is the reward that follows! How great is the profit that follows, and how great is the blessing that follows! We say that we labor

and suffer for the Lord, but how many things the Lord blesses us with! So when we reckon it up in the end, what we gain is far greater, and also because this life is right, we live this way; and just as John lived in the wilderness, the hearts of you and me are to live with such a heart and such faith. We must live that way.

In the end, that is what it comes down to. Can we live before God, even for a single day—living day after day—without removing the dregs of our hearts? We cannot, dear fellow believers. If we do not remove the dregs of our hearts, it is hard to follow the Lord; it is uncomfortable and hard. Dear fellow believers, also, when we take on the Lord's work, a new task, our heads ache and we get headaches, and we cannot do it. As there is the word, *"There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty" (Proverbs 11:24),* if you and I live for the Lord, the Lord blesses us and we prosper; but in the end, setting aside everything else, in order for the gospel of the water and the Spirit to be spread, in order to fulfill this mission of spreading it, although we cannot live such a life one hundred percent like John the Baptist, there is in the hearts of you and me such faith, such a heart, such a thought, such a resolve of heart—that we must live such a life, that we have been made to live such a life. God has given this to you and me. Such hearts.

Dear fellow believers, when I look at you like this—the brothers and sisters, the workers, those working in the church like this, and even the children—truly, John the Baptist cried out the word of God in the wilderness, and if the Lord had not given you the heart that says, "I will remove the dregs of my heart, remove such fleshly thoughts, and truly follow by faith in order to serve the gospel, and I will serve this gospel by faith," you could not be here. You could not bear it. Everything you did would be a complaint, everything would get on your nerves,

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everything would be irritating. “Why do we have to do it this way? Why? Why do we work the hard way when there is an easy way? How hard that is! And how much is there to gain by doing it?” Actually, there is. Materially, there is not that much to gain. There is a great deal of unseen, lasting wealth, but there is not so much that catches the eye right away. People may think, “What kind of thinking is that?” Dear fellow believers, if we try to live the easy way, everything comes to be thought of in an easy way. If we earn money easily, we go to ruin easily and spend all the money on the wrong things; if we earn it with difficulty, we truly spend the money where it is needed.

In the hearts of you and me—just as John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, crying out and carrying out the will of the Lord—because the Lord has given the hearts of you and me this heart, this faith, that we will live for the gospel, that we must spread the gospel, that we must fulfill this work, we fulfill this work; otherwise, who would fulfill this work by the strength of the flesh? That is the point. Who would do it? No one can do it. There are such people, though. Such people, without even realizing it, come to leave the place of serving the gospel.

As we live, whatever fleshly thoughts and such there may be in our hearts, it is because the Lord frequently gives us the heart that desires to serve and follow only the Lord, and such faith; and because, in order to live that way, we frequently remove the dregs of our hearts, remove them by faith, and live on like this; and because we set a single goal and run toward that one goal and live like this. Otherwise, all die. Dear fellow believers, is it that ordinary people cannot live because they do not know how to live? They can all live well. Even a passing beggar, dear fellow believers, if told to live such a life, would live it well—that kind of life. As for a life for others, dear fellow believers, it says that *“those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of*

the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3), but this righteous life is not something just anyone lives. "Before God, faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and spreading this gospel are right. For that, there are such hardships, and even if I lose such things, if this is accomplished, I will do it." And because we pray to God and receive His help and really do this, we are satisfied and glad, and that is why we do it; otherwise we could not do it, but we do it because God helps us. Because God helps us. He gives salvation, He also gives the heart that desires to live for the Lord, and all of that—that is why we live.

The changed life of those who have received the remission of sins

John the Baptist lived a life different from others. He was different from birth, and the life he lived after being born was also different. You are different too. Before receiving the remission of sins, you lived the same life as everyone else, but after receiving the remission of sins, your life is now different. *"Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)*. Even though we have become new, fleshly things keep rising up; but as He said, *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*, we must not serve any other god besides the Lord. The Lord is our Savior. To serve this gospel, we truly have to do so much pruning and truly cut off so many small branches—how many such things there are! That is why you and I are here now like this. It is because the Holy Spirit, the word of God, the gospel, the Lord, the church, God, and the work hold you and me up and keep us that you and I are doing the work. Is that so, or is it not? Yes, it is.

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Dear fellow believers, think of John the Baptist. John the Baptist is the life of you and me. It is not only John the Baptist who lives this way. You and I must also live this way. Though we live in this world, we live somewhat detached from this world—you and I do. Those who live for the Lord are all such people. But the people of the world, those who do not know God, cannot bear to live when there is sin in their hearts because of the torment, and they die because of sin.

Actually, you see, when the Lord was carrying the cross up to Golgotha, many people saw Jesus carrying the cross and, feeling pity and sorrow, mourned and wept. Jesus said, *"Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28)*. Actually, everyone must weep for themselves. Every person is born, dies once, is judged before God, and goes into the fire of hell—if you go to a crematorium, it is the same order for everyone. However a person may live, dying once, being judged, and going into the fire that is never quenched—that is the order. The world says that someone is a success and someone a failure, or that someone burned like a flame and faded like a flame, but the order is the same for all.

You and I have been born once into this world and will live like this and then pass away; but you and I have met the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is, the gospel in which Jesus received baptism from John, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and thereby remitted our sins. We have received the remission of sins. We have become children of God. We have obtained eternal life. So the Lord told you and me, who are living on this earth, to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to others. We are living this life. To live this life, we have become like John the Baptist. Even if we did not want it, we have become this way. Dear fellow believers, is there anyone who does one

hundred percent as his heart, the heart of the flesh, desires? Doesn't one try a little and then give up? Actually, there are also very many people who, because they are too busy with work, cannot do so even if they want to. Is that so, or is it not? Yes, it is. So if we did not have the work of God, it would be the way to our ruin, because we would go off after our own fleshly cravings; therefore, it is good that there is much of God's work.

Set your heart to live as a little John the Baptist

When there is much of God's work, we do it all and fulfill all that responsibility, so even if other things, the desires of the flesh, rise up, what does it matter—there is no time. There is no time, is there? Then we cannot pay attention to them, can we? We have no energy either, do we? Is that so, or is it not? So at times I pile up work like a mountain and do it. So that there will be no shortage of work, I have already planned and piled up so much work that even if I worked my whole life long, I would die without finishing it all because my strength is insufficient. I have piled it up high. And I have prepared enough work so that you, too, can never be idle. I have prepared it so that there is not even a little room for ease in my heart, so that we cannot help but live, fittingly, like John the Baptist.

Dear fellow believers, you and I have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and, dear fellow believers, you and I have received the remission of sins. If we have received the remission of sins, dear fellow believers, how can we live just like others? How can we live just like others? How can we live just like the people of the world? We must live eating locusts and wild honey in the wilderness, crying out the word of God—is that so, or is it not? Yes, it is. Only then do people receive the

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remission of sins; otherwise, how could they receive the remission of sins? Even now, though my flesh is weak, you see, if I did not live like John the Baptist, I could not preach the gospel to you. By being like others, we cannot become more than others. That is how it is with you and me. It is not that you and I wanted this, but God has made you and me live like John the Baptist in this way.

Will we live like John the Baptist? Or will we live like ordinary people, like such people? You and I must make a decision in our hearts. If we do not decide, how are we going to live? If we live like the people of the world, that is just how it will turn out. Dear fellow believers, those who serve the Lord are little John the Baptists. We live like little John the Baptists. Physically we are lacking, so we must urge one another to eat, even delicious food, and help one another in what is lacking; but in spirit, dear fellow believers, we must be John the Baptist. God has given you and me this heart, this faith. He has made us live this life.

Do not forget the fact that you and I have come to live such a life, this life, and that God has made you and me live this life; truly set your hearts firmly and live that way. We must live that way. You and I must think about how we ought to live and live accordingly. “If circumstances change like this, I will live like this”—it has nothing to do with circumstances. One thing is clear to me: the harder the world becomes, the better we live; I will set my goal that way and live. Why? Because we serve the gospel all the more, and just because the world goes to ruin, we cannot go to ruin too. However other people may live, because we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we have set our hearts to live this way until the day the gospel is spread to the whole world and the Lord comes, until the day the Lord’s will is fully accomplished. If you have not yet set your heart, I

hope you will. We must live by faith. We must live for righteousness. We must live in action, be quick, and our thoughts, our hearts, must be as sharp as a two-edged sword. Do not become the kind of life that lives haphazardly and then simply vanishes like a drop of dew—that is not good. We must live a life that turns many people to righteousness. I thank God for making us live this life. I pray that He will continue to let us live this way in the days to come. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

It is a happy and rewarding thing to be doing the same work as John the Baptist

< Mark 1:1–11 >

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."' John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

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John the Baptist, who appears first at the beginning of the gospel

Looking at this word, it said, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)*. At the beginning of the gospel, at the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the one who appears first is John the Baptist. John the Baptist, who gave baptism to Jesus, appears, and this John is such a one as was prophesied in the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. Looking at the word here, it speaks in this way, as it is written: *"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight'" (Mark 1:2–3)*. What is written here is *"I send My messenger before Your face" (Mark 1:2)*; that is, in sending His Son to this earth, God the Father said, "Ahead of that, I will send My messenger; I will first send Your servant, I will send the servant of Jesus Christ," and He said, *"Who will prepare Your way before You" (Mark 1:2)*. It said, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight'" (Mark 1:3)*.

So here, God the Father sends His Son Jesus Christ to this earth, and He said that He sent the messenger of Jesus Christ and had him prepare the way of Jesus Christ, and that He had him prepare that way and make His paths—that difficult work—straight; so He said. Here we see that John the Baptist, as a servant of God, truly prepared the way of the Lord, and that when the Lord came to this earth and did this work of saving mankind from sin, John the Baptist carried out that work well. It said to prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight; if Jesus Christ had come to this earth and had to explain everything one by one all by Himself, saying, "I am the Son of

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God; I am the Savior who saves you," that work would have been a work that could not be carried out. Though He is the Son of God, He did not do that work alone but sent a servant and had him prepare the way. Now, God the Father, in sending His Son to this earth, said that He would first send a servant for the sake of the Son, and so He sent him, and this servant prepares the things the Son would do when He came to this earth, the things of saving mankind from sin, all those things; he makes preparations and does all the things that prepare for the work of Jesus Christ to be accomplished; and that is why He sent him—so He says.

We, who have been entrusted with the work of preparing the way of the Lord

So when we look at how John the Baptist did his work in this way, it seems he truly did his work well. At all times John the Baptist testified of Jesus; he testified of everything about Jesus—what he himself had seen, the fact that he himself had given Him baptism, who Jesus Christ is, and what kind of One He is. He truly carried out his own work well. I think the work we do is also this kind of work—the same kind of work as that of John the Baptist. The work we do is also the work of preparing. It is the work of preparing, the work of preparing the work of the Lord. Here it said, *"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4)*; what would have happened if John the Baptist had really not done this work? But he prepared everything. John the Baptist came six months ahead, and John the Baptist did all the work before Jesus did His work. He told everything—that Jesus would come, that there was One coming after him, and who that

One is. So those who followed Jesus followed Him in great numbers because of the testimony that John the Baptist testified. It is no exaggeration to say that nearly all of them did. Except for those who met Jesus one-on-one in particular, even among the disciples of Jesus there were several who had been disciples of John the Baptist and then followed Jesus. The work we do is also like this. The work we do, too.

If John the Baptist testified of the baptism of repentance to people, then we, too, must preach the word to people and speak to them about these matters—"What you believe, you believe wrongly; you know it wrongly"—and so cause people to turn back, and we must testify that Jesus really came to this earth and saved us in this way; the work we do is also this kind of work. The work we do, the work that you and I do, is this kind of work. We are those who prepare the work of the Lord and those who help so that the work of the Lord can be accomplished well and fully over this earth. The work that you and I do is the same as the role of John the Baptist.

All the various things we are doing now are also that. Like John the Baptist, preparing, preparing, and also making straight—making the work of the Lord, the work of the gospel being spread over the whole earth, straight—it is that kind of work. It is the work of preparing for this. When I look at the things John the Baptist did in this way, I see that this is exactly the same as the work we do. It says John the Baptist testified of the baptism of repentance; he pointed out people's sins and testified to them, "You must turn back and return to God, Jesus Christ, and you must believe in Him, and you must have your sins washed away," and he told them who Jesus is; but since you and I cannot do all these things directly—directly we pray, but we are now doing much through literature—if we did not do these things concretely, if we did not set about such work in

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order to do these things and did not do them, would the will of the Lord be accomplished on this earth? That is the point. The will of the Lord could not be accomplished. If these things were not done—the Lord has power, yes, but He works through the servants of the Lord. Looking at the word of Genesis, there, through servants, it says so-and-so begot so-and-so, he walked with God for several hundred years and begot so-and-so, and again so-and-so begot so-and-so, begot, begot; this speaks of the descendants of faith.

Through them God revealed His will. For example, looking at people like Abraham or Noah, Isaac or Jacob, God revealed the will of the Lord through them in their lives, had them prophesy, and fulfilled that will, those prophecies. God worked through servants, and especially when Jesus came to this earth, when the gospel began, He worked through John the Baptist, and even now He is working through you and me. He is doing so. John preached the baptism of repentance. Even now we are taking out the word that was preached long ago, revising it in writing, and making books, and this is exactly the same as preaching the baptism of repentance. The baptism of repentance. The work gets done step by step like that.

So rather than constantly making a big noise about it, now that we have preached the gospel a great deal, if we now go on step by step with deeper and deeper content, then people will read this content and now repent and believe in and come to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is for that purpose that we are doing this work. You and I are now doing the things that John the Baptist was doing. We must always work with the heart that we are truly servants of the Lord, and the things John the Baptist did in his work were the work of preparing the way of the Lord, so you and I, too, must make preparations, and we must prepare people’s hearts and teach them so that the gospel

may be spread over all this earth; these are the things we are going on doing. This is how we must go on. We must go on in this way; only then does it work, and it does not happen without preparation.

Nothing gets done without preparation

To do any one thing, one must prepare countless times; when women want to have a baby, first they must get married, second comes whether or not they have conceived, and then after conceiving, going in and out of the obstetrician's—I cannot tell you how much they prepare. Then when the time of birth draws near, they take care about certain things, and they are careful about food so the baby will be born healthy, and, calling it prenatal care, they refrain from rough words and try not to look at ugly things. They try to listen to good music, and so on in various ways; they prepare, and then, just when the time comes, they now give birth to the baby; and before giving birth to the baby, how much do they prepare—blankets, diapers, and the like? The parents must also prepare their attitude of heart, they must prepare so that the baby can be born healthy, they must also prepare so that it can grow up well after it is born, and once it has grown up well, they must also prepare so that it can get along well in society—how much they prepare! Two-thirds of it all is preparation. Two-thirds is preparing. When plants bloom, they make all their preparations and then later the flower blooms, and building a house is the same. In building a house, too, once the design is done and the foundation is all done, later the house goes up in no time. It is now decided according to how precisely and how well one prepares. We, too, are such people as John the Baptist in order that this gospel may be spread well. We are such

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people. So we must prepare. We must go on preparing step by step. Also, we must know well who you and I are, what the work we have been entrusted with is, and what work we must do, and we must work with real faith and a sense of mission. If we just work without this, we get discouraged, don't we?

If it comes into our hearts that the things you and I are doing now are the work the Lord desires, and it is certain, then how rewarding is the work we do! Since the work gets accomplished according to how much we care, pray, challenge ourselves, and work, where is there a happier person than this? In fact, who is the happiest person? One who has come to this earth and can eat and drink according to how he labors like this, one who does not give what he has labored for to others but can obtain it himself—such a person is one who has been blessed by God.

Here in the Old Testament it speaks of blessed people, saying, *"When you eat the labor of your hands" (Psalm 128:2),* and it says that this is the blessing of God. One eats what one has labored for. If what we have prepared is used for the gospel, and if we are used in the work of preparing the way of the Lord and causing souls to receive the remission of sins, then we are blessed people. We truly are blessed people. If the things you and I are doing are like that, then we really must live with a certain sureness in this, in such work; and the things you and I are doing now are the work of preparing the work of the Lord. It is making His paths straight. How difficult is the work of Jesus Christ preaching the gospel to the whole world! In fact, it is extremely difficult. It said "paths." Paths. The way by which Jesus Christ preaches the gospel to the whole world is a rough way that has no end however far one goes and in which new obstacles are run into one after another. It says it is an extremely hard way. So it says this, and since the Lord, having come to this earth, has great power yet is One who does not do things by force,

the Lord saves us and accomplishes His will through us; if we are used as such instruments that prepare for the will of the Lord to be accomplished, what truly blessed people we are!

The work of plowing up a long-fallow field and sowing the seed of the gospel

So we must work with this kind of faith, with a sure, believing faith in the work we are doing, and we truly must. We are now doing the work John the Baptist did, and when we do all this work, the Lord accomplishes His will as much as we have prepared. Even when speaking of the gospel alone, we have spoken of it through many books so far. The gospel revealed in the Old Testament, the gospel revealed in the New Testament—we have spoken of it with this argument and that argument. So how much have we done? "There probably won't be anything special even if more comes out from now on"—it is not so. There is no end. Why? Because Satan the devil has sown tares of falsehood, those tares must first be cleared away and the true seed sown there, so I cannot tell you how much work the farmer has to do. If it were a field farmed every year like this, you could plow it right away—plow it with a plow or with whatever—and then just sow seed right away and it could be done right away; but a field that has been left fallow, for example a field left fallow for a hundred years or a thousand years or two thousand years, a field left fallow for several thousand years—if you try to plow up that field, sow seed there, and make grain grow there, I cannot tell you how hard it really is, that work. If you go to a field that has long been left fallow, trees are growing and boulders are embedded, to the point that you wonder whether it is a mountain or a field. To farm in such a place, you have to

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pick out all the boulders and cut down all the trees; only then can you farm—how else could you farm? So just as it is that hard to farm, now people—the Reformation took place.

In the 1500s, the Reformation took place in Europe. After that, too, many leaders of the Reformation came out in Europe and carried out the Reformation. That is how today's Protestantism came into being. But if you trace this history back, Jesus came about 2,000 years ago, and for about 300 years there were, here and there, people who somehow kept that faith, and as it went on like this, it suddenly vanished. Then, if it was about 300 years, since it is over 2,000 years, about 1,700 years is the period in which tares were sown. Tares were sown on this earth. The true gospel was not testified of, and the false gospel rose up all over like thornbushes. If you do not sow seed in a field like this, trees and then thornbushes rise up all over, and this is land that has lain fallow for 1,700 years. It is there that we are sowing seed. We are sowing the seed of the gospel. But if we just sow the seed of the gospel there, the seed of the gospel all dies. So we first dig out the trees, clear away the tares, and dig out the stones—we do this work first. The work of clearing up—we are doing that work now with a small number of people. We are doing it with the Internet and doing it with literature. We are doing this work now, and these things are exactly the same as the work John the Baptist did. When John the Baptist came to this earth, people did not know who Jesus was. But John the Baptist speaks. "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. "That One is the very sheep of God, the Lamb of God; that One is the very Jesus Christ; I am not worthy to loose His sandal strap"; and he says things like *"There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose" (Mark 1:7)*. He says these things, and while John the Baptist lives there in the

wilderness and preaches such words, people now believe in Jesus Christ on account of John the Baptist. They believe by seeing the life of John the Baptist.

Because John the Baptist did all of this role, even after the Lord came to this earth and did these things—received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and went up—there were many disciples like John the Baptist, many believers, and so these things are accomplished. So the work we do is exactly the same as the work John the Baptist did. We must work with faith. It said, *"Make His paths straight" (Mark 1:3)*, and so that the gospel of the Lord may be spread fully over this earth, so that the gospel may truly be spread well, we as servants must prepare and work, and in any case act so that His will may be accomplished. Praying and doing it, even though we are lacking, even though you and I are lacking, we do that every day.

Our purpose is to preach the gospel and the like; is there any other purpose? How could there be any other purpose? It is to make His paths straight. We prepare so that the gospel may be spread well, and we do these things. Is there any purpose other than this? That is the question. After receiving the remission of sins, there cannot be any other purpose even if one tried to have one. It said, *"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*, and truly, whatever we do, we do it for the glory of God. Even though we are lacking, we work with faith.

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It is a happy and rewarding thing to be able to do this work

Dear fellow believers, those who serve the gospel must have sure faith in this regard. It is not that we merely know the role of John the Baptist and know and believe only the work John the Baptist did; rather, we must know and believe that you and I are the very ones who play that role, and we must do this work in clear faith, believing the clear and certain truth. It is not something we do just because we do it; we must do it with real faith, and we must know how precious the work we do is; if we have the heart and the faith that through this work the will of the Lord is accomplished, that we are being used for that work of the Lord to be accomplished, that this is preparing the way of the Lord, that this is preparing the work of the gospel being spread—then we gain strength. Strength comes. Some kinds of work are draining even as you do them; for example, suppose you work only to feed yourself. How draining that is! Try going to someone else's house, working seven or eight hours, and bringing home whatever day's wages. And suppose you take it and sip it away by yourself and eat it by yourself. What joy is there in living like that? Then it is draining. There is no need to work every day; with just a little money there is no need to work, so you quit. If you and I lived that way only for ourselves, what satisfaction would there be? Still more so for the righteous. I truly give thanks that God has entrusted these things to you and me. I give thanks that He has entrusted us with the role of John the Baptist like this.

I am working together with you, and as I do the work in this way, I feel real fulfillment. Why? It is not work I do alone but work we all do together, and when we work hard—some brother, some sister, the brothers and the sisters all working like this—

and once all the work has been done, I see these things being used usefully for the gospel, and I feel fulfillment. Do you, too, feel fulfillment in the fact that the things you do are used for the gospel? We do it because we feel fulfillment; if we did not feel fulfillment, we could not do it. If you did not feel fulfillment, dear fellow believers, what would you do? Truly, even if only as much as we worked came back to us, we could not do even that. We did only this much work, yet the fulfillment comes back thousands and tens of thousands of times over. So how good this is! How truly worth doing it is! Doing what one likes on this earth is generally a good thing, too, but how rewarding is the work we are doing! It is truly worth doing—the work of serving the gospel. The work of serving the gospel is worth doing. It is truly worth doing. For all of us it is worth doing. For me it is truly worth doing. Why this work? It is worth doing because it is worth doing; is there any other reason? We do it simply because it is rewarding. If it were not rewarding, we would not do it—never. If it were not rewarding, why would we do this? We might as well drink, eat, play around, and then just die. Why would we fret and fuss working like this, trying somehow to adjust our health in some way so as to do this, trying to gather strength, fretting and fussing to accomplish it somehow? If this were not rewarding work, we could not do it. We do it because the Holy Spirit is in the hearts of you and me and gives us new strength, saying that this is the work the Lord delights in, and makes us feel fulfillment and comforts us, and also because we see with our eyes the rewarding things of people receiving the remission of sins. Otherwise, what would we do?

Dear fellow believers, even if it is not the work of saving people's souls, if it is work that benefits others even physically, if others truly live well and become happy because of the work we do, people say that, too, is work worth doing; even in worldly

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terms, even the life of the flesh, even the good deeds of the flesh are such work—how much more so when we are doing the work of saving souls! So how worth doing is this work! It truly is worth doing. There is no work in this world more worth doing than this. If there were a work more precious than this, we would do that work. I would take up that work as a challenge. If there were a work more rewarding than this—for example, building a rocket and launching it—some country launched that rocket—and doing the work of observing everything that happens somewhere, and if that were really rewarding, then I probably would have jumped into that kind of work.

But even if one did such work, that, too, is nothing much; it only pursues the life of the flesh, and it, too, only satisfies one's own selfishness, whereas we are now doing the work of saving other people's lives, causing them to receive the remission of sins and giving them life, and the work by which they obtain everlasting life—so how good this is! I have this heart toward the literature work and the workers who help that work from behind: "I am thankful, too, but you, too, must give thanks to God; how thankful a thing it is to be born and be able to do this work."

I do not know what you think, I do not know what the workers in each place, the brothers and sisters, think—I do not know what you may think, that having met a person like that you are going through such hardship all your life—but as I do this literature work, when this goes out this time, it will have an influence on people mentally in some respect; that is certain. So even though it is hard for me, my heart is glad, and the workers who revise the literature, those who help that work from behind, and all our brothers and sisters serving in various fields are doing very rewarding work. So I say to them in my heart: "We must give thanks; do not think only of the hardship, but give thanks;

where else could we do work like this? It is because it is worth doing that it was entrusted to us, because it is worth doing that we are made to do it, and because it is a happy thing that we say let us keep on doing it. If doing this made us unhappy and brought no benefit at all, then neither the one doing it nor the one assigning the work could do it, this. One might do it temporarily, but one could not keep it up." That is why I think so in my heart: "Give thanks, give thanks. At times it is hard and difficult because we have a body, but we must give thanks. Where else could we do this kind of work? Where else could we do this kind of work? If you go into the world that is not even born again, even if you work yourself to death, you cannot do the work of saving even one soul. But when we do this work, so many people receive the remission of sins—how thankful a thing is that?" Here, for example, even putting on stickers—dear fellow believers, you may not regard those who put on stickers as doing anything great, but that is a great work. That work, the work of drawing pictures, the work each one is entrusted with—all these things, the things all of them are doing, are great work. I truly take pride in it: that we are those who do great work. I believe that God has entrusted us with great work, that this is the way of preparing for the spread of the gospel of God, that this is the work of preparing.

The work of opening the gate of heaven

I truly feel fulfillment and happiness in this regard. At times when my body is ill I feel irritated, and when the work does not go well I feel irritated, but still, I am truly happy, I am truly happy. "The Lord who cares for the sparrows, the Lord cares for us too"—so it goes in a hymn, and we truly are happy people.

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You and I are happy people. We are truly happy. How happy a thing it is to be born, meet the Lord, and be able to do the work the Lord delights in like this! Even though it is hard, how rewarding a work it is! John the Baptist was born, did his work at the age of thirty, and I do not know how many years past thirty he lived. But he was martyred. He went. To put it simply, he lived a short but intense life and went. How happy John the Baptist is!

We, too, dear fellow believers, having met the Lord and doing this work—how happy we are! We are truly happy people. Happy people. So what I want to say to you and me is this: whatever work you do, you must work on all the things you are now doing with the conviction that you are doing truly very happy work; not just doing it whether it works out or not, but working full of conviction; even if the work is not accomplished quickly, truly, even if only little by little—indeed, someone said that if he did not read a book for even a day, thorns would grow in his mouth—we go on doing rewarding work a little at a time each day, little by little. You cannot do much in a day, either. While working, at times it is tedious, but in our hearts we know how blessed a work it is that we do, and that we are truly those who prepare the way of the Lord and those who make His paths straight. When God the Father sent Jesus Christ to this earth, He said, *"I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You" (Mark 1:2)*, and that one was John the Baptist, but this word is the same for us as well. This word applies to us. That is why I say I am thankful and grateful. It said, *"It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I*

am well pleased'" (Mark 1:9–11). Heaven was opened. The Gospel of Mark records it exactly like this.

The heavens were parted, the heavens were split wide open, and there was a voice that spoke, saying, *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11)*. The Lord came to this earth in order to do this work for us. He came in order to do this work for us, this rewarding work—to open the gate of heaven and take those who believe in the Lord to the kingdom of heaven. The work we do is doing the work of opening the gate of heaven. You do the work of the Lord, but as you grow older, the flesh grows weak and you cannot do as much work. These days I feel that a lot. But when people are young, they usually do not work much. Yet you, fortunately, are working while you are young, and that is a very good thing. I believe that I, too, am doing rewarding work and you are doing it as well. I hope that you will live well in this way with faith and give glory to God. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

John the Baptist, the forerunner of the gospel

< Mark 1:1–2 >

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'"

The messenger of God, sent to be entrusted with the duties of the high priest

First, John the Baptist is the messenger whom God sent in order to entrust him with the duties of the high priest. The New Testament says, *"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You" (Mark 1:2)*. Dear fellow believers, the Bible must be read very carefully. It must be read carefully. Why did God send His messenger John the Baptist before each one of us, before you and me (Matthew 11:10–11)? Why did that John the Baptist come six months before Jesus Christ came to this earth? It was to play the role of a servant, and the other thing is that he came to carry out the duties of the high priest. He came in order to fulfill the duties of Aaron the high priest, in order to pass all the sin of the world on to Jesus. Six months before Jesus was conceived by the virgin Mary, John the Baptist was conceived by Elizabeth, a descendant of the family of Aaron, the high priest of the Old Testament. The division of

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Aaron the high priest refers to the order of the priests who offered sacrifices. In the Old Testament, the sons of Aaron the high priest could all work as priests according to the division of Aaron. Aaron carried out the office of high priest for the nation of Israel. And God gave his sons and his descendants the privilege of being able to carry out the office of high priest. Let us look at the word of 1 Chronicles. *"Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. And Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children; therefore Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests. Then David with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, divided them according to the schedule of their service. There were more leaders found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar, and thus they were divided. Among the sons of Eleazar were sixteen heads of their fathers' houses, and eight heads of their fathers' houses among the sons of Ithamar. Thus they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of the house of God, from the sons of Eleazar and from the sons of Ithamar. And the scribe, Shemaiah the son of Nethanel, one of the Levites, wrote them down before the king, the leaders, Zadok the priest, Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the priests and Levites, one father's house taken for Eleazar and one for Ithamar. Now the first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzez, the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezekel, the twenty-*

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first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. This was the schedule of their service for coming into the house of the LORD according to their ordinance by the hand of Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him" (1 Chronicles 24:1–19). He had the sons of Aaron perform the priestly office in place of their father. Let us look at the word of Leviticus. *"'This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever. And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.' And he did as the LORD commanded Moses" (Leviticus 16:29–34)*. We must know that God entrusted the office of high priest to the descendants of Aaron forever, according to the division of Aaron the high priest. That the descendants of Aaron carry out the office of high priest was a law established by God that never changes forever. For the atonement of the people of Israel, God had the sacrifice of atonement offered every year on the tenth day of the seventh month, and He had Aaron the high priest offer it.

John the Baptist, who came as a descendant of Aaron

Second, John the Baptist came as a descendant of Aaron the high priest. Therefore, John the Baptist was able to carry out the office of high priest.

In the Gospel of Luke, a couple who were descendants of Aaron appears, as it says, *"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth" (Luke 1:5)*. Here the couple Zacharias and Elizabeth appear, and I feel the need for us to look this up once in the Bible and come to know somewhat clearly about John the Baptist, the messenger of God. John the Baptist was born of the couple Zacharias and Elizabeth. Zacharias and Elizabeth are descendants of Aaron the high priest. The reason God caused John the Baptist to be born to Zacharias and his wife was to have John the Baptist carry out the duties of Aaron the high priest, to entrust him with the priesthood as the representative of mankind. We must know more surely John the Baptist, who was born into the family of Aaron and lived as the priest of mankind. Only then can we rightly know and believe in Jesus, the Savior of sinners. While we have thought a great deal about Jesus, we have neglected John the Baptist, who was sent ahead of Jesus, far too much. John the Baptist was the messenger of God whom God the Father sent to this earth together with Jesus, and he was the one who carried out the last priesthood of the Old Testament. *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)*. Now the sacrifices of the Old Testament became no longer necessary because of the sacrifice of atonement through Christ.

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The reason Mark introduced John the Baptist first

The Gospel of Mark said, *"As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face'" (Mark 1:2)*. But here the writer of the Gospel of Mark is speaking of John the Baptist rather than testifying of Jesus. Mark is first introducing John the Baptist, who passed the sin of the world on to Jesus. That is because, in fact, the servant who did the work of causing the sin of the whole world to be passed on to Jesus is John the Baptist; so, quoting the word of God from the Old Testament, it is saying that John the Baptist, who passed sin on to Jesus and had it atoned for, was a servant prepared in advance. A person who believes in Jesus can know accurately the truth that Jesus becomes the Savior of us all when he knows John the Baptist deeply. So Mark and the disciples of Jesus testify to us that John the Baptist is the messenger whom God sent, the last priest of the earth who passed all the sins of the world on to Jesus, and the prophet who preached in advance that Jesus had become the Savior of all sinners.

Dear fellow believers, this is like an ambassador whom one country sends to another country. When you listen well to the words of the ambassador, you can know well the plan of the king of his home country, and know well what that king wants and what he does for you. In the same way, if you know John the Baptist well, if you know well the role of John the Baptist recorded in the Bible concerning John the Baptist, it is easy to understand and realize that Jesus became our Savior and to be saved. Dear fellow believers, but why does the Bible speak of John the Baptist in the four Gospels and in the Books of Isaiah and Malachi, and show Aaron, the shadow of John the Baptist, in the Pentateuch? It is because the work of Aaron the high priest passing all the sins of the nation of Israel for one year on to a

goat or a sheep once and for all is the type of the work of John the Baptist in the New Testament passing all the sins of the world on to Jesus through baptism. *"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man" (Leviticus 16:21)*. All of the Old and New Testaments necessarily speak of the importance of the work of John the Baptist. It is because, just as a soldier first practices with a model gun and later fires live ammunition, the laying on of hands by the high priest on the Old Testament sacrifices (bulls, goats, and sheep) is the type of passing the sin of the world on to Jesus Christ, the eternal Lamb of atonement who was to come later, through John the Baptist. In Hebrews it said, *"For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect" (Hebrews 10:1)*.

Only when we know John the Baptist can we preach the gospel rightly

Also, in the Book of Isaiah it said, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:3)*. The meaning of this word of God is to declare that John the Baptist passed the sins of us all on to Jesus, to lay the groundwork for the gospel of God. That is, before speaking of the Cross of Jesus, it was to proclaim and testify that all the sins of this world were

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passed on to the head of Jesus through the baptism of John the Baptist, when Jesus received baptism from John.

Therefore, in the Bible, all four Gospels bring John the Baptist, the messenger of God, onto the stage first of all. Before the Lord preaches the gospel, they bring John the Baptist onto the stage first. And according to the word of the Old Testament prophesied about John the Baptist, God sent John the Baptist, the messenger of God, in the New Testament age. But today there are preachers of the gospel who utterly ignore John the Baptist, and we must know that this is the same as being one who ignores the wisdom of God. It amounts to leaving out the core of the content of the gospel of God and preaching only the shell. To speak of the gospel without speaking of John the Baptist is like beating the air. This is why, today, those who believe in Jesus live their lives of faith without being born again. A sinner if you believe in Jesus and a sinner if you do not—then is there any need to believe in Jesus? Believing in this way is no different from a person who does not believe in Jesus. How about you? Have you believed in Jesus and become righteous, or not? Today the preachers of the gospel say that if you just believe in Jesus unconditionally you go to the kingdom of heaven, and this is because the guides are blind. Even though Jesus testifies of John the Baptist, the messenger of God, that *"John came to you in the way of righteousness" (Matthew 21:32)*, how can one say, without knowing this right thing that John the Baptist did—transferring the sins of all people to Jesus—that he believes in Jesus or preaches the gospel? We must know clearly about John the Baptist. In the Gospel of Matthew it said, *"John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him" (Matthew 21:32)*. Among those who today boast only of the history of Christianity, there are many who cannot

enter the kingdom of heaven because they do not believe this fact.

These days, among those who preach the gospel, there are many who pretend to know without even knowing the meaning. Without even knowing how Jesus bore their sins, they say that God loved them and sacrificed Himself for them, so they are saved just by believing in the Cross of Jesus unconditionally, but this is truly wrong. Through John the Baptist, it was first told to us who Jesus is, what sins Jesus bore and how, that He who bore all our sins was the Son of God, and how much of our sins He bore; it is because John the Baptist testified of who Jesus is that we today, through the word of the Bible, by seeing what is recorded about John the Baptist, have become able to believe in Jesus. The Apostle John and John the Baptist are not the same person. The Apostle John is a disciple of Jesus, and John the Baptist is the messenger of God, the representative of mankind, a descendant of Aaron, the last prophet of mankind, and the last priest of mankind.

Without the testimony of John the Baptist, we cannot believe in Jesus

In the Gospel of John it said, *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:6–7). "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6).* The Apostle John testifies that we believe in Jesus Christ through his testimony. Without the testimony of John the Baptist spoken of in this word, how could you and I believe in Jesus accurately? When did we ever see Jesus, and with our culture, our country, and our religion all being different,

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if we did not know what John the Baptist did, how could we believe in Jesus as our own Savior even then? If John the Baptist had not testified when our sins were passed on to Jesus, that is, that he passed the sin of the world, our very own sins, on to Jesus, how could we believe in Jesus as the Savior? Without John the Baptist, that is, the forerunner of the gospel, how could we believe in Jesus as our Savior? Only when we examine from the very root of the plan of God can we know whether or not Jesus Christ is our Savior, and only when we know when, how, and through whom my sins, your sins, were passed on to Jesus can we either believe or not believe, can we not? Isn't that so?

Dear fellow believers, those who already believe in Jesus must also know this. To be entrusted with village affairs, one must know. If you put someone who cannot do it in charge, there is trouble. Not only that person suffers; all the village people suffer. Dear fellow believers, only when we know the passing on of sin by John the Baptist, the forerunner of the gospel whom God sent, can we make up our minds whether or not we will believe in Jesus, can we not? And when you believe in Jesus and accept and believe that He has become your Savior, you yourself are saved and the salvation you have received is not in vain. When you have such faith, will you not testify with your own mouths that Jesus truly loved us and saved us? Dear fellow believers, just as you can be entrusted with a task only when you know it, only when we know that John the Baptist came in the way of righteousness will we believe that Jesus is our Savior, will we not? John the Baptist is the priest of God who passed the sin of the world on to Jesus. And he is the forerunner of the gospel. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Behold, I send My messenger

< Mark 1:1–5 >

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.”’ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”

John the Baptist, whom God sent

John the Baptist was the one who came to the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance for the washing away of sins. Not only that, he was the one who would give the baptism that passes the sins of all the people of this world on to Jesus. John the Baptist was not an ordinary man; he was the representative of mankind. And he was the servant of God who passes all the sins of mankind on to Jesus. At the time when John the Baptist was born on this earth, this world was full of sin and idolatry. When all iniquity abounded on this earth, all people were waiting for the Savior who would save them from sin.

At that time, God the Father sent John the Baptist and His own Son Jesus Christ to this earth. Those whom God the Father

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sent to rescue all sinners from sin were John the Baptist and Jesus. Therefore, all of us must become those who learn and believe about the work John the Baptist performed and the meaning of his birth. The Bible says that before Jesus came to this earth, John the Baptist was sent six months ahead of Jesus. That is why we needed to know the work of John the Baptist in more detail and more deeply. Only then can we know and believe more accurately the reason Jesus came to this earth and His purpose.

God sent His servant in each generation and had him guide the people of God. For 400 years before John the Baptist was born on this earth, God had not sent His prophets to them. That is why the people of Israel were waiting earnestly for a servant of God to appear. At that time, idols were their gods. The cause of this was that they had lost the faith that believes in the word of God. Therefore, because there was not even a servant of God to guide the people of Israel rightly, they had become corrupt to the utmost. Now they had to have a servant of God whom God sent.

So God had to send again the servants of God who had been cut off from them. That servant of God was John the Baptist, and the One who came as the Savior was Jesus. Jesus Christ, who came to them, was the Son of God, who sought to uphold the will of God the Father, and our Savior, and He was by no means a created being. Jesus Christ was indeed of the same essence as God, yet He was the faithful Son of God the Father who humbled Himself of His own accord. Therefore, according to the will of God, John the Baptist had to stand as the one crying in the wilderness, and when the time came, he had to give Jesus the baptism that passes the sin of the world on to Him.

At that time, John the Baptist lived in the wilderness eating locusts and wild honey. Hearing the cry of John the Baptist to

repent, the people of Israel began to realize their sins and began to return to God. Because they met a servant of God while they had been serving idols for several hundred years until then, fear began to come upon them. When their sins were rebuked by John the Baptist, they returned to God and wanted to have their sins washed. John the Baptist cried out to them to repent and cried out to them to turn from iniquity. But their sins had to be washed away. They needed Jesus, who would wash away their sins once and for all.

John the Baptist was the greatest among those born of women, and he was the last prophet of the law, representing all mankind. Because he was the one who would carry out the office of the high priest on this earth, he could pass the sin of this world on to Jesus once and for all through baptism. Now those who know and believe this fact have come to have the truth by which they can wash away all their sins together with Jesus. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and had the sin of this world transferred onto His own body once and for all (Matthew 3:13–17).

He, who had the sin of this world passed on to Him once and for all through baptism, was fundamentally the Son of God, and He was the sacrificial Lamb whom God had prepared, who came to bear all the sins of this world once and for all (John 1:29). The only true Mediator between God and man was Jesus alone. That is why God pointed to John the Baptist and said, *"He is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. John the Baptist, the servant of God, was the one who would testify that Jesus was the Lamb of God who came to bear the sin of the world (John 1:29).

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John the Baptist, who was born within God's providence of salvation

Luke chapter 1 explains well the birth of John the Baptist and his background. John the Baptist, too, was born into this world within God's special providential work of salvation.

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was a descendant of the family of the high priest (1 Chronicles 24:1–19). Zacharias had to carry out the duty of offering sacrifices to God in the order of his priestly division. When he was inside the sanctuary of God, the voice of the angel Gabriel was heard. *"Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John" (Luke 1:13)*. Because of the sin of not believing the words of the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God, Zacharias had to come out of the sanctuary with his mouth shut (Luke 1:20). But Zacharias remembered the word he had heard. Elizabeth conceived the child who would be called John the Baptist, and when the time came for her to give birth, she bore him. All this came about just as Gabriel, the messenger of God, had said.

The family of Zacharias tried to name the newborn baby "Zacharias," but his father, Zacharias the priest, asked for a writing tablet and wrote his name as "John." Everyone marveled at this. But the tongue of Zacharias was loosed, and he began to praise God and began to prophesy. *"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:76–79)*. The mouth of Zacharias was opened, and the sound of

praise rose high. It was a prophecy that said, "This is my child, but he is a servant of God whom God has given. O child whom God has given! You will be called the prophet of the Highest, and you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, and you will make the people of the Lord know that all people come to true salvation through the remission of their sins." In this way, John the Baptist, who was born into the family of the high priest, had the office of passing all the sins of this earth on to Jesus later through baptism. John the Baptist was sent into this world as a servant of God indispensable to mankind.

Therefore, the Old Testament records him as follows. *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5)*. God promised that before the time comes when all would burn up and be consumed like a blazing furnace, He would send to this earth a servant of God like Elijah of the Old Testament. Therefore, that Elijah the prophet had to do the work of bringing about the work of turning the people who had left God back to God. Therefore, he intended to turn the hearts of the children back to the fathers and, with the heart of a father, to turn the people who had left God back to God as well. The one who does all this is John the Baptist, who gives baptism to Jesus. When Jesus said, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:12–14)*, it was Jesus Himself testifying that the servant of God like Elijah in the Old Testament was none other than John the Baptist. Jesus spoke the truth of God by testifying that the Elijah prophesied in the Old Testament was none other than John the Baptist. The Book of Malachi was saying as follows that God would send John the Baptist and Jesus.

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"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, Says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:1–3).

God said, *"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me" (Malachi 3:1)*. Here, the messenger of God refers to John the Baptist. And *"the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple" (Malachi 3:1)* is a prophecy that spoke of the birth of Jesus Christ. The word that Jesus Christ and John the Baptist fulfill the righteousness of God is right here (Matthew 3:13–17). Therefore, it was that John the Baptist, as the servant of God, would come to this earth as a guide who helps the work of Jesus. It was that before the end comes to this world, John the Baptist and Jesus would come upon this earth.

John the Baptist, who came in the spirit of Elijah

In the Book of Malachi, God said, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6)*. Jesus testified, *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. What did it mean that He would send Elijah before destruction comes upon this world? It meant

that He would send a servant of God who would pass the sins of all the people of this world on to Jesus Christ. The word that God would send Elijah the prophet was not spoken only in the Book of Malachi. The Book of Isaiah, too, was saying, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:3)*. This word pointed to John the Baptist.

Elijah the prophet, who lived in the Old Testament, had already gone up to heaven in a whirlwind and was no longer on this earth (2 Kings 2:11). Yet how could God say that He would send Elijah, who had left this earth, to this earth again? We could not help but have a question in our minds. It was because God had already been prophesying to us in the Old Testament Book of Malachi and in the other major prophets. The word of God that He would send Elijah was a promise that He would send one who would carry out the same work as Elijah. Therefore, regardless of our question, God clearly promised that, just like Elijah the prophet, who was the most powerful in the Old Testament, He would send in the New Testament, too, a powerful servant of God who would pass the sins of mankind on to Jesus Christ. He was none other than John the Baptist, who carried out the role of giving baptism to Jesus.

Elijah was a powerful servant of God who turned the people of Israel, who had been following Baal, back to God. Therefore, all that spiritual work could be completed through the work of the one entrusted with the office of passing the sins of mankind on to Jesus once and for all through the baptism he gives Him. Among mankind, there was no one else but John the Baptist who could take on and do this work (Matthew 3:13–17).

When the work of Elijah, the servant of God who appears in the Old Testament, is compared with the work of the many prophets of the Old Testament, it becomes all the more evident

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that his power was markedly higher. Isaiah, the prophet of the gospel, also cried out to people and told them to return to the LORD, but those who heard his cry and returned were not many. Jeremiah, the prophet of tears, also pleaded with tears every day for his people, but those who returned to God were very few. The prophet Ezekiel also cried out, "Before you are completely destroyed, quickly forsake your idols and return to God," but those who returned were not many.

But what was the power of Elijah the prophet like? He was a powerful servant of God who went before God and prayed in order to turn the people of God back, and caused it not to rain for three and a half years.

Elijah the prophet was living in the age when King Ahab ruled, and because King Ahab was so wicked before God, when Elijah prayed to God, it truly did not rain in the land of Israel for three and a half years. King Ahab was thirsty. Since it truly was not raining in that land, he thought that the nation would come to ruin. King Ahab dispatched his army and commanded them to find Elijah the prophet and bring him. At that time, Elijah the prophet appeared before King Ahab. He requested a contest with the prophets of Baal before the king of Israel. "O king of Israel, let us have a contest to see who is the real God, Baal or the LORD God. Let us all gather at Mount Carmel and test and contend once to see whether the LORD God is the true God. I will prove and show that the LORD, the God of Israel, is the true God in the nation of Israel and in heaven above and on earth beneath." He proposed that each side place its burnt offering on the wood and pray, and that the god who answers by fire be determined as the true God. Therefore, King Ahab sent the servants who served the god Baal and permitted the spiritual fight of faith with Elijah. And Elijah had to make the people of

Israel believe that the LORD God is the true God by fighting 850 to 1 and winning before the eyes of the people of Israel.

Now Elijah truly had to show what kind of God God is. With bold faith, Elijah the prophet went up to Mount Carmel and fought a duel of faith, 850 to 1, against the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah. Who, then, won the fight of faith? In fact, the God of Elijah and the faith of Elijah won. Why did Elijah settle the matter by faith? That fight was not a fight of flesh and blood. It was purely a fight of faith that believes in the LORD God.

When the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Asherah, 850 in all, had gathered, Elijah the prophet cried out before the people of Israel. *"How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21)*. And then he slaughtered the sacrifice for the burnt offering, cut it in pieces, and laid all of it on the wood. And he poured water to the depth of the trench so that the wood was submerged.

When the preparation for offering the sacrifice was thus finished, Elijah said, "You who believe in the god Baal, call on the name of the god Baal and have fire come down and answer by fire upon this offering. The god who answers in that way is the true God! Now let us begin." At that time, all the people who were at Mount Carmel responded that that would be good.

Elijah first gave priority to the 450 prophets who served the god Baal and told them to go ahead. The prophets who believed in the god Baal began to pray from morning until midday, saying, "O Baal, O Baal, answer us," going around the altar they had built. But even past noon, there was no answer at all. Then Elijah mocked them and said, "Call on your god with a loud voice. Your god may be sleeping and may need to be awakened, so call on him with a louder voice."

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When there was no answer even though they prayed for a long time, they began to pray while wounding their bodies with swords and lances. They pierced their bodies with their own swords and lances, making blood come out, and called on the god Baal and waited for an answer, but in the end there was no answer by fire. They did not stop but kept praying, going around the altar. But even at the time when the sun was slowly setting, fire did not come down from heaven. Then Elijah said to all the people, *"Come near to me" (1 Kings 18:30)*.

Now it was the turn of Elijah the prophet. Elijah the prophet went forward to the altar and began to pray, calling on the name of the LORD God of Israel. "O LORD God, answer me. Show that the LORD God is the God of Israel and also the true God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Show this people that the Lord, the LORD God, is alive!" As soon as the prayer of Elijah ended, a ball of fire came down from heaven, and the fire licked up completely the water that was in the trench, just as an ox laps up water. There, the meat and the wood were all burned up, and only ashes remained. The 450 prophets who believed in the god Baal and the people of Israel all saw the power of God. God showed that He Himself is alive and that He is the God of the people of Israel. Because this power of God was accomplished before the eyes of the king of Israel, no one could any longer even say that the LORD, the God of Israel, is not the true God. Elijah won that fight and came to be called the powerful servant who turned the people of Israel back to God. The people of Israel who saw this fell on their faces and cried out that the LORD, He is God. So he caused the nation of Israel to return to that faith that believes in the LORD God.

The servant of God who received power like this Elijah was John the Baptist. Just as Elijah the prophet turned the people of Israel back to God, John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus,

passed all the sins of the world on to Jesus, and testified that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and thereby all who live on the whole earth could come before God, have their sins washed away by faith, and become the people of God. God said that He would send the servant who gives the baptism that passes sins on to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and that, with Jesus and John the Baptist working together, He would save us from all the sins of the world. It was the will of God to make all people return to Jesus Christ through the servant of God who received power like Elijah. As for you and me, it was through the role of John the Baptist that Jesus had to have all the sins of you and me passed on to Him and shed His blood and receive the judgment on the Cross. Now those who believe in the role of John the Baptist and the work of Jesus can receive salvation from all sins once and for all by faith. That is why, when God sent Jesus, the Son of God, He sent John the Baptist together to this earth six months ahead. John the Baptist was needed as the servant of God who would pass all the sins of mankind on to Jesus the Savior. The Elijah whom God said He would send was none other than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14).

John the Baptist, who carried out the office of the high priest

If John the Baptist had not come as a son of the family of the high priest, he could not have carried out the office of the high priest on this earth. Therefore, he had to be born through the family of Zacharias without fail. Just as only the high priest of the Old Testament had the qualification to represent the people of Israel, lay his hands on an unblemished lamb, and pass a

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year's worth of sins on to it, he had to be born that way in order for the prophecy of God to be fulfilled as well. For this reason, the high priest of the earth became the servant of God who could represent all the people of the world, give baptism to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, and pass the sin of the world on to Him. But even now, foolishly, many people who believe in Jesus have been disregarding the role of John the Baptist in giving baptism and just passing it by, believing in Jesus as the Savior, and so their sins have just remained. *"For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him" (Matthew 21:32)*. It has turned out just as this word of the Lord says.

The faith that believes in John the Baptist as the servant of God

"For John came to you in the way of righteousness" (Matthew 21:32). The Pharisees and the chief priests did not believe that John the Baptist was the servant of God. We had to know that even in this age, the fact that there are many religious people who mock Jesus, saying that they believe in Christianity while not believing in "this important work of John the Baptist giving baptism to Jesus and passing the sin of the world on to Him," is piling up the wrath of God. Therefore, even among those within Christianity today who truly believe in Jesus as the God of salvation, there are those who are misunderstanding the truth without knowing the true truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Then who believed the truth in this age as well? It is those like the harlots and the tax collectors, who are lacking in the

flesh but right before God spiritually. What kind of people are harlots? They are those who live committing sin according to the desires their flesh wants. Whether then or now, few are those who know that, spiritually, they were people who would be destroyed because of their own sins. But strictly speaking, those who have lewd and lascivious sins in their hearts are all of us, and therefore all of you and I were such people who would end up receiving the judgment for sin before God. But in this age now, few are the people who admit in their hearts the fact that they are like harlots. When a harlot, a lump of sin, admitted what she was and believed that John came in the way of righteousness, she could wash away all her sins by faith. That faith was the faith that believes that when John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus, the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus. The reason this faith is important is that this faith causes us to be saved from all our own sins. That is why we had to believe the truth that when we believe that Jesus received baptism from John and bore all our sins, all our sins have been washed away.

At that time, Israel was under the rule of Rome, and the tax collectors were those who collected taxes from their fellow Israelites and paid them up to the Roman state. If they received 1,000 dollars in taxes, they would stuff 300 dollars into their own pockets and pay up 700 dollars to Rome; such were the tax collectors. They were the same as licensed thieves in that age. They were swindlers who lived by fleecing the people of their own country, traitors to their country, and leech-like people who sucked the blood of the people of their own country. That is why they were rejected by their fellow countrymen and lived being much reviled. Because they were spiritually very much sinners, they were able to believe the true gospel of salvation. All the tax collectors had already been exposed as sinners as much as they could be exposed, so there was no reason for them not to believe

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in Jesus Christ as their Savior through the testimony of John the Baptist, which passes the sin of the world on to Jesus Christ and causes all sins to be washed away. They believed that John came in the way of righteousness. Jesus was their God. At that time, only among the tax collectors and harlots were there many who believed in Jesus as the Savior.

But some did not believe to the end. Who were such people? At that time, they were the Pharisees and the chief priests. Even in this age, those who have spiritually become Pharisees must believe that Jesus bore the sin of the world and their own sins through baptism. The foolish ones who did not believe it and became spiritual religious leaders were the spiritually ignorant who were not believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit for fear that their livelihood would be cut off. They went about wearing clothes woven of fine cloth, and their status was high. When they saw the lowly and base, they covered their faces with their long sleeves and tried not to look at them. They were religious people who, as if that would make them holy, were busy pretending to be holy, and while committing all kinds of sins, were hypocritical and opposed the truth of God. Their pretentious conduct did not stop there; they went so far as to stand in the street where everyone could see and pray with both hands raised as if they were godly. “O LORD, save us. We pray on behalf of the pitiful people, so have pity on this people and save them.” Therefore, they were truly hypocrites and whitewashed tombs.

Such people are trying not to believe that John gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him. And they are standing in the way of those who try to believe. Because they did not believe that John came with the way of righteousness, they will end up falling into destruction.

John the Baptist, who came in the way of righteousness

John came in the way of righteousness. What is the way of righteousness that John brought? It refers to his having done the right work of passing the sins of all people on to Jesus and making the sins of all people disappear. Anyone must believe in this work. Anyone who does not have the faith that believes the truth that Jesus had sins passed on to Him through baptism, bore all the sins of you and me, died on the Cross in our place, rose again on the third day, and saved us from all sins could not be a holy people of God. Jesus had all of our sins, the sins of the world, transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. John the Baptist and Jesus came in the way of righteousness, so why do you pretend not to know? Honestly, did not Jesus receive baptism from John the Baptist, have all the sins of the world passed on to Him, and die in place of your sins? We must believe the truth as the truth. Believing in Jesus, who truly saved us from sin, as the Savior and thereby receiving the remission of all sins by faith is the faith that believes in John the Baptist and Jesus, who came in the way of righteousness. Those who do not believe this cannot go to the kingdom of heaven.

There is no way for us to go to the kingdom of heaven other than believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Yet at that time, the Pharisees and the religious leaders did not accept this knowledge of the truth and believed in God in vain. It is the same now. There are people who believe in Jesus in vain. There are far too many people who believe in Jesus in vain. They are those who have sin in their hearts even though they believe in Jesus.

John appeared before us with the way of righteousness. He appeared before those like the tax collectors and harlots, made

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them know that there are twelve kinds of sins in our hearts, and made them acknowledge that he himself gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him, thereby enabling them to have all their sins washed away. He played the supporting role of a guide to the kingdom of heaven for those who believe in the Lord. Do you believe in the way of righteousness that John the Baptist fulfilled together with Jesus? And now John the Baptist has appeared before you and me with the way of righteousness. This writing is such a thing.

Dear fellow believers, in fact, we have seen in the Gospel of John the word that says, *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:6–7)*. If it were not for the role of John the Baptist, how could we have believed in Jesus and washed away all our sins? The point is, how could we believe when we did not even see Jesus receiving baptism from John? And how can we believe when we did not see with our own eyes Jesus dying on the Cross either? Do you know through the word of the Bible that your sins were all passed on to Jesus once and for all through John the Baptist? If our sins were passed on to Jesus, how could those who believe be sinners? If we did not believe that our sins were passed on to Jesus through baptism, how could we have known that Jesus became our Savior? If you do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, your sins remain just as they are in your heart, so what will you do? What would your believing in Jesus or the shedding of the blood of Jesus on the Cross have to do with you? The reason Jesus has something to do with you and me and the blood of the Cross can become life is that when Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, all our sins were passed on to Jesus; that is why it has something to do with us. We were able to pass our sins on to Jesus through John the Baptist and receive

the washing of sins once and for all by faith. You have become those who have something to do with Him because you believed in John, who gave baptism to Jesus, and in Jesus as the Savior.

So, if it were not for the role of John the Baptist, we would not know that Jesus bore the sin of the world, our sins, by receiving baptism from John, and so we would become sinners even though we believe. No, rather, because we could not even believe in Jesus as the Savior even if we tried, we could only believe in it as one of the religions of the world. That is why this Bible, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, says, *"He is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*, and continually mentions John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, together with Jesus in the four Gospels.

"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14). Here, who did He say is Elijah who is to come? He said that it is John the Baptist. Therefore, it says, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 11:12–15)*. John the Baptist is the servant of God whom God promised in the Old Testament to send.

Only when we believe in the work of John the Baptist do we believe rightly in the work of Jesus

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence" (Matthew 11:12). God said that from the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. What on earth did John the Baptist do on this

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earth that the Bible says the kingdom of heaven suffers violence from the days of John the Baptist? There are those who say that they know who John the Baptist is and why he is called John the Baptist, but they are curious as to what he did that the kingdom of heaven is said to suffer violence from that time on. The answer is simple. Because John the Baptist precisely gave Jesus, on this earth, the baptism that passes the sin of the world on to Him, those who believe in that work could have their sins passed on to Jesus Christ, receive the washing of sins, and enter the kingdom of heaven without sin. That is why He said, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. And He said, *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13)*. This word was spoken because the age from the age of the law in the Old Testament until Jesus came was the age of the law, and the fulfillment of the prophecy of the law was fully accomplished by John the Baptist coming to this earth and giving baptism to Jesus. Since the age of the law that God promised in the Old Testament lasts until the days of John the Baptist, we can enter without hesitation through the gate of the kingdom of heaven by believing the truth that Jesus came, received baptism from him, and bore the sin of the world. The age of the law is from the time of Adam until the time John the Baptist came. That is why He said, *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13)*.

Therefore, in the New Testament age, Jesus came to this earth and said that He would fully accomplish the fulfillment of salvation by having the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism of John the Baptist, as the fulfillment of the prophecy promised in the age of the law. Jesus said that He has all the sins of mankind passed on to Him through John the Baptist, and that this is the final fulfillment that fulfills the

promise of salvation promised in the Old Testament. Just as in the Old Testament the people of Israel, in order to have the sins they had committed remitted before God, laid their hands on the head of the sacrificial offering to pass their sins on to it, took its blood, and offered the sacrifice of the washing of sins, so Jesus, too, by receiving baptism through John the Baptist, had His own body fully become the sacrificial offering for the sin of the world.

The law of laying hands on an unblemished offering and passing on sins

The word "the laying on of hands" that appears in the Bible has the meaning of "to be passed on." If someone asks where there is a word saying that sins are passed on in the word "the laying on of hands," we can find the word of that evidence in Leviticus chapter 1. *"If his oblation be a burnt-offering of the herd, he shall offer it a male without blemish: he shall offer it at the door of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before Jehovah –ASV" (Leviticus 1:3)*. In order to have their sins washed away, the people of Israel had to bring an unblemished offering before God and lay their hands on it. Then it would be *"accepted,"* and to be accepted means that God receives it gladly. An offering that is accepted before God can be understood and believed as an offering that God gladly receives. It means that God, seeing that sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering by the laying on of hands instead of killing the person, receives that offering and gladly accepts it, willing to wash away the sins of that person. Because Adam and Eve sinned, all people born as their descendants came to have sin, and in order to remove their sins, God said, *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted*

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on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4). Because God is holy, He cannot simply tolerate the sins of man, and so one had to lay hands on the head of the sacrificial offering without fail. The law of God is that *"the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*. According to His law, God had to put to death all the people who failed to keep the commands of God and the law of God, but He told them to pass all those sins on to the sacrificial animal by laying hands on it. And He received the blood of that offering and saved those people from all sin. From the beginning, the law that God made in order to make people His children was the law of the laying on of hands and the shedding of blood. That is why the sacrificial offering for sinners first had to receive the laying on of hands and had to shed its blood. In the eyes of God, people who had sin could not help but be pitiable and wretched.

Yes. God, knowing even before the foundation of the world that we would sin, prepared one sacrificial offering to remove our sins and was waiting for us. God was cherishing the noble will to make us His children within the faith that believes the truth and to have us live together with God forever. That is why God did not hand us over to the judgment for sin, but prepared the sacrificial lamb for us and told us to lay our hands on it. Although man is one who violates the commandments of God and sins day and night, because of the noble purpose of creation of God and His love toward us, He made it so that we could have our sins washed away by laying hands on the sacrificial offering and having it shed its blood. God could not simply overlook sin as if He did not see it, and yet the God of love could not simply kill man either, because He had determined to make us His own children; and so there was a need for Him to wash away all our sins with the sacrificial offering.

God had the law of salvation that accomplishes both the righteousness and the mercy of God at the same time be completed for us as the law of faith. Therefore, by having our sins passed on and receiving the blood of that sacrifice, God could judge our sins and make human beings His children. God chose the laying on of hands as the method of passing the sins of people on to the sacrificial offering. And He had it shed its blood.

The shedding of blood and death of the unblemished offering that received the laying on of hands

God prepared the sacrificial offering as the way to remove our sins in order to make us His people and dwell together with us in heaven. That sacrificial offering could be made of what God had declared not unclean. And in order for those clean animals to become sacrificial offerings, they had to be without blemish. If its body was damaged, deficient, disabled, or wounded, it was not qualified to be a sacrificial offering.

And when one brought an unblemished offering and gave it to God, there were things that had to be followed without fail. It was that the sinner had to lay his hands on the sacrificial offering without fail in order to pass his sins on to it. Only when he did so was it made possible for the sins of the sinner to be passed on to the sacrificial offering. And its blood had to be taken and given to God. The priest took the blood of that sacrifice and sprinkled it on all sides of the altar of burnt offering, and if it was a sin offering, he put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and poured the remaining blood at the base of the altar.

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And he cut the meat into pieces, placed all of it on the altar of burnt offering, and burned it.

So when one opened the door of the tabernacle and entered, the very first thing one saw was the altar of burnt offering. On the four corners of the altar of burnt offering there were horns, and the blood of the unblemished sacrificial offering that had received the laying on of hands and died was always put on them.

If a sinner had committed sin, he had to lay his hands on this unblemished animal before God, confess his sins, saying, "I have committed such and such a sin. I stole. I murdered," and then take his hands off, cut the throat of the unblemished animal, take its blood and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, pour the remaining blood on the ground, and cut the remaining meat into pieces, place it on the grate, and burn it with fire, offering it to God as a sacrifice.

The sins of man that are recorded on the tablet of the conscience and in the Book of Works

God had the sins of people recorded in two places. It says, *"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars" (Jeremiah 17:1)*. Here, Judah was named as the representative of all people. As it says that it is engraved on the tablet of their heart and on the horns of their altars, when any person sins, the sin is recorded on the tablet of his heart. The tablet of the heart of man refers to the conscience. It means that sin is written on our conscience with a pen of iron with the point of a diamond. Even if we have committed a perfect crime that no one knows about, because the sin we committed has been recorded on our own conscience, we cannot but confess that we

are sinners. That is why, when a person sins, it keeps coming to mind, pricks him, and bothers him. But at times there are brazen people who commit sin and yet are unbothered, as if they had no conscience; but in fact, since there is not a single person without a conscience, it is only that his conscience has become dull or that he is turning away from his conscience with a very strong will.

But sin is not recorded only on the tablet of the heart. It is also recorded in the Book of Judgment of God, which is placed before God. It is just as in the world, too, there must be two witnesses for evidence to be sufficient. Just as one is the person himself and the other is another witness, God records the sins of man on the tablet of the conscience of man and also in the Book of Judgment, respectively. That is why anyone must receive the remission of sins through the water and the Spirit while on this earth and have the sin in his heart disappear, and only then is that sin erased. Therefore, whoever does not believe that Jesus Christ is his Savior and that John the Baptist came with the way of righteousness will at any time receive the fearful wrath of God because of his sins. He who cannot have his sins remitted is one who is placed under a curse. God cannot but send to hell one who comes before God with sin still on the tablet of his heart like that.

There are people who go before God and say, “I did not sin. I absolutely did not sin. What, did You see it, God? How can You say I have sin when You do not even know well?”—deceiving their own conscience like that and opposing God; because there are such people, God records their sins on the tablet of their hearts and, at the same time, in the Book of Judgment before God.

It says that when we go before God, we report directly to God just as it is engraved on the tablet of our hearts. “I am so-

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and-so from such-and-such a country. I was born in that land and committed sins. I committed sins morning and evening all the time, so that it is overwhelming even to tell them all. When I was young, it seemed I did not commit much sin, but from the time I passed fifteen, I sinned in earnest. I sinned so gleefully that by the time I passed twenty and turned twenty-five, sins slowly began to pile up in my conscience. I committed so many sins that I cannot even report them one by one."

"From the time I was born until I grew old and died, I kept sinning, and so I have come here in this way."

Then God asks whether he knew and believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and how he resolved the sins of his heart. If he says that he had no interest at all and that the sins are still in his heart just as they are, God cannot but send that person to hell. It is the law that anyone who has sin goes to hell, and God had also given the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the law of being saved from sin, yet he did not believe it, so now there is nothing that can be done.

That is why, unless the sins on the tablet of his heart disappear while every person lives on this earth, he can never go to the kingdom of heaven. However much a person may have believed in Jesus as his Savior, if the sins on the tablet of his heart do not disappear, he will go to hell.

There are those who try to deceive their conscience even when they have gone before God. There are people who insist unconditionally before God that they have no sin. If we look at the Book of Revelation, it says that when we go before God, there are two kinds of books. One is the Book of Life, and the other is the Book of Judgment. The Book of Judgment is none other than the Book of Works. In the Book of Works, the record of the sins of people is all written down item by item, so it is full of sins, and those Books of Works are piled up like mountains

before God. But the Book of Life only needs to have a list of names written in it, so its volume is not great. In that book is recorded who were born again of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, and what rewards are to be given to them. God knows all of these things. God sees all the deeds of man without missing a single one and has them recorded in the books (Revelation 20:12). So, because He receives reports of everything about us and also sees it directly, we cannot deceive before God. "I did not sin!" The person who deceives his conscience and insists this way can no longer insist before the Book of Works, in which everything is recorded before God. Therefore, God established the law of sacrifice for man and made it possible for the sins of man to be remitted.

The law of sacrifice given to erase the sins on the tablet of the heart and in the Book of Works

In the Old Testament, after people laid their hands on the sacrificial offering and passed their sins on to it, they slaughtered it and burned the meat, and every time a sheep or a goat died, they would have said something like this: "I am sorry. If you did not die in my place, I would have to die. Hey, I am sorry. The reason I fed you and raised you until now was all for this day. I did not raise you because I wanted to eat meat, but because of my sins." The reason the people of Israel raised sheep and goats was to use them when offering sacrifices to have their sins remitted before God. The reason people of other countries raise cattle is to farm, to raise a lump sum of money, or to slaughter and eat them. But the sheep raised by the people of the nation of Israel, though they could also be eaten, were first of all used for

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offering sacrifices. Only after that was there a separate portion of meat that could be eaten a little.

Just because a sacrifice was offered once, could one go without offering a sacrifice the next time? That is not so. Because man sins every day, he had to offer a sacrifice every day. It was not that because one offered a sacrifice today, one would not sin tomorrow. It was not that one's sins were remitted forever just because one had once offered a sacrifice by laying hands on a sheep, piercing its throat to draw its blood, putting it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and burning the remaining meat with fire. On the way home, thinking, "The sins I committed today have all been passed on," if one met a hateful person who had borrowed money and did not pay it back, one would immediately hurl abuse at him and slander him and end up fighting, committing sins recklessly, and sin would be recorded on the tablet of the heart again. When sin is recorded on the tablet of the heart, the heart is in great anguish because of sin. Even though one has just now come back from offering a sacrifice. "It has not been long since I offered the righteous sacrifice of slaughtering an expensive goat, laying hands on it to pass on my sins, and drawing its blood and killing it, and I barely received the remission of sins before God, but I have sinned again because of that person, so this time I will have to slaughter a sheep from our backyard." So one had to bring another sheep to the tabernacle and ask the priest to offer the sacrifice.

In the Old Testament, the priest always stands at the entrance of the tabernacle. The priest has no time to rest. These are the words a priest says to a certain person in the Old Testament.

"Didn't you come and go just a little while ago?"

"Yes, I did. But I sinned again, you see. I was going home with a light heart after offering the sacrifice, and what do you know, I met that man who does not pay back my money. I tried

to put up with it if I could, but he kept provoking me, didn't he? So before I knew it, my fist flew out, and he threw his fist at me, too; it was beyond words. I tell you, lightning was flashing back and forth before my eyes. And when I came to my senses, I was at the police station. At the police station, we agreed not to fight and he agreed to pay back the debt, and I came out, but still, there is sin in my conscience and it torments me. So I have dragged a sacrificial sheep here again in this way. This time, too, it is an unblemished sheep."

"Please, live a little better. I am exhausted to death, too. For you, it is enough to drag a sheep here, lay your hands on it, and have its blood taken from its throat, but from then on, isn't it my work as the priest? I have to put the blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, I have to skin it, I have to cut it in pieces, I have to burn it with fire. It is killing me. That one from a little while ago was already killing me, and you have come again? Truly, thanks to people like you, there is never a day when the smoke ceases in the tabernacle."

"I am sorry, priest. What can I do, being made this way? Please take the trouble. And thank you."

With a light heart, he resolved never to sin again and was going back, but he ended up sinning again. Are there not times when one commits the same sin three or four times a day? But that man of the people could not help coming to the tabernacle to offer a sacrifice.

"I have come again. This time, I have no shame. You take care of everything yourself." Then he just tosses down a sheep and leaves. But if he leaves even what he himself must do to the priest and goes away after giving only the sheep, it becomes a useless sacrifice. If the priest takes the sheep and slaughters and eats it, or if the priest lays his hands on the sheep to pass on sins and draws its blood, puts it on the horns of the altar of burnt

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offering, and pours it on the ground, it is only the sins of the priest that are remitted. To offer a sacrifice that removes one's own sins, one must lay his own hands on it without fail and pass his own sins on to it without fail. After that, according to the law that *"the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, one must cut the throat of the sheep to draw its blood and kill it, take that blood and put it on the four horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour the remaining blood on the ground, and thereby the sins are all erased from both the Book of Works and the tablet of the heart.

What sin does a sheep of the world have? What ethics and morals does an animal have that it would know sin? Because an animal has no soul, it has no conscience and no perception, so the law does not apply to it either. Therefore, the sheep has no sin. The sheep had to die only because it received the laying on of hands from a human being and had the sins of us human beings passed on to it. The sheep, which knows nothing, is merely used by God as a substitute for man in order to save man; that animal does not know sin.

That is why man must lay his hands on the sacrificial animal without fail. It means that he must lay his hands on it and pass his sins on to it, and then slaughter that animal. Therefore, if that person tosses down a sheep and goes away without even laying his hands on it, it does not become a sacrifice for the remission of sins. To receive the remission of sins, there must be an unblemished offering, the laying on of hands, and the shedding of blood without fail; that blood must be put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and poured on the ground; and the meat must be burned with fire and offered before God. Up to laying hands on it and killing it, the sinner did it himself, but from then on, the priest had to do it for him.

Because man commits sin dozens of times even in a single day, offering a sacrifice in that way every time he sinned was far too much to handle. Yesterday, too, he dragged three animals and offered sacrifices, but he had to go again the next day, and since he had to go on average at least once every day of the 365 days of the year, he had to have at least 365 sheep. Not only is raising sheep overwhelming, but even though one offers the troublesome sacrifice every day, one sins again tomorrow, so the feeling of wanting to just give up would also arise. So, with such a feeling of disappointment, saying, "I cannot do it. I cannot do it anymore. I cannot do it," and saying, "Even if I offer a sacrifice today, I will sin again tomorrow," one just gives up.

So God, because He knows people well, gave the way to remit a year's worth of sins that had piled up for one year. When two goats were brought to have the sins of the people of Israel for one year remitted, this time it was not the sinner who laid his hands on them directly, but the high priest laid his hands on them before God, representing the people of Israel. And he sprinkled the blood seven times on the east side of the mercy seat. "God! Look at this blood." The lid that covers the ark is covered by the wings of angels, and he sprinkled the blood seven times on it and before it (Leviticus 16:14–15).

The sacrifice of the great atonement required two sacrificial victims. One was used as the offering for the sacrifice offered inside the tabernacle of God. When hands were laid on that sacrificial offering and its throat was cut and it was killed, blood flowed out, and the priest took the blood and went into the sanctuary. Then, as for the remaining one, hands were laid on it before the eyes of the people, and it was entrusted to a man appointed beforehand to be taken to the wilderness and abandoned. Then what happened to that goat when it went into the wilderness, where there was no water and no grass? It went

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bearing all the sins of the people of Israel and died of thirst. Because two sacrifices were offered in that way, two sacrificial offerings were needed. That was the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement.

But this, too, was not a perfect sacrifice. Because the sacrifice had to be offered again every year, it was a sacrifice that reminded people of sins. Now, not such an imperfect sacrifice, but the sacrifice of salvation that never changes forever had to be offered. An eternal sacrifice, that is, for which one never again has to offer a sacrifice for sin.

The eternal sacrifice of atonement accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist

God, exactly according to the law of salvation that He had planned before the foundation of the world, had the high priest and the sacrificial offering needed for the eternal sacrifice offered to God. That was none other than the work of John the Baptist and Jesus. The "baptism" that John the Baptist gave to Jesus at the Jordan River was the same as the laying on of hands of the Old Testament. Jesus came to this earth as the unblemished offering and received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. And so, through that baptism He received from John, He had the sin of the whole world transferred to Him. And after having sins passed on to Him, Jesus went to the Cross and received all the judgment for all sins. Because Jesus offered such a sacrifice, the righteousness of God, the righteous judgment of God, was accomplished.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by

force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:12–14).

John the Baptist is not only the representative of the nation of Israel but also the representative of all mankind. John the Baptist received the testimony that he was the greatest among those born of women. Jesus pointed to John the Baptist and said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11)*. Therefore, it was said that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. It was because John the Baptist was the very last high priest of this Old Testament, and the Old Testament extends up to John the Baptist. The age of Jesus is the New Testament. Because John the Baptist stood on the boundary between the Old Testament and the New Testament and gave baptism to Jesus and passed sins on to Him, the New Testament began. Because John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed all sins on to Him, it was said that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. Because John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him, he could testify, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*, and from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the New Testament age was opened.

Let us look at the word of the Gospel of Matthew. *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized" (Matthew 3:13–16)*.

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Now, let us see. Jesus received baptism from John. Where? At the Jordan River. For what? To fulfill all righteousness. John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus, just as the word says, *"For John came to you in the way of righteousness" (Matthew 21:32)*, and Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, and Jesus received baptism in order to fulfill *"all righteousness."* There is a meaning in Jesus having received baptism from John at the Jordan River in order to fulfill all righteousness. The people of the Old Testament crossed the Jordan River and entered the land of Canaan. Because the Jordan River has the meaning of the river of death, it was said that they crossed the Jordan River and met God, who is in the land of Canaan. That is why Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River in order to cut off all the sins of death.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence" (Matthew 11:12). John the Baptist began the work of the public ministry of Jesus for the first time. The first thing Jesus undertook in His public ministry of removing the sins of mankind was none other than receiving baptism from John. Jesus receiving baptism from John was the work of having the sins of all the people of mankind, the sins of you and me, all transferred to Him.

Jesus had the sin of this world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism in the manner of the laying on of hands of the Old Testament. From whom? By receiving baptism from the representative of mankind, the greatest among those born of women, none other than John the Baptist. John! He is the greatest among those born of women. *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence" (Matthew 11:12)*. When John the Baptist, being on this earth, turned thirty, Jesus also turned thirty. Since Jesus was born six months later than John the Baptist, in fleshly terms He

would be like a younger brother, but Jesus and John the Baptist met unmistakably as the Lamb of God and the representative of mankind.

When Jesus turned thirty, He ended His private life and began His public life. As He began the work of saving us, all mankind, from sin, the very first thing He did was to receive baptism from John. To whom did Jesus go in order to receive baptism? He went to John the Baptist, who at the Jordan River was crying out for repentance, saying, *"Brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7)*, and was preaching, *"He who is coming after me is mightier than I" (Matthew 3:11)*, and received baptism from him.

Jesus is walking step by step toward John the Baptist. And Jesus came before John the Baptist and bowed His head. "You give baptism to Me. For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. You, the representative of mankind, pass the sins of all people on to Me through baptism. I will have the sins of all people passed on to Me from you and wash away all those sins. I will have the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Me through baptism and die on the Cross so that all who believe in Me may be saved. This is the love of God, and this is the salvation of God. God the Father sent Me to this earth to have Me bear the sins of all people and to have Me receive the judgment in place of all people. Therefore, you must give baptism to Me." Jesus had to receive baptism from John the Baptist and have all sins passed on to Him.

The word "baptism" has the meaning of "to be washed." Baptism is a word meaning "to be washed, to be buried, for sins to be passed on, to be transferred," and these all have exactly the same meaning. The word "the laying on of hands" of the Old Testament was also a word with exactly the same meaning: "to be transferred, for sins to be passed on, to be buried."

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It was said that in the Old Testament, when one laid hands on it, sins were passed on. That is why God gladly receives the blood of that offering. Since God said that He accepts the sacrificial offering, the sacrifice that offered the laying on of hands and the blood was pleasing to God. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)*. Although God loves us, He could not make a person who has sin His people. That is why God shifted the location of sin. In order to make us people without sin, He sent Jesus and had Him bear all the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John. Because all our sins have been passed on to Jesus, we become children of God without sin. Through this eternal sacrifice, He made it possible for all mankind to become the people of God without sin by faith. That was the love of God, the holiness of God, and the righteousness of God.

That is why Jesus did the work of receiving baptism from John. John the Baptist was giving baptism at the Jordan River, and Jesus walked toward John the Baptist.

Saying, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, He told John to give Him baptism.

"How can I give baptism to You? I am the greatest among those born of women, and God has entrusted me with this office, but are You not the Son of God, who is higher than I? Are You not my Creator? Then how can I give baptism to You?"

"Permit it to be so now. For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. It is fitting that I receive baptism from you and you give baptism to Me, and thereby remove the unrighteousness and sins of all people."

The word, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, means that Jesus receives baptism from John

the Baptist and has all sins transferred to Him. John the Baptist is the representative of mankind and the one who performed the office of the high priest of mankind. He is the one who, as the last priest in the Old Testament, passed the sin of the world on to Him through baptism. John the Baptist was the only one who could give baptism to Jesus, the Son of God who is the Lamb of God, and pass the sins of all people on to Him. Because Jesus was the Lamb of God who came to remove all the sins of this world, He received baptism from John, the high priest. In Old Testament terms, Jesus is the Lamb of God, the sacrificial offering of atonement, and John the Baptist was the high priest. "The one who will pass the sins of all people on to Me is none other than you. You give baptism to Me." Jesus said this, and when John the Baptist refused, Jesus commanded John, "Do it."

"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. I command you. You give baptism to Me. For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. You give Me the baptism in the form of the laying on of hands and pass all sins on to Me, and I will receive the baptism in the form of the laying on of hands through you, have all the sins of mankind passed on to Me, and wash the hearts of people clean so that there is no sin in them. For Me to receive baptism through you, have sins passed on to Me, and plant sins in My body is the most righteous work. And to receive the judgment for sin in place of all mankind and save you is the love of God and the salvation of God."

Jesus told John the Baptist to obey. John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus. *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)* in the original Greek is "houtos (οὕτως) dikaiosyne (δικαιοσύνη)." "Houtos" means "thus, in this way," and "dikaiosyne" means "righteousness, rightness."

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Believe in the righteous act that Jesus performed

From the time we were born, we were beings like factories that produce the sin of the world. Born on this earth having inherited the sins of our parents from our mother's womb, having inherited the sin of Adam and Eve, we are producers and places of origin of sin, committing hundreds of actual sins until we die. The welfare system of Europe is described as "from the cradle to the grave," but in fact, committing sin from the cradle to the grave is our life as lumps of sin, a life that is a production site churning out sin every day. Who is the one who will save those lives and make them righteous? It is Jesus, the Son of God, who received baptism from John the Baptist and shed His blood and died. Only our Lord receiving baptism from John as the method of having all the sins of mankind passed on to Him is the fairest method of removing sin, the fairest salvation, and the most appropriate and fitting method of salvation. The point is that this method—"John passes all the sins of mankind on to Me, and I have all the sins of mankind passed on to My flesh through baptism"—is the most fitting. Dear fellow believers, do you believe the word of Jesus? Do you also believe in the righteous act that Jesus performed? That is why it was said that John came in the way of righteousness. It means that John preached the right truth.

What about you and me? Do you admit the fact that you are people who commit sin until you die? *"From the days of John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:12)*, at the Jordan River, the river of death, through John the Baptist giving baptism to Jesus, our sins were all passed on to Jesus entirely. In this manner, by Jesus receiving baptism from John, all the righteousness of God was fulfilled. Baptism is baptisma (βάπτισμα) in Greek; it is also called immersion, and it means to be buried.

Even before you and I were born on this earth, even before we were in the loins of our mothers and fathers, our Lord came to this world and accomplished salvation. From the time this world was made and for as long as the whole earth exists, people who resemble the image of God are born and die, are born and die, and repeat this, and that is living over and over a life of sinning and dying, committing sin. Jesus came to this earth about 2,000 years ago, at the time God appointed, in order to save all these people from sin. Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John. Jesus receiving baptism from John was in order to save you and me from sin. Jesus received baptism from John and fulfilled all righteousness in order to save all of us from all sins. All righteousness, that is, the remission of all sins, He accomplished through baptism. Our Lord Jesus Christ had all the sins of you and me transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John.

God, seeing Jesus receive baptism from John, said with gladness, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. It was a word that said, "My Son has borne all the sins of mankind and made you without sin."

We were originally those who would go to hell because of our sins, but we have become those who possess the kingdom of heaven by faith; so the violent who take it by force are those who believe in what Jesus and John the Baptist did.

Freely receive what is freely given

I came to have an expensive children's watch. So I was going to give it as a gift to children, and just then I saw three children passing by over there with runny noses.

"Hey, kids, wait a moment."

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"Why?"

"Shall I give you a watch as a gift? Now, who will take this watch?"

Then all three children hesitated. The first child said bluntly,

"You're not really going to give it, are you? Don't lie. And I don't need it."

That is what he said. Then he grumbled to himself,

"Where is there such a thing as free?" "That man is a complete liar."

So I held out the watch to the second child. The second child hesitated and took it. But after taking it and seeming to think quietly for a while, as if he decided it just would not do,

"Here! You're going to give it and then take it back, aren't you? Or else you're going to go around saying I stole that watch, aren't you? It just won't do. Receiving something that belongs to someone else is a dangerous thing. I won't take it."

That is what he said. Not knowing what to say about a child who could not gladly receive a gift even though I was trying to give it to him, or whether to blame such a world, I took the watch back with a bitter heart. The third child was looking at me with his eyes wide open.

"Please give that to me."

So I quickly gave the watch to that child.

"Thank you. But no giving it and then taking it back."

That child tried on the watch, alternating between his left arm and his right arm, and was delighted. My heart was glad because of the third child. Seeing him believe my words that I would give him the watch just as they were, receive it, and rejoice, trying it on this way and that, I felt that his heart was pure.

This is the right faith that believes in the Lord. Believing that the Lord has done it for us and taking it—possessing it with such faith is none other than the kingdom of heaven. Those who

possess the kingdom of heaven by faith have only to rejoice and give thanks.

Those who believe the word of God in their hearts are those who have taken the kingdom of heaven by force

For us, taking the faith of salvation that God has given us is none other than the faith of the violent who take it by force. This is the faith that believes the spiritual truth of salvation. Dear fellow believers, do you know the word of Romans that says, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)*? No one can be saved from his own sins by his own deeds. No one can go to the kingdom of heaven by his own strength, by his deeds, or by his ability. Whether one has committed many sins or few sins, one is equally a sinner who has committed sin. No one can pay the wages of sin by making himself good through his own deeds, nor can anyone go to the kingdom of heaven with such faith. Then who on earth goes to the kingdom of heaven? Just as it was said that the violent take it by force, those who believe that He has remitted our sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit take hold of the kingdom of heaven by faith and possess it. Those who possess the kingdom of heaven by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are saved from sin and go to the kingdom of heaven. "Lord! I believe that Jesus came to this earth to save us sinners, received the baptism in the form of the laying on of hands given by John the Baptist, and had our sins passed on to Him once and for all. The Lord came to this earth and did this, so what reason is there for me not to believe it? Lord, I believe. And I give thanks for

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the grace of salvation that has remitted my sins." God is pleased with those who take it by faith in this way.

The Bible, the word of God, is absolutely not a lie. From the old days until now, it has been handed down continuously like this without changing. Do you believe that this Bible is the word of God? Even if you do not know other things well, do you believe that the Bible is the word of God? In such a word of God, it clearly said that when Jesus received baptism from John, He fulfilled all righteousness. All people have sin and must go to hell, but it said that Jesus bore all the sins of all people by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. The Bible, from beginning to end, was that very word: that Jesus makes all people without sin through baptism.

And Jesus actually received baptism from John, had the sin of the world all passed on to Him, and shed His blood. Receiving the laying on of hands and going into the water and coming up out of it spoke of having the sins of all mankind passed on to Him, dying on the Cross, and rising again from death. In this way, Jesus Himself bore our sins, had sins passed on to Him, then died on the Cross, came back to life on the third day after He died and rose again, and, sitting at the right hand of the throne of God, has given the word of assurance, "You have no sin," to all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Because Jesus Himself came to this earth and made us without sin, this is the righteousness of God. This is the salvation of God. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

You and I must believe in our hearts.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth that must be in your hearts and in my heart. Do you believe in your hearts this word that you have heard until now? Are you those who have taken the kingdom of heaven by force through faith? You and I are those who have taken it by force by believing in the

gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their hearts and have truly received the remission of sins can go to the kingdom of heaven. Your sins were all passed on to Jesus Christ, Jesus received all the judgment for sin in your place, and He rose again on the third day after He died and is sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus is alive now. The Lord came to this earth for a while clothed in human form, and during His life of 33 years He Himself received baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again on the third day, testified for 40 days, and now sits at the right hand of God and says to all who believe in their hearts according to the word of salvation, "Right! That faith is right. You are My people. Come into the kingdom of heaven."

Dear fellow believers! Do you believe that your own sins were all passed on through baptism? The sins of you and me were all passed on to Jesus. That is why God said that from the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

And it said that the violent take it by force. What do they take by force? Becoming righteous through faith, they take the kingdom of heaven by force. Dear fellow believers, do you believe that you possess the kingdom of heaven through faith? This is none other than faith.

Dear fellow believers, for us human beings to practice disciplines to keep away from sin, or to make efforts not to commit sin, or to go to the kingdom of heaven by accumulating good deeds—all of these are lies. No human being who has flesh can do so. Because you and I have weak flesh, we end up exposing our shortcomings. Even when we always eat our meals, we want to eat a lot; when we see something delicious, we want to eat more; even when we have become pretty, we want to become much prettier—these cravings of the flesh are unlimited. So how can we be changed by not committing sin? That is

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impossible. We become righteous by faith, we become children of God by faith, we take hold of everlasting life by faith, and we go to the kingdom of heaven by faith.

We, who have become righteous by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

As it says, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*, we become righteous by believing in our hearts. Do you really believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit in your hearts? Do you believe in your hearts that your sins were passed on to Jesus? Then are you righteous, or are you sinners? You are righteous. Do you have sin, or do you not? You do not. There cannot be any sin. Because Jesus came to this earth once and for all, received baptism from John once and for all, and took away all sins, transgressions, and shortcomings once and for all, we have no sin by faith once and for all.

Just as in the Old Testament the representative prophet of all the people of Israel was Elijah, the servant of God, who is the servant of God who represented all the people in this world? Who is the representative prophet? It is none other than John the Baptist. 2,000 years ago, John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus on behalf of you and me and passed all the sins of you and me on to Him. The sins of your children, the sins of your ancestors, and if your children grow up and have children, since those children, too, are people of the world, even their sins were all passed on. You are also people of the world, and your parents are also people of the world. All the people who will be born in the future are people of the world. What bore all the sins of the

people of the world—future, present, and past—is the baptism Jesus received from John.

Now, from the time you were in your mother's womb, you were born with sin and committed sin until you were ten years old. Were those sins passed on to Jesus or not? They were passed on. From the sins you committed at ten years old to the sins you will commit for the rest of your life, were they all passed on to Jesus or not? They were passed on. Because all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus through baptism, there cannot be any sin in your hearts.

In the Gospel of John, there appears the testimony about Jesus that says, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. This word is the word that John the Baptist testified toward Jesus on the day after Jesus received baptism from John. Just as that testimony says, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him through baptism and went to the Cross bearing the sin of the world. Your sins from the time you were in your mother's womb until you die are the sin of the world. Are the sins you committed knowingly and unknowingly from birth until you were ten years old, out of immaturity, the sin of the world or not? Since they were committed in the world, they are the sin of the world. Sinning without knowing, sinning knowingly, sinning in hiding, and sinning openly—all of these are the sin of the world. The sin of the world was passed on to Jesus. What about from age ten to age twenty? Do you not commit sin? Since the sins committed at that time are also the sin of the world, were they all passed on to Jesus through baptism or not? They were clearly passed on. What about from twenty to thirty? From thirty to forty, and what about the sins from forty until you die? They were all passed on.

We must clearly know and believe in our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which removes all our sins and makes

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us possess the kingdom of heaven. Anyone, man or woman, young or old, must know this fact and believe it in his heart. Of course, I, too, believe this truth in my heart. It is because I know well that Jesus received baptism from John and shed His blood and died and thereby removed all sins, and that apart from the gospel of the water and the Spirit there is no way whatsoever to receive the remission of sins. So thankfully, Jesus actually took away the sin of the world. We committed sins in the world from age one to age thirty-one. In fact, this is the very prime of our lives. When life is in full bloom, sin also runs rampant, and we commit truly countless sins. Were your sins of that time passed on or not? They were passed on. Then were the sins committed until age thirty-five, not to mention the sins committed until death, passed on or not? They were passed on. Were the sins of your children passed on or not? They were passed on. Were the sins of your parents passed on or not? They were passed on. They were all passed on. The sin of Adam and Eve was also passed on, and all the sins of mankind until this earth comes to an end were all passed on. We cannot say exactly when, on what date, the Lord will come to this world, but surely an end comes to this world as well, and if we look at the word of God, it said that on the day He comes, a woman gives birth to a child. Did Jesus bear even the sins of the baby born at that time or not? Because He bore even those, anyone can receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart. Anyone must know this truth and receive the remission of sins through faith.

A person believes in his heart and comes to righteousness, and confesses with his mouth and comes to salvation. Are you righteous, or are you sinners? You are righteous. Seen through faith, do all the people of this world have sin, or not? They do not. Clearly, on God's side, they do not. But because they do not

believe it, there is still sin in their hearts. It said, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)*. God loved people and removed the sin of the world so that people might obtain everlasting life. God saved everyone so that no one would be judged. But on man's side, do they know that fact or not? They do not. There are far too many people who do not know. Even today, there are many people who believe in Jesus but do not know what the gospel of the water and the Spirit is. So they are sinners every day.

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:13–14). You will now have set your hearts on and be believing the fact that Elijah is none other than John the Baptist. John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, the greatest among those born of women, is Elijah, the servant of God whom God said He would send. Because John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, gave baptism to Jesus and passed all sins on to Him, from that time on all people have received the remission of sins. Jesus, my Savior, received baptism from John, had all my sins passed on to Him, received the judgment for all my sins on the Cross, died, rose again on the third day, and is alive now, listening to my prayers. That Jesus removed all my sins. He took away all my sins. He made me a person without sin. Even though I am this unclean, even though I am a person who sins until I die, He made me a person without sin. This faith of mine is so very real.

Those who believe this fact in their hearts through faith obtain salvation. It is because God has already accomplished all salvation. This is the promise of God and the salvation of God. Whoever believes this word in his heart becomes righteous and has been given the right to become a child of God, so now I hope

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that you will believe in your hearts. I hope that you will take the kingdom of heaven through faith and become children of God through faith.

God said that it is not by living a good life that you become righteous. It said, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)*. But through the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, He accomplished the salvation that makes you and me people without sin. That is why there is actually no sin in the hearts of you and me. I believe in my heart the fact that when Jesus received baptism from John, my sins, the sin of the world, were passed on. Do you believe in your hearts? In your hearts there were sins red like scarlet and blacker than ink. When Jesus received baptism from John, when John the Baptist gave baptism, these sins were passed on to Jesus. Jesus had the sins that you and I and all the people of the whole world commit throughout our lives transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, and He removed on the Cross the punishment of having to go to hell.

There was sin in our hearts, but through John the Baptist giving baptism, our sins moved along the arms of John the Baptist to the head of Jesus. Then where are our sins now? They are on the head of Jesus. Before Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, there was sin in the hearts of you and me. We could not help but have sin until we died. But when John the Baptist laid his hands on Him, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the arms of John the Baptist. Then is sin in your hearts, or is sin on Jesus? It is on Jesus. Now sin is not yours but Jesus'.

Dear fellow believers, Jesus, who has no sin, went to the Cross bearing the sins of you and me. He who had never once committed sin received baptism from John to save us, had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him, received the

punishment that is the price of sin, and suffered affliction and persecution. Because He received baptism from John, Jesus bore our sins, was nailed with large nails on the Cross, poured out all the blood in all His veins, and died. Jesus did not refuse to shed His blood, which is His life, and die in order to save our lives. The reason Jesus shed His blood was for no other reason than that He bore the sins of you and me through baptism. Jesus hung on the Cross and shed His blood and paid the price of all our sins.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The reason our Lord had to receive in full the death that is the wages of sin on the Cross was that He had borne all our sins through baptism. And the reason Jesus could say, *"It is finished" (John 19:30)*, as He died on the Cross is also that He bore all sins through baptism and fulfilled all righteousness. Jesus was glad of the fact that He completed salvation by dying on the Cross.

On the third day after Jesus was shut in the tomb, God the Father raised Him up again. Jesus, who had risen again, testified for 40 days. And before the eyes of countless people, He was taken up into heaven by God. And the Bible promised that Jesus would come again just as He was seen going into heaven.

Our Lord saved those who believe in their hearts this fact that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. He made it so that we can obtain salvation by believing in our hearts, not by anything else. How can you receive the remission of sins? Can you receive the remission of sins by living a good life? You cannot. Can you make yourselves without even a speck of sin by doing good deeds? You cannot. There is no one who can do so. However much one may be acknowledged by oneself and others to be good, in a long time of suffering that one cannot endure, one is bound in the end to throw up one's hands and feet and reveal the nature of iniquity.

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However well one may hide one's nature, one's inner self, one's heart, as soon as circumstances permit, it is all bound to be revealed immediately. If there is even one good thing in you, know that behind it there are heaps of your own evil things.

Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and removed all the sins of you and me and of all mankind. The baptism Jesus received from John, the event of John the Baptist giving baptism to Jesus, the event of Jesus receiving baptism from John the Baptist—if you do not believe this, your faith is a vain faith even if you believe in Jesus. That is why all four Gospels recorded the work by which Jesus saved us in this way. I hope that you, too, will believe in your hearts and live just as it is recorded in the word. Only when you believe in the love of Jesus, who removed all the sins of your hearts through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, is the kingdom of heaven yours. Through the water and the blood of Jesus the Savior, you have no sin. I hope that you will believe in your hearts. He who believes is one who has been saved from all his sins. I give thanks to God. This truth is the truth of the remission of all sins that the tabernacle speaks of. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Even Satan's temptation could not block the way of salvation

< Mark 1:12–13 >

"Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him."

The wilderness into which the Holy Spirit led Him

After the voice from heaven was heard saying that He was the beloved Son, the place Jesus went was the wilderness. Even for the Son in whom the Father was well pleased, there was Satan's temptation. Looking at this order, we cannot judge that God has forsaken someone just because he has met with temptation. We must know the will of God not by the shape of the circumstances we are in but by the word, and that word shows who Jesus is and what He was doing even in the wilderness.

Let us read verse 12. *"Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12)*. After receiving baptism from John, Jesus went into the wilderness following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit led Him, the wilderness, too, was a

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way within the will of God, and that will to save people continued even in the wilderness. If only comfortable circumstances were the will of God, we could not understand this event, but the Son of God was the Savior even in the place where He was tempted.

Let us read verse 13. *"And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him" (Mark 1:13)*. The one who tempts is Satan, and it was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness. We must not confuse these two agents in our thinking. Even while God accomplishes salvation, Satan opposes Him, but that opposition could not turn the Son of God away from the way of salvation. Jesus went into the wilderness while bearing all our sins, and He drove away the enticement of the devil by believing the word of God and with that word. Passing through this wilderness, Jesus went to Galilee and preached the gospel of God.

The work of the Savior that we must know before the temptation

When we meet with temptation, we are apt to regard holding out by our own will as faith. But if we make our own strength the ground of salvation, every time our weakness is exposed, even our salvation is shaken. Looking to Jesus in the wilderness is not a matter of vaguely resolving to become a strong person. It is believing who the Son of God, who came to save us, is and what work He accomplished.

Just before going into the wilderness, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. In order to

save people who are in sin and death, He Himself bore those sins on His own body. The lifelong sins of you and me are also included in all those sins. Therefore, we cannot look at Jesus being tempted in the wilderness as a mighty being who has nothing to do with us. The Savior who bore our sins was facing the adversary.

Jesus accomplished the work of salvation to the end and said on the Cross, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. While bearing those sins that had been transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, receiving the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. Neither the temptation in the wilderness nor Satan's opposition that followed afterward could tear down this salvation that the Lord accomplished. We believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. Not our own merit of having endured temptation well, but the salvation that Jesus accomplished becomes our righteousness.

When this ground of salvation is clear, there is a word to return to even in the midst of temptation. So even when our own failure is exposed, there is no need to hide it or justify it; we have only to acknowledge the wrong and follow the word of the Lord. At the same time, we must not, using our own weakness as a reason, deny the fact that Jesus bore all sins. Turning back before the word and doubting the Lord's salvation are different things. Faith acknowledges one's own wrongs and yet holds fast to the righteousness the Lord accomplished.

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Do not measure God's love by circumstances

In the wilderness there were wild beasts, and the angels ministered to Jesus. The Bible shows the reality of temptation and God's care together. When difficulties appear, we are apt to think that the Lord's care has vanished. But the very fact that the Son of God was in the wilderness corrects such a judgment. Since even the Son whom the Father loves passed through the wilderness, being loved by God and not going through any difficulty at all do not mean the same thing.

We, too, who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, meet with worries and difficulties as we live. At such times, do not try to accomplish salvation all over again from the beginning, but rely on Jesus, who saved us. Do not regard the thoughts that tear down your heart as greater than the word, but ask the Lord for the help you need. Jesus, who passed through the wilderness and accomplished the work of salvation, is the object of our faith. The evidence that He loved us also lies not in our circumstances but in *"the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20)*. Let us not make difficulties the standard for measuring God's love, but let us make our hearts firm in the word of the Savior, who walked the way of salvation even in the wilderness. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The repentance and faith that lead into the kingdom of God

< Mark 1:14–15 >

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'"

The promised Savior has come

The Bible records, *"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14)*. Even though John's activity was blocked, God's promise was not interrupted. That is because the Savior whom John had pointed to was Himself speaking to the people. Jesus accomplished the work that had been prepared through a man and preached the good news of the kingdom of God.

Let us read verse 15. *"And saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:15)*. Jesus' saying that the time is fulfilled means that the salvation promised in the Old Testament has been accomplished and that the time has now come to obtain salvation by faith. The Savior whom God promised to send has come.

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Jesus had already received baptism from John and had the sin of the world passed on to Him, and now He proclaims that we are to believe in that gospel. Salvation is not a matter of having to search further for human methods, but a matter of having to believe in the Son whom God sent.

The kingdom of God is not a kingdom that a person who lived as he pleased while having sin takes possession of by piling up merit. God sends the Savior to rescue sinners and makes them the people of God. Therefore, we who hear the news that the kingdom has come near must learn from Jesus the way to enter that kingdom. The Lord said to repent and believe in the gospel. Repentance and faith are the response to this call of the Savior.

Turn from the wrong way and believe in the gospel

If we think of repentance only as the feeling of grieving over what we have done wrong, how much our heart is tormented ends up becoming the measure of faith. But since a person can keep going on the way of trying to wash away his sins by his own strength even while agonizing over sin, the repentance the Lord spoke of is not repeating prayers of repentance but turning back from that wrong way. A person who went against the word of God and believed his own thoughts must acknowledge his wrong and accept the salvation that Jesus gives.

A person who tries to solve his sins by gathering up his own righteous deeds must also turn back. That is because the fact that he did good deeds cannot remove the judgment for the sins he has already committed. A person who only repeats the words that he has realized his sins and does not accept the word of salvation must also come forward before the gospel. Repentance does not shut us up within ourselves but turns us toward the

Savior. Here we can see why Jesus, after speaking of repentance, said to believe in the gospel.

Then what is the gospel that we must believe in? It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which says that Jesus, who came when the time was fulfilled, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, that while bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, receiving the judgment in our place, and that He rose again from death and accomplished salvation completely. It is the very gospel of which the Lord spoke when He said that *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. The sin of the world that the Lord had transferred to Him also includes the lifelong sins of you and me. Therefore, this salvation is not a salvation in which part of our sins is entrusted to the Lord and the rest must be removed by our deeds, but a salvation in which the Savior bore all our sins.

Accepting this fact with the heart is the faith that saves. Knowledge that can explain the gospel and believing that gospel as one's own salvation are distinguished from each other. If a person knows that Jesus received baptism from John and yet thinks that he himself must still wash away his own sins, he has not accepted what that work accomplished for him. The Lord had our sins passed on to Him and bore even the judgment for those sins. Believing only in the blood of the Cross is not a whole faith but a half faith. It is because our sins were passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John that the blood of the Cross has anything to do with us. Believe this word as your own salvation.

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The grace of the kingdom received by faith

The hope of entering the kingdom of God does not lie in the fact that one's life has never once collapsed. It lies in having received the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who believe in the righteousness the Savior accomplished come to stand before God as righteous people without sin, and so it is exactly as the word says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)*. This is not a way of thinking that takes sin lightly, but the faith that acknowledges the price of sin that Jesus paid. The more seriously a person knows his own sins, the more he must move the ground of his salvation from himself to the Savior.

This faith is needed in the life of following the word even after receiving the remission of sins. When we come to know that our thoughts go against the will of God, we must give up our stubbornness and follow the word. This life of turning back is not a price paid to obtain again the salvation we have already received. We follow His will because we believe in the Lord, who made us the people of God. When we give thanks for the grace we have received, the work of serving the gospel also goes beyond the burden of duty and becomes a work of thanksgiving.

Jesus let us hear the news of salvation and told us to believe. Now do not keep your heart bound to the way of trying to make yourself righteous. Do not hide your sins, and do not leave the Savior because of your sins. Turn to Jesus, who washed away our sins, and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord has given us a sure ground for living while looking toward the kingdom of God. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Follow Jesus and become fishers of men

< Mark 1:16–20 >

"And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him."

The call that came to people who were working

Simon and Andrew were casting a net into the sea, and James and John were mending their nets in the boat. Jesus saw them and called them. The way of the disciples did not begin with their setting out to obtain high offices by themselves, but with the Lord coming to people who were working and giving them a new purpose in life. Knowing who the One who calls is and accepting His word is the starting point of a disciple.

Let us read verse 17. *"Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men'" (Mark 1:17)*. Jesus gave together the command to follow Him and the promise to

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make them fishers of men. Just as He promised that He would make them become so, the disciples were not people who went forward boasting of abilities already prepared, but workers whom the Lord made while they followed Jesus. Therefore, if we judge whether the Lord can use us by looking only at what kind of character and experience we have, we end up missing this promise.

Simon and Andrew left their nets and followed Him, and the scene in which He called James and John is concluded with the word *"they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him" (Mark 1:20)*. The text does not stop at explaining their occupation but records their response to the call. Acknowledging Jesus in words was shown in actual steps. If we, too, say that we have believed in the gospel yet keep our hearts closed when it comes to following the Lord, we must look back on our own faith. That is because the Lord gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe with the heart and makes them His own people, so if one only says that he believes and does not follow, he must examine whether that faith has stayed only in his head.

He entrusts the gospel that saves people

Fishing for men does not mean gathering people into one's own faction. It is the work of preaching the Savior to people who are in sin and leading them to receive the remission of sins. Jesus called the disciples in order to use them for precisely this work. Even if one is eloquent in speech and gathers many people, if he cannot preach the gospel through which sinful people hear and believe and their sins are gone, it is not the work that a disciple of Jesus does. That is because the power to save sinners lies not

in the fame of the one who preaches but in the salvation the Savior accomplished.

The news that a disciple must preach must contain the work of the Savior, who solved the problem of sin. Before calling the fishermen at the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. Therefore, instead of demanding that people remove their own sins by themselves, a disciple preaches that the Savior bore those sins. The lifelong sins of you and me are also included in all those sins of the world.

Jesus, who had the sins passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins while bearing them, receiving the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and accomplished salvation completely. As the word says, *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)*, God accomplished this work that man cannot do. Since it is a salvation in which He bore even the price of sin, we can preach the remission of sins to people who were in despair because of sin. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with their hearts receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit, and become children of God. The ground on which the work of a fisher of men is possible is precisely this salvation.

If we are to lead other people to the Savior, we must first believe this gospel as our own salvation. One cannot tell only the hearers to have assurance while one's own sins remain unsolved. Those who believe with their hearts that the Lord washed away their sins preach the same salvation to other people. What the hearers are to rely on is also not the character or ability of the preacher but the salvation Jesus accomplished. That is because the work of a disciple is the work of revealing Jesus.

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Follow the Savior and learn

Do not make your claim that you believe in the gospel a tool for achieving your own purposes. The remission of sins is the grace Jesus bestowed, and those who have received that grace give their hearts to the Savior. There is no need to think of the life of following the Lord as paying the price of salvation. But neither should we take for granted a life that has nothing to do with the Savior on the grounds that we received it freely. Because we believe in the One who saved us, we treasure what He delights in.

The Lord calls people who are lacking, teaches them, and uses them. Therefore, do not stop learning, using your lack as an excuse. Do not insist only on your own thoughts, but humble your heart before the word, and learn what is to be learned even from those who serve the gospel together with you. The name of an office does not take the place of actual faith. We grow up as workers while listening to the Lord's will and doing the work of the gospel with our hearts joined together.

The work of preaching the gospel directly and the work of helping that gospel to be spread head toward the same goal. The heart that follows the Lord also appears in helping those who will hear the word to encounter the gospel, faithfully fulfilling the work entrusted to us, and caring for those who labor together with us. Regard whether a person who was in sin receives salvation as more important than how much you yourself stand out. That is where the purpose for which the Lord called the fishermen lies.

Jesus changed the lives of the people who were casting nets in Galilee. He has also given us the grace to serve the gospel that saves souls, going beyond the way of living only for our own food, clothing, and shelter. The One who makes us fishers of

men is Jesus, and the Lord Himself teaches and uses those who follow Him. Therefore, just as the Bible says of the fishermen of Galilee, *"They immediately left their nets and followed Him" (Mark 1:18)*, do not stop at saying that you believe, but actually follow the Lord, who saved you. ✉

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Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

A new doctrine with authority that even the unclean spirits obey

< Mark 1:21–28 >

"Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.' And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee."

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The authority with which He accomplishes exactly what He has said

The people who were in the synagogue at Capernaum were astonished when they heard the teaching of Jesus. It was because there was an authority different from what they had been hearing from the scribes. That authority did not come from pleasant-sounding words or a forceful tone. Then where did that authority come from? The event that took place right afterward revealed who Jesus is. An unclean spirit cried out before Jesus, and when Jesus commanded it, it came out of the man.

The demon cried out, *"I know who You are—the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24)*. To say the Holy One of God is to say that He is God, so, in effect, the demon was the first to testify that Jesus is God. But that knowledge was not faith that loves and relies on the Savior. The demon rejected any relationship between itself and Jesus and was afraid of destruction. Saying correct things about Jesus with one's mouth and believing in the Savior with one's heart are not the same. Along with what we can say about Jesus, we must examine whom we are actually relying on.

Let us read verse 25. *"But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!'" (Mark 1:25)*. Jesus did not borrow the demon's testimony to exalt Himself; rather, He rebuked the demon, silenced it, and commanded it to come out of the man. That command and its result show who it is that sets free a person held captive by an unclean spirit. The demon cried out loudly, but it could not go against the word of the Lord and keep holding on to the man.

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Jesus is God, who came to deliver us from sin

Let us read verse 27. *"Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him'" (Mark 1:27)*. The people saw the word and the actual work appear as one. Because Jesus had authority, that command was carried out. We must not regard this One, who is greater than the evil spirits that torment people, as one of the teachers who give good teachings. For a teacher only teaches people to live good lives, but Jesus is God, who came Himself to deliver those bound by sin and the devil.

This fact is important in the matter of our sins as well. Since a sinner has no ability to cleanse himself, he needs a Savior who will remit his sins, and the fact that Jesus is God means precisely that this Savior has the power to deliver us from sin and judgment. Therefore, this fact does not remain a distant doctrine but becomes the basis of our faith.

That Savior of power actually bore our sins. Before He entered the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus had already had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River; and bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive; and He rose again from death and saved us completely. The sins of our entire lifetime are also included in all the sins that were passed on to Jesus. The authority of the Lord does not stop at merely telling us that we have no sin. It is the authority with which He Himself bore sin and its judgment and accomplished salvation.

Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins, and the Holy Spirit comes into

their hearts and testifies that this salvation is true. Do not regard salvation as something that depends on the size of your own resolve. Since Jesus, who saved us, is God, whom even the unclean spirits obey, those who believe the word that the Lord has washed away all our sins can take the fact of that salvation, not the wavering of their own hearts, as their sure foundation.

Go forward from amazement to faith

The fame of Jesus spread throughout the region around Galilee. The number of people who heard of the amazing things increased, but what we need is to go further than hearing that news and finding it marvelous. We must accept in our hearts that Jesus is the One who saved us. If one does not receive the Savior even after a demon has gone out, we must remember the warning of the Lord, who said that *"he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matthew 12:45)*. The fact in this passage that even the demon knew Jesus clearly shows us the difference between knowledge and faith.

Those who believe in the Lord seek help from the Savior. When they encounter something they cannot solve, they do not remain alone in fear but rely on the Lord of power. We who have received the remission of sins pray to the Lord because we believe that Jesus, who saved us, is God, who is alive even now. Know Jesus, whom the word conveys to us, and rely on Him. The authority that cast out the demon in the synagogue with a single word is the authority that delivers us, and that authority is not a power we produce within ourselves but belongs to the Savior. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

Simon's mother-in-law, who served only after He took her by the hand and lifted her up

< Mark 1:29–31 >

"Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them."

Telling Jesus about the situation of a weak person

Having come out of the synagogue, Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. The Bible conveys the situation of that house as follows: *"But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once" (Mark 1:30)*. They brought the problem before the Lord on behalf of a weak person. We, too, when we see the difficulties of those who live alongside us, can go beyond merely worrying and tell the Lord, who will help, about them.

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In the face of the fact that a sick person is lying there, human weakness is revealed. Even if there is something one wants to do, one cannot raise one's body at will, and even those who want to help have no ability to make the person well as they wish. If there were someone lying with a fever in our house, we would pray, use medicine, and strive to find a physician, but we could not take that fever away in an instant. But Jesus, who came to this house, did not merely look at the weak person and feel sorry for her; He Himself went near, took her by the hand, and lifted her up. We must know who this very Jesus is.

Let us read verse 31. *"So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them" (Mark 1:31).* When the Lord took her by the hand and lifted her up, the fever left, and the woman served. This was not the result of a person forcing her sick body to move but the result of Jesus having healed her. The illness did not merely get a little better; the fever left and she was able to serve at once, so her serving means that the fever had gone down completely and she had recovered fully enough even to run errands, and this recovery was the work of the One who has the power that made all things. Jesus, who came to save us, is God, who actually raises up the weak.

The Lord's help comes before service

The woman was not healed of her illness because she served Jesus. Jesus first lifted her up, and after that she served. If we reverse the order of grace and service, we cannot read this event properly. The heart that thinks the Lord will help because we have done something for Him expects a transaction, but this passage shows the help of the Lord, who gives first.

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In the remission of sins, too, we must know this grace. It is not that a sinner cleanses himself by his own deeds and then comes to the Savior. Jesus came for us, who have no ability to solve our sins by ourselves. If we put forward our own service and devotion in order to make ourselves qualified to have our sins washed away, we end up missing the salvation that the Savior accomplished first. The Lord did not demand the price of salvation from us; rather, He Himself bore the price of sin.

Just as He first lifted up the woman who was lying down, Jesus also did the work of salvation first. It was not that He received good deeds from us and then saved us as the price for them; rather, saying, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and He bore, within all those sins, even the sins that you and I commit throughout our lifetime. And bearing those sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, receiving the judgment in our place; and He rose again from death and accomplished salvation completely.

Those who have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit have received the Holy Spirit and become children of God, so we serve the Lord not as those who serve in order to help pay the price of sin but as those who are thankful for the salvation that has been accomplished. Since He has washed away all our sins so that we can stand before the Lord, the desire now arises in us to take part in the work the Lord delights in. Just as the grace that lifted up the woman led to service, our lives, too, must start from the grace we have received.

Live by the grace that lifted us up

If we regard service as a way of building up our own righteousness, we feel hurt when others do not recognize us, and when we are unable to labor, we become afraid as though we will be forsaken by God. But when we distinguish between the basis of salvation and the fruit of service, the direction of our hearts changes. The basis on which He accepted us is the righteousness Jesus accomplished, and service is the thanks that those who have received that grace offer to the Lord. This is because, just as the word says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23),* eternal life is not wages for work but a gift. Thanks toward the Savior must come before the desire to prove ourselves.

We are still weak. Therefore, even while doing the Lord's work, we must not regard our own strength as everything but must seek His help. When you see the weakness of others, too, rather than rebuking them first, tell the Lord about the matter and share the help that is needed. The people in this passage told Jesus about the problem of the woman who was lying down, and Jesus Himself lifted her up. The One we rely on is the Savior of power, who knows our weakness.

Do not make today's service a means of buying the grace of God. Just as the woman who rose from her fever served the One who had lifted her up, let us believe in Jesus, who has made us clean through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and, in thanks for that grace, serve the Lord and the Lord's people. ✉

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Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

Come to Jesus, who healed the sick of the whole city, and receive the remission of sins

< Mark 1:32–34 >

“At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.”

The One who has power even in the face of many needs

The Bible conveys that evening as follows: *“At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door” (Mark 1:32–33)*. More important than the fact that many people gathered is to whom they came. People who had problems they could not solve by their own strength came to Jesus, and Jesus healed many who were sick and cast out demons.

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We are at a loss, not knowing what to do, even at the difficulty of a single person close to us. It is because, even though we want to help in our hearts, we lack the ability to actually help. But Jesus, who appears in this passage, did not stand powerless in the face of those many needs. Let us read verse 34. *"Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him" (Mark 1:34)*. The Lord actually helped the people who came to Him. If the people of a whole city gathered at the door of our house and waited for a helping hand, we could not heal the illness of even one of them, but Jesus healed those many people. It is because Jesus is God.

Faith must have a clear object. The heart that thinks anything will come about if only one desires it earnestly is different from the heart that believes in Jesus. Only when we know the One who loves us and has the power to help us can we rely on Him. When we know that Jesus is God and our Savior, our prayers asking for help also come to have a clear object. The One we call upon is not some vague power but Jesus Christ, who came to save us.

The Savior who healed sick bodies also bore sin

The problems of people do not end with sick bodies. That the whole city gathered means that there was not a single person in that city without a problem, and it means that before God everyone is a sinner. There is sin before God, and there is judgment for that sin. Even if the difficulties of the body are solved, if our sins are not washed away, we cannot stand before God. Therefore, we must not stop at seeking Jesus as the One who will solve our immediate problems but must know what the

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Lord came to save us from. Delivering people from sin and judgment is His work of salvation.

Before He began this work, Jesus had already had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. Since He is the One who healed the great multitude gathered at the door, even when the sins of all mankind were passed on to Him, those sins did not become a burden exceeding the Lord's power. Bearing all those sins, including the lifetime sins of you and me, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, receiving in the place of sinners the judgment they were to receive; and He rose again from death and accomplished salvation completely. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the news of salvation that has been conveyed to us.

The power to remit sins is not the power to let sins pass lightly. Jesus actually bore our sins and received their judgment in our place. So the word the Lord declared to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5),* is not an empty word either. That is why those who have been saved can have the assurance of the remission of sins while not regarding their sins as a small matter. They do not think that they must wash away again the sins the Lord bore; rather, they accept in their hearts the salvation that has been accomplished.

If your heart is still weighed down because of sin, do not put off coming to the Savior until your deeds get better. Just as the sick came to Jesus because they needed help, those who cannot solve their sins must hear the word of salvation. The One who makes us clean is Jesus. To those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Lord gives the remission of sins and testifies through the Holy Spirit that this salvation is true.

Accept the salvation that the Lord reveals

The demons knew Jesus, but Jesus did not allow them to speak. Therefore, we must know the Savior not through the mouths of demons but through what the Lord Himself does and teaches. Do not believe what someone says merely because he speaks the name of Jesus; confirm in the word the salvation Jesus accomplished. The Bible testifies of Him as follows: *"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ –ASV" (1 John 5:6)*.

Our hearts, as we come to Jesus, must also be clear. We can tell the Lord of our desire to receive help, but merely getting what we want cannot fully explain our relationship with the Lord. Jesus is the Savior who washed away our sins and made us children of God. We who believe in that grace, even while telling Him our needs, listen to and follow the word of the Lord. To rely on the Savior is to accept in our hearts, along with His power, the salvation He accomplished.

Just as the whole city gathered at the door where Jesus was when the sun had set, do not hide your weakness and try to solve things alone, but come to the Lord, who saved us. For He is God, who has the power to grant what we ask, and He is our Savior. ✉

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Sermon 13 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel to the other towns as well, following the way Jesus went

< Mark 1:35–39 >

"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for You.' But He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.' And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons."

He prayed to the Father even when people were looking for Him

After the evening when the people of the whole town had gathered was over, Jesus rose in the early morning while it was still dark and prayed in a solitary place. Look at the fact that the Lord of power, who had healed many people, prayed to the Father. The Lord's work was not an activity led along by people's reactions but the work of fulfilling the Father's will.

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We must learn the heart of Jesus, who was turned toward the Father even while caring for the needs of people.

Simon and those who were with him went looking for Jesus and told Him, *"Everyone is looking for You" (Mark 1:37)*. To the people who had experienced amazing things the day before, Jesus must have been someone they wished would keep staying with them. But Jesus said that they should go into the other nearby towns. The fact that many people had already gathered could not tie down the Lord's steps. It was because there was the gospel that had to be preached in other places as well.

Let us read verse 38. *"But He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth'" (Mark 1:38)*. Jesus spoke of the purpose for which He had come. Preaching the word of salvation came before holding people's attention for a long time. If we know this purpose, we can understand why the Lord left. His leaving did not mean that He would not care for people; it was a step taken to preach the gospel to more people.

The reason the news of salvation must be preached

From the rumor alone that bodies were healed, a person cannot know how his own sins are washed away. Because Jesus came to save people from sin and judgment, He preached the word so that they would believe in that salvation. While seeing the Savior of power who delivers from diseases and demons, we must also know the work of the remission of sins that He accomplishes. Just as Jesus said that *"for this purpose I have come forth" (Mark 1:38)*, the spread of the gospel is not an incidental thing added on to the work of Jesus but the work of causing people to know and believe in the Savior and gain life.

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The gospel that He had to preach to the other towns as well is this. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all; bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins and received the judgment in our place; and He rose again from death and completely accomplished salvation. It is a salvation that includes even the lifelong sins of you and me. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins, receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes a child of God. Only when people are told what the Lord has accomplished can they turn from the way of trying to remove their sins by their own efforts and believe in the Savior.

The record that says, *"And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons" (Mark 1:39),* shows that the word of salvation did not stay only with the crowd in front of one house. We, too, cannot consider that we have fulfilled our mission by rejoicing only among those who already know the gospel. It is because there are people who do not yet know salvation and are suffering because of sin. So that they can believe, we must clearly preach what Jesus has done.

Follow the way of preaching while praying

Those who serve the gospel also have busy work and many demands. If we chase after all those demands, we can forget what we are working for. Therefore, we must confirm the center of the work entrusted to us before the word of the Lord and seek His help. Prayer does not mean doing nothing in place of labor; it is the response of faith for laboring according to His will while relying on the Lord. As the word says, *"Now in the morning,*

having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35), Jesus went to the other towns after praying.

Even if what we can do looks small, if it is connected to the purpose of the gospel being preached, it is a precious labor. Preaching the word directly, preparing ways for people to encounter the word, and helping those who work together are all works of serving so that the news of salvation reaches people. Look first at whether the gospel is being preached accurately rather than at how much your own labor becomes known. To follow the Lord, who called us to be fishers of men, is to unite our hearts with this purpose to which the Lord points.

Even after hearing that everyone was looking for Him, Jesus walked to the other towns according to the purpose for which He had come. I hope that we, too, will not let the grace we have received stay only within ourselves, but will follow this way that Jesus, who saved us, walked first, and preach the word of salvation to those who have not yet heard the gospel. ✉

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Sermon 14 by Paul C. Jong

If You are willing, You can make me clean

< Mark 1:40–45 >

"Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction."

The man who came to the Lord with his uncleanness

A leper came to Jesus, knelt down, and implored Him. He did not pretend that his body was clean, nor did he boast that he would be healed by his own strength; he only believed that if Jesus was willing, He could make him clean. The heart that

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entrusts the solving of his problem to the Savior appears in his plea.

We, too, can have our hearts taken captive by other things even while knowing that we have sin before God. We hope that our lives will become comfortable and our wealth will increase, yet we pay no attention to the remission of sins itself. Seeking what we need is not wrong in itself. But if we love those things more than God, who gives us what we need, we end up not giving our hearts to Him even after hearing the word of God. The Lord said, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. We must look back at the heart that says it seeks the Savior but in reality seeks only to fulfill its own desires.

The man in the passage asked to be made clean. He knew who Jesus was and relied on His help. We, who have no power to wash away our sins, must also come to the Lord without putting forward our own righteousness. Faith is acknowledging as our Master the One who will fill our needs, without hiding those needs. What we need is not to be recognized in the world while our sins remain, but the salvation of being made clean before God.

He makes clean with compassion and power

Let us read verse 41. *"Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed'" (Mark 1:41)*. Jesus had pity on him and stretched out His hand and touched him. And He said that He was willing for him to be made clean. A human being may pity someone yet be unable to solve the problem, but Jesus had both

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compassion and power. When the Lord spoke, the disease left and he became clean.

This Jesus is God, who is willing to wash away our sins as well. Just as He stretched out His hand and touched the leper, He did not tell us to first make ourselves qualified to be saved and then come; rather, He Himself came to sinners and, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. He also bore the lifelong sins of you and me within all those sins. The cleanness the Lord wants is the salvation that actually washes away our sins.

Bearing those sins that had been passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins and received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and completely accomplished salvation. The love with which He was moved with compassion for sinners appeared in this way as the work of accomplishing salvation. We believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, and the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and testifies that we have become children of God. There is no need to doubt whether the Lord has the heart to wash away our sins. It is because He showed His will to save us through what He Himself did.

If, even after hearing what the Lord has done, we hold on to the riches or honor of the world as more precious, we cannot accept the word of salvation with our hearts. It is because, if something we like more than God has settled in our hearts, we do not accept the word even though we know that the word is right. Everything that we like, love, and serve more than God is an idol, so if you want to meet the Lord, first throw away that idol. It is because that idol cannot wash away our sins or take us to the kingdom of God. We must believe in Jesus, who makes us clean, and accept His word into our hearts.

If you have received grace, listen to the word of the Lord as well

Jesus said to the man who had been made clean, *"See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them" (Mark 1:44)*. Along with the joy of being healed of his disease, there was the word of the Lord that he had to follow. But he went out and spread this matter widely, and as a result, Jesus could not openly enter the town. The passage does not say that he obeyed simply because he said many things. It records what effect the action that differed from the word of the Lord had on His work.

We must not put our own judgment ahead of the word of the Lord on the grounds that we rejoice in grace. To believe in Jesus is to rely on Him and listen to His word even after receiving help. Even the heart that wants to preach the grace we have received must agree with the will of the Lord. Rather than turning the command given to this man at that time into a word that forbids all the spread of the gospel today, we must learn the fact that we must unite our hearts with the word of the Savior who gave us grace.

The One who makes us clean is Jesus. Do not regard the things of the world as more precious than the remission of sins the Lord has bestowed; believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit with your heart and live according to the word of the One who saved us. The man knelt down and said, *"If You are willing, You can make me clean" (Mark 1:40)*, and the Lord said to him, *"I am willing; be cleansed" (Mark 1:41)*; that same Lord today also makes clean those who come to Him with their sins, through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

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CHAPTER

2

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The authority to remit sins revealed by the paralytic who walked out

< Mark 2:1–12 >

“And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, ‘Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise, take up your bed and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he arose, took

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up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'"

The faith that brought him before the Lord

The house where Jesus was staying was so full of people that there was no room to step in even at the door. Four men came carrying a paralytic, but because of the crowd they could not bring him to Jesus. They did not go back; they uncovered the roof and let down the bed on which the sick man was lying. There was only one reason they went to the trouble of even tearing open the roof. It was because they believed that if only they brought this man to Jesus, He could heal him.

Jesus saw their faith and spoke the remission of sins to the paralytic. The four men had brought him hoping for the healing of his sickness, but the Lord first dealt with the problem of his sins, saying, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. It is because, although the healing of sickness is also a precious thing, for a person to stand before God, the remission of sins must come first. So, through the visible restoration of the body, Jesus made known even His own authority to remit invisible sins.

We, too, are people who have sins that we cannot solve by ourselves. Like the paralytic whose thinking is perfectly clear but whose body does not move, we are spiritual paralytics who, even though we do not want to sin, cannot remove our own sins by ourselves. Even if we regret our wrongs and do good deeds, we cannot remove by our own strength the judgment for the sins we have already committed. Look at what this paralytic did. He was carried by others, he was let down while lying on a bed, and even the remission of sins he did not achieve by himself but

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received through the word of the Lord. The remission of sins is received in this way, by going to the One who can remit sins. Therefore, a person who knows his own sins must, instead of striving to cure himself, go to Jesus, who gives the remission of sins, just as the four men did.

Who is the One who remits sins

The scribes reasoned in their hearts, *"Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7)*. They knew the fact that the authority to remit sins belongs to God, but they could not accept that Jesus, who was right before them, was that God. So they regarded Jesus, who spoke the remission of sins, as speaking blasphemy. Therefore, for us as well, what matters is not how great a teacher we acknowledge Jesus to be, but whom we believe Him to be.

Jesus knew their hearts and asked which was easier: to declare the remission of sins or to tell the sick man to walk. Then He made clear the purpose for which He raised the sick man. Let us read verse 10. *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins—He said to the paralytic" (Mark 2:10)*. The Lord did not simply intend to show an amazing miracle. He intended to make it known that the Son of God, who came to the earth as a man, is the One who remits sins.

The sick man rose as Jesus had said, took up his bed, and went out in the presence of them all. Since a restoration that people could confirm testified of the Lord's word, the declaration of the remission of sins was no empty word either. It is because the One who spoke that word was not a religious leader with human limitations but God, who is our Master.

Therefore, we must accept in our hearts the word of the remission of sins that Jesus has given.

He Himself accomplished the remission of sins that He spoke of

On what grounds does Jesus remit people's sins? It is not that He covers over sins as if they did not exist; it is because, before He came to Capernaum, through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. This is the reason John testified, pointing to Jesus, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Before He spoke the remission of sins to this sick man, He had already carried out the work of bearing that sin. The lifelong sins of you and me are also included in all the sins of the world that the Lord had transferred to Him.

Jesus, who had that sin passed on to Him, shed His blood and died in our place on the Cross as the price of that sin, and He rose again from death and saved us completely. Because His having sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and the Cross on which He received the judgment for that sin are connected, we know clearly the grounds of the remission of sins. Whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which the Son of God Himself accomplished, receives the remission of sins. To believe in the authority of the Savior is precisely to accept this fact of salvation in one's heart.

Our hearts can waver according to our own deeds. But the salvation that the Lord has accomplished does not change along with our feelings. Jesus, who has the authority to give the remission of sins, bore all sins, so do not think that this grace has

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not reached you. While acknowledging your own sins, you must also acknowledge the Lord's work just as the word says. Faith is not a matter of denying sin but a matter of accepting the Savior who washed away sin.

Give glory to God, who has given the remission of sins

When the man who had been let down lying on a bed walked out carrying his bed, the multitude *"all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'" (Mark 2:12)*. It was because Jesus had done what they themselves could not do. When we, too, come to know that the Lord has washed away the sins we could not solve by ourselves, we cannot give the glory of salvation to ourselves. Peace and thanksgiving in our hearts come not because we have done well but from what the Savior has accomplished.

Just as the four men brought the sick man to Jesus, we, too, can help those who are suffering because of sin to hear the word of the Savior. If these four men had not gone to the trouble of even tearing open the roof, would this paralytic have received the remission of sins? The work of bringing souls that can do nothing before the Lord, as the four men did, is precisely our work. When you do that work, do not put forward your zeal as the power of salvation. It is because the One who makes people clean is not we ourselves but Jesus. The Lord, who has the authority to remit sins, has saved us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as the multitude were amazed and gave glory to God when they saw the man walking out carrying his bed, let us give glory to the Lord, who has remitted our sins with the same word that raised that man. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Who goes to heaven?

< Mark 2:1–12 >

"And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.' And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 'Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, 'Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Arise, take up your bed and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'"

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Jesus, who spoke of the way to heaven

After some days, Jesus entered the town of Capernaum again. When He entered the town of Capernaum and it was heard that He was in the house, many people gathered; so many people gathered that there was no longer room even near the door, and Jesus preached the word to them. At this time, before the many people who had come to Him, the Lord took as the subject of discussion who goes to heaven, that way, and shared the word.

Dear fellow believers, in this world the way to heaven, the way to the kingdom of heaven, is the greatest question for any religion and for any person. All people were interested in the way that is a subject for every human life, that is, the way to heaven, and Jesus, too, spoke on these points that were the subject of interest: what kind of person goes to heaven, how one goes, what kind of person goes. While our Lord was taking the way to heaven as the subject of discussion and speaking to the people in this way, some people tried to come to Jesus bringing a paralytic carried by four men, but because they could not bring him to Jesus on account of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was and lowered the bed on which the paralytic lay through the opening, tying it with ropes.

Then, when our Lord saw that paralytic coming down bed and all, when He saw their faith, He said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. The point is that our Lord saw the faith of this paralytic and these four men and said to that paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. Before this paralytic came, our Lord had earlier been speaking to the many people on the subject of the way to heaven, the way by which one can reach heaven, and the point is that our Lord was now explaining this part to the many people vividly, taking up the paralytic and these four men as an illustration.

Does the healthy person go, or does the paralytic go?

Who goes to heaven? What kind of person goes to heaven? Does someone like the paralytic go, or does the healthy person go? Our Lord spoke to them about the way to heaven, that is, the word. Our Lord, bringing the paralytic and these four men onto the scene, is in fact speaking on this point: whether the healthy person goes to heaven or someone like this paralytic goes. This point that our Lord spoke of, we, too, should take as our subject of discussion and discuss once: whether the healthy person goes to heaven or someone like the paralytic goes to heaven. Dear fellow believers, who goes to heaven, the paralytic or the healthy person? It is the paralytic. Why is that? Our Lord says, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17)*. As for the way to heaven, the way by which one can enter heaven, who enters it? It is not the healthy person but a person like this paralytic who enters. Then what kind of person is the paralytic, and what kind of person is this healthy person? A healthy person is a person who can think and put what he has thought into action. But the sick, especially the paralytic, have clear thoughts, yet it is impossible for them to put them into action.

In the Bible, dear fellow believers, why, of all people, a patient with a flow of blood? Dear fellow believers, this flow of blood is bleeding that keeps on coming out. Blood coming out without stopping is called a flow of blood. So when we look in the Bible, there appears a woman with a flow of blood who had seen many physicians over a long time but in the end could not be cured and had suffered much. This woman, believing in Jesus, with the faith that she would be healed if she only touched the hem of His garment, touched Jesus' garment and was healed.

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Why, of all people, a paralytic, and why, of all people, this patient with a flow of blood, in the Bible? And why, of all people, the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years? Why, of all people, a leper? What all of these speak of is the figure of a person who, because of his own weakness, cannot help but go to hell. It is the figure of our own selves, whose thoughts are clear but whose actions do not follow well. It is telling us of our own figure: we know full well that we must not sin, and yet, differently from what we really thought, we are led into sin by weakness and commit sin, and in the end cannot help but go to hell. Our Lord is speaking of this weak part of us human beings. He is saying that our Lord came not to save perfect people but to save helpless sinners.

The root is the sin inherited from Adam

What kind of person receives the remission of sins before God? Some people like to use the words, “It is my fault.” Dear fellow believers, of course it is my fault; of course it is our fault. But as for our being weak, our committing sin, and our being lacking—of course what we have done is our fault, but at the root, it is not our fault, dear fellow believers. At the root, it is the fault of our ancestor Adam; at the root, it is the fault of Adam and Eve; and at the root, if we go up even deeper, we can also say that God had a purpose in causing us to be born and making us weak in order to make us the people of God, dear fellow believers. We human beings want to live rightly. But because we were born as descendants of Adam, we are weak, we are. We are like this paralytic. In our hearts we want to do good, but our actions do not follow 100 percent. So our heart, our thoughts, and our actions each go their separate ways. There is always

something lacking. We, too, must ask ourselves whether we are paralytics or healthy people. Does one go to heaven by living a good life, or does one go like the paralytic, by knowing his own lack and accepting what the Lord has done in becoming his Savior? This is the homework of human life.

Yet our Lord is saying that the paralytic goes to heaven rather than the healthy person. We are people who want to do good but cannot do good. We are people who want to do evil, yet also cannot do even evil as we please. We are people who act not as we please but as God made us, as our ancestor passed sin down to us. We are not people who act as we please. Because we inherited sin, we commit the twelve kinds of sins. Because we inherited them through Adam, through our ancestor—evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, envy, strife, a lewd heart or such thoughts, proud hearts—because we inherited all of these, we are living as people who do not want to do such things but cannot help doing them. That is why we need Jesus Christ. You were paralytics. You and I must know the fact that we were paralytics, think once again that He saved the paralytic and that we have received the remission of sins through faith, and we human beings must also know that our Lord came to this earth and that the authority to remit sins belongs to our Lord. It says, *"That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10)*. Our Lord intended to make all people know that the Son of Man, Jesus, who is the Son of God come as a man, has the authority to remit the sins of all the people of this earth—that this authority belongs to Jesus, the Son of God. When our Lord said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*, the scribes and many people reasoned within themselves, reasoned in their hearts, "*Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7)*. To speak blasphemy means to dare to take as one's own what

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belongs to God alone, that is, to blaspheme God. They thought that it was blasphemy, that no one but God alone could remit sins.

"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Dear fellow believers, who is that one and only God who came to this earth? Is it not Jesus, dear fellow believers? Is not Jesus precisely God? Is not Jesus precisely the Savior? Yet these scribes failed to recognize this Jesus. This point, dear fellow believers, is still controversial even now. When our Lord spoke about the way to heaven, about what kind of person goes to heaven—whether the healthy person goes or the unhealthy person goes, whether Jesus is God or not God but a man—this point is still a matter of controversy among people even now. So when many people had gathered, our Lord spoke about the way to heaven, about the word, about what kind of person goes, who remits sins, who is God, who is the Son of God who came to this earth, and this point has become a matter of controversy among people.

Even now there are people who do not believe in Jesus as God and who explain away the miracles of the Bible with human thinking. They say that Jesus was just a man, and that there is salvation in other religions as well.

Then what reason is there to believe in Jesus? Their words sound plausible. They do believe in Jesus. They believe in Him as Jesus, yet they deny that He is God. They deny that He is God. They say that He is not God. Here the scribes were saying: who can remit sins but God alone; only God can remit sins, so who can do this? And how could this young man called Jesus dare, so impudently, to look at a paralytic and say, "Son, your sins are

remitted"? How could He dare to proclaim such words? This point became a matter of controversy among people. A matter of controversy. Dear fellow believers, a matter of controversy means not believing. How could He remit sins, how? But we can believe. Because Jesus is God. At that time, too, when Jesus came to this earth, this paralytic who met Jesus also believed. Faith is simple. These four men who carried the paralytic, and that paralytic, had this faith: if only he could get to Jesus, this sickness would surely be healed, surely, without fail. They had this kind of faith—faith. Who can remit all the sins of a sinner? Who, who? That Jesus, who is God, could clearly heal this sick man and could remit the sick man's sins. The root cause for which sickness and death entered mankind is sin. So the Lord remitted first the sin that is the root of sickness.

So our Lord said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*, and later on, we see, He said, *"Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Mark 2:11)*. The paralytic had come lying on a bed, and the point is that he received the remission of sins before our Lord, and then, when the Lord told him to take up his bed, rise, and walk, he rose, took up the bed he had been lying on all that time, and went out. The authority to remit sins belongs to Jesus. Dear fellow believers, is it easier to heal a sickness, or is it easier to remit sins? Which is easier? For God—this paralytic is a sinner, and secondly, he is a sick man—is it easier to heal paralysis, or is it easier to remit sins, when God does it? Which is easier? In our thinking, in the thinking of us human beings, when he comes before a man, when a paralytic comes before a man who is not God, is it easier for a man to remit the paralytic's sins, or is it easier to heal the paralytic's sickness? Dear fellow believers, a man cannot remit sins. He may be able to heal a sickness. If one treats it well somehow, paralysis is sometimes cured. Isn't that so? For a man, healing a sickness is

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at least the easier side, but for God, remitting sins and healing sickness are both equally easy. But because the source of sickness came from sin in the first place, He remitted sin first. Dear fellow believers, healing a sickness is easier for a man, but when this paralytic came before our Lord, remitting that paralytic's sins was the easy thing.

The faith that believes that Jesus is God

Our Lord took this way to heaven as the subject of discussion, and the point is that He is throwing these questions at us: does the healthy person go or does the sick person go; does the one who has done good deeds go, does the one who commits sin go, or does the one who does not sin go; can Jesus remit sins; is Jesus the Son of God or not, and is He God or not; is the true Savior of this earth Jesus, or is it some other religion? Which is easier, which? *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10)*. The authority to remit sins belongs to Jesus. Are sins remitted once and for all, or every day, each time one repents? The authority to remit them once and for all belonged to Jesus. It says, *"He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'" (Mark 2:10–12)*. This tells us that our true Savior is precisely Jesus, that Jesus is the true God and truly our Savior, that Jesus is the One who removed our sins, the One who remitted our sins, and that we receive the remission of sins when we believe only in Jesus Christ, believing in Jesus Christ, who is God.

The reason many people cannot believe in Jesus Christ is that they do not know well the part about Jesus being the Son of God, the part about Jesus being God, and so they cannot believe. They do believe in Jesus; they believe that Jesus died on the Cross for them, and they also believe that He came to this earth and received baptism from John and had our sins transferred to Him. They believe it all. Then why can they not believe? Why can they not receive the remission of sins? Why is there sin in their hearts even though they believe in Jesus? They do not know the fact that Jesus is God. And so they cannot believe in Jesus. In this word, He clearly tells us that the Son of Man—He who is the Son of God come as the son of man and who is also God—has the authority to remit sins, that Jesus has the authority to remit our sins. It clearly tells us that Jesus is God Himself and also the Son of God the Father and the Savior who came as the Savior of mankind—that Jesus came as the Savior.

Do you believe that Jesus is God? And do you believe that He is the Son of God the Father? Do you believe that Jesus, as our true Savior, has remitted all our sins, all our sins? Dear fellow believers, our Lord wanted us to have this faith, and the four men and the paralytic who had this faith went before Him and received the remission of sins, because they believed that Jesus is the Son of God and also God, because they believed that Jesus is the true Savior. This word speaks to you and me, telling us that Jesus is God, that He is also truly our Savior, that He is the One who has remitted all our sins, and that we were paralytics; it is speaking on these points. *"That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10)*.

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The remission of sins received once and for all

Dear beloved saints, you must clearly believe these three things. If you want to go to heaven, you must believe that Jesus is God, that He is also the true Savior, and that He is the One who has remitted our sins. Jesus gives us the remission of sins. People think of this remission of sins as something very unfamiliar. If you look at the whole Bible, it is all about the remission of sins. And in fact this talk of the remission of sins appears here as follows: *"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you'" (Mark 2:5)* and *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10)*. This remission of sins means that He has removed sins. To say that He has remitted sins means that He has washed them away. It is not an unfamiliar word. Looking at the word in which it is clearly written that God spoke of the remission of sins, that He has remitted sins, we must come to know: ah, if we believe in Jesus we receive the remission of sins; it is not that there is sin in our hearts even though we believe in Jesus, but that if we believe in Jesus, our sins are completely remitted. Dear fellow believers, our Lord remitted the sins of this paralytic. And He healed the paralytic's sickness. He healed him 100 percent. He said, *"Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Mark 2:11)*; He did not heal him just so that one leg would no longer tremble a little, but healed him completely, once and for all. The remission of sins was in our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we completely believed in what Jesus Christ has done, we were able to receive the remission of sins. You and I, the righteous who have now received the remission of sins on this earth, have received the remission of sins once and for all through faith in Jesus Christ. It is not, as those who have not received the remission of sins say, that we received the remission

of sins once and for all, are receiving it, and will receive it. The remission of sins that Jesus gives is received once and for all. If Jesus had not come into this world, we could not have received the remission of sins. We were, at the root, paralytics. Before we believed in Jesus Christ, we were sinners who could not do what is right. Sinners—what kind of sinners? We were sinners who sin until the day we die, but our Lord saved us once and for all from all the sins we commit until we die, and so we believed in Jesus' salvation and were saved from sin.

Jesus Christ came to this earth as the Son of God to save us from our sins; when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John in order to perform the rite of bearing all our sins, and so had all our sins transferred to Him; He also received the judgment for all sins in our place on the Cross; and He rose again on the third day after He died, sat down at the right hand of the throne in heaven, and speaks to us as the One who clothes those who believe with the grace of the remission of sins, as the Savior. The Lord is alive even now and is seated at the right hand of the throne of heaven. Whoever believes in what our Lord has done, to that person our Lord even now says, "Son, your sins are remitted; you have no sin"—our Lord is alive even now and is bestowing on us the grace of remitting sins. I, too, received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ. I, too, was a paralytic. I, too, was a person who tried not to sin but could not help sinning. But our Lord completely healed this sickness of being unsound in heart and body, this state of being stained with sin. The Lord bore all sins; He came to this earth and bore them all and removed them all. Through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, His death, and His resurrection, through the Lord's birth, He has completely saved us—you and me, all mankind, every one of us.

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We must clearly know one thing. Although so many people had gathered here, we must know that only those four men who carried this paralytic and this one man, the paralytic—only these people received the remission of sins. These people recognized Jesus and received the remission of sins by believing in what Jesus did. But the great multitude surrounding that Jesus who was staying in that house, in some house in the town of Capernaum—those people did not receive the remission of sins. The reason they did not receive the remission of sins is that they did not know the fact that Jesus is God and did not recognize the fact that Jesus is the Savior who has removed all sins; because they did not know for certain, these many people did not receive the remission of sins. But this paralytic received the remission of sins, and the Lord saw the faith of the four men who brought him—faith in whom? It is telling you and me that they received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, by believing that Jesus Christ is their God and their Savior.

Dear fellow believers, have you received the remission of sins? Have you received the remission of original sin only? No. You are lacking every day even now and commit sins; is that sin there, or is it not? It is not. Has that sin also been remitted? Have the sins you will commit in the future also been remitted? Even if you happen to be lacking, do you have sin? You do not. You have received the remission of sins. But a person who has received the remission of original sin, who then receives remission for the sins he is committing now by repenting, and who has not yet received remission for the sins he will commit in the future—such a person has become one who has not received the remission of sins, because he does not know that Jesus is God and that Jesus has remitted all his sins once and for all. There, clearly, what is wrong with that person's faith? He

does not know the fact that Jesus is God. And he cannot believe. Jesus is God, dear fellow believers.

As for this faith—if I only believed this one fact that Jesus is God, all the rest would be believed, but this part was hard for me to believe; because I did not know this, I, too, while studying theology, struggled for a long time with this one thing, unable to believe the fact that Jesus is God. But it is clearly shown in the word that "Jesus is God," and Jesus has removed all my sins. By believing that God has removed all the sins of mankind, the sins of all of us, the sin of the world, I received the remission of sins. I received the remission of sins by believing the fact that all my sins, too, are included there and that my sins, too, are gone. God speaks clearly. Those who have received this remission of sins clearly believe the fact that Jesus is God. When the Lord created the world, He was there together, at the very beginning, when this world was created. He made us, He did. He created us, and He made us. He saved us. Jesus is the Lord of our salvation and the Lord of our creation. Jesus is our God. We give thanks before our Lord, who has become our God and has become our Savior. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus is God

< Mark 2:1–12 >

“And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, ‘Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise, take up your bed and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’”

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In the word we read today, Jesus first remitted the sins of the paralytic, and then He also healed his body.

The paralytic rose up with his bed in the presence of them all. And the multitude glorified God and said, *"We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:12)*. Our Lord came to this earth. What the Lord did first for this paralytic when He came was to remit his sins. Saying, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*, He remitted the sins of the paralytic.

The paralytic who came before Jesus had actually come in order to have the paralysis of his body healed, but Jesus remitted the sins of this paralytic. And He said, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10)*. He said this, meaning that He wanted to let all people know that Jesus, the Son of God, has the authority to remit the sins of man.

What God did

Four men carried this paralytic to Jesus, but because they could not get in before Jesus, they uncovered the roof and let him down. So Jesus saw the faith of this paralytic and also saw the faith of the four men, and saying, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*, He remitted the sins of the paralytic.

All the things that Jesus did when He came to this earth are the works that God did. Jesus Christ's coming to this earth and remitting our sins, His coming as the Savior, and God's becoming a man and remitting the sins of man—these are precisely God remitting the sins of human beings through Jesus Christ.

Truly, when people say that they believe in Jesus, what they believe in is not only Jesus Himself, Jesus who came as a son of

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man; in fact, they are believing in God. What Jesus did is precisely what God did.

What Jesus did, the words that Jesus spoke, are precisely the word of God. And they are the work of God. Jesus remitted the sins of man, the sins of this paralytic. In fact, this means that God remitted the sins of the people of the world.

Jesus' coming to this earth, having our sins transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, dying on the Cross, and rising again to save us from all sins—this speaks of God having remitted our sins. God revealed, through Jesus Christ, the work that He did. *"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18)*.

None of us had ever seen God, but it means that God sent to this earth His only Son Jesus Christ, the only begotten God who was in the bosom of God the Father, and through His own Son revealed what kind of God He is.

No one but God can remit the sins of people. So when Jesus remitted sins, people were puzzled and said, *"Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7)*. They wondered, "How impudent! Does He think He is God? How can He remit the sins of man?"

Because Jesus is God, because He is the Creator, and because the Creator came to this earth clothed in human form to save mankind from sin, Jesus is in fact God, and Jesus came as God the Savior, who came to save mankind from sin. That is why we have received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus.

People regarded it as blasphemy, saying, "How impudent! How can He be God? He remits the sins of man? Only God can remit sins." Only God can remit sins. Because Jesus alone is God, He was able to remit your sins and mine, and He was able to remit the sins of all the people of the whole world.

Do you believe that He is God?

If Jesus were not God, if He were merely a created being, if He were merely one person among human beings, one of those whom the world calls sages, then He could not remit the sins of man. Did the people whom the world calls sages remit the sins of man? Did they remit their own sins? Did they remit the sins of their own families? No created being could ever remit the sins of man.

Only God could remove the sins of man. Because that Jesus was God, He remitted the sins of this paralytic. People were puzzled. How could He remit sins? But because Jesus is God, He remitted sins. If Jesus had laid His hands on this paralytic and healed him and so raised him up, since that is something possible, with that alone they would simply have acknowledged Jesus as one of the great sages.

Rather, they would have respected Him. But Jesus was God, who was able to remit the sins of man. Jesus asked the people. He asked them, *"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?" (Mark 2:9)*. For people, both of these were impossible.

Even so, healing paralysis was something possible in human thinking. If someone were a very extraordinary master, a person who performed some kind of supernatural power, he could have healed paralysis, too. That would have been possible. But while even that alone would make one a great person, people could not understand this Jesus, who remitted the sins of man. But you and I can understand Jesus as much as we wish, and, looking at the Bible, we can believe as much as we wish.

Because we believe that Jesus is God, and because what Jesus Christ did is what God did, we believe it all. And because

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all the words that Jesus spoke are the word of God, we believe them all.

Before solving the problems of our lives, what our God wanted to settle first was the remission of sins. Because a person can receive the remission of sins only when God remits his sins, He saw the faith of that person who believed that Jesus is God and remitted his sins.

Dear fellow believers, a person who believes that Jesus is God receives the remission of sins. He comes out like this paralytic and receives the remission of sins. He receives the grace of the remission of sins through God. If one cannot believe that Jesus is God, one cannot receive the remission of sins. One may perhaps receive healing from paralysis, but one cannot receive the remission of sins.

We must know the fact that when this paralytic came before Jesus with the faith that believed Jesus Christ is God, He saw the faith of that paralytic and spoke to him, saying, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*; we must know that God remitted his sins. In this age, the question is this: how do you believe in Jesus Christ, and do you believe that Jesus Christ is God? Many people profess faith in Jesus, but it is important to understand rightly that He is truly God and the Savior who has the authority to remove sins.

In the Bible, God is saying that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is God, that is, the Creator, the almighty God.

God Himself is speaking: you will see the Son of Man, who came as a son of man, coming again to this earth on the clouds to judge you. Then what will you do? Among people, those who believe that Jesus is God are few. But in reality, Jesus is God.

Though He came as a man, He did so to save mankind, to come as the Savior; He is the God of our true salvation. He is the eternal God. As for our receiving the remission of sins by

believing in Jesus Christ, it was because Jesus Christ was God that we were able to receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, by believing in Him alone. We were able to become righteous.

We were able to obtain eternal life, and we were able to become children of God. Only when we have the faith that believes Jesus Christ is God do we receive the blessing of the remission of sins, and with that faith we come to entrust the problems of health and of life to God as well.

When we believe that Jesus is God, we can believe all the records spoken in the Bible. When we believe that this God has remitted our sins, we come to believe the word of the Bible, and by coming to believe this word, we come to pray to God.

The Lord said, *"If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19)*. When we look at the Bible here, the Bible is entirely the word of God. In the Old Testament there is the word of the LORD, the word of the self-existent God, and the word of promise that this God would come as a man and save us human beings from sin.

It was God's word of promise. And the New Testament was the word of God that fulfilled that word of promise. Jesus Christ came to this earth. He came to this earth clothed in human form. He was God in His very nature. For a while, He came to this earth as a man, clothed in the flesh of a man, to save mankind. He was on this earth for thirty-three years. He came and fully accomplished the work of remitting all our sins, the work of making us the people of God, and He told us everything in every respect, and then He finished His short life of thirty-three years on this earth.

And He became the God of true salvation. We must live believing that Jesus, who healed the paralytic and remitted the

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sins of the paralytic, is God, and also believing that all this written word is the word of God.

Pray in agreement

And we must believe in God and pray. We must bring our problems before God with faith, and with the faith that God has remitted our sins, we must pray before God, who remitted our sins, asking for His help. We must pray for the work of preaching the gospel.

He promised, *"If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19)*. That is why we pray before that God who remitted our sins. Because God has remitted our sins, and because we have received salvation before God, we also pray before God about other problems. Before we preach the gospel, we must first look at those to whom we will preach the gospel and pray to God for them.

We must agree together in our hearts and pray, "God, please save that soul." We must also lay out all the problems of our lives and pray before God. "God, please give us health. God, please give us a place to work. God, please let that soul receive the remission of sins." When we pray like that, that God who remitted all our sins hears our prayers and answers them.

Because we believe that what Jesus did is what God did and that the word of Jesus is the word of God, we become people of faith who hold on to that word and pray. Dear fellow believers, before we do anything, we must become people of faith who believe in God and pray to God.

Before we make any kind of effort at anything, we must first become people who believe in God and pray to God. We know

very well that the word of the Bible is the word of Jesus Christ, but we must believe that what Jesus Christ did and all these words that Jesus Christ spoke are the word of God, because Jesus Christ is God.

When we believe this word as the word of God, faith comes to arise in our hearts, and we also come to pray. So we come to live believing in God, having received salvation before God, having received the remission of sins, and receiving the help of God. For the rest of our lives, too, let us live believing in God, believing the word of God, and receiving the blessings of God by faith. And we must also live by faith such a life in which we pray before God and receive, and carry out the work of God and His word. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus Christ, who is God

< Mark 2:1–12 >

“And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, ‘Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise, take up your bed and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’”

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Two things that are impossible for a human being

I would like to share the word with you from this passage in which the paralytic was healed of his illness. Dear fellow believers, would it be easy to heal a paralytic of his illness? If a paralytic were lying on a bed before you and you were told to cure that paralysis, would it be easy? And if famous doctors were told to cure this man who had long since been struck with paralysis, would that be easy? Even doctors cannot cure paralysis well. Because it is an illness in which the nerves become paralyzed, even doctors cannot cure it well. Paralysis is an illness in which something goes wrong in one side of the brain: when something goes wrong in the right side of the brain, paralysis comes to the left side, and when something goes wrong in the left side of the brain, paralysis comes to the right side. Doctors cannot cure such an illness well. There was even a case where a theologian wrote in an ordinary newspaper that there is salvation in all religions as well.

But when Jesus preached the word of the kingdom of God in the town called Capernaum, so many people had gathered that there was no room to set foot, and they were listening to the word of Jesus. While many people were listening to the word and absorbed in it, there were four men who wanted to bring a paralytic to Jesus, carrying him bed and all, each holding one corner. These men, with the single-minded determination to bring this paralytic to Jesus, chose another way because they could not push their way in through the crowd. They went up onto the roof of the house where Jesus was, tore open the roof, and let the paralytic down, bed and all, into the middle of the room where Jesus was. When Jesus saw this paralytic coming down bed and all, and saw their faith, He spoke to him in this way: *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*.

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The Lord healed this paralysis. But the Lord did not praise the faith of this son; rather, He saw the faith of the four men who had brought this paralytic, praised it, and healed the illness. Paralysis is an illness that is extremely hard to cure. One takes a paralytic to the hospital to try to cure him, and when that does not work, one goes to an acupuncture clinic to try to cure him; one tries every method, and when nothing works, one leaves him in a room, just brings him his meals, and buries him when his life comes to an end—paralysis is that kind of illness.

Jesus said to this paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. At that time there were scribes there. They were thinking, *"Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7)*. Jesus knew what they were thinking inwardly and said, *"Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?" (Mark 2:8–9)*. Dear fellow believers, can we human beings do both of these things? Let us think about it. Can a human being remit the sins of a human being? No. Can a human being cure a paralytic who has become completely paralyzed because something has gone wrong in the nerves of his brain? These two things are impossible for a human being. Today science has advanced greatly, and people are struggling to cure paralysis. But they cannot cure a person in whom something has gone wrong in the nerves of the brain. However advanced technology has become, no one has ever cured paralysis at one stroke with a single word. It may make sense to say that someone cured a person at the very onset of paralysis, but no one can cure a person who is completely stricken with paralysis and dying.

When Jesus said, *"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed*

and walk'?" (Mark 2:9), it was a word asking which of these they would do and what they could do. So our Lord said, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10)*, and said to the paralytic, *"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Mark 2:11)*. He arose, took up his bed, and went out before all the people.

Four men who had firm faith

Here we can think about two things. Who is the One who can actually remove our sins on this earth? We can know that it is none other than Jesus Christ, our Savior, who has saved us from all our sins. Another thing we can know here is that there are not many people who have the sure faith that if they bring this man to Jesus, his paralysis will surely be healed and he will surely receive the remission of sins. So many people had gathered before Jesus that there was no room to receive them, and they were listening to the word of Jesus. But how many people actually came out before Jesus with faith, bringing a definite problem? Here, there were only these four men. And we can see that all the rest were nothing but obstructors. Only these four men had the firm faith that if they brought the paralytic before Jesus, this paralysis would clearly be healed. We can see that many people were hindering the firm faith of these men. Because there were so many people that the four men with firm faith could not carry this sick man in by the ordinary way, they went up onto the roof of the house where Jesus was. They tore open the roof. This is something that cannot be done without firm faith. In this world there are preachers who believe in Jesus and try to bring people to Jesus so that they may believe in Jesus. But we

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can see that those who have sure faith are truly a tiny minority, like these four men.

Jesus, who is God and the Christ

First, in order to have the firm faith to bring this sick man to Jesus, one must have the faith that clearly believes the fact that Jesus is none other than God. The name of Jesus is given at length as Jesus Christ. The word Jesus means Savior, and the word Christ means the Anointed One, and in the word "anointed" it is revealed that Jesus is God. It is speaking of a king. In the Old Testament, God anointed kings. So Jesus is the King and God. This One, the Son of God, is the very God spoken of in the word *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)*. When God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, when He said, *"Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3)*, there was light. Who is the One who said, "Let there be"? Who is the One who created the heavens and the earth, the universe, and all things? It is none other than Jesus, Jesus our Savior, who is the Christ. It means that He is none other than our God.

Dear fellow believers, when we know this fact—that Jesus is the Christ, that He is none other than our King, our God, the Savior who saved us from sin once and for all, and the Prophet who taught us and made known to us everything about human affairs—from that time on we live a life of faith rightly. When we have the faith that Jesus is God, from that time on we can believe the words that Jesus spoke. Before that we cannot believe. If we come to have thoughts such as how we can believe this, whether He might not be a human being, or whether He might not be one of the four great sages spoken of in the East, our faith all collapses. When we believe in some absolute being

of faith, it is when we know the true identity of that absolute being that our faith in that absolute being stands firm. The words Jesus Christ mean that He is none other than God, our Savior, and a Prophet to us. The word prophet means that He knows everything. So Jesus speaks of our human sin, speaks of the fact that we human beings were made of dust, speaks of what the afterlife of us human beings is like—that there is everlasting life, that there is judgment, and that there is resurrection—and also teaches us whom and what we must believe in to obtain everlasting life, obtain new life, and obtain the remission of sins. The One who teaches us accurately is none other than Jesus Christ. This world speaks of Jesus as one of many sages. In fact, Jesus is the Creator who made Socrates, made Confucius, and made Buddha. Because people do not know that Jesus is God, because they do not know that He is the Savior who solves all the problems of human beings and the Prophet, they mistakenly think of Him as one of the four great sages spoken of in the East.

The reason these four men here brought the paralytic to Jesus is that they had the faith that Jesus is God, and because they firmly knew that God alone can remit sins and that He is none other than Jesus Christ, the Creator God who came clothed in human flesh, they were able to bring him. That is why they broke through the roof, tied the four corners, and let him down. Before Jesus spoke this word, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*, He praised the faith of the four men who had brought this paralytic to Him. Seeing the faith of these four men, He said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* While living in this world, we must meet people who have such firm faith. God is teaching us that many people can receive the remission of sins only when they meet the servants of God and the saints who have surely received the remission of sins—people like those who brought this paralytic to Jesus and helped him have his problem firmly

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solved. There are many believers in this world. When Jesus said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*, the scribes and Pharisees here—these people who had until then heard many words before Jesus—said in their hearts, "Blasphemy! How do You have the authority to remit sins? Are You God?" The four men firmly knew that Jesus is God, and the great multitude of people did not really know that Jesus is God. It is the same even now.

Not long ago a theologian wrote in a secular newspaper that it is not that one must believe only in Jesus to be saved, but that there is salvation in all religions as well. What is more, he wrote this not in a Christian newspaper but in a secular newspaper. There are a great many such theologians. Because these people do not really know that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the King, God, the Savior, and the Prophet, people who have become doctors of theology while believing in Jesus say such things.

What does it mean that a great many people here came out before Jesus and listened to the word? Listening attentively to the word of Jesus means that, for the time being at least, they believe. But when He said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* these people said that no one but God can remit sins, so how could He remit sins; when we look at this word, it is clear that they did not believe in Jesus as God. And if Jesus had not been God, He could not have remitted sins, saying, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. Because Jesus is God, He was able to remit the sins of this son. And Jesus spoke to the people. It was a word asking whether it would be better to tell the paralytic that he had received the remission of sins or to tell him to take up his bed and walk, and whether they could do even one of these two things.

The authority to remit sins belongs to God alone

So Jesus said, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10)*. It means that God who came as a man, Jesus, has the authority to remit sins, and that the authority to play the role of a prophet to all people and the authority to manifest the power that shows all people that He is God belonged to none other than Jesus Christ, God. He was saying that He would show this, and that this authority belonged to none other than Jesus Himself. Dear fellow believers, do you believe that Jesus is God? Jesus is God. Jesus is God. Jesus is God. People cannot do anything. People cannot cure a paralytic. People cannot solve their own problem of sin by themselves. The problem of sin cannot be solved in religion. Whatever religion one believes in, one cannot solve one's own sins. The illness of human beings is exactly the same as that of the paralytic. A paralytic is one who knows that he must move but cannot move. Likewise, human beings are born with sin from birth. A person born with sin has the thought "I must not sin," but he cannot help sinning and can do nothing but sin—that is what human beings are. These human beings are sinners born with sin, which is like paralysis. The word says that a human being is not just a human being but a human being with sin, a human being of sin, and therefore a sinner. Where can one go to have this remitted? One cannot have it remitted anywhere one goes. Dear fellow believers, is Christianity a religion?

If we read the Bible—if we read the Gospel of John—how noisy it is; the Gospel of John is all fighting from beginning to end. He opened the eyes of a blind man on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees picked a quarrel with Jesus, picked a quarrel with the man whose eyes were opened, asking why his eyes were opened on the Sabbath, and picked a quarrel with the blind man's

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parents as well. It begins with quarrels, as they ask how their son's eyes could have been opened on the Sabbath. When we read the Gospel of John, we can see this: why do they believe in Jesus so noisily instead of believing in Jesus a little more peacefully? I, too, am a person who loves peace. I am a person who very much dislikes noise. Yet when I read the Gospel of John, it is fighting from the beginning. The Gospel of Luke explains in detail what this gospel is. The Gospel of Mark tells the story just as it is, in its raw colors. The Gospel of Matthew explains accurately that Jesus is God. But what they have in common is that they are all noisy.

Here, too, it says that Jesus said to the paralytic, *"'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'" (Mark 2:11–12)*. They glorified God and said that it was truly amazing.

First the remission of sins, then the problems of the flesh

Even so, people pick quarrels. It means there was a commotion. Even now the same things happen. Through the order in which Jesus worked here, we can discover the truth. Jesus did not first tell the son that his paralysis was healed and tell him to take up his bed, rise, and walk, and then afterward say, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. He first said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* and after He had spoken all His words, at the very last He told him to take up his bed and walk. This, too, became a problem. If He had done the work in reverse, it would not have been a problem. If He had

told the son to take up his bed, rise, and walk out, Jesus' popularity would have soared to the extreme, and such a disturbance would not have arisen. There would have been only many stories praising Jesus.

But in people's eyes, Jesus did the work in reverse. In Jesus' eyes, He did it rightly. It means that the problem arose when He said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. We must clearly know about this work that Jesus does. Jesus does not work with healing people's illnesses as His purpose. Jesus Christ, who has the truth and who is Himself the truth, absolutely does not solve the problems of the flesh first. Jesus also healed people's illnesses in order to reveal that He is God. But we must know that Jesus' true heart and true intention were that He solved the problems of the body so that those people might believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sins.

When one receives the remission of sins and one's heart becomes at peace, there are also cases where minor ailments of the body are healed. People who had been ill without even knowing when they had caught such an illness have, after receiving the remission of sins, had many illnesses healed, saying, "How strange, how strange." Of course, there are also cases where God has allowed people one or two illnesses. But we must clearly know this. In this age there are many people who claim to heal the illnesses of the body yet cannot clearly teach the remission of sins in the heart, and we must clearly know the fact that such people are false. There have been people who said that, while professing to believe in Jesus, when they prayed with the laying on of hands and sprinkled water, works of healing illnesses took place. Is that one hundred percent? Such phenomena occurred for a short while. Such people have a characteristic: they heal the illnesses of the flesh well. But when those people pray, it is not that the illness keeps on being healed.

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Never be deceived. It is healed temporarily. It is healed temporarily, and after a little while it recurs and becomes a worse illness. People go to such places because illnesses are healed. At that moment the illness really was healed. But after a little while it is worse. Even now there are many such people. There are many meetings that put the healing of illness first while failing to teach the remission of sins. Such healing does not last long. Jesus never does that. But the one who was healed of his illness by Jesus was set free from paralysis for his whole life. And when we receive the remission of sins before Jesus, we are completely saved from sin for our whole lives. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? It means that it must be done through the Lord.

The remission of sins received once and for all

The truth of Jesus is that He first remitted the sins in our hearts. Jesus came to this earth, had our sins transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John, bore those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and thereby cleanly solved the sins of our hearts. And after that, He also solves the problems of our flesh, just as He told the son to take up his bed and go out. We must clearly know this truth—that only when we clearly receive the remission of sins can the rest of our problems be solved—and we must not be deceived by any trickery. And we must clearly meet people who have firm faith. Even now there are many people who believe in Jesus as if they receive the remission of sins every day. This is a great sin before God, and it is the same as degrading the way of the true truth, the way to the kingdom of heaven, the way of receiving the remission of sins, into a human religion.

The remission of sins is not something received every day. It is not that this paralytic was healed little by little. It is not that this paralytic kept on having all these sins remitted—the original sin he inherited, the wrongs he committed in his heart, the wrongs he committed in deed, and the sins he would commit in the future. The word *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)* means that Jesus remitted his sins once and for all. We must know and believe that it is the truth that we clearly receive the remission of sins once and for all. Those who cannot clearly preach this truth are teaching people to receive the remission of sins every day. They lie, saying that even if one has sin every day, one is righteous if one believes in Jesus. If we believe in Jesus, do we have sin or not? We do not. Though we may not know the whole Bible, one thing is clear: there is no sin in our hearts. Some people have believed for twenty or thirty years and yet have sin in their hearts. But these four men who brought the paralytic had clear faith, and because they had once had a problem solved through the Lord and had clearly experienced that, they clearly brought this paralytic to Jesus. There are many people in this world who believe in Jesus, but we must meet people like the four men who have firm faith, and we must also clearly know the fact that we must meet the Lord, have all our sins remitted once and for all, and then entrust all our human problems to the Lord and live having them solved through the Lord. We have received the remission of sins. I have received the remission of sins. You, too, have received the remission of sins. Is this my own story? It is not my own story. Jesus has removed my sins, and Jesus has removed your sins. He has clearly removed them. We may not know anything else, but this one thing is clear. If this is not clear, we all go to hell. If this is not clear, no problems can be solved. We cannot receive help from the Lord.

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Where the one who has received the remission of sins goes

And Jesus told the son to take up his bed, rise, and walk. It means that Jesus did not want him to go back to the place where he had been before. This man who had received the remission of sins went to his house according to the Lord's word. And after that, he would have stayed beside people of faith like the four men who had brought him to Jesus. It means that this man was not with the scribes and Pharisees. And it means that he was not with the sick either. He was not a man who would lie among the sick again.

Even now there are many people who, while saying that they believe in Jesus, still say that they have sin. When I meet such people, I have nothing else to say. All I say is this: "Do you have sin? I have no sin. By what word did you receive the remission of sins?" What I mean is, how can one say that one has no sin when it is not clear through the word?

And whatever anyone may say, I have clearly believed in Jesus and received the remission of sins. I have no sin. Is it the same with you? Then it cannot be undone. I dislike places that say one still has sin even though one believes in Jesus. There are people who say that they believe in Jesus but are deficient sinners, saved sinners; but we, though deficient, are righteous people. And we actually have no sin. I did not believe in Jesus in order for my body to be healed of illness; I believed in Jesus in order to heal the illness of my heart and to go to the kingdom of heaven. It means that I did not believe in Jesus to get help for my body, nor did I believe in Jesus as one of the religions of this world.

We must clearly tell people about this. Whatever anyone may say, this paralytic was healed of his paralysis. And he received

the remission of sins. Whatever anyone may say—even if a scribe says, "Has the likes of you received the remission of sins? Are you walking about like this?"—he can say, "You hold office, you are in a high position, you have much learning, and you have more years than I, but do you not have sin? I know nothing, but I met Jesus, and Jesus said to me, *'Son, your sins are forgiven you' (Mark 2:5)*, and removed all my sins. I have no sin." The paralytic cannot forget Jesus. And it means that the paralytic does not stay with the scribes and Pharisees. Just as the paralytic clearly received the remission of sins and can never forget this, and just as through this he received the remission of sins and went to the kingdom of heaven, we who have received the remission of sins also cannot forget. And in the future we will enter the kingdom of glory. We give thanks before our God.

The remission of sins received through the living word

And whatever anyone may say to lure you, do not fight over human doctrines. Do not fight over denominations. I did not receive the remission of sins from a denomination. I received the remission of sins through the word of God. I did not receive the remission of sins through the doctrines of a denomination. I received the remission of sins through the living word. It is the same with you. That is why, when I speak, I speak only of Jesus. I know nothing else. I do not know philosophy, and I do not know literature well either. I do not really know what Shakespeare said, and I do not know Tolstoy well either. There is no need to talk about such things. Because Jesus removed my sins, because Jesus blessed my life, I became a person who preaches this. The One who first remitted the sins of the paralytic

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and then raised up his body is Jesus Christ, who is God. You, too, preach this to people. I give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

A physician is of use only to those who know their own illness

< Mark 2:13–17 >

"Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

The Lord's intention in calling Levi, who sat at the tax office

While Jesus was teaching the multitude by the sea, He saw Levi sitting at the tax office. The Lord first called him, saying, *"Follow Me" (Mark 2:14)*, and Levi arose and followed Him. It

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was not that Levi came forward after quitting his work as a tax collector and becoming a fine person; rather, the Lord came to him right there where he was sitting at the tax office and opened the way for him to follow. In those days a tax collector was a person pointed at with scorn, because he collected taxes from his own people, handed them over to Rome, and filled his own pockets as well. People think that He would call upright people, but the Lord, completely contrary to that thinking, called a man with many faults.

Next, many tax collectors and sinners sat together at the place where Jesus was dining. It was because they were following Jesus. Seeing the fact that Jesus was among sinners, the scribes of the Pharisees asked the disciples, *"How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" (Mark 2:16)*. They judged Jesus by the reputation of the people He ate with. But to see this scene rightly, we must first know what the Lord came to do, rather than whom He ate with.

For the One who came to save sinners to draw near to sinners is as fitting as for a physician who came to heal the sick to sit beside the sick. The scribes took issue with the Lord's sitting together with sinners, but it was at that very table that the reason the Lord had come was revealed.

One seeks a physician only when one knows one is sick

Let us read verse 17. *"When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" (Mark 2:17)*.

The fact that one needs a physician becomes clear when one acknowledges one's own illness. If one considers oneself healthy even though one has an illness, one does not feel the need to receive treatment. The *"righteous"* of whom Jesus spoke does not mean that there are separately people who can stand before God by their own righteousness; it refers to people who, like the scribes, consider themselves righteous even though they are sinners. He made them realize that with such a heart they could not accept the grace of the Lord, who calls sinners.

We, too, must look at ourselves as we stand before God before we weigh the faults of others. Our sins do not disappear through the judgment that we look better than others. Since God knows even the evil of our hearts that we have not shown outwardly, there is no way to erase the judgment for the sins we have already committed by the memory of having done good deeds or by the resolution to do better in the future. Therefore, what we need is not words that evaluate us favorably but the Savior who actually removes our sins.

The reason that knowing one's own illness does not end in despair is that the Lord came precisely to call such sick people. So those who have realized their sin must not avoid the Lord; rather, they must acknowledge the fact that they cannot solve it by their own strength and believe in the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

The Lord, who called sinners, also bore the burden of sin

Jesus did not end His work at dining with sinners. For just as a physician is of no use if he only sits beside the sick and does not heal the illness, a sinner can stand before God only when the

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sin remaining in him and its judgment have actually been removed.

So Jesus the Physician had not only the sins of the tax collectors and sinners but all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Included in all those sins are the sins that each of us commits throughout our lifetime. Bearing those sins, the Lord was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died as the price of those sins, thereby receiving in our place the judgment we had to receive, and He rose again from death and became the Savior who delivered us from sin and death. The Lord's purpose in calling sinners was not to leave the sinner's condition as it was but to give this salvation.

We receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit in our hearts. Merely acknowledging one's own sins does not make the sins disappear. When a person who has acknowledged his sins believes in Jesus, who bore those sins and even received the judgment in his place, the salvation the Lord accomplished becomes his own salvation. The person who has received the remission of sins through this faith is a righteous person before God and a child of God, and God sends the Holy Spirit into his heart to testify of this salvation. We must clearly know the fact that we were sinners before but have now been clothed with the righteousness of the Lord. For those who believe in this way, the word *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)* is fulfilled just as it says.

Follow Him, remembering the grace by which He came to us

There is a fact we must not forget even after we have believed in the Lord. It is the fact that it was not that we became righteous by ourselves and came to the Lord, but that the Lord came to us while we were in sin. Just as the Lord said to Peter, *"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:8)*, the One who washed us is also the Lord. If we forget this grace, it is easy to judge others by our own standards, like the people who looked down on the sinners sitting beside Levi. But if we remember the Lord, who washed away our sins, we come to preach the news of that salvation even to those who are still in sin.

Just as Levi heard the call, arose, and followed, we, too, must keep in our hearts the grace of having been saved and live following the word of the Lord. That following is not a matter of repaying the price of salvation; it is a matter of trusting and following His word because we know who the One who saved us is. Those who are well have no need of a physician, but to those who know they are sick, Jesus, who came to call sinners, is the Physician they absolutely need. That Physician comes to us, who are like Levi sitting at the tax office, and calls us even today. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who saved people with many faults

< Mark 2:13–17 >

"Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

The thoughts of man and the thoughts of God

In Mark chapter 2 there is the story of four men who uncovered the roof of the house where Jesus was, let a paralytic down, and sent him down to Jesus. Seeing not the faith of the paralytic but the faith of these four men who had brought the paralytic, Jesus remitted his sins. We, too, must likewise guide by faith the souls who can do nothing, bring them before the Lord, and cause them to be saved.

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The Lord healed this paralytic. The Lord healed such a man who could do nothing and could do no righteousness at all. I believe that because the sins of sinners were laid down before the Lord, He saved them all. Truly, through our faith, souls have received the remission of sins before God.

When we look at this word, Jesus said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17)*. The Lord said that He did not come to call the righteous but sinners. Looking at this word, we can know in several respects what our Lord is saying.

First, we see the thoughts of people. Jesus came to this earth and taught many multitudes. But what kind of people are those whom Jesus calls? And what kind of people are those who follow Jesus? Here we see the thoughts of people.

What kind of person would truly believe in God and follow God? The thoughts of people are that those who live steadily and are decent would follow God. People think that among the many human beings of this world, those whose deeds are upright, whose thoughts are very decent, whose hearts are very clean, and whose conduct is upright would follow our Lord, and that when God calls people, He would call such people. People think that God will call upright and respectable people, and that upright and respectable people will follow and pursue our Lord. These are the thoughts of people.

Our Lord did not do so. Our God caused people who were the exact opposite of the thoughts of people to follow Him, and He called them. Here, seeing this man named Levi the tax collector sitting at the tax office, He said, *"Follow Me" (Mark 2:14)*.

We human beings think that Jesus, as the Son of God and as the true God, would call very proper people, people respected by

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others—such people. We naturally think that a person whose deeds are so proper, decent, and upright is the one who believes in God, and that he is worthy to follow God.

Jesus, who called Levi the tax collector

But a man named Levi was sitting at the tax office, and Jesus, as He passed by, called Levi. When He said, *"Follow Me" (Mark 2:14)*, the man named Levi abandoned all the duties he had been doing and followed the Lord. Since it says that the man named Levi was at the tax office, he was a tax collector. This tax collector named Levi was a man pointed at by many people. A tax collector in those days was a traitor to his country, one who sold out his country, one who extorted taxes, one who drew the blood of his own people to offer it to Rome as taxes, and one who lived by sucking the blood of his own people. So all the people of Israel disliked tax collectors, hated them, mocked them, and pointed their fingers at them. Jesus called such a man. The Bible says that when the man named Levi was at his desk carrying out his duties, Jesus, who was passing by in front of him, called him, and that man followed Jesus.

Dear beloved saints, what about you and me? What kind of person do you think Jesus calls? Do you not think, as a matter of common sense, that He calls people who are somewhat recognized by others in the world? We think that our God calls a person who is somewhat decent in his town, and if such a person believes in God and follows Him, we would find nothing strange about it and would naturally think it quite a matter of course.

But the point is that our Lord did the exact opposite of what we think. This is a very simple story, but it is a very serious story.

Jesus, as He passed by, called a tax collector named Levi. This man followed Him. *"And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him" (Mark 2:14)*.

Whom did our Lord look at, and to what kind of person did He say to follow Him? Did He tell a somewhat decent person to follow Him? Do you not think that since He is God, He would have done so? Even if it were us, would we tell a troublemaker to follow us? We would tell him to go his own way. Even so, when we call someone as a worker who looks somewhat decent, is useful, listens well, and is an object of respect to others, someone rather bright, and when we say, "Follow me," would we not call a somewhat decent person? According to our way of thinking, would it not be so? Would we tell people who do nothing but drink every day, get cursed at, and, far from being respected, receive only hatred and are pointed at by others, to follow us? Even if it were us, we would call a decent person. Even when a country recruits soldiers, it gives a physical examination and selects them after looking at every condition, and it does not select those with a defect. Even in hiring company employees, a company gives a physical examination and selects them after looking at every condition. The point is that for even one small defect, a person can be rejected and completely buried.

But the point is that we people tell those who are decent, clean, and well-behaved to follow us. But our Lord called those who in those days were cursed at, those who were marked out, tax collectors, those like robbers. These were the ones who had extorted the taxes of their own people. Since the nation of Israel was a colony of Rome, taxes had to be paid, and if the tax to be offered to Rome was a certain amount, the tax collector collected double that. Even that was a tax collector with a conscience who collected double; some tax collectors collected three times, even

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five times as much, put most of it into their own pockets, and offered only the remainder to Rome.

So in the eyes of the people, they did not look like human beings. The point is that when people spoke of a tax collector, they thought of a traitor, a bloodsucker, an evil person. The perception of tax collectors had become very bad. But when we look at the people whom Jesus, having come to this earth, made a point of choosing, He chose a tax collector, He chose fishermen who were passing by, and among the twelve disciples there was no one who was particularly proper.

When we look at the people Jesus chose, they were country people or people who were notorious in their towns, and among the women who followed Jesus there were also those who had been pointed at by others. Whether man or woman, it was hard to find anyone respected in that country. Yet Jesus called that tax collector, the man named Levi, and told him to follow Him, and Levi followed Jesus.

People with many faults follow Jesus

Our thoughts and God's thoughts are different. What kind of person does God call? And what kind of people did God cause to follow Him? What kind of people followed Jesus? The point is that people like Levi followed Jesus. A person who had nothing proper in himself, a person who was always lacking and had many faults, followed Jesus. When we look at the many people who followed Jesus, people with many faults of their own followed Jesus. People who had hardly any faults of their own did not follow Jesus.

Then Jesus went to the tax collector's house and ate a meal there. Who would the friends of a tax collector be? Tax

collectors, of course. Who would the friends of a thief be? Thieves, of course. Even a tax collector is a sinner, yet people worse than tax collectors gathered and sat together with Jesus and His disciples, for there were many, and they followed Jesus. If we ask who followed Jesus, the point is that notorious sinners and notorious tax collectors gathered in a whole crowd and followed the Lord. Jesus sat together and had a meal at the house of Levi the tax collector. He also mingled with his friends. Only such people gathered—tax collectors and their friends, sinners—and not only Jesus was there in that place but Jesus' disciples, too, were part of the same company. They were together, calling one another brothers.

So it says, "*And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Mark 2:16)*. This is precisely the thinking of man. The point is that such are the thoughts of man. Why does this person Jesus do something that cannot be understood? Jesus says that He Himself is the Son of God, He raises the dead, and there is not the slightest fault to be found in what He does; so why does this One who is said to be the Son of God, courteous and perfect, join together with tax collectors and sinners and eat a meal? From the viewpoint of the Pharisees, from the viewpoint of the scribes, from the viewpoint of those holding high office, from the viewpoint of the religious leaders, from the viewpoint of people whose heads are packed full of human ethics and morals, from the viewpoint of people who have eyes that look at the world only through ethics and morals—when seen through the eyes of people who do not know the word of God, who do not know the truth of God, who do not know the heart of God, and who do not know the salvation of God—the point is that

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Jesus was utterly wrong. The point is that it was utterly puzzling to them.

"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners"

Let us read this word once more. *"When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" (Mark 2:17)*. Those who are well have no need of a physician. Only those who are sick have need of one. Jesus was needed by these sinners. Jesus was the One who was needed by real sinners.

One more thing: since He said, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17),* whom did our Lord come to call? He came to call sinners. Who were the sinners at that time? They were tax collectors, sinners, and notorious people. Such people are not corrected by education or religion. This is because a person born with the nature of sin commits sin all the more cunningly the more he learns.

Tax collectors and sinners were people with many faults. We are people who understand this word simply. Our Lord came to call sinners with many faults. When we hear the word *"sinners,"* we tend to brand them as people who did some one thing wrong and were sentenced for it, but the sinners whom our God calls are people like tax collectors, the friends of tax collectors, people with many faults, and people who are lacking.

The point is that the Lord came to call people with many faults. Is a person before God a sinner with many faults, or is he truly, like the Pharisees and the scribes, a person who is hypocritical, courteous, and never really does anything bad, a person who, once he learns what is right, unfailingly does what

is right? Or is he a person who, even though he knows, always does wrong, is always lacking, and always has many faults? When we look at us human beings, when we look at our lives just as they are, what kind of people are we human beings? We are people with many faults. *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).* The point is that our Lord did not come to call people whose deeds are shining and upright, but He came to call you and me, who have many faults—people like tax collectors, people with many faults.

We are all people with many faults. The descendants of Adam are all people with many faults. You and I, too, are people with many faults. Our Lord came to call sinners with many faults, He came to save us, and He had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore them all, and saved us perfectly. So we have been saved through faith.

What kind of people are those who believe in Jesus? The point is that people with many faults believe in Jesus. Even though we have received the remission of sins, our nature is still vicious. Even over one small thing, we bite and fight one another. The Lord is saying that He did not come to call teachers of ethics and morals, but that He came to call you who are lacking and have many faults.

What we wish for and what we really are

Dear fellow believers, we must know the heart of the Lord. The goal we wish for is to be decent. Each one of us wishes to become such a person. We wish to become perfect people. That is only a wish. We wish, concerning ourselves, to become decent people. The point is that we wish to become people who are

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proper in anyone's eyes, who are not cursed at, and who are respected. That is what we call a wish.

What are we really like? The point is that we are sinners with many faults. We are people with many faults. We sin knowingly, we sin unknowingly, and we sin out of weakness. Our Lord called sinners with many faults and became our Savior.

Do you know what a human being is? The true substance of a human being is to have many faults. The fundamental nature of a human being is full of faults. We men and women alike have many faults. Do you think that stern and holy people have no faults? Such people, too, have so many faults that they wear fine clothes and walk ever so carefully in order to cover up their faults. Would such people have no faults? Such people, too, have many faults.

There are people who have been exposed in their town, people who have been marked out in their town. Whether a man or a woman, there is someone of whom people say that he is a person completely given up on in our town, and that unless he fights once a day, our town is too quiet to be right. In some household, the husband and wife fight once a month and the sound of dishes breaking is heard. All the people of the town say that only quarrelsome people live in that house. And there is a notorious philanderer, and all the people of the town acknowledge that he was always that kind of person. People do not make much of it even if that person commits quite a few sins. That is because they already know what kind of person he is in the town. But then a strange rumor begins to spread in that town. People lament, saying that even if everyone in our town were like that, they thought that person would not be, and that they never knew he would be like that, and they say that they were truly deceived. The notorious person has many faults, the person of whom they said they never knew he would be like that has

many faults, and his family, too, must have many faults. In that town there is not even one person who is without faults. Then, are all the people living on this earth without faults? All the people living on the earth have many faults. That is precisely us. The point is that people born as the descendants of Adam, wherever they were born, in this town or that town, are people with many faults, who have gathered together and are living on this earth among people with many faults like themselves.

We are precisely the people whom Jesus calls. Jesus did not call people without faults. He called people with many faults. Among those who believe in Jesus, if a student who is decent and carries his schoolbag properly believes in Jesus, people say that a person like that is believable. But there are troublemakers at school, are there not? Not only among the boys; among the girls, too, there are troublemakers. If these say that they believe in Jesus, people laugh. They laugh, saying, "You go to church? That is nonsense."

It is a person who has become such a laughingstock who believes in Jesus. The real truth is that people with many faults believe in Jesus. People who do not have many faults, people who hide many of their faults and do not know their own faults well, people who live with nothing but wishes—such people have no need of Jesus. So on this earth, it is those who know themselves well and know that they have many faults who believe in Jesus and follow Jesus.

Who is the one who follows Jesus? People with many faults, people who are lacking, people who know what they are like, people who know themselves—these are the ones who follow Jesus. This is what this word means.

Who are those who follow Jesus? Who is the one who truly follows Jesus today, tomorrow, and forever? The one who knows that he has faults, the one who knows that he himself is

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by nature a lump of faults—that person needs Jesus and follows Jesus, and Jesus has perfectly removed the sins of such people, making them as white as snow. Jesus became the Lord of salvation for such people. He did not become the Lord of salvation for people who are different outside and inside.

Today people go to church and say, "I believe in the holy and merciful Lord," and "Lord, I love You." Do you and I truly love the Lord? It is not that we love the Lord, but that the Lord loved us. It is not that we believe in God because we are righteous; rather, we believe in God in order to receive the remission of sins because we have many faults, and because we have received the remission of sins, we follow the Lord, who loved us who have many faults. It is not that we believe in the Lord because we have no faults. It is not that we believe in the Lord because we are more special than others. We believed in the Lord because we have many faults. Even though we have received the remission of sins, because we are lacking, we are fond of the Lord, we follow the Lord, and we love the Lord. A person who has many fine things of his own does not follow the Lord. He cannot follow Him. Our Lord said, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17)*. Our Lord says this word to those who have not been saved, and He says this word to those who have been saved as well. "I call people with many faults; I call you to follow Me; I have become the Savior of you who have many faults"—the Lord is saying this to us, the righteous, as well.

We follow the Lord because we have many faults

What kind of people are you? What kind of people are you and I? I am a person with many faults. I have many faults in my

words, and my life itself has many faults. You say a pastor has no faults? That is not so. He has many faults. You say Jesus' disciples had no faults? Peter was a man who denied Jesus. He said, "I do not know such a man," and when that was not enough, he even swore an oath, saying that he did not know such a man; he was a man who thus denied his own teacher, his own Savior.

Knowing that Peter would deny Him, Jesus, while washing the feet of His disciples, said, *"What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this" (John 13:7)*. He washed Peter's feet in order to make known to him these facts: that he would commit such a sin in the future; the fact that He had borne all that sin; the fact that He had loved him; and the fact that He had become his Savior. The Lord was saying that, knowing that Peter would make such a mistake, He had saved him.

I became a pastor because I have many faults. If I had had no faults, I would not have become a pastor. I would have become a saintly sage. Because I have many faults, I became the pastor of this church of the righteous. I became righteous because I have many faults, because I believed in our Lord with all those faults and was saved; it is not that I became righteous because I had no faults at all. Because I have many faults, I was saved, I follow the Lord, and I became a pastor. I hope you will know me as such.

To be able to say that I have many faults means that I know what I am like. Can I live according to the wishes I myself have thought up? When I look at myself, I have so many faults that I cannot live that way 100 percent. The point is that I have many faults before God.

What kind of person does God save? He saves people with many faults. He saves those who know and acknowledge that they themselves have many faults. It is hard for a person who

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does not know what he is really like and thinks that he has no faults to receive the remission of sins. A person who acknowledges himself, a human being who knows what human beings are—that person can believe in God and be saved. Jesus came to call such people and became the Savior of such people. Jesus did not come to save people who are like prim scholars.

People say, "I am all right in everything, but it seems that just one thing is wrong," but we are full of faults in everything. What about you? Do you have no faults? Do you have faults, or do you not? Are you a person who continually has faults, or a person who has faults only for a while and then at some point abruptly stops having them? The point is that we are people who continually have faults. Until when? Until we die, until we go into the grave. Just try growing old, and see how envious you become. When the grandchildren eat a lot, the grandmother and grandfather say that the grandchildren get to eat a lot while they themselves are given none. At first the grandmother and grandfather dote on the grandchildren, but when their son or daughter-in-law looks after and feeds only the grandchildren, they say that no one gives them anything and only the children are given. This is what we human beings are. This is what man is.

We have many faults until we go to the grave. Even now, while we are young, we are in this sorry state; just try growing old. The point is that our life is such that the fair face and the fair heart are all gone somewhere, and faults are heaped upon faults; just as the wrinkles increase, our faults increase.

Jesus said this. Jesus aptly described the fundamental nature of us human beings, saying that because we were born with sin, our life is one of doing nothing but sin our whole life long. But we have heard it as religion, heard it as etiquette and morals, and covered ourselves all over with ethics and morals.

Know yourself, a seed of evildoing

We must know that we are beings who cannot but live while doing evil; we must know ourselves as such. We are that kind of seed. Yet we shift everything we do wrong onto the other person, but the point is that it was not the other person who made us act that way; rather, that kind of heart was in our hearts, and because someone came and poked us in the side, what was inside leaked out and we acted that way.

Originally, we are people who act with that kind of heart. We are the kind of seed that does bad things. That is precisely what we human beings are. A human being is only human when he is humane. Originally, man was a holy being resembling the image of God, but after Adam and Eve were deceived and enticed by Satan the devil, we lost the image of the original seed, and what we are is that we are born with nothing but filthy sin and do nothing but sin. The point is that this is what we are like. We must rightly know what we are like.

And the point is that even when we come to church, this must truly be spoken of rightly, we must know it rightly and rightly acknowledge ourselves, and then we must know and believe how God has saved us so that we are saved, and although we are people with many faults, we must accept and believe that God has saved us, and so be saved and live. We must become people who are saved by faith, who go to heaven by faith, and who, though we are people with many faults, give glory before God and are used before God by following our Lord.

At the very least, if we say that we come to church, we must know that we are a seed of evildoing. What kind of people are we? We must know that we are people with many faults. At the very least, if one says that he is a person who believes in Jesus,

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he must know that he himself is a person with many faults. Only then can he believe in Jesus and be saved.

While saying that they believe in Jesus, people say that they need only to correct just one thing and that everything else is fine. Can we really become perfect people if we correct just one thing?

We are not lacking in just one thing; we are lacking in everything. Our thoughts, our hearts, and our conduct are all contradictory and full of faults, and we human beings are vicious in everything. Do you believe so? Even though we have received the remission of sins, we are vicious. Even though we have received the remission of sins, is our temper not still like that of a dog? Like dogs that bite and fight one another over a single piece of food, we are that vicious. He came to save such human beings.

If we say that we come to church, we must truly know ourselves. We are saved only when we know what we are like and believe in Jesus. Because we have so many faults, we must follow the perfect Lord to the end. This is because the Lord, as the right shepherd, leads us to the right place. If we are left alone, we become a mess. We must be led by someone. Only when we are led by the Lord, who is the true truth, can we live a right life. Although we have many faults, we must receive the remission of sins and live rightly by following our Lord. We must live the rest of our lives in a worthwhile way. The Lord has saved us.

The Lord, who became the Savior of people with many faults

Dear beloved saints, what about you? Are you truly people with many faults? Are you sinners with many faults? Or are you

righteous people who have received the remission of sins and, though you certainly have many faults, are righteous? Are you righteous indeed, yet with many faults? Or are you perfect people without a single fault? Or have you not yet received the remission of sins in your hearts, and do you still have sin in your hearts?

Jesus came to call people like us. Do you believe? He came to save people like you and me. Our wishes are so noble, beautiful, and lofty. But what we fundamentally are is sinners with many faults. It is not that just one particular person has many faults; the point is that all of us have many faults. And yet if one goes about pretending to have no faults, such a person is a hypocrite like the Pharisees.

In the Bible, people with many faults received the remission of sins, while people who, though they had many faults, went about covering themselves up as though they had no faults did not receive the remission of sins and went to hell. Such people have left behind an everlasting regret, and even now, having gone to hell, they are gnashing their teeth, saying that they should have believed, that they should have revealed themselves, and that they should have acknowledged themselves. If we ask where the people in the world who were deceived the most go, it is hell. The place where people who were deceived the most by their own selves go is hell.

Only people who were deceived by their own selves go to hell. And only hypocrites and foolish people go there. God is not One who does not call us because we are lacking. It is not that He does not remove our sins because we have many faults; rather, our Lord came in order to remove the sins of people with many faults. Our Lord saved people with many faults. But the point is that our God does not even call people who say they have no faults, people who cover themselves up, and He leaves such

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people alone so that they go to hell. Our Lord became the Savior of people with many faults.

In order to save you and me, who have many faults, our Lord came to this earth, saved us, and became the true Savior of you and me. Who are we, that the Son of God should have removed all our sins for us? Though we can hardly know all of that, God says that He came to save sinners, that He came to save people with many faults, and that He did not come to save people whose deeds are perfect. But people want their deeds to become perfect. That is a wish. And they strive to become so. Such are the thoughts of man, but the thoughts of God are that He says, "Let that person who has faults come just as he is; I have removed all your sins; I have become your Savior; I have saved you; whatever you have, come with it." *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. He is saying, "You who bear the burden of sin, you who bear the heavy burden of faults, all of you, come to Me."

Our Lord has become our true Savior. Jesus has become the Savior of you and me. Our Lord has become our true Savior. Do you believe? He has become our true Savior. Because the Lord has saved us, we are joyful. It is truly good. I hope that you will believe the word of Jesus that He came to call and save people who truly have many faults, believe the fact that that person is none other than you and me, and the fact that it is everyone, and that, giving thanks for the word the Lord spoke, you will come before the Lord by faith and receive all the blessings He has given. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Conform your own thinking to the gospel you have received

< Mark 2:18–22 >

"The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.'"

What must be known before the question of fasting

When the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting, some people asked Jesus the reason His disciples did not fast. In this question lay the thought that the disciples of Jesus, too, had

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to put on the form of godliness that others practiced. But before explaining why His disciples did not fast, the Lord spoke of who He was to them through the relationship between the bridegroom and the friends of the bridegroom.

The Lord asked, *"Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast" (Mark 2:19)*. It is right for the friends of the bridegroom not to fast while the bridegroom is with them but to rejoice together with him. The reason the disciples did not fast also lay here: because Jesus, the Bridegroom, was with them, they had the joy of a feast instead of the sorrow of fasting. Therefore, if we judge the faith of the disciples only by whether or not they fasted, we fail to see the Lord who had come among them. The center of faith lies in who the Lord is and what He has given us, before it lies in what kind of appearance we produce.

The Lord also spoke of the day when the bridegroom would be taken away. Since He said that on that day the disciples would fast, we cannot take this word to mean that fasting itself is always wrong. What the Lord corrected was the error of measuring faith by a religious life that tries to squeeze out sin through fasting, even though the Savior had come and was right before their eyes. We, too, must first look into the word of the Lord and His will before putting forward any deed of our own.

A new piece cannot simply be patched onto an old garment

The Lord said, *"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse" (Mark 2:21)*. Even if new wine is put

into old wineskins, the wineskins burst, and both the wine and the wineskins are lost. These two parables show the fact that the new thing the Lord has given cannot be forced into the old frame to which one is accustomed.

People have long been accustomed to the thought of trying to be recognized by God through their own efforts. They think that if they fast a great deal, pray at length, and pile up greater toil, the problem of sin will be solved. What happens if, leaving this thought as it is, they merely add the words that they believe in Jesus? Just as when a piece of unshrunk cloth is patched onto an old garment, in the end the tear only becomes worse. They end up treating the salvation the Lord accomplished as a patch to fill in what is lacking in their own merit, so that while calling Jesus the object of their faith with their lips, they place the final reliance of their hearts on their own deeds.

Therefore, when we accept the gospel, we must first rightly know the basis on which sin is washed away. It is not that sin disappears when we add the Lord's work of salvation to our own zeal; rather, we must lay down the thought of trying to solve sin with our self-righteousness and believe only in the salvation the Lord accomplished. Before the word that tells us to put new wine into new wineskins, what we must throw away is precisely our own thinking that we put ahead of the word.

Entrust your heart to the gospel that has given the remission of sins

The new wine that must be put into new wineskins is precisely this gospel. Jesus, who came as the Bridegroom, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and at that time He

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also had the sins we commit throughout our whole lives passed on to Him. Then, bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died in our place on the Cross as the price of those sins, and He rose again from death and completely accomplished the remission of sins. The basis of the remission of sins lies not in how much we have afflicted our bodies, but in the fact that the Lord has accomplished all this salvation.

Therefore, we are made righteous by believing in this gospel. We must not, while accepting the fact that the Lord bore our sins, think that some sins must be washed away by our own asceticism. Nor must we, while saying that we believe in the judgment of the Cross, try to pay the portion of that judgment again by ourselves. When we entrust our hearts to Jesus, who accomplished salvation through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, we who were sinners stand before God as righteous people who have received the remission of sins, and the Holy Spirit testifies of that salvation within us. This is the new thing spoken of in the word that says, *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)*.

This grace enables us to understand the joy of the disciples. Since the Savior came and opened the way of salvation to sinners, those who have received that grace have thanksgiving and joy. That joy did not arise from taking sin lightly. It arose because they know the love with which the Lord bore the burden of sin and the judgment in their place.

Even after being saved, we must learn the word

The remission of sins is received once and for all simply by believing the word, but following the Lord after that does not

happen so automatically. This is because our own thinking and habits that we were accustomed to before still remain in our hearts like old wineskins. If we regard only the way we used to do things as right, it becomes difficult to follow the word even when we have zeal to serve the Lord. Therefore, even those who have been saved must continue to listen to and learn the word and examine their own thinking.

Even when we serve the gospel together, we must not regard only the adoption of our own opinions as important. We must think about what is fitting to the word and what is beneficial for preaching the gospel and helping the saints. The reason we must also learn from the example of those who have gone ahead in faith and not insist on our own style is that the standard we are to follow is always the word of the Lord and the benefit of the gospel.

Following the Lord is not a matter of hardening our own stubbornness, but of conforming our hearts to the word that has saved us. Both when we receive the remission of sins and when we live after being saved, we must believe what the Lord has done and follow what the Lord has said. Just as the word says, *"But new wine must be put into new wineskins" (Mark 2:22)*, conform your own thinking to the gospel you have received. That is the way to keep the joy of one who is with the Bridegroom to the very end. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Does one receive the remission of sins by keeping the Sabbath?

< Mark 2:23–28 >

“Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, ‘Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’ But He said to them, ‘Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?’ And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’”

Those who rebuked the disciples for plucking the heads of grain

When Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, His disciples plucked the heads of grain. Seeing this, the Pharisees challenged Jesus, saying, *“Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” (Mark 2:24)*. Their concern was not

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whether the disciples were hungry, but that they had done what must not be done on the Sabbath. They put the regulations they themselves had set up ahead of people's circumstances.

Jesus asked them whether they had not read what David did. When those who were with David were in need and hungry, David went into the house of God, ate the showbread, which no one but the priests may eat, and also gave some to those who accompanied him. By bringing up the Scripture they knew, the Lord made them look back and consider whether a judgment that clings only to regulations while turning away from people's needs is right.

The Lord's bringing up what David did does not mean that one may disregard the word of God; rather, it means that one must know the will of God, who gave the word. God gave the Sabbath out of His will to let people rest, but the Pharisees, while claiming to keep that day in the name of God, turned away from His will to give life to people. This is precisely the problem that was revealed when they put the Sabbath forward and rebuked the disciples.

The Sabbath, given for the sake of man

Let us read verse 27. *"And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27)*.

The Lord spoke clearly of the relationship between the Sabbath and man. God gave the Sabbath for the sake of man, but people, the other way around, were pressing man down under Sabbath regulations. When people do not know His will in giving man rest, they turn even the day meant for rest into a means of condemning others.

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We must not make this word an excuse for living as we please. To be for the sake of man does not mean changing the word of God in order to satisfy one's own cravings. It means accepting the word according to the will of God, who loves people and seeks to give them life. The Lord did not turn away from people's hunger and weakness, and furthermore, He came to save the souls that were to die because of sin.

Our life of faith, too, must look into that will. If keeping up a certain outward form well becomes the purpose, we may fail to look after the very people who need to hear the gospel and receive the remission of sins. The reason we worship and listen to the word is also to believe in the Lord and follow His will. Before we fill our hearts with the fact that we have kept the order and form we are used to, we must look into whether the salvation the Lord has given is in our hearts.

True rest is found in Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath

Let us read verse 28. *"Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28).*

Jesus did not speak as a teacher who explains the meaning of the Sabbath, but as the Lord who established the Sabbath. Since He is the Lord of the Sabbath, He knows the meaning contained in that day, and He also gives the true rest to which that day points. Therefore, we must not put the Sabbath forward and judge the Lord, but must listen to the word of the Lord and receive that rest.

Does one receive the remission of sins by keeping the Sabbath? Keeping a date and stopping work does not make the burden of sin disappear as well. This is because even if the body

rests, when there is sin in the heart, one lives pressed down by fear in the face of the judgment of God. In order to remove this burden of sin, the Lord of the Sabbath Himself came as a man and had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. When He received that baptism, the Lord said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Since He bore at that time even the sins that each of us would commit throughout our whole lives, the basis on which our hearts can rest lies in this work the Lord accomplished, instead of in the religious merit we have built up ourselves.

Jesus, who bore our sins, shed His blood and died in our place on the Cross as the price of those sins, and He rose again from death and completely saved us. The fact that the Savior received in our place the judgment that we had to receive sets us free from the fear of sin. Just as the disciples took the trouble to pluck and eat the heads of grain, we, too, must take the trouble to recall this gospel every day and believe it in the present tense. We believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins, and stand before God as righteous people, and the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and testifies that this rest is true. The spiritual rest the Lord gives does not come from a mental knack for trying to forget sin, but from the faith that sin and judgment have been resolved through the Lord's work of salvation. Rest is resting at ease. Keeping in our hearts by faith this gospel, in which the Lord has removed all our sins, is what it is to keep the Sabbath spiritually.

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Join your heart to the will of the Lord, who gives life

Those who have obtained this rest come to know the fact that the Lord wants to save other souls as well. Just as there were people who preached the gospel to us, we, too, can convey to those who live bearing the burden of sin the call of the Lord, who said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. Rather than setting our hearts only on displaying our own godly appearance, we must set our hearts on helping the other person know and believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished.

The labor we undertake in serving the gospel takes many forms. There is not only the work of preaching the word but also the work of helping others to be able to hear the word. The reason we regard that labor as precious is not to build up our own righteousness, but that through that labor the gospel of life is preached to the souls the Lord regards as precious. We who have received the remission of sins also join our hearts to that work, because we have come to live by the love of the Lord.

Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, has given us the remission of sins and true rest. Just as the Sabbath exists for the sake of man, every form we keep must also be under the will of the Lord, who gives life to people. Since the Lord who went through the grainfields with His disciples is with us even now, I pray that His word, which has saved us, will lead our hearts ahead of the forms we keep. ✉

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CHAPTER

3

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

It is right to do good on the Sabbath

< Mark 3:1–6 >

“And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward.’ Then He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.”

The man with the withered hand and those seeking to accuse Him

It was the Sabbath. When Jesus entered the synagogue again, a man with a withered hand was there, and it says, *“So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him” (Mark 3:2)*. They were not waiting for one man’s hand to be restored; they were watching so that they might accuse the Lord if He healed sickness on the

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Sabbath. Though they were looking at the same sick man, the heart of the Lord and their hearts were different.

Jesus made the man with the withered hand stand up in the midst. He made him stand in the very place where people's hostile gazes were concentrated, and asked what the right thing to do was. Now the people could no longer remain in the position of secretly judging another person's deeds. Whether their own hearts were in accord with the will of God came to be exposed before the word.

Which is right, to do good or to do evil?

Let us read verse 4. *"Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent" (Mark 3:4).*

Anyone could have answered the Lord's question. Since the Sabbath is the day God gave so that people might rest, it is right to do good and save life in keeping with that purpose. The Sabbath is not a day given only to tell us not to work; it is a day given so that we might keep the faith that believes the Lord has removed our sins. But the people kept silent. That is because, if they gave the right answer, they would also have had to acknowledge that it was right for Jesus to heal the sick on the Sabbath. Holding on to their intent to accuse the Lord, they were unwilling to accept the fact that the Lord's word was right.

In this silence there was hardness of heart. Grieved by that hardness, the Lord looked around at them with anger. They were sitting in the synagogue where God was served, yet they refused the work of God, who has compassion on people. Having a place of faith and religious knowledge does not mean that one's heart is also joined with God. If keeping one's own position is more

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important even while hearing the word, one closes one's heart even when faced with the plain truth.

We, too, must examine whether we have such a heart when we hear the word. If we accept only the parts that fit the thoughts we have already settled on and avoid the word that would turn us around, it is difficult to follow the will of the Lord. Rather than fitting the word to our own assertions, we must acknowledge the fact that the word is right. Only then can we join our hearts to the good work the Lord does.

The Lord, who restored the hand, and the people who plotted to kill Him

The text testifies, *"He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other" (Mark 3:5)*. The Lord's word had the power to actually heal a sick person. But the Pharisees who saw this restoration went out and plotted with the Herodians to kill Jesus. The Lord restored one man, yet they made a plan to harm the Lord's life. To the question of which is right, to do good or to do evil, their actions revealed the answer.

This scene shows that opposition arises even when the Lord does the work of saving people. Just as the Pharisees joined hands with the Herodians, even today those who hold power within Christianity join hands with one another and persecute those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, regarding them as a thorn in their side. Therefore, people's reactions cannot be the scale that measures the work of God. Since something does not become the truth by receiving praise, nor does the truth disappear by receiving opposition, we must

believe on the basis of the word the Lord spoke and the work He accomplished.

Just as the man with the withered hand could not stretch out his hand by himself, a sinner cannot remove his own sins by himself. So Jesus, who restored that hand, came to save us who were to perish because of sin, and through the baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. Not only our past sins but also the sins we will commit throughout our whole lives are included in them.

Jesus, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, receiving the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and completely accomplished the salvation that gives us life. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit leaves the position of trying to wash away his sins with his own deeds, receives the remission of sins the Lord has given, and stands as a righteous person. Seeing the power of the Lord, who restored the diseased hand, we must believe in the Savior, who has resolved even our sins.

Preach the gospel of life even amid opposition

Even while people were watching Him closely with hardened hearts, the Lord did the good work that had to be done for the sick man. We who have received the remission of sins must also learn this heart. When we preach the gospel, some receive it gladly and some oppose it, but the value of helping another soul receive the remission of sins does not change according to people's response.

When we meet opposition, if our hearts are taken up with hating the other person, we lose the strength to preach the gospel.

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Just as the Lord did what He Himself had to do before those who opposed Him, we, too, need only do what we have to do. Of the Bereans, the Bible records that *"they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11)*. Preaching more clearly the salvation the Lord accomplished, and explaining that truth step by step to those who want to examine the word, is the way to join our hearts to the will of the Lord, who saves life.

Remember the man in the synagogue who stretched out his hand at the word telling him to stretch it out. He could not stretch out his hand by his own strength, but he stretched it out as the word said, and the Lord restored that hand. Since that Lord has saved us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, cast off the hardness that refuses the word because of your own thoughts, stand on the side of the word that says it is right to do good on the Sabbath, and become people who preach this news of life to other souls as well. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in the Son of God, who went beyond healing sickness and saved us from sin

< Mark 3:7–12 >

"But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.' But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known."

The crowds that flocked to Him after hearing of the great things He had done

When Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea, a great crowd followed Him. They did not come only from Galilee. It

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says, *"And from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him" (Mark 3:7–8)*, so what moved these people was the news of the great things Jesus had done. To those suffering from diseases, the fact that they could meet the Lord became an earnest hope.

Because many people flocked to touch the Lord, Jesus had His disciples keep a small boat ready. This was to avoid being crushed by the crowd. This record shows the desperation of the people gathered there. People who could not resolve their diseases by their own strength came, looking to the power of the Lord who heals.

The Lord did not turn away from their weakness but actually healed many people. Since Jesus is the One who knows the suffering of man, we, too, can tell the Lord of our weak circumstances and ask for His help. However, if we limit the Lord to One who only solves the problems of the flesh, we have not understood even half of the purpose for which the Lord came.

The Son of God, whom even the demons recognized

Let us read verse 11. *"And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God'" (Mark 3:11)*.

The unclean spirits fell down before Jesus because the Lord is not One who works by the power of demons but the Son of God, who has authority over the demons. The evil powers that oppress people could not boast of their strength before the Lord. This scene clearly reveals who the Lord is.

But when the demons tried to make the Lord known with their mouths, it says, *"But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known" (Mark 3:12)*. Even though they spoke correctly, saying that He was the Son of God, they were merely evil spirits that had yielded before the Lord; they had not become disciples who believed in and followed the Lord. This is how different the knowledge of who Jesus is and the faith that believes in Jesus as one's own Savior are.

We, too, must reflect on this point when we think we know Jesus well. That is because, even while remembering many names and events concerning Jesus, we may actually still be bearing our own sins just as they are. What we need, beyond increasing our knowledge about the Lord, is to know and believe in our hearts the salvation that the Son of God accomplished for us.

The One who healed the sicknesses of the body has resolved even sin

When a disease is cured, the suffering of the body is relieved, but even a person who has regained his health cannot stand before God if he is under sin. The Lord also said, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17)*. So the Lord did not come only to heal people's diseases; He came to fundamentally save sinners from all their sins, make them children of God, and give them everlasting life.

For this salvation, Jesus received baptism from John, and through that baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. He had even the sins each of us commits throughout our whole lives all passed on to Him at that time. Contained in the statement that the Lord

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did not turn away from the weakness of the sick is the reality that He Himself bore even the burden of sin that we could never take off.

The Lord, who bore the sins, received in our place the judgment we were to receive by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross as the price of those sins, and He rose again from death and became our living Savior. Faith that believes in the Son of God is precisely believing in Jesus, who saved us through this gospel of the water and the Spirit. A person who believes this gospel in his heart is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins and a child of God, and God sends the Holy Spirit into his heart and has Him testify of this salvation.

Therefore, the assurance of salvation does not depend on the condition of the body. It is not that sin disappears because one has become healthy or that one becomes a sinner because one is sick again; rather, the basis of the remission of sins lies in the salvation the Lord accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Even amid the difficulties of the body, we can believe in this salvation and ask the Lord for help.

Let the heart that seeks the Lord remain in the gospel

The fact that great crowds flocked toward the Lord makes us, too, examine our hearts. What do we hope for when we seek Jesus? We can also tell the Lord of our heart's desire that a present hardship be resolved. But if, after that need is met, we live as though we no longer have anything to do with the Lord, we have not yet deeply considered the most precious grace the Lord has given.

To a person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus is not One who gives the help needed for a moment and then leaves, but the Savior who has given everlasting life. Therefore, we keep listening to the word of the Lord, give thanks for the grace we have received, and preach so that others, too, may know this salvation. We do not stop at knowing with our mouths who the Lord is; we rely with our hearts on Him who saved us.

Thinking of the desperation of the crowds that came to the Lord, I hope that we, too, will tell the Lord of all our circumstances. The Lord calls us, saying, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. But even while telling Him of all our circumstances, what we must hold on to most clearly is the Son of God, who has saved us from sin and death. The Lord, who saved us, is the object of our faith today as well. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The twelve men whom He appointed to be with Him and to preach

< Mark 3:13–19 >

“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, ‘Sons of Thunder’; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.”

Those whom the Lord Himself wanted and called

The text begins, *“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him” (Mark 3:13)*. While great crowds were gathering, the Lord appointed twelve men. Their work began not from a plan they had made after gathering on their own to do great things, but

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from the Lord's calling. Therefore, to know the way of a disciple, we must first know the will of the Lord, who called them.

The text records the names of the twelve men. To Simon He added the name Peter, and to James and John He added the name Sons of Thunder. The names of the other disciples also appear one by one. Those whom the Lord appointed did not remain part of a nameless crowd; each one came to belong to the Lord and to carry out the work entrusted to him. But at the end of the list there is also a name of which it says, *"And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Mark 3:19)*.

Looking at this list, we must not judge our own faith by the name of an office alone. Before the fact that we have been in the church for a long time or the fact that we have many duties, what matters is whether we believe in our hearts in the Lord, who called us. The way to live as befits those whom the Lord appointed lies in the faith that believes in the Lord, who called us.

He had them be with Him and sent them out

Let us read verse 14. *"Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14)*.

In the Lord's purpose in appointing the twelve, having them be with Him and sending them out go together. The disciples first heard the word at the Lord's side and learned what kind of work the Lord did. He sent out such disciples to preach the gospel. That is because only when one has heard and learned from the Lord can one convey the Lord's will.

We, too, cannot replace our life of faith with zeal for working alone. The more things we have to do, the easier it is to forget

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what we are laboring for, and if we set aside the word of the Lord and work only by our own judgment, we end up trying to accomplish our own thoughts even while claiming to serve the Lord. Therefore, for those who serve the gospel, hearing the word and engraving it in their hearts is not a side branch of the work but the foundation that lets them know what the Lord has given and what He wants.

Moreover, being with the Lord does not end in staying put, satisfied by oneself. The Lord sent out the disciples He had kept with Him, and the truth they received from the Lord became news to preach to other souls. Since it is love to share what one has received because one has received it, the more we know the grace of the Lord, the more we come to look after those who do not yet know that grace.

The news of salvation the disciples were to preach

The disciples were called to testify not of their own excellence but of Jesus, who saves people. In His name is contained the meaning, *"For He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. When we preach the gospel, if we speak only of how much we ourselves have changed, a person who is in sin does not hear the basis of salvation. We must let him know how the Lord has removed his sins.

The news the disciples were to preach is as follows. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins that we who preach the gospel and those who hear the gospel commit throughout our whole lives are all included in that sin of the world. Bearing that sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of that sin, receiving the judgment in our place,

and He rose again from death and completely accomplished the remission of sins. The remission of sins is not something a disciple produces for a person; it is something the Savior Himself accomplished.

We have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. We were sinners before, but we have become righteous through the righteousness of the Lord. Now we preach this very salvation to others as well, and at this time, if a disciple's displaying his own ability becomes the center of preaching the gospel, the Savior is hidden. Conversely, if we clearly preach the work the Lord accomplished, those who hear can also rely on Jesus instead of on human ability.

Carry out the work He entrusted to you with the power you have received

Verse 15, continuing the purpose for which He appointed the twelve, states, *"And to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons" (Mark 3:15).* Since the source of that power is the Lord, who appointed them, a disciple's work is not a matter of boasting of his own strength but of doing the work the Lord entrusted with what the Lord has given.

Today, we, too, cannot take lightly the grace by which we have come to be able to serve the gospel. That is because people who could not even resolve their own sins have received the remission of sins and have come to preach the word of life to other souls. Before being discouraged that you have no great ability, think about how certain the salvation you have already received is. When we know that word rightly and preach it, we come to confess that the power of salvation lies with the Lord.

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The list of the twelve disciples, recording at its end even Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, makes us examine our hearts. Therefore, rather than boasting of having been in a position close to Him, what matters is believing and following the word of the Lord. Let us learn the word at the side of the Lord, who saved us, and preach the gospel we received from Him to other souls. Within these two purposes—having us be with Him and also sending us out—our lives will be used. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Do not blaspheme the work of the Lord, who delivers people

< Mark 3:20–30 >

“And they went into a house. Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, ‘He is out of His mind.’ And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He has Beelzebub,’ and, ‘By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.’ So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: ‘How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation’—because they said, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’”

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Those who called the work of delivering people an evil work

When Jesus went into a house, the multitude gathered again, so that there was no leisure even to eat. But at this time, the Lord's relatives, thinking that Jesus was out of His mind, went out to lay hold of Him. The scribes went further. The Bible conveys their words, saying, *"And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons'" (Mark 3:22)*. The work of delivering people from oppression was turned, in their mouths, into the work of an evil power.

We must take seriously the fact that people could judge in this way even after seeing the work the Lord did. When one puts one's own thoughts first, one comes to explain even the work of God revealed before one's eyes the other way around, and even while knowing that a marvelous thing has happened, one comes not to believe in the Lord, who did that work. Therefore, we must not stop at knowing what happened, but must listen to how the Lord speaks of that work.

Would Satan bring himself down?

Jesus called the scribes and spoke to them in parables. If a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand, and if a house is divided against itself, it cannot stand either. Satan, too, cannot stand but comes to an end if he rises up against himself and is divided, and so their claim that He cast out Satan by the power of Satan did not make sense. The Lord did not leave as it was the evil name they had attached to Him, but exposed the error of their claim.

Next, the Lord said, *"No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house" (Mark 3:27)*, speaking of entering a strong man's house. His casting out demons was precisely the work of subduing the demons and driving them out, just as one who is stronger enters the strong man's house, completely overpowers him, and binds him; so the Lord is not One who borrowed power from Satan, but One who delivers people as the stronger One, who made and rules all things.

For us, this fact becomes the hope of salvation. If man could have overcome the evil power by himself and removed his own sins, there would have been no reason for the Savior to come. But because we could not deliver ourselves, the Son of God, who is stronger than we are and overcomes the evil power, came as the Savior.

The sin of rejecting the work of salvation

The Lord warned, *"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" (Mark 3:28–29)*. The meaning of this warning must be found within the text. Verse 30 makes clear the reason the Lord spoke this way. Let us read verse 30. *"Because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:30)*.

The scribes called the work of God that the Lord did the work of an unclean spirit. They made the One who saves out to be an evil one, and rejected the salvation He gives. The Lord warned how fearful a thing this is. This is because one cannot receive that salvation while opposing the work of God, who remits sins.

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To blaspheme the work Jesus did is precisely to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, and to call the work of God, who today saves sinners through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the work of demons is also the same sin.

However, this word does not confine in fear even those who want to ask the Lord and learn. The heart that asks questions in order to know what it does not know is different from the heart that, while knowing the truth of salvation, makes it out to be something evil and keeps others, too, from believing. If there is a part one does not understand, one has only to examine the word of the Bible again and learn the gospel until one comes to believe. The problem is recklessly blaspheming God's work of salvation by following only what people say.

Today, we, too, need this warning. Rejecting the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished and keeping others, too, from believing that truth is not a light matter. Since examining the expressions or the shortcomings in conduct of a person who preaches the gospel is a different matter from opposing the salvation itself that the Lord accomplished, what we are trying to say is not that we should exalt people, but that we should rightly know and believe in God's work of salvation.

Believe in the remission of sins that the Lord accomplished

The content of that work of salvation, which the scribes called the work of demons, is clear. Jesus, who came to bind the strong man and deliver people, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and the sins we have committed and will commit throughout our whole lives are all included in them as

well. Bearing those sins, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins and received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death, put an end to sin and judgment, and gave us life. This is the holy work of salvation of God that the Holy Spirit testifies of.

We believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with our hearts and receive the remission of sins. After the Lord rose again from death and ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit to those who believe, and the Holy Spirit seals their hearts and testifies that this faith is right. The word of the Lord that He spoke to the paralytic, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2)*, has been fulfilled just as it is for us as well. Since the Lord bore all the sins of the world, there is no reason to think that, because the sins we have committed out of weakness are many, those sins are greater than the Lord's salvation. One cannot obtain the remission of sins by another way while opposing that salvation, and believing in Jesus, who saved us, is the only way of salvation that God has given.

We who have already believed in this gospel and become righteous must preach the news of salvation more clearly. We must help those who hear to examine the word and believe, and pray that even those who oppose will come to know the truth and turn back. Rather than making the word of warning a weapon of our own feelings, we must embrace the will of the Lord, who has compassion on souls that are in sin. Therefore, we must be not on the side that blasphemes the work of the Lord, who delivers people, but on the side that believes in that salvation and prays and preaches so that those who do not yet believe may turn back. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Who is My mother, or My brothers?

< Mark 3:31–35 >

"Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.' But He answered them, saying, 'Who is My mother, or My brothers?' And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.'"

The family seeking Him outside and the people sitting around Him

The mother and brothers of Jesus came, and standing outside, they sent someone to call the Lord. The multitude, who were sitting around the Lord, conveyed that news to Him. At this, the Lord said, *"'Who is My mother, or My brothers?' And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers!'" (Mark 3:33–34)*, and He said that the person who does the will of God is His family.

This word does not mean that one should neglect one's family in the flesh; rather, it is a word in which He made clear the standard of the spiritual relationship one forms with the Lord.

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Being close by blood and belonging to the Lord within the will of God are different things, and so even the relationship in the flesh of being the Lord's mother and brothers cannot guarantee salvation.

Just before this, there appeared the relatives who tried to lay hold of the Lord and the scribes who slandered the Lord. Now the Lord looks at the people sitting around Him and listening to the word, and speaks of who truly belongs to Him. The standard is not a relationship or position recognized by people, but the will of God.

The relationship formed within the will of God

Let us read verse 35. *"For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).*

The Lord said "whoever." What family one was born into or what position one holds in the world is not the standard for becoming the Lord's family. Therefore, even a person who lacks background can come to the Lord, and conversely, even if one has family members who have lived a life of faith for a long time, one's own faith does not arise by itself, and so each person must know the will of God and believe that word.

Then, does doing the will of God mean that a person piles up enough good deeds to obtain the qualification for salvation? To understand it that way runs counter to the work of the Lord, who came to save sinners. Doing the will of God is first to accept His will in sending the Savior to sinners, that is, to acknowledge the fact that one is in sin and cannot wash away that sin by oneself, and to believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished. David, too, confessed, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5).*

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To join our hearts to the word of God is not a matter of choosing only the parts we want to believe; rather, it is to acknowledge our true selves when the word says that we are sinners, and to believe in that salvation when it says that the Lord has washed away our sins. We become sinners by the word and become righteous by the word; we do not dress ourselves up in the form we want.

The salvation that made sinners children of God

Behind the grace of calling sinners brother and sister and mother, there is what Jesus actually bore. God did not call sinners His children while roughly covering over their sins; rather, He had the Son bear the sin of sinners, and so Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Included here are also all the sins that each one of us commits throughout our whole lives.

Jesus, who bore our sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins and received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death, gave us life, and completely accomplished salvation. Since the Lord said that *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*, whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins, becomes righteous, and becomes a child of God, and God sends the Holy Spirit into that person's heart and testifies that he has become His child. The spiritual relationship formed with the Lord does not come from a person's merit or family line, but is given through faith in the salvation the Lord accomplished.

Therefore, we who have been saved have no reason to think of ourselves as people abandoned by God whenever our faults come into view. This is because, although we cannot call faults right, the salvation the Lord accomplished does not disappear because of faults. We have only to believe in the gospel that has washed away our sins and go on correcting our wrong thoughts and conduct in the light of the word. Because we believe in the grace by which He made us His children, we learn and follow the will of God all the more.

Cherish one another as one family

The Lord called those who do the will of God brothers and sisters and mother. This also makes us think about how those who have been saved should treat one another. Saints who believe in the same gospel are not people to keep close only while they do what we need; they are family whom the Lord regards as precious. Therefore, we must seek one another's benefit, look after one another's weaknesses, and grow together within the word.

That said, leaving one another's wrongs as they are is not love. When someone departs from the word, we must examine the word together and help him go the right way. When another saint goes through hardship, rather than turning away, saying that it is that person's own fault, we must share the help we are able to give. The Bible says of love that it *"does not behave rudely, does not seek its own" (1 Corinthians 13:5)*. Because we have the love we received from the Lord, we can also take the trouble of cherishing other saints.

To speak of "the Lord's family" is not to boast of one's own specialness, but to invite even those who do not yet know

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salvation into this grace. Remembering the word in which the Lord said "whoever," we must not narrow the gate of salvation by a person's background. Since the gaze of the Lord, who asked, *"Who is My mother, or My brothers?"* and looked at those who sat around Him, rests on us today as well, I pray that you will believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, join your hearts to the will of God, and live as one family belonging to the Lord. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The will of God, which comes before Sabbath regulations and blood ties

< Mark 3:1–35 >

"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Step forward.' Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean

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spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.' But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known. And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house. Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.' So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation'—because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.' Then His brothers and His mother came, and

standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.' But He answered them, saying, 'Who is My mother, or My brothers?' And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.'"

The heart that judges the Lord while claiming to believe in Him

Even while we speak of faith, we can set up standards of our own in our hearts. When the Lord works in a way that fits those standards, we rejoice, and when He does not, we find it hard to accept. But the Lord is not a savior we have fashioned to fit our own thoughts. He is God, who made us and came to resolve our sins. The angel conveyed this about Him: *"For He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. Therefore, true faith does not begin with fitting the Lord to our thoughts; it begins with knowing and accepting what the Lord has done.

In Mark chapter 3, various gazes directed at Jesus appear. In the synagogue there are people looking for a chance to accuse the Lord, and at the seashore there are people who have flocked to Him to be healed of their diseases. On the mountain, the disciples called by the Lord come to Him. After He goes into a house, there appear the relatives who try to lay hold of the Lord and the scribes who slander Him, saying that He relies on the ruler of the demons. Passing through all these scenes, the Lord says that the person who does the will of God is His family. This flow shows us by what standard we must treat the Lord.

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Regulations and needs cannot come before the Lord

The people in the synagogue clung to the issue that He had healed on the Sabbath rather than to the joy that the man with the withered hand was restored. The Lord asked them which was right, to do good or to do evil, but they did not answer. Rather than grasping the meaning of the word, they held on to the judgment they had already made. The Sabbath was not given merely as a day on which to do no work; it was given as a day on which to keep the faith that believes the Lord has removed our sins, yet they were bound up in keeping only the date and the letter. In the end, after the Lord healed the man's hand, the Bible says, *"Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6)*. This shows that the thought of being for God can actually come to the point of opposing the work God is doing.

The multitude at the seashore came to the Lord in a different way. Because the Lord had healed many people, the sick flocked to Him. The Lord healed them, and even the unclean spirits fell down before the Lord. The Lord had the actual power to deliver people. But we must examine whether we have a heart that tries to confine that power only within the range of our own needs. If we make only being healed of disease and having an easier life our reason for believing in the Lord, then when our needs change, our heart toward the Lord can also change.

The Lord knows people's weakness and helps them, but if we obtain only the help we want and have no interest in the salvation the Lord intends to give, that is not the faith that fully knows the Lord. Since believing in Jesus properly means knowing the purpose for which Jesus came to us and believing it just as it is, both the heart that puts religious regulations first

and the heart that puts only its own needs first must be set right before the word of the Lord.

Learn the purpose the Lord has established

The Lord called those He Himself wanted and appointed twelve. That purpose appears just as it is in the word *"that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons" (Mark 3:14–15)*. In this word, the One who sets the purpose is the Lord; so it is not that the disciples borrow the Lord's power to accomplish their own plans, but that the Lord appoints the disciples and entrusts His work to them.

This fact also gives direction to our lives as those who have been saved. If, even after believing in the Lord, we think only about what benefits us, it is hard to learn the will of the Lord. We must listen to the word and know the purpose for which He saved us. The Lord delivered us from sin and judgment and made us children of God, and He has enabled us to preach that grace to other souls as well. Once we know the grace we have received, serving the Lord does not remain merely an outward duty.

However, even the position of having been appointed cannot take the place of faith, for among the twelve, Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is also recorded. Therefore, we cannot make an office or the experience of having been close to Him our final ground. What matters is whether we are believing in and following the word of the Lord now.

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The Savior cannot be made into an evil one

The scribes slandered Jesus, who was casting out demons, saying that He relied on the ruler of the demons. The Lord refuted that claim with the word that a kingdom and a house divided against themselves cannot stand. He also said that one must first bind the strong man in order to take the goods of his house. The Lord is not One who delivers people by leaning on an evil power; He is the Savior who breaks that power.

Regarding the attitude of making God's work of salvation out to be an evil work and rejecting it, the Lord gave the stern warning, *"He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" (Mark 3:29)*. Since blaspheming the work Jesus did is precisely the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, blaspheming the work of those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit today so that people cannot believe is also the same sin. We must not condemn the work of the Lord on the grounds that it differs from the thoughts we had. Not our judgment but the salvation the Lord actually accomplished must be the standard of faith.

The content of that salvation must be clearly known from the baptism Jesus received from John. By receiving baptism from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and in those sins are included all the lifelong sins of each one of us. And Jesus, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins and received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and completely accomplished salvation. Because He had the sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and these two cannot be separated.

We believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. Not by regulations or labors we have set up ourselves, but by believing in this work Jesus did, we who were sinners become righteous, and God gives the Holy Spirit upon that faith and testifies of salvation. True faith is not a matter of making up the story of salvation we want; it is a matter of accepting the salvation God has accomplished.

Make the will of God the standard of faith

At the end of the chapter, the Lord says, *"For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother" (Mark 3:35)*. Even a close relationship in the flesh cannot come before the will of God. Conversely, even a person who has nothing to show for himself in the world becomes one who belongs to the Lord if he believes in God's salvation and joins his heart to His will.

Now we must examine ourselves. Are we measuring whether the Lord fits our thoughts, or are we fitting our hearts to the word of the Lord? We must not hide ourselves before the word that makes us acknowledge our sins, and before the gospel that has washed away our sins, we must not try to add our own deeds. We must keep in our hearts the salvation we have received by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and live for the souls the Lord regards as precious. To lay down the position from which we judged the Lord and to stand within the salvation the Lord accomplished—that is the faith we must have before the word of this chapter. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Abandon silence and slander, and believe the word of the Lord

< Mark 3:1–35 >

"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Step forward.' Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean

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spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.' But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known. And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house. Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.' So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation'—because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.' Then His brothers and His mother came, and

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standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.' But He answered them, saying, 'Who is My mother, or My brothers?' And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.'"

Hearing the word much and accepting it

When we hear the word of God often, there come to be many parts that we grow familiar with. But we must distinguish between the fact that we are familiar with the word and the fact that we believe that word in our hearts. This is because one can fail to abandon one's own thoughts even before a passage one knows well, and one can still hold on to one's own sins even before the gospel one has heard many times. What is more important than the number of times we have heard the word is accepting into our hearts the facts that God has spoken. The Bible also exhorts us, "*But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of*" *(2 Timothy 3:14)*.

In Mark chapter 3, the Lord speaks to many people. He asks the people in the synagogue which is right, and He tells the man with the withered hand to stretch out his hand. On the mountain He calls His disciples, and to the scribes who slander Him He explains why their words are wrong. At the end, He makes it plain that the person who does the will of God is His family. Following the word of this chapter, we must examine how our hearts respond before the Lord.

The heart that avoided the answer and the hand that followed the word

In the synagogue, the Lord asked which is right on the Sabbath: to save life or to kill. The people did not answer. It was not because they could not know, but because they had a heart that wanted to accuse the Lord. Rather than turning their hearts before the right word, they guarded their own thoughts with silence. As the word says that He *"looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5)*, what the Lord grieved over was their hardened hearts.

On the other hand, the man with the withered hand stretched out his hand at the word telling him to stretch it out, and his hand was restored. The power of restoration was not in his hand but in the Lord, and he followed that word so that the Lord would do what he needed. Although they were in the same place, the way they treated the word of the Lord was different.

We, too, can avoid the answer before the word that shows us our sins. While readily acknowledging the sins of others, we can make excuses for our own sins or cover them up. But hiding ourselves does not make sin disappear. When, in the light of the word, we acknowledge that we are sinners who cannot become righteous by our own strength, it becomes clear why we need the Lord, who came to save sinners. If the word of God says that we are sinners like the man with the withered hand, only the person who agrees with that word in his heart is qualified to believe in Jesus. The heart that acknowledges sin is not a merit for obtaining salvation but a heart that accepts one's real self as the word says.

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Do not stop at knowing with your mouth

By the sea, a great multitude gathered, having heard of the great things the Lord had done. The unclean spirits also fell down before Jesus and cried out, *"You are the Son of God" (Mark 3:11)*. But even though the demons recognized who the Lord was, they were only evil spirits that submitted before the authority of the Lord; they did not become people of faith who belong to the Lord. Therefore, merely saying the correct title cannot fully explain faith.

The Lord's appointing the twelve also makes us examine our hearts. They were people who would be with the Lord, learn the word, and be sent out to preach the gospel. But the fact that Judas, who later betrayed the Lord, is also on that list is a warning that a close position and experience in the work alone cannot take the place of faith in the heart. We, too, need to accept what we hear and know as our own faith.

If we know the word that Jesus removed sins and yet think that our own sins alone remain, we must hear again the extent of that salvation. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the lifelong sins of each one of us are also included in that sin of the world. To think that one's own sins were not passed on to the Lord at that time because they were especially great or many is to narrow the extent of the sins the Lord had transferred to Him.

Jesus, who bore the sin of the world, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of that sin, which had been passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment in our place; and He rose again from death and, as the living Savior, gave us life. We must not leave this gospel of the water and the Spirit as mere knowledge that we can explain

to others, but must believe it as the very fact that saved us. Through this faith, we who were sinners become righteous people who have received the remission of sins, and the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and testifies of salvation.

Do not set thoughts that are not yet convinced above the truth

The scribes saw the Lord casting out demons and said that it was the power of the ruler of the demons. The Lord said, *"How can Satan cast out Satan?" (Mark 3:23)* and explained, with the parable that a kingdom and a house divided against themselves cannot stand, that their words did not hold. With the word that one must bind the strong man before one can take the goods of his house, He also revealed who it is that overcomes the evil power. The Lord made them look at the work of salvation that was actually being done, rather than at the name they had attached to it.

Nevertheless, to brand the work of God as the work of an unclean spirit and reject it is a grave sin. The Lord warned that he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never receives remission. Since blaspheming the work Jesus did is the very sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, blaspheming the work of those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit today is also the same sin. We must not rashly oppose the truth of salvation just because it does not fit the thoughts we have been familiar with; rather, where we do not understand, we must examine the word further and learn. Moreover, to keep even others from believing the gospel in order to hold firmly to one's own thoughts is an even more fearful thing.

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That does not mean, however, that we need to be afraid even of asking about what we do not know before the word. What matters is the heart that wants to know the word, and hearing and believing how the Savior bore our sins and how He received the judgment for them. Salvation is not true only when our emotions are specially stirred; rather, because what God has done is true, we believe that fact.

Let the word received in your heart lead your life

At the end of the chapter, the Lord looks at those sitting around Him and says, *"Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother" (Mark 3:34–35)*. Here we come to know where our faith must go. It is not to stop at saying that we know the will of God, but to believe and follow that will. We must first accept the salvation He accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and after being saved, we must live learning the things that please the Lord.

When we sing praises in worship, too, we must not stop at singing the lyrics out of habit but must think of the grace that saved us. When we labor together with other saints, too, we must not look only to the work being finished but must think of the benefit to that soul and to the gospel. The word we have accepted into our hearts must lead these everyday judgments.

The way the people in the synagogue kept silent before the word serves as a warning to us. We must lay down the heart that wants to keep itself as it is even after hearing the word of the Lord. I hope that you will join your hearts both to the word that exposes our sins and to the word of salvation that washed away those sins. We must not be satisfied with becoming people who

know much of the word, but must become people who are saved through that word and follow the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord entrusted the gospel to those to whom He gave life

< Mark 3:1–35 >

"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Step forward.' Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.' But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known. And

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He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house. Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.' So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation'—because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.' Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking

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You.’ But He answered them, saying, ‘Who is My mother, or My brothers?’ And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.’”

The life received from the Lord is news to be shared together

For us who serve the gospel, too, there are times when the work entrusted to us feels only like a burden. This is because when the work to be done continues and we even meet with people’s opposition, the reason why we take this trouble grows dim in our hearts. At such times, we must look back on what we have received and to whom we have come to belong. The gospel we preach is, before it is the content of a task entrusted to us, the news of life that brought us to life out of sin. The Lord first called us, who were bearing the burden of sin, saying, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)*.

Mark chapter 3 begins with the scene of the Lord restoring a man and ends with the word in which He calls the person who does the will of God His family. In between, the work of the Lord continues as He heals the sick, appoints the twelve, and breaks the evil power. After giving life to people, the Lord does not leave them scattered; He establishes those who belong to Him and entrusts them with the work of preaching the news of life. Within this will, we must find the direction of our saved lives.

The Savior, who did not turn away from the weak

The man in the synagogue who had a withered hand could not restore his own hand by himself. Yet the people there looked at that man's weakness as an opportunity to accuse the Lord. The Lord *"said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Step forward'" (Mark 3:3)* and asked which is right, to do good or to do evil. Then He had him stretch out his hand and restored it. Even though there was opposition from the people, the Lord did what the weak man needed.

To the multitude that gathered by the sea as well, the Lord's help was real. There were people who had heard the news from afar and come looking for Him, and there were people suffering from diseases who came near, wanting to touch the Lord. The Lord healed many people. The unclean spirits also fell down before the Lord. The grace the Lord gives was not a matter of comforting people only with words while not knowing their circumstances.

We, too, are people who have received this grace of the Lord. Before we were saved, our debt of sin did not disappear even when we added good deeds, and we could not leave sin even when we made resolutions. Jesus came to us, who could not solve our own sins by ourselves. Only when we know the fact that the Lord first gave us life does the reason why we labor for other souls also become clear.

He bore sin and received the judgment, and gave us life

The work of the Lord that gives life to people does not end with the healing of diseases. This is because even if the body is

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restored, if sin remains, one cannot escape the eternal judgment that He described as *"where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched'" (Mark 9:48)*. That is why Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Not only the sins of someone else but even the lifelong sins of each one of us were all passed on to Him at that time, and this is the starting point of the salvation He has given us.

Jesus, who bore all those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins and received the judgment in our place. Because sin had been transferred to the Lord through the baptism He received from John, that death was a death of atonement for our sins, and the Lord rose again from death and fully accomplished this salvation. Because the Savior who bore sin and the judgment is alive, we enjoy the eternal life He has given us.

We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have received the remission of sins through this salvation. Those who were sinners have become righteous people and children of God by virtue of the righteousness of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit comes into their hearts and testifies of this salvation. Therefore, we must not try to earn the qualification for salvation again through the labor of serving the gospel. First there is the life He has given, and then there is the labor that the person who has received that grace takes on. Only when this order is clear will even our assurance of salvation not be shaken when the work is hard.

The people He established to learn together and preach together

The word says, *"And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve" (Mark 3:13–14)*. The Lord appointed them so that they might be with Him and so that He might send them out to preach; thus the time of learning at the Lord's side and the work of going out into the world to preach were within one purpose. The disciples were not people who would keep the grace of the Lord hidden only within themselves, but people who would preach it to others.

Today we, too, cannot remain in our own private satisfaction after being saved. We can hear the word together, serve the gospel together, and carry out the work each of us has been given. Not everyone does the same work, but the salvation that is preached is the same. It is to preach whose sins the Lord bore and how He bore them, how He brought the judgment for those sins to an end, and why we must believe in the risen Jesus as our Savior.

In doing this, making one's own name known must not become the purpose. This is because it was the Lord who gave the disciples the power to cast out demons, and the word we have and the opportunity to serve were also received by grace. As befits people who share what they have received from the Lord, we must help one another and not think lightly of the labor of others. We must be able to rejoice together in the benefit of the gospel being spread.

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Do not let go of the work of salvation because of opposition

Misunderstanding and opposition also followed the Lord's work of giving life to people. His relatives went out to lay hold of the Lord, and the scribes slandered Him, saying that He did it by the ruler of the demons. But the Lord did not stop the work of salvation He was doing because of those words. With the word, *"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:24–25)*, He corrected the slander, and He said that one must bind the strong man before one can take the goods of his house. The power to rescue people was in the Lord.

The warning about him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit is also not separate from this work of salvation. This word makes plain how fearful it is to brand the holy work of the Lord as evil and reject it. Since blaspheming the work Jesus did is the very sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, blaspheming the work of those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit today and thereby keeping people from believing is also the same sin. Therefore, we, too, cannot change or hide the truth of the gospel because of people's reactions. However, attacking the other person is not the spread of the gospel; what we hope for is that the person comes to know and believe the truth of salvation.

When we labor amid opposition, we must not bear the burden as if we were the ones who must save every soul. The Savior is Jesus. We faithfully preach the salvation the Lord has accomplished, and we pray and help so that those who hear may believe. When this distinction is clear, we can continue the work entrusted to us while leaving the results of our labor to the Lord.

Labor as a family belonging to one Savior

Lastly, the Lord *"looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers!'" (Mark 3:34)* and said that the person who does the will of God is His family. Those who have gained life through the gospel and follow the will of the Lord are not people who compete with one another to secure positions. They are a family belonging to the same Savior. Therefore, we must not make the weakness of our brothers and sisters the grounds for our own superiority, but must care for them with the grace we have received from the Lord.

When your heart is heavy because there is much work, remember this relationship. We are not people who work to pay off the debt of sin, but a family that has received the love of the Lord and gained life; and with that grace we cherish one another and also preach the gospel to souls who have not yet been saved. When the will of the Lord, who gathered those He gave life to and entrusted them with the gospel, leads today's labor, we will come to give thanks for the grace of the Lord all the more deeply on this path of sharing the life we have received. ✉

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CHAPTER

4

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The fruit borne in a heart that fears the Lord, who saved us

< Mark 4:1–9 >

“And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: ‘Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’ And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

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Different results even when the same seed falls

When Jesus taught by the sea, a great multitude gathered. Jesus got into a boat and sat down, and He spoke in parables to the multitude on the land. The first of those words was *"Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow" (Mark 4:3)*. They were not to listen to the story of sowing seed as something merely interesting and pass it by; they had to examine their own hearts before that word.

The sower sowed the seed, but the results differed according to where it fell. The seed by the wayside was devoured by the birds. On the stony ground with thin soil, it sprang up immediately, but because it had no root, it withered after the sun rose. Among the thorns, the thorns grew up and choked it, so it bore no fruit. But on the good ground, the seed grew up and flourished and bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

The reason the results differed even though the same seed was sown lies not in the seed but in the ground that received the seed. Therefore, we must look not at how often we have heard the word, but at how our hearts received the word we heard. Because even if we come into contact with the word often, we cannot enjoy its fruit if we do not receive it in our hearts or if our hearts are taken captive by other things, the Lord, even as He finished the parable, said once again, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mark 4:9)*.

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A good heart does not come from self-righteousness

When we speak of good ground, we may first think of a person whose inborn disposition is gentle and who has few faults. But the heart that receives the Lord's word is not the same as a character that is well regarded in the world. For, as the Bible says in the words *"and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12)*, no one can become righteous before God by his own strength. Therefore, if we think that we are good ground because we are basically decent people, we have not set ourselves rightly before the word.

A good heart begins with acknowledging God. We must acknowledge that the One who speaks is God, who made us, and the One who knows our sins. Only then do we come to esteem that word above our own thoughts. When He exposes our evil in the word, we acknowledge it without covering it with excuses, and when He makes known to us the grace of salvation, we receive it with thanksgiving.

On the contrary, if we regard our own thoughts as always right, it is hard for the word to enter deep into our hearts. That is because we push away the words that rebuke us and seek only the words that fulfill our own will. Therefore, the heart that receives the word must also be a heart that fears the Lord. To fear the Lord is not merely to tremble vaguely because there is someone frightening. It is to know that the holy and good God loved us and saved us, and to respect, love, and fear Him and receive His word as precious. When the word of God falls, it is to settle it firmly in one's heart that it is as the word says. The word does not enter a person whose heart is not settled at its center, but to the one who has set his heart, God bestows the grace of salvation.

When we know the Lord, who saved us, the word enters deeply

God, who knows our shortcomings, did not leave us alone, but sent His Son Jesus in the body of a man and saved sinners. For us, who could not become good ground by ourselves, Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)* and received baptism from John, and through that baptism He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. Among all those sins are also the sins we commit throughout our whole lives. The Lord did not wait for us to remove our sins by ourselves and then come to Him; He Himself bore that sin, which we could not remove by our own strength.

Jesus, who bore that sin, shed His blood on the Cross as the price of that sin and died in our place, and He rose again from death and completely accomplished our salvation. When we believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which He saved us through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, we receive the remission of sins. We who were sinners become righteous by the Lord's righteousness. It is not that we make a good heart and are saved as the reward for it; it is that we acknowledge our sins and accept, just as the word says, the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

When we know this love of salvation, our attitude toward the Lord's word also changes. The Lord is the One who, though He knew all our faults, bore that sin and even received the judgment in our place. Therefore, when our shortcomings are exposed, rather than leaving the Lord and hiding, we can stand before the word relying on the grace by which He saved us. We follow the Lord not because we ourselves are excellent, but because the Lord is faithful and loved us.

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Treasure the word before pressing for fruit

The Lord said, *"Other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred" (Mark 4:8)*. This fruit was not something the ground produced by its own strength; it was borne as the seed that was received grew. In our lives, too, the word of the gospel must first take its place in our hearts. If we only hurry to produce results that are visible on the outside, the heart that seeks to be recognized by people easily comes before the heart that believes the word.

Give thanks for the salvation the Lord has given and keep listening to the word. When your own stubbornness is exposed, correct it in the light of the word, and, thinking of the love you have received, you must preach the gospel to other souls as well. Being of one heart with the saints who labor together also comes from this faith that believes in the Lord. More important than the heart that wants to produce great results by our own strength alone is the heart that trusts and follows the word of the Lord.

The word about thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold is not a number that each person must fill; it means that when we become good ground, the spread of the gospel becomes that much faster, and other souls, too, come to be saved. Jesus showed us how the seed that fell on good ground bears abundant fruit. Therefore, rather than comparing ourselves with others, we must examine how we are receiving the Lord's word today. I hope you will live fearing Jesus Christ, who saved us, with a heart that receives His word deeply. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Toward a heart-field that can receive the word of God

< Mark 4:1–9 >

“And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: ‘Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’ And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

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The Lord, who taught in parables by the sea

From Mark chapter 4, verse 1, up to this passage is what the Lord spoke about the parable of the sower. Whenever Jesus was on this earth speaking the word and doing the work of God, people gathered in huge crowds. So many gathered that they could not fit in one place, in one building. The sick sought to be healed of their diseases, those who had sin sought to receive the remission of sins, and in this way everyone sought to tell Jesus their own wishes and have them resolved; that is why so many gathered.

This time, too, Jesus taught by the sea, and far too many people gathered. So Jesus had a boat prepared, got into the boat and sat down, and had the audience stay on the shore as He spoke the word. By the sea there was the sound of waves rolling in and rolling out, and people were gathered in a huge crowd, so how noisy it must have been! Since each person's wish was different, it would hardly have been quiet. Even so, the Lord preached the word in the midst of it. Of course, since the Lord is God, I believe He could preach the word so that it reached everyone's ears clearly, no matter how many people were gathered. I think both Jesus and those who came to hear the word were truly remarkable.

What the Lord spoke at this time was about what state arises in people's hearts when the word concerning the kingdom of God is sown, just as seed is sown. When the sower went out and sowed the seed, there were several kinds of fields. He says that there were four fields: first the wayside field, next the stony field, next the thorny ground where seed fell among thorns, and next the good field. And He said, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mark 4:9)*.

The wayside field: a person whose heart is not set

First, the Lord said, *"And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it" (Mark 4:4)*. What is called the wayside field refers to a heart that is not settled when it hears the word of God. It means that one is not ready to accept the word of God as the word of God and to plant that word smoothly in one's own heart. When seed falls by the wayside, it is kicked by this person's foot and kicked by that person's foot, and it is all scattered. A field is a field, but a field by the wayside is much handled by people and much trampled by the feet of animals. I believe that the wayside field the Lord speaks of here refers to people whose heart's center is truly not set.

When a farmer sows seed, he plows up the ground and picks out the stones, clears away tree roots and worthless weeds, breaks up the soil until it is soft, raises the ridges, sows the seed there, covers it with soil, and waters it—that is how he farms. But the wayside is a place where many people pass by and many animals pass by. When seed falls there, people passing by may pick it up and take it away, birds may come and peck at it and eat it, and animals may come and eat it. Also, because the wayside is a spot that people have trampled over so very many times, it is so hard that even if the seed sprouts, the root cannot push its way into the ground. It is so smooth and hard that it is not a place fit for farming. Since the seed was sown in such a place, the birds came and picked it up and ate it.

The hearts of people who live a religious life are exactly like that. In this world, whether they believe in Christianity or in Buddhism, whether they believe in Buddha, in Confucius, or in Socrates, whatever they believe in, people who are deeply steeped in the rituals of that religion cannot be saved even when

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the word of God is preached to them. That is why the Lord said, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*. Viewed religiously, every religion says to live kindly, to live virtuously, to become a good person in the world, and to become a person useful to the world. Ultimately, is there any difference? If one hears the word of God with such notions and thoughts, the word of God does not enter one's heart. Even when someone preaches the word of God to him, if he merely knows it, someone comes and picks it up and eats it. When another problem arises, he forgets it, and when someone else says, "Oh, that is not so," he loses it. If one's heart is set when hearing the word of God, one need only accept it; but a person who is not like that, whose heart is hard and not yet ready, finds it hard to be saved. That is why we must listen carefully to the word the Lord spoke to us.

Coverings of fig leaves and tunics of skin

In Genesis chapter 3 there are Adam and Eve, and Satan the devil, using the serpent, came to them and told them to pick and eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Adam and Eve would not pick and eat it, he said that if they ate it they would become like God, and so made them eat it; they were deceived and picked and ate it. After they ate it, they knew that their bodies were naked, hid among the trees, and made coverings of fig leaves to try to cover their bodies. If we read the Bible a little further, Romans says as follows: *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—" (Romans 5:12).*

Adam and Eve sinned and made themselves coverings of fig leaves, and God called to Adam and said, *"Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9)*. Adam said, *"I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10)*. When God said, *"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (Genesis 3:11)*, Adam said that this woman whom God had given him gave it to him and he ate. God spoke to Adam, spoke to Eve, and spoke to the serpent and cursed the serpent. Saying that it had made these people distrust the word of God, He said to the serpent, *"On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life" (Genesis 3:14)*. So the serpent became an animal that crawls with its belly on the ground, and the serpent and man came to be at enmity with each other.

But God came again to Adam and Eve, stripped off the clothes of fig leaves they had made and put on, and Himself made tunics of skin and clothed them. *"Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21)*. What does this mean? It means that with only religious thoughts and religious rituals, with such faith, one can never go to the kingdom of heaven. Religious things are like weaving plants together to make coverings to wear. Even if one makes and wears them, once the sun shines on them and a few days pass, they all dry up, shrivel, and fall off. This speaks of something unstable. But God's making tunics of skin and clothing Adam and Eve speaks of something perfect. God's making tunics of skin and clothing them tells us that, in place of man's life, He passed our sins on to another sacrificial offering, and killed and judged that offering in our place as the price of our sins, and so saved us.

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Sinners born as the descendants of Adam

So when we look at the word of Romans, it says that *"just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12)*. God first made Adam and Eve, this one couple, and because they sinned against God, death came, and that sin and death came upon all people. All of us, all mankind, are the descendants of Adam and Eve. Because we are their descendants, because of the sin Adam and Eve committed, we too are born into this earth with sin, and because of that sin we have come to receive the judgment for sin from God and to reach death. It means that everyone has come to be so.

The reason I am saying this is that He said that in the wayside field the seed does not get into the soil but rolls around on top, fails to take hold, and as a result that seed is lost. God clearly said to you and me, to everyone, that we are the descendants of Adam and Eve. Because we are born through our parents with sin in our hearts from birth, we are sinners who commit sin. Because we are born with the twelve kinds of sin in our hearts and are those who commit sin, we are sinners before God. If a person who has sin before God is judged according to the righteousness of God, then since *"the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, a person who has sin faces death. Death means that, spiritually, one must go into the eternal fire of hell. The Bible tells us that we are such people.

So our Lord spoke in Mark chapter 7 about what man fundamentally is. *"And He said, 'What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from*

within and defile a man'" (Mark 7:20–23). The Lord said that what comes out of a man is what defiles a man. The Bible also says *"as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19)*. Through Adam, who became our ancestor, all people in the whole world came to be born into this world, and it means that through one man's sin all people automatically became sinners. Why is that? Because they were born with these sins. Because people are born with the evil thoughts that come out of the heart of man, that is, these twelve kinds of heart, and put them into action, they are transgressors, and they are human beings who fundamentally have sin before God. That is why He calls them sinners.

Because a human being is a human being, when he has offspring, he begets a human being. Because a dog is a dog, when it has young, it gives birth to a dog. A bird lays eggs, and when they hatch, a bird of that kind comes out. God made all things each according to its kind, and so it is according to its kind. So we are sinners because we are the descendants of Adam. Because we were born as sinners, born with twelve kinds of evil and filthy hearts, because we are human beings who have sin, and also because we are human beings who commit sin, we are called sinners. God says this, and because this word is a word God spoke, we need only accept this word as it is. Then we can accept the salvation the Lord has given us and receive true salvation.

But He said that the birds came and pecked at and ate what was sown in the wayside field. Those whose hearts are not fixed, people who, when God speaks like this through the word of the Bible, do not admit, "That is so," just as He said, people who say, "In my opinion it is like this; I think it is like that"—such people find it hard to go to the kingdom of heaven. If we become complete sinners and fully acknowledge only the word of God,

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we can receive true salvation before God. But if we do not acknowledge the word of God and rely only on our own feelings and acknowledge only our own thoughts, then even when the word of God falls on us, even when He says what kind of sinners we are and says that the Lord has saved us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we do not accept it in our hearts; and so, even though God has given us salvation, we do not receive salvation. That is why He says that the wayside field will not do, that the heart-field must be plowed up.

The Lord says that we were born with the twelve kinds of sin in our hearts, and among these, some sins are what can clearly be called actual offenses, so we must confess and admit before God that we were not merely born with them in our hearts but have actually done wrong as well. More than the one or two offenses we have committed, we have many sins we have not yet committed and many sins we commit repeatedly. Therefore, before God we must admit, "If God does not save me from sin, then since I am a sinner before God because of the offenses I have committed and the evil heart within me, if it goes according to God's righteous judgment, He said that *'the wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23)*, so I am one who goes to hell." Only when we clearly acknowledge the word of God can that word enter into your hearts and mine when God saves us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, just as He went to Adam and Eve, made clothes, clothed them, and saved them, so that we can truly receive the remission of sins by faith and become children of God. Therefore, we must know the meaning of this word about the wayside field, think carefully over the sins in your hearts and mine and think over the word of God, and become those who admit the facts as they are before God and accept in our hearts the salvation God has given.

The stony field: the sins hidden in the heart

The second field the Lord spoke of is the stony field. *"Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away" (Mark 4:5–6)*. Seed that falls on stony ground with thin soil dies. At first it sprouts, but because the soil is not deep, it cannot put down roots. After sprouting, it should push its way into the soil, find where there is moisture, and draw up nutrients to grow, but there are stones underneath. It is not that there are one or two stones; the whole thing is a gravel field. There is only a little soil, and almost all of it is stones. So it cannot live.

Therefore, if we want to receive the remission of sins before God, if we truly want to become the clean bride of Christ without spot, blemish, or wrinkle, we do not have to tell other people the sins hidden in our hearts, but we must think deeply before God about the fact that we have evil hearts and about how we have shown that evil heart outwardly. The Lord said that what comes out of the heart of man is evil thoughts, and that such things as murders, adulteries, covetousness, foolishness, and fornications are all sin. We must become people who look back on our own hearts to see whether or not we have such filthy and evil hearts, and admit it before God. It means that we must admit, "God, You say that I have such a heart, and indeed, when I look into my heart, such thoughts and feelings rise up from within the heart of my flesh. I am such a person." When we admit it like that, we are revealed before God as such people, and just as the word says that *"where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20)*, God gives us abundantly the gift of salvation, the gift of blessing, the gift of the remission of sins,

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and through that salvation the Lord has accomplished for us, we obtain true salvation.

The word about the stony field means that we must reveal our own sins. Usually, in this world, people try to hide their sins. They say that hiding them is a virtue. Religious people greet others humbly and hide their sins well. But in reality, in such a person's heart there is an evil and venomous heart, and it is full of thoughts of how to harm the other person and how to make life miserable for him. And yet, when he appears before people, he presents himself as a very good person. If such people do the same before God as well, they cannot receive the remission of sins. They cannot have their sins washed away.

The Lord did not intend to remove just one of our sins. The Lord had all the sins in our hearts and all the offenses we committed by putting them into action transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore them Himself on His body, was nailed to the Cross and received the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death, and so truly saved us. Because the Lord did so, on our part we must admit how great the sins we commit before God are, that we are transgressors, that we are truly sinners before God, and that we are people who can only go to hell.

So what is called the stony field refers to the sins hidden in our hearts. What is true happiness for a person born into this world? It is written that *"it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)*. Everyone goes through the process of birth, aging, sickness, and death—being born once into this earth, falling ill, growing old, and dying—and while living through this process, we must know how evil we are before God and how much wrong we do before people, lay our sins open before God, acknowledge the word God has spoken to us, admit that we are sinners before God, and so accept the word

of the gospel of the water and the Spirit by which God has removed our sins, and believe with a true heart in the love of God and in the fact that God has removed our sins, and receive the remission of sins. Only then do we become children of God. A person who does not reveal his sins but keeps them tightly hidden and keeps trying to hide them before God receives that much less grace.

By the wayside, too, there are things like puddles where water has collected, and there are indeed some seeds that fall there and sprout and grow. But mostly they die trampled under people's feet, die crushed under wheels, or are pecked up and eaten by birds before they even sprout, so most of them die. That is why, before God, we must think over our sins both with our own conscience and with the word of God, shine the light of the word of God on what sins we really commit before God, what kind of sinners we are, and what the result of those sins is, and come to know it, and believe the word of God and believe in Jesus Christ, and so truly receive the remission of sins.

"You shall have no other gods before Me"

To do that, we must know the function of the law and know the commandments of God. Let us look at the commandments of God in Exodus. *"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My*

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commandments" (Exodus 20:3–6). We have read the first commandment and the second commandment.

The LORD God is the true God of heaven and earth, of the whole universe. He is the self-existent God. This God said, *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*. He spoke this to all of us, all mankind. The name Jesus means the Savior, and the name Jehovah means the self-existent God. All things in heaven and earth were made by the Creator, and the One who created them is the LORD God. This God commanded all mankind to have no other gods before Him. Then, on the basis of this commandment, you are to think about yourselves for a moment. You must find out, with this word as the standard, whether you truly have not had other gods besides God, or whether, on the contrary, you have believed in and served all sorts of other gods while singularly excluding only the true God. We must know our sins. If we want to know our sins, we can know them quite well by taking the commandments of God shown in Exodus chapter 20 and examining whether we have really kept what God told us to do and what He told us not to do.

We, too, served many other gods before we knew God. We did not believe the word of God, yet we believed in other gods especially well. God said to have no other gods besides Him, but on the contrary, we had all sorts of other gods and served them all the more, while excluding and rejecting God. We must know that before God we became those who broke the first commandment of God, such sinners. We broke the first commandment. Even if you and I had committed no other sin at all in our relationships with people, because we committed such a sin before God, for that one sin alone we must go to hell unless we receive the remission of sins. It is exactly like when a nation has established a law, and if one fails to keep that law and commits a crime, one violates that law and is arrested as a

criminal, tried, and punished. God is not visible to the eye, but He counts as sin whatever is not fitting before this word He has spoken. If one has sin, one must go to hell.

Now, for us to be born and receive the remission of sins is the happiest thing for a human being. That is the true happiness of life. God says, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31)*. And we have already broken the first commandment. If so, even if you and I commit not a single other sin while living in this world, we are already sinners before God and go to hell. Even if someone were born so weak in body from birth that he could not harm anyone or do anything at all, if that person did not serve God alone but served another god, sin is already established and he goes to hell.

What goes even further than this is the word of Mark chapter 7. What comes out of the heart of man is evil thoughts, such things as murders, adulteries, thefts, fornications, and foolishness, and He said that because we were born with such hearts, we are people who go to hell even if we commit not a single sin. The person who acknowledges this word of God that He has spoken becomes a truly good heart-field. The person who admits before God, "In my heart there is an evil heart, a murderous heart, a thieving heart, and a lustful heart. I have such a heart"—such a person is qualified to be saved. The Lord has removed our sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and such a person is fully qualified to believe it. That gospel of the water and the Spirit is what God gave to mankind for such people. That is why, through this word of the law, we must know how much we ourselves have sinned before God.

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You shall not make a carved image

The second commandment is that He said, *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image" (Exodus 20:4)*. It means not to make any likeness of anything in heaven, on the earth, or in the water, and not to bow down to them or serve them. Among the things God hates are idols. He hates it when people carve a stone, call it a god, bow down to it, pray to it, serve it, and set food before it and make petitions. It means not to make an image of stone or of wood and bow down to it, and not to bow down and pray to a great mountain or a great sea, or to the moon, the stars, or the sun that God made. Because God is a jealous God, what did He say He would do to those who serve things that are not gods as gods, who do not serve God, who made them, blesses them, and guides them, but serve created things? He said, *"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Exodus 20:5)*.

So a family that devotes itself utterly to offering sacrifices to its ancestors may seem as if it would prosper, but it does not turn out that way. Because they utterly devote themselves to what God hates most, it turns out just as the word says that He visits the iniquity of those who hate God and serve idols to the third and fourth generations. There are also families in which sickness after sickness and accident after accident continue throughout the whole household. People look at such families, say they have been cursed, and seek all kinds of superstitious remedies, but they must know the root of it. It is because God said that He visits the iniquity of those who hate Him upon the children, from the fathers to the sons, to the third and fourth generations.

The name Jehovah means He who exists by Himself. God created heaven and earth, and He also made man. And He said that He is the LORD and told them to serve Him, but after Adam

and Eve were enticed by the serpent and became estranged from God, their descendants were born with sin. Since they were born with sin from birth, it means that they automatically have the thoughts God hates and do the things He does not want. That is why the Lord said of such people, *"A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters!" (Isaiah 1:4)*. It means that they do what He tells them not to do, and do not do what He tells them to do. Among people, we have no choice but to let such things pass with one another, but God said that He visits the iniquity of those who hate Him. Those who were born into this world through God do not serve or believe in God; instead they make idols of stone and serve them, say that the spirits of the dead come and help them, go to fortune-tellers asking why the family is not doing well, and spend large sums of money on rituals to ward off misfortune—that is what people usually do. God said that He visits the iniquity of those who do such things to the third and fourth generations and brings down a curse. So this is true of those who say they believe in Jesus yet do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, do not follow the Lord by faith, and believe as if in a superstition; but those who serve many idols, those who keep following only other gods and superstitions, are cursed. Why is that? Because they serve idols before God.

In reality, are not you and I, all plants and animals, and all people made by God? Why do such beings exclude God? Everyone fails to do what God told them to do and does what He told them not to do. God laid down ten commandments—do not take the name of God in vain, keep the Sabbath day holy, honor your father and your mother, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not covet what belongs to your neighbor—but do we keep them? We fail to do what He told us to do; He tells us not to murder, but since

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we were born with a heart to murder, we murder; He tells us not to commit adultery, but we commit adultery; He tells us not to steal, but we steal. Because what comes out of the heart of man is evil thoughts and we all have such hearts, we fail to do what He tells us to do and do what He tells us not to do. So before God we are sinners from birth, lumps of sin. We wanted to live good lives and tried hard to live good lives, but in living our lives there are many decisive wrongs we have done, many wrongs we did not want to do but did, many wrongs we will yet do, and many wrongs not only in our hearts but also in our actions. And it is not only you; your children, too, are the same, because they have inherited the same heart. That is why we need Jesus Christ, who saves you and me from sin.

So we must know the function of the law. It is written that *"by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20)*. If we want to realize and know our sins, we must know the law of God. This is the law. It is what God commanded us: do this, do not do that. When we look at this word, we come to know that we are doing wrong before God. Therefore, because we are such people, we need the salvation by which Jesus Christ came to this earth and saves us. In particular, we need the salvation by which He saves us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Set your heart and acknowledge the word

So our hearts must be fixed. We must have a heart that receives the seed when it falls. The seed does fall, but it falls on the wayside field and bounces off; or it falls and does settle, but underneath it is teeming with stones. We must think about what kind of sinners we are before God and whether or not we have truly set our hearts to believe in the LORD God alone, and set our hearts. And we must acknowledge what God has said. Only then can we receive the salvation God has given us.

Falling among thorns means that when the thorns grow up and choke it, it bears no fruit; and He says that a person who worries too much, thinking, "How will I live from now on? Life in this world is so hard, so how is this flesh to live?" also cannot receive the remission of sins. The seed falls and sprouts a little, but the thorns grow faster and block out all the sunlight, so it all dies. It is written that *"it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)*. Rather than worrying about what will happen tomorrow, we must receive the remission of sins now. Tomorrow's affairs are not settled by our worrying; God must work for us and bless us. This is so with the matters of the soul, and so with the matters of the flesh. A person who worries terribly about the world and about the flesh, yet never admits the sin in his own heart and has not set his heart—if that is how it is, he cannot receive salvation.

We must do the opposite. We must set our hearts, and when the word of God falls on us, admit, "The word says so. If the word says so, then we are those who commit such sins before God. Without the Lord, I am one who must go to hell. Not someone else—I am the one who will go to hell," and set our hearts, saying, "I will believe in God alone. God alone is my God." To such a person God grants the grace of salvation. When

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we set our hearts and hear the word of God knowing it as the word of God, God washes our sins clean with the word of God. God, just as it is written *"that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26)*, makes us the bride of Jesus Christ and blesses us. He gives us the remission of sins. So whenever we go to the kingdom of God, or whenever the Lord comes to this earth, we can welcome the Lord at any time. And in the next life, we become those who can live happily in the kingdom of God, enjoying riches and glory forever. I hope that all of you receive this blessing. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Receive the word in your heart so that it is not taken away or choked

< Mark 4:10–20 >

“But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, ‘To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that “Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.”’ And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on

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good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.'"

Those who asked the Lord the meaning of the parable

When Jesus was alone, those around Him, together with the twelve disciples, asked the meaning of the parable. Jesus said that the mystery of the kingdom of God had been given to them, and explained the parable of the sower. They did not stop at merely remembering the story the multitude had heard, but learned its meaning from the Lord. We, too, after hearing the word, must not let the parts we do not understand simply pass by, but must learn the will of the Lord who spoke it.

The Lord said that to those outside all things come in parables, so that *"Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them" (Mark 4:12)*. The same word becomes the mystery of the kingdom of God to some people, and to others it remains a story they cannot understand. The difference lay not in how many times they had heard the word, but in whether their hearts were ready to acknowledge God as God and accept the word. Because those whose hearts are not yet ready and who pursue things other than God do not believe even when they know the truth, but rather blaspheme it, the Lord spoke to them only in parables. Therefore, this word of warning must be read together with the scene in which He explains the parable to those who ask its meaning.

The starting point of the parable that Jesus made clear is the fact that the seed being sown is the word. Therefore, we must not set our minds only on classifying other people as we look at

the four kinds of ground, but must accept it as a word telling us to examine how our own hearts are treating the word right now.

Receive the word in your heart so that it is not taken away

Being sown by the wayside refers to the case in which, when people hear the word, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown. The mere fact that one has heard the sound does not mean that the word has taken root within oneself. If one knows that the word is true yet does not accept it with the heart and keeps it at a distance, one is easily shaken when a thought that denies that word comes in.

If the gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, is left as knowledge that has nothing to do with oneself, it becomes like the seed that fell by the wayside. If, even after hearing the word that the Lord bore the sin of the world, we think that our own sins still remain separately, we must examine in the word how far the scope of the sin the Lord bore extends. It is to accept first the salvation that the word conveys, rather than the feelings of one's own heart.

The word states that scope clearly. When John saw Jesus, he testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins each one of us commits throughout our whole lives were also all transferred to Him at that time. Jesus, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died in our place on the Cross as the price of those sins, and rose again from death and completed the salvation that establishes sinners as righteous people. We receive the remission of sins by

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believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. A person who receives this fact in his heart does not stop at hearing a story of someone else's salvation, but comes to believe in the Lord who saved him.

The root that remains even after the joy has passed

The Lord explained, *"These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble" (Mark 4:16–17).* We must not think that the root of our faith is deep merely because we rejoiced at first. Joy is precious, but we must know what that joy is based on.

We must know why we were sinners who needed salvation, why Jesus received baptism from John, and what judgment He received on the Cross, bearing those sins. It must become clear to us that the basis of the remission of sins lies not in our own experience or in people's evaluation, but in what the Lord has accomplished. Only then will we not easily let go of the word of salvation even when we hear words of opposition or difficulties arise in our lives.

This is the reason we continue to learn the word even after being saved. If we close our ears, saying that it is a gospel we already know, our own thoughts easily grow large again. But if we hear the word and reflect on it in the light of our lives, we come to know the grace of the Lord more deeply. Acknowledging our own weakness within the faith that we are righteous people who have received the remission of sins,

seeking the Lord's help, and following the word is the way faith grows.

The cares and cravings that choke the vitality of the word

The person sown among thorns hears the word. But the Lord said of them that *"the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" (Mark 4:19)*. Here the problem is not that they did not hear the word, but that other things which occupy the heart together with the word choke the vitality of the word.

As we live, we must plan the things we need and care for our families. The text does not tell us to cast off those responsibilities themselves. But if not suffering loss becomes more important than the word of God, we end up retreating from the way of faith. The worry that we might be hated by people, the thought that we can feel secure only if we gain more, and the craving to live as we please can take hold of our hearts. At that time, we must examine what we regard as most precious.

The remission of sins and eternal life that the Lord has given cannot be exchanged for the gains obtained in the world. If we pile up riches beyond what we need, we come to rely on that money, and in the end it results in putting money in the place of God and replacing God. Therefore, when cares grow, we must tell them to the Lord and set our hearts again by the word of the Lord who saved us. It is not pushing the word away because of craving, but dealing with craving according to the word.

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Fruit grows in the heart that hears and accepts

The Lord concluded the explanation of the parable with the words "*these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred" (Mark 4:20)*. As we live believing the word, the fruit of laboring to follow the Lord's will and of sharing the gospel with other souls is borne. This fruit is not a price that must first be offered to buy salvation, but the result of the received word leading our lives.

As you hear the word today, I hope you will not regard the dangers of the wayside, the stony ground, and the thorns as stories about others only. We must receive the gospel in our hearts, keep learning its meaning, and regard the salvation of the Lord as more precious than cares and cravings. When we believe and follow to the end the word that has saved us from sin, that word will lead our lives. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

What do you hear, and what do you shine forth?

< Mark 4:21–25 >

"Also He said to them, 'Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.' Then He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.'"

The reason a lamp is brought

Jesus asked whether a lamp is brought to be put under a basket or under a bed. A lamp is brought to be set on a lampstand and light up the inside of the house. Although Jesus had said just before this that He speaks the mystery of the kingdom of God in parables to those outside, that mystery was not something to be kept hidden forever. As He said, *"There is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light" (Mark 4:22),* even what He had hidden for a while was something He intended to reveal when the time came.

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The truth of salvation that the Lord has given is a light to be preached to people. It was not given so that only certain people might possess it secretly and boast of it. It is so that those who are in sin may hear that truth and receive the remission of sins. We, too, must not be satisfied merely with the fact that we have come to know the gospel, but must think about the purpose for which the Lord gave this light.

If we blur its meaning while preaching the news of salvation, those who hear find it hard to know what the Lord has accomplished. If we tell people to receive the remission of sins yet do not let them know how those sins were removed, we have not shone the light of the gospel sufficiently. We must clearly preach what the Lord has accomplished.

The salvation revealed through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection

The light that must be set on the lampstand is the whole of the salvation the Lord accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and the sins each one of us commits throughout our whole lives are also included in all those sins. The reason the sinless Jesus received baptism from John was to have our sins passed on to Him and save us. Therefore, if the baptism He received from John is left out, it becomes impossible to explain what sins the Lord bore when He went to the Cross.

The Lord, who bore those sins, received in our place the judgment we should have received, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross as the price of those sins. Therefore, the death

of the Lord was not the unjust death of one man who had nothing to do with sin, but the substitutionary death of the Savior, who bore our sins. And Jesus rose again from death and became the living Savior who has made us righteous forever. That is why the Apostle Peter wrote, *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. When we believe with our hearts in the Lord, who accomplished salvation through this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins.

This gospel lights up the dark heart of a sinner. A person who could not resolve his sins even though he tried to wash them away by his own strength comes to know the fact that the Lord has already borne his sins and received the judgment. Knowing that the basis of the remission of sins lies not in his own feelings or labor but in the Lord, he stands before God as a righteous person. Therefore, we must preach the content of this salvation without reducing it or changing it into something else. Since the Lord has already revealed everything, there is nothing more to reveal, and there is no other gospel besides this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Examine what you are hearing

Let us read verse 24. *"Then He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given'" (Mark 4:24)*.

After the word about the lamp follows the exhortation to take heed what we hear. If light has been given, we must accept that light. Even so, we must not believe just any word because it is

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familiar, or regard something as the truth merely because many people follow it. We must examine, in the light of the word, whether that word fully conveys the salvation Jesus accomplished.

While believing in the judgment He received on the Cross, we must also believe the fact that, in order to receive that judgment, the Lord bore our sins through the baptism He received from John. If someone tells a person who has received the remission of sins to wash away his sins again every day with prayers of repentance, we must examine whether that word agrees with the salvation the Lord accomplished once and for all. The standard of faith is not a person's reputation or a long-standing habit, but the word of God.

Even when we weigh the word, we must not have a heart that looks only for faults in order to hold on to our own thoughts to the end. The reason we need a heart that learns what the Lord said and seeks to accept that truth is that the word of God is not something to be judged, and if God has said so, then so it is. The written word of God is the final confirmation for our hearts. Those who hear rightly learn more through that word, but those who reject the truth lose even what they thought they knew. The word *"whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him" (Mark 4:25)* shows that the attitude with which we hear is by no means a light matter.

Shine the light you have received on other souls

It is a great grace that we have heard and come to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This grace is not an ornament to be kept as our own private knowledge, but a light to

be preached to those who do not yet know the remission of sins. Even so, it is not that we can preach the gospel only if we speak many words well from the start; we can preach step by step, according to the word, how we received the remission of sins and how Jesus bore sin.

The person who preaches the gospel must also keep hearing the word. We must not close our hearts, saying that it is content we already know, but must know the Lord's salvation more deeply. Only then can we explain the basis in the word, rather than answering with our own guesses, even when those who hear ask questions. The more clearly we know the light we have received, the more clearly we can shine it on others as well.

Let us remember the purpose for which the Lord gave the lamp. The Lord said to us, *"You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)*. Just as the gospel of the water and the Spirit lit up our hearts, we must preach it so that it lights up other souls as well. Taking heed what we hear, let us believe the salvation the Lord accomplished just as it is, and let us become people who do not put the lamp we have received under a basket but set it on a lampstand. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

We sow the seed, and God makes it grow

< Mark 4:26–29 >

"And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.'"

The work that the one who sowed the seed does not fully know

Jesus said, *"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how" (Mark 4:26–27).* The fact that a man sowed the seed and the idea that the man brings about the whole process of life are two different things, and through this difference the Lord teaches the work of the kingdom of God.

We go through something similar when we preach the gospel. We have preached the word, but we cannot see what has happened right away, and we cannot fully know which part the listener has received into his heart or what thoughts he is wrestling with. But just as the seed grows even while the one

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who sowed it sleeps and rises, the work of life takes place more widely than the range our eyes can reach. Therefore, we cannot think that the word is doing nothing merely because there is no visible response before our eyes. The kingdom of God is not something that comes about in a moment, but the gospel that has been planted surely grows in people's hearts and bears fruit.

That said, this parable is not a word telling us to do nothing. Just as the sowing of the seed comes first in the parable, if the gospel is not preached, people cannot come to know its content on their own, so we must preach the word. Only, we must know that the One who, after the sowing, gives life to people's hearts and makes faith grow is God.

The seed to sow is the salvation the Lord accomplished

Even if the one who sows the seed puts his whole heart into it, if what he sows is something without life, he cannot expect fruit. For us who preach the gospel, too, what we preach matters. Merely urging people to steel their hearts or to do many religious works cannot take the place of the gospel of the remission of sins. We must preach what Jesus, who saved sinners, has done.

The seed of life that we are to sow is this. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins each one of us commits throughout our whole life are also included in the sin of the world that was transferred to Him at that time. Jesus, who bore that sin, shed His blood and died in our place on the Cross as the price of that sin, and He rose again from death and completely accomplished the salvation that gives life to sinners. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit

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with his heart receives the remission of sins. The Lord also said that *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*.

The person who preaches the gospel has himself also come to life through this salvation. We became righteous not because our way with words is outstanding but because we believed the fact that the Lord has removed our sins, so other people, too, must believe the same word of salvation. Therefore, we must not blur the content of the gospel or change it into a story the other person likes to hear in order to get results quickly. We cannot change the seed and still expect fruit.

He makes it grow from the blade to the full grain

Let us read verse 28. *"For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head" (Mark 4:28)*.

Jesus spoke of the order of the blade, the head, and the full grain, so the whole process is not revealed before our eyes all at once. The person who has received the word of the kingdom of God also grows in faith while learning and following that word. It is not that from the day he is saved he becomes skilled in every area of life and handles every difficulty with ease. But the Lord raises His people with the word.

We must distinguish between the completeness of salvation and the growth of faith. Even a person who has just believed receives the complete remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is not that one receives a little of the remission of sins and then labors to receive the rest. The word clearly states, *"Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)*. Only, in coming

to know more deeply the grace of the Lord, who has already saved us, and in living according to His will, there is learning and growing. Only when this distinction is clear can we help a person with young faith without condemning him.

Teaching the word, having fellowship, and laboring together help this growth. But we cannot force faith into being because the other person does not change as quickly as we expected. We must keep sharing the word the Lord has given, pray for that soul, and help him learn together with us the work he is to take on. Because we trust the Lord, who makes things grow, we do not give up hastily.

Sow the seed today, looking to the Lord, who reaps the harvest

By saying *"when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:29),* Jesus shows us the fact that in the work of sowing seed there is a time to reap. The work of salvation that God began is not a work that goes on without a purpose. The Lord raises His people and finally gathers them into His kingdom. When the gospel has been preached throughout the whole earth and the faith of those who have received the remission of sins has become firm and the grain has ripened, the Lord will come again, take up the sickle, and reap the harvest. With that hope we take on today's labor.

Since the Lord sets the time of harvest, this word is not something with which to calculate the date the Lord will come; it is a matter of preaching the gospel entrusted to us. Also, we must not measure the worth of our labor only by how many people have responded. There may be people who hear the word

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and believe even in places we cannot fully see, and the Lord works more widely than our field of vision.

If you have an opportunity to sow the seed today, treasure that work. We must preach the word of salvation clearly, help those who have believed to grow in the word, and leave the results to God. We do the work of sowing the seed, and the Lord makes life grow. Our work is to serve the gospel by faith instead of with impatience, looking to the day when the seed we have sown will not be in vain but will become the full grain in the head, and when the grain has ripened the Lord will put in the sickle and reap. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

From a single mustard seed to the large branches where the birds nest

< Mark 4:30–32 >

"Then He said, 'To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.'"

Do not judge the end by looking only at the small seed

Saying *"To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth" (Mark 4:30–31),* Jesus took up the example of a single mustard seed. A small seed does not look like much on the outside. But what Jesus caused us to see was not only its small appearance at the time it is sown. He caused us to see even how it grows after it is sown, shoots out large branches, and the birds of the air nest under its shade.

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We easily judge worth by the size before our eyes. We think that a work is important only when many people gather and there is great power. So when our own place in serving the gospel looks small, we may feel that our labor, too, is worthless. But we must not judge the work of the kingdom of God by outward appearance alone. Just as there is life in the small mustard seed, in the gospel the Lord has given there is the power to save people from sin.

Since this parable is a word about the kingdom of God, it cannot be read as meaning that whatever we dream of on a grand scale will succeed. Instead of enlarging our craving, the Lord intends to make us believe the work that God accomplishes through the gospel. Therefore, before we lose heart because our own strength is small, we must know what the salvation the Lord has given is.

The greatness of the salvation contained in the gospel

When we first hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the fact that our own sins have disappeared is the first thing that enters our hearts. But the grace the Lord has given does not end with knowing that fact for a moment and rejoicing. The person who has received the remission of sins becomes a child of God and obtains everlasting life, and he comes to be able to preach that salvation to other souls as well. We come to know how great the salvation the Lord has given is as we learn the word.

The basis of all this grace is the work the Lord actually accomplished, and this work is all contained in that short word which one person hears and believes. Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism

He received from John, and the sins each and every one of us commits throughout our whole life are also included in the sin that was passed on to Him at that time. And bearing that sin, He shed His blood and died in our place on the Cross as the price of that sin. The Lord rose again from death, became our eternal Savior, and completed the salvation that establishes those who believe as righteous people.

We believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. The kingdom of God begins precisely from believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and this gospel we have believed is like a single mustard seed. In people's eyes, one person hearing the word and believing may look small. But that person escapes from the place where he was under sin and judgment, stands before God as a righteous person, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and obtains everlasting life as a child of God. This is exactly what the promise *"for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)* says. The worth of this change cannot be measured by the size or status of the world. Like the word telling us not to look only at the first appearance of the small seed, we must not make light of the grace given within faith in the gospel.

It grows and gives shade where other lives can nest

Let us read verse 32. *"But when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade" (Mark 4:32)*.

After the mustard seed is sown, it grows and shoots out large branches, and the birds nest under its shade. Jesus spoke together of the beginning that looked small and of the abundant appearance that follows. The person who has believed in the

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gospel also does not stop at keeping only the joy of his own salvation; he is used as a person who shares the word of salvation with other souls. While he hears and believes the word and follows the Lord, the range of his concern also widens.

Before, he may have considered only his own well-being important. But when he knows the fact that the Lord saved sinners like himself, he comes to think of the people who do not yet know the gospel. He comes to know that wherever they live, and however different their circumstances are from his own, they need the same salvation. The heart that was shut up in the problems of one person, himself, grows into a heart that looks after other souls.

That said, it is not that we ourselves become the masters of the power that saves people. Salvation was accomplished by the Lord, and life is in the Lord's gospel. We preach the grace we have received and help other people believe that gospel. Therefore, we must not make the branches growing large a ground for boasting of our own influence; we must give thanks for the fact that the Lord uses us to preach the news of salvation to more souls.

Take on small labors by faith

In serving the gospel there are also labors that are not very noticeable. We can explain the word to one person, help people come into contact with the word, and learn faith together. We must not carelessly belittle such labors because they look small. What is preached through that work is the gospel that gives people everlasting life. In the Book of Daniel, too, there is the promise that those who turn many to righteousness shall shine *"like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)*.

Nor do we need to compare ourselves with the status of the world and regard ourselves as inferior. At the same time, we must not look down on other people because we know the gospel. This is because we are not people who are used because we are great in ourselves, but people who have received great grace from the Lord. When we know this fact, we can take on even work that looks small with thanksgiving and also treasure the labors of other saints.

I hope that you will believe in the Lord, who spoke of how the mustard seed grows. We must not gauge the work of the kingdom of God by looking only at today's small appearance; we must deeply believe and learn the gospel that delivered us from sin, and take on the work entrusted to us so that other souls may come to know that salvation. Truly great is the grace of the Lord, who through us, smaller than all the seeds on earth, shoots out large branches where the birds will nest. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The parables of the kingdom of God

< Mark 4:21–32 >

"Also He said to them, 'Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.' Then He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.' And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.' Then He said, 'To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.'"

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The lamp set on a lampstand

In this word, Jesus said that a lamp is there not to be hidden but to be set on a lampstand so as to shine its light on all people. *"Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?" (Mark 4:21)*. That is right. That is indeed the fact. In the old days, people put oil in an oil lamp, dipped the wick in the oil, lit it, placed it on a lampstand, and lit up the inside of the house. A lamp is lit to be placed in such a high place and to light up the whole room.

If you ask why a lamp is spoken of here, it is because a lamp is what shines light into a dark place. Our Lord said that a lamp is not lit in order to hide it, and asked whether it is not lit in order to show it. Our Lord is saying that He does not intend to hide the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He has given us, this light of salvation, the gospel of salvation, but that He intends to show it; that He will surely reveal it; and that before the end comes there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed and nothing kept secret that will not be made known. *"There is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light" (Mark 4:22)*. It means that everything will be revealed. It means that before this last age comes, He will fully reveal this gospel: that the Lord gave salvation to us, mankind; that the Lord had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment for those sins, and rose again from death, and thereby removed our sins; and that He thus made us righteous and made us sinless.

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"There is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light"

It means that the Lord gave the gospel to this earth in that way not in order to hide it but in order to have it fully revealed. Just as, when an oil lamp is lit, all the people in the room can see one another face to face, it means that He does so in order that truly all people may come to know this gospel. I believe that the Lord will do so in the last age. It means that there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and that nothing that has been hidden will fail to be revealed. It also means that nothing that has been kept secret will fail to be revealed. It cannot but come to light. It means that it will be revealed. It means that these mysteries hidden in the Bible, this work of salvation, and also the plan God has toward us, mankind—all this plan by which He made us His children and made us His people—will all be revealed. And it means that the Millennial Kingdom our God wants to give, the kingdom of God, the judgment of sin, all these things, and also those who obtain eternal life—all these things will be revealed. Some may worry that this gospel might perhaps be hidden, but it means that it is not so. It means that the Lord will have it fully revealed throughout the whole world.

The Lord spoke in this way. Because He has spoken, I believe that this gospel we preach will shine throughout the whole world so that all people may know it. Where is there anything that stays hidden? Whatever is hidden will all be revealed. People have turned Christianity into a religion and are doing this, but they can never hide the gospel by doing so. It will all be revealed. What has been kept secret will all be revealed, and what has been hidden will all be revealed too. It means that the gospel will be spread to all nations. Even those who now

believe in Christianity only as a religion will preach this gospel once they have come into contact with it. I know that they will testify, "This is truly amazing; this is an amazing gospel; we did not know it well until today; our Lord truly was our Savior." So I believe that the gospel will be spread from one to another—through the mouths of pastors to church members, and through the mouths of church members to those who do not believe in Jesus—and that it will be testified to Christian believers in other countries, to those who follow Jesus, and that it will come to be so. So I believe that the gospel will soon be spread over all the earth. We, too, are doing the work of preaching this gospel in various ways so that people all over the world can read it easily.

Whatever happens, we must do what we have to do, and I believe that this gospel we preach will be spread throughout the whole world. However much people try to hide it and conceal it, they cannot hide it, and even if no one tries to make it known, it will surely come to light. People all over the world will hear this gospel; those who accept it will accept it and receive the remission of sins, and those who do not accept it will go to hell because of the sin of not believing. I believe that God will work with us and guide us in that way.

Those who measure and those who accept

He went on to say, *"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Then He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him'" (Mark 4:23–25).* For people to measure means that they slander, that they measure what is wrong and slander.

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There are many people who do so. When this gospel of the truth is spread, some people accept it and some people measure it. People argue, "Theology did not say so. It is indeed written that way in the Bible, but the Apostle Paul also said, *'sinners, of whom I am chief' (1 Timothy 1:15)*, and there are also verses that speak in the progressive sense, saying that we will be saved or are being saved; so must it be said only in this way? Are you not speaking of only one part?" This is measuring. It means judging.

Such people are measured by God. It means that those who judge are judged before God. And this word says that those who accept the gospel and believe in God accept more, have more faith, and receive more blessings, while those who do not have will have even what they have taken away from them.

This is what happens in these last days. This happens to those many people in the world. Some people come into contact with the gospel and believe, some people hear the gospel and measure and judge it, and in the midst of this the Lord comes. Those who will accept it all accept it, and those who will oppose it all oppose it. But there is nothing to judge in the word of God. If God has said so, then it is so. People do talk with many doubts, don't they?

Where does such judging come to an end? It comes to an end when we read them the word, saying, "It is written; it is written this way in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible; the Lord said this." Against that, no one can argue back and forth. The faith of you and me is also like this. Even while we are saying, "In my thinking it is this way, and in your thinking it is that way," when we read straight through what the Bible says is written, our doubts vanish completely. They all disappear. What puts our doubts to rest is the written word of God. What gives faith to our hearts is also the written word of God. It is exactly as this word says. People say that the word of the Bible is difficult. But the Bible is truly spiritual. The reason He says in this way what

could have been said simply is that there is something to meditate on and there is a deeper meaning.

Not everything is fitted to some set form. Is there not such a thing as poetry? Poetry is not expressed according to some grammar, but does it not still give us a great deal in a few short words? In the same way, this Bible also conveys a great deal in a few words. This word of the Bible is the final confirmation in our hearts.

The ground that yields fruit by itself

He also said, *"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:26–29)*. He said that the kingdom of God is like a man scattering seed on the ground. When the seed is sown, it sprouts, grows, and becomes fruit, but the one who sowed it does not know how this came about. It means that the kingdom of God is like the work of a farmer who sows seed in this way.

As for the kingdom of God, when this gospel is sown to people as one sows seed, the gospel is planted in those people's hearts, and at first they do not know it well. Once it is planted in the heart, if it keeps being watered and they keep hearing the word of God, it sprouts. Faith grows. Later, they themselves also bear fruit. That is how it goes. It means that the kingdom of God also comes about in this way. When we preach the gospel on this earth, we wonder when all that will ever be accomplished, but

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the gospel is surely received into people's hearts, grows, and bears fruit, and thus the gospel is spread widely among people—and then what? God comes with the sickle and harvests.

We are now preaching the gospel, and we also often think, "When will the gospel be fully spread?" The work we do may feel flat. If we gathered people noisily, told them to receive fire, had them give testimonies, and took pictures and showed them, our hearts would be stirred up. But He said that the kingdom of God is like this: the seed is sown and the ground yields fruit by itself. It means that it sprouts, grows, and then bears fruit. It means that as time passes, God's will is accomplished. It does not happen like something swelling up in an instant; rather, the gospel is surely testified and the work surely takes place. It means that when the Lord comes, there will surely be many fruits of the gospel, and it will be made complete in that way. Now, when we preach the gospel, people ask for the books, and there are many responses.

After we work a little more from now on, it will gain momentum so that it becomes several times what it is now, and then thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. And all over the world, people will say that this gospel is right, have fellowship with one another among themselves, invite us, and ask whether there is anything else. I hope that you, too, will believe like this.

So the gospel will shine on the whole world. So all people—those who will believe—will all believe and obtain salvation. The day when this happens is not far off. We are preparing to preach this gospel in the languages of many countries. I truly look forward to it. Just as it says, "*Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20)*, we will preach this gospel. We will see to it that people come to know this gospel and receive the remission of sins. In some countries, it is said that the gospel did not go in purely but went in mixed with their

native beliefs. Because of this, it is said that the gospel there is not a matter of purely preaching the word and believing the word as we think of it.

We listen quietly to the word and say amen when our hearts say amen. In any case, we worship centered on the word. We truly listen with our hearts; the one who preaches the word preaches, and those who hear the word hear with their hearts and believe; faith grows, and we give thanks together and pray together. This is how I preach the gospel and preach the word, and even before this, because I had the law in me, if anyone shouted amen loudly, clapped, or made a commotion during worship, I did not let them stir. In the old days, I did not tolerate such things.

Originally, seen Biblically, I was exactly the same as a Pharisee. Even in the way I walked, I walked in a holy manner. Because I was like that, the preaching and the listening were centered on the word. Now it is truly more so. Now it is more so, and we believe with our hearts and give thanks.

Truly, as for the kingdom of God, now we are sowing the seed, but it sprouts, and before we know it, this gospel will be spread throughout the whole world and those who will believe will all believe. We are doing this work now, but we have already taken a big step. There are many peoples and languages in the world, so we cannot translate into all of them at one time, but the gospel preached in one language is being carried over into yet another language and is spreading out. In any case, even now the gospel is being testified and the work is taking place.

I know that right now, all over the world, the work of the gospel is taking place much among people who use English. And I believe so. When something is good, they share it among themselves; just as we share among ourselves when we have something good, they share among themselves. Do we not also

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tell the people next to us after we have read a good book? It is the same. Those people do it even better. They read the book, tell others about it, and also lend the book; they all do that. I believe that it will soon be so.

I look forward to this gospel going into every country. I look forward to what will happen when the gospel of the truth goes in. Those who will accept it will accept it, and those who will measure it will measure it. They will judge. But those who will accept it will all accept it. Those who are poor in spirit will all accept it. The work of the gospel is taking place much in many countries, and there are also pastors who work in other countries and preach this gospel zealously. I believe that these things will soon come to pass.

The kingdom of God, which is like a mustard seed

"Then He said, 'To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade'" (Mark 4:30–32). Truly, as for how the kingdom of God turns out, He said that, like a single mustard seed, it begins very insignificantly at first and is sown on the ground, and after it is sown it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.

The work of the gospel is extremely insignificant at first. Have you seen a mustard seed? It can be seen, to be sure. But when the wind blows, it is blown away in a puff. It is that small, but because there is life in the seed, when it is planted in the

ground a shoot comes out, and though at first it grows like grass, later it becomes a large tree. It means that it becomes so big that birds come and nest under that tree. When we think about how we could ever preach the kingdom of God to the whole world, it looks pitch dark. We wonder what will become of it, since even in the country we live in it has come only this far. Just as a seed is very feeble when it is sown but becomes a large tree when it grows, when this gospel is spread, at first when it is sown it is as insignificant as if it were nothing, but in a little while those who have received the remission of sins grow up, and later the gospel is spread everywhere so that there is no one in all nations who does not know the gospel. And it means that those who will believe will believe for certain and be clearly revealed. I believe that the kingdom of God will come to be like this.

Even though it is hard for you, the gospel is now being planted, and the gospel is being testified throughout the whole world. That is, it is being planted like this one mustard seed. It is being planted in many countries, and it is planted even in countries we do not know. When it is planted, it is planted in a few people out of those many people. Does that show? It does not show. But what happens when they grow up? It spreads out all at once. I believe that the kingdom of God has drawn near.

Hold on to faith in the last days

I hope that you will endure well by faith in these last days and not become the kind of person who gives up faith in the last days. In this age, just as it says, *"Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8)*, Satan the devil is trying to devour whomever he may devour. He is trying to kill even God's people. In this age it is

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easy to be deceived, and it is hard. It is truly hard even to keep one's faith, and hard even just to keep oneself breathing. Even so, we must keep our faith well, and though we are lacking, come to church and hear the word while looking forward to God's work, love one another, have fellowship, hold one another up, and with faith become like a bride waiting for the bridegroom, with faith, until the kingdom of God comes to this earth, until Jesus Christ comes to this earth. We must wait with faith. Do not be discouraged, and do not go off on side paths either; in this age, if you go off on a side path, it is hard. When it is hard and you yourself go wrong, if you come to church again and hear the word, your heart is renewed again, you gain strength again, and your heart is made clean. When you gather at church to praise and hear the word, it is not that you come because you have run out of money. You come because there is something you gain by coming—your heart is renewed, you come to pray before the Lord, you come to have faith, and you come to live by faith; otherwise, you would not even come.

I hope that you, as people who truly have faith, will wisely and truly endure well, now that the time when the Lord will come at the last has drawn near. I hope that you will endure well and welcome the Lord. I also hope that you will live as workers of the Lord, do more work before God, and receive blessings. This present age is an extremely hard age, but God has held you and me up and has also enabled us to serve the gospel. I hope that you will never do anything that harms the gospel and that, whatever happens, you will hold on to faith. I hope that you will not give up believing in the Lord. And I hope that you will live holding on to the church. Then you and I will be victorious. No matter what happens on this earth, we will never be servile, and we will be able to welcome the Lord boldly when He comes. It is not far off. Just as, when a mustard seed is planted, the tree

grows up and becomes a large tree, as for how the kingdom of God will come, at first it comes very insignificantly, but soon the kingdom of God comes. It comes to every nation in the whole world. I hope that you will believe like this. Just like the word that says, *"Though your beginning was small, Yet your latter end would increase abundantly" (Job 8:7)*, though it has now started extremely small, later it will increase very abundantly. It will happen soon.

This gospel will go around the whole world and be preached even to the people of Israel. Since He said, *"This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14)*, it was said that when the gospel is testified throughout the whole world, the Lord will come. It was said that that time is the end of the age.

The Lord's kingdom, which is not tedious

I hope that such a day comes soon and that the gospel is spread soon. Then, after that, a new world comes. Dear fellow believers, it is hard for you because you cannot live as the people of the world do, isn't it? In fact, it is very hard. The Lord gives us a reward. It is said that the Lord will reward us. It is said that He will reward us for a thousand years. After that, we go to the eternal kingdom of heaven and live forever. I hope that there will be no one who is afraid when that day comes. Some may say, "What shall I do if I get bored? What if there is just no sin and we simply live like this?" But there will be no time to be bored.

While we live on this earth, when we pursue a hobby and do what we like, it feels very good, but it is not just at that level. Do you think the kingdom of God, the power of God, is so lacking?

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Do you think the kingdom of God is such a tedious place? It means that we will live forever, and forever we will be so happy that we will not know what to do with ourselves, and we will live like that forever. That is the result of having been saved, and that is the blessing that comes to those who have become children of God. Once we have become God's people and received the remission of sins, we cannot do the things of the world, so it is a bit tedious, isn't it? It is a bit hard, isn't it? Isn't that so?

God made all things in this universe; can He not make the hearts, thoughts, and bodies of you and me a little joyful? We must not, out of narrow thinking, simply think of Him as being like ourselves. We must not think of God as having abilities like our own. He is God, who cannot be measured by our abilities, and He is the One who has the power of the Creator. Whatever He wants, it all comes to be. So I hope that you will not think in your hearts that it is tedious, nor think that there is nothing good after being born again, but look forward to the Lord's kingdom.

Courage arises in serving the Lord, and it is truly good. I am saying this because I thought there might be some who, after being born again, worry, "I am bored to death; what if it is this tedious when I go to the kingdom of heaven?" Set your worries aside. It is never tedious. It is so good that you cannot contain yourself. There are houses shining with gold, houses built with twelve kinds of precious stones, and the heavens and the earth are a sea of glass. To begin with, the houses are different. They are on a different level from houses built of cement. What I am saying is, let us think of everything on the level of the kingdom of heaven like this. What I am saying is, let us bear with it and endure well.

Though it is hard for you, take good care of your bodies too, and see that you do not break down too much until then; and

believing the word of God, let us live in hope by faith in what this word says. Just as the word says, *"Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16),* though there is no pleasure at all, let us still live with our hope set on the kingdom of heaven. Let us live by faith.

Even if life should deceive us, do not grieve or be angry. Even though this world is hard to live in, I hope that you will not grieve or be discouraged. The Lord is coming. The Lord's kingdom is coming. Let us live with hope as we wait for that day. Let us live with faith. What else is there for us? At that time, everything will be different. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Learn the meaning of the parables from the Lord and preach it so that people can understand

< Mark 4:33–34 >

"And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples."

The Lord, who spoke so that they could understand

In Mark chapter 4, words about the seed and the ground, the lamp, the growing grain, and the mustard seed follow one after another. All of them are things that people who farmed and lit their homes saw every day. Verse 33 says that the Lord spoke to them as they were able to hear it. The Lord did not pile up difficult words to show off His own knowledge; rather, He preached the truth of God so that those who heard could understand and believe.

However, the fact that one has heard a familiar story and the fact that one has grasped its meaning are not the same. Knowing

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that a seed falls on the ground and grows does not mean that one automatically comes to know what relation that parable has to one's own heart. Knowing what a lamp is does not mean that one has fully understood how to receive the light of the gospel and preach it. Therefore, we must not remember only the outward appearance of the parables but must learn the meaning the Lord taught.

Let us read verse 34. *"But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples" (Mark 4:34)*.

Jesus explained everything to His disciples. Because those who do not believe in God, when they come to know the truth, rather speak evil of it, He spoke to the multitude only in parables, and to His disciples He explained everything separately and in detail. Earlier as well, when those who were with the disciples asked about the parable, He explained that the seed is the word and that each kind of ground refers to the people who deal with that word. The disciples were not people who interpreted the parables as they pleased, but people who listened to the Lord's explanation and learned.

Do not fill in the meaning of the word with your own thoughts

We, too, when a familiar word appears as we read the Bible, are apt to think that we already know it all. But if we decide its meaning by our own experience alone, we may end up telling a story different from the word the Lord spoke. If we see the seed and think only of riches, or see the large branches and think only of worldly success, we miss the will of the Lord, who spoke of

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the kingdom of God. We must look at the words before and after together with the explanation the Lord Himself gave.

It is the same when we learn the gospel. Having heard the words "the baptism He received from John," "the Cross," and "the resurrection" many times does not mean that we know all about how they are related. We must know whose sins the Lord had passed on to Him through that baptism He received from John, why He died on the Cross bearing those sins, and why we believe in the One who rose again as our Savior. Only when that meaning is clear can we believe the gospel with our hearts and also preach it rightly to others.

Just as the Lord explained the parables to His disciples, when we explain this relation, it is as follows. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and the lifelong sins of each one of us are also included in all those sins. In the Old Testament as well, God said, *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4)*. When we know the fact that the Lord bore sin through the baptism He received from John, we come to understand how His death on the Cross is connected to our sins. It is because Jesus, bearing those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins and received in our place the judgment we were to receive.

The Lord rose again from death and became the Savior who gives us eternal life, and with this He accomplished salvation completely. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, which He accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Those who were sinners become righteous by relying on the righteousness of the Lord. Learning the content of this salvation step by step is not in order to make the gospel

complicated. It is in order to believe what the Lord accomplished just as it is, without leaving anything out or connecting it wrongly.

A disciple is a person who keeps on learning

The fact that the disciples heard the explanation separately does not mean that they gained the right to look down on others with special knowledge. We must take it to mean that they received the responsibility to believe what they learned from the Lord and to preach it to others. If the Lord had not explained it to them, saying, *"Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?" (Mark 4:13)*, they too could not have understood the parables rightly. Therefore, the more we come to understand the word, the more we must give thanks for the grace of His teaching us rather than boast of our own wisdom.

We who have already received the remission of sins must also keep on learning the word. If before we were saved only the problem of sin loomed large, after we are saved we come to know how the Lord raises His saints and what kind of life He wants. When we hear the word and come to a part that differs from our own thoughts, we must not push it away immediately but examine its meaning. While we learn the word, our thoughts are also shaped to fit the will of the Lord.

Since the disciples also asked about the parables, asking about what we do not know is not something to be ashamed of. Rather, what is dangerous is to pretend to know while not knowing and to explain things with our own thoughts. We must examine the word together, learn from those who know the

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gospel rightly, and confirm the basis in the Bible. A person who has such a learning heart can also help other souls step by step.

We too should preach with the hearers in mind

We must remember the word that says, *"And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it" (Mark 4:33)*. If, while preaching the gospel, we only rattle off familiar terms quickly, those who hear it for the first time can hardly know what they mean. We must explain what the remission of sins is, what it means to say that Jesus bore sin through the baptism He received from John, and why His death on the Cross is the judgment He received in our place. We must speak plainly, yet without reducing the meaning of salvation. Before sowing the seed of the gospel, we must first tell them who God is, what the sin of man is, and what the price of that sin is, and so plow the heart-field of the hearer, and then preach the gospel.

Before we grow impatient because the other person does not understand right away, we must remember that we ourselves also learned through someone's explanation. We must be able to listen to their questions, see which part they do not understand, and explain it with the word. It is to labor so that the hearer understands, without changing the truth.

Jesus, who explained the parables, has also given us the word of salvation to believe. Keep on learning that word and believe it with your heart. The Apostle Paul also taught, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. Like the Lord, who explained all things to His disciples when they were alone, you too must become disciples who know deeply the

Learn the meaning of the parables from the Lord
and preach it so that people can understand

gospel of the water and the Spirit that has saved us and explain it so that other souls can understand. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in the Savior, who is with us even in the storm

< Mark 4:35–41 >

“On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, ‘Let us cross over to the other side.’ Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, ‘Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?’ And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, ‘Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!’”

The great windstorm that arose on the way with the Lord

When evening had come, Jesus told His disciples to cross over to the other side of the sea. The disciples took the Lord along in the boat as He was, and other boats were also with them.

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But a great windstorm arose, and the waves came into the boat. It was a journey they had set out on following the word of the Lord, and the Lord was riding with them, yet a great hardship came upon them.

We may think that if we believe in the Lord we will not meet with hard things, but the text shows us a scene different from such an expectation. The disciples met the storm not because they had left the Lord, but on the way as they were crossing over together with the Lord. Therefore, we must not judge that the Lord has forsaken us merely from the fact that hardship has come. What matters is whom we look to and believe in the midst of hardship.

While the boat was filling with water, Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. The disciples woke the Lord and said, *"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38)*. In their words reporting the danger, there was also the thought that the Lord did not care for them. Because the storm before their eyes looked so great, they did not fully believe who the One with them was.

The word that the wind and the sea obeyed

Let us read verse 39. *"Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39).*

When Jesus spoke, the wind ceased and the sea became completely calm. Even the storm that the disciples could not handle submitted to the word of the Lord. Jesus was not a teacher who merely offered words of comfort; He was the almighty God who made and rules the wind and the sea. Seeing this, the disciples said to one another, asking who He could be that even

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the wind and the sea obey Him. We must realize and believe, not only with our knowledge but with our hearts, that the Lord who saved us from sin is the very almighty God who created the universe.

Jesus asked His disciples, *"Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:40)*. This does not mean that the fearful situation was not real. However, living without relying on the Lord, using only human means and methods, that is, not believing, is a great sin. With that question, the Lord was teaching that the One whom the disciples should believe in is greater than that danger. Faith is not deceiving ourselves that there is no hardship; it is relying on the authority and care of the Lord even in the midst of hardship.

We, too, must ask the Lord when we have no strength to solve a problem. While saying that we are asking, we must not think in our hearts that the Lord has forsaken us. It is because the Lord knows our circumstances and has the power to help us. Even if we do not know every way, we can entrust ourselves to the Lord and go forward according to His word.

The Savior who took responsibility even for our sins

The basis on which we rely on the Lord is not just one story of a miracle. The Lord has solved for us the greatest problem of all, sin and judgment. While we look at the authority with which He calmed the wind, we must also know what He bore in order to save us. The Lord is not merely someone we call on briefly for help when we are in danger; He is the Savior of our lives.

As John pointed out, Jesus is *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. That Jesus who rebuked

the wind had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and the sins that each one of us commits throughout our whole lives were also all passed on to Him at that time. Even though the Lord knew our sins, He did not stay far away but Himself bore those sins. And bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died in our place on the Cross as the price of those sins and received the judgment that we should have received. The Lord, who rose again from death, became our living Savior, who has overcome sin and death.

We have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. We who were sinners have become righteous by the righteousness of the Lord, and have received the Holy Spirit and become children of God. Therefore, even when our circumstances are shaken, we must first hold on to the fact that He has saved us. If we judge the love of the Lord only by today's peace, on a hard day we come to doubt even that love. But when we think of the Lord, who gave His own life to save us, we can bring even our anxious circumstances before Him.

Entrust your wavering heart to the Lord

When the storm blows, what we have to do is not to pretend to be strong people on our own. It is to admit our own fear and inability and ask the Lord for help. There may be hardships for individuals, and there may also be hardships for the church that serves the gospel together. At such times, rather than only nursing a heart that blames one another, we must pray together and set our hearts by the word.

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Setting our hearts does not mean that if our own will is strong we overcome every problem. It is to set the direction of our hearts to believe in the Lord, who saved us, and to live following His will. Then, each time hardship comes, rather than calculating all over again from the beginning whether to abandon the way of faith, we can rely on the Lord and look to what we must do now. When we grow weary, we can hear the word and gain strength, and share our faith with other saints and receive help.

We must not confine the Lord's help within the time and the manner we have set. We must simply believe the fact that the Lord is alive and has the power to care for us, and ask. It is to lay down the heart that tried to hold on to every circumstance by its own strength, and to rely on the word of the Lord, who saved us.

Jesus, who calmed the wind and the sea, is our Savior. He is the almighty God who said to Moses, *"I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14)*. I hope that you will entrust even today's worries to Him, who has delivered us from sin and judgment through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even if a storm arises on the way we go with the Lord, not forgetting who the One with us in the boat is, and setting our hearts to rely on the Lord to the end—this is faith, and this is a blessing. ✉

Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

Faith that believes in God the Almighty

< Mark 4:35–41 >

"On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?' And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, 'Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!'"

A boat crossing the Sea of Galilee in the evening

This word is about something that happened after Jesus had spoken the parable of the sower and various other parables. The Lord gathered the disciples and the people by the sea and taught them, and when He had finished speaking the parable of the sower and the various parables, the sun had gone down. Since the sun had gone down, He now wanted to go to the village on the other side of the sea. This sea is the Sea of Galilee. It is called

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a sea because it is so large, and in the old days, since transportation was inconvenient, to go to the village on the other side one had to walk all the way around it for more than a day. So, when evening came, the disciples took Jesus into the boat and crossed over.

On the way, they met a storm. The wind blew, and the waves struck the front and the sides of the boat. As the waves came and struck, water fell onto the boat. Boats in the old days were rowing boats, and as the boat went forward, going down and coming up, the seawater shot upward and fell into the boat, so that the hollow place where people sit was filled with seawater. In a little while it was about to sink. With the waves striking from the side and the waves striking from the front, the disciples were in a situation of life or death. But what about Jesus? Jesus was lying in the stern of the boat, using a slightly raised place as a pillow, and was sleeping. He had preached the word all day long, so how tired He must have been! Even with the waves striking like that, Jesus slept soundly. When the situation became too urgent, the disciples woke Jesus, saying, *"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38)*. They woke Him, saying, "Can You sleep in this uproar?"

"Peace, be still!"

Jesus woke from sleep, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, *"Peace, be still!" (Mark 4:39)*. Then the wind that had been blowing so hard became still. The waves that had been ramming the side of the boat like an angry lion baring its teeth became quiet, and the water of the sea became calm. The disciples were astonished and said, *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:41)*.

Dear fellow believers, when a typhoon is blowing, try shouting at the wind, "Be still!" Jesus probably did not even shout. He probably just said quietly, "Wind, be still; waves, be quiet." By nature, a person who has power does not shout. It is those without power who shout and make a fuss. If we tell the wind to be still when a typhoon is blowing, will the wind become still? If we tell the waves from the boat to be quiet, will they become quiet? But when Jesus spoke, the wind became still and the water of the sea became as quiet as a lake. How marvelous, how frightening, and how amazing it must have been! That is why the disciples were astonished, wondering who this could be that even the wind and the waves obeyed Him.

Of course, the disciples believed in Jesus. But they did not know that Jesus was One with such power. Jesus lived a life of thirty-three years, and for three years He went about together with the disciples. As He did so, He told the disciples that He Himself was God, spoke to them of the gospel, spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and taught them everything. He taught them while taking them along with Him. True education is like that. One learns by living together, living a life of faith together, and eating and drinking together, not by words alone. Even so, the disciples' hearts were filled with wonder, and they were so amazed that they asked who He could be that all the things of nature obeyed that one word of His. Although the disciples knew about Jesus and believed in Him, and although they knew that He was the Son of God, the Savior, and the Creator, they were weak when it came to experiencing that Jesus was God. They had had little experience of it.

You and I are also like that in our life of faith. The Lord Jesus Christ, who saved us, saved you and me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had our sins transferred to Him; He shed His blood and died on the

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Cross; and by rising again from death He removed our sins. The Lord has saved us, helps us in our lives, is leading us with the truth, and has caused us to experience many signs and miracles in our daily lives and has blessed us. Yet although we know and believe that Jesus is God, how much have we experienced it? How much do we know it? How much do we believe it? Is what we know merely knowledge, or do we truly know it with our hearts as well? Jesus, who saved you and me from sin, is God, who made this universe, brought all these things into being, caused them to exist, and sustains them. The One who said *"Peace, be still!" (Mark 4:39)* is God. Who is the Lord who met you and me? He is God. We know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Creator who created the universe, but the question is how much we believe it.

The Lord, who saved us, is the Creator God

That Lord Jesus Christ, who saved you and me from sin, is the Creator and is God. If, as we go on in our life of faith, our faith is small in this area—that He is God—then even if we have received the remission of sins, when we meet difficulties and run into obstacles in our life of faith, we shrivel up even though we have been saved. We end up burying our heads in our circumstances and groveling before our circumstances. But if we truly realize and believe in our hearts that Jesus, who saved us from sin, is the true God, then whatever difficulty may come upon us, at such times we can believe in that almighty God and triumph by faith. The question is whether we know, realize, and believe that Jesus Christ, whom we call Lord and who saved us, is the Maker of this universe of whom people speak, the Creator God. We must know Him that way. Jesus is the Creator. When

angry waves and a storm arise, at that one word of His, “Be quiet,” they simply become quiet. Even such nature cannot but submit entirely and obey before the word Jesus speaks. When He says, “Why are you making such a noise? Be quiet,” it becomes quiet. When the wind is howling and raging madly, if He says, “Be still,” it becomes still. The One who does such things is our Lord. He is the Lord who saved you and me from sin.

Then, we know that Lord as the Lord who saved us from sin, as our shepherd who leads us, and as the Lord who gave us the kingdom of heaven; but the question is whether, beyond that, we realize that He is truly God, who created the universe, and the absolute God, who rules over all things. And whether we believe it. We must realize it and believe it. We must believe that Jesus is that absolute God. Believing so, you and I must live.

How many difficulties do we have as we live our life of faith? How many times do we want to give up and sit down because of our weakness, saying, “Shouldn’t I give up because of my weakness? Now I cannot possibly follow the Lord with my own strength. I do not seem to be suited for this”? I know that there are many times when it is so frightening and fearful because He tells us to run forward. We also know that the tasks you and I have been given are beyond our strength and are things we cannot handle. So there are times when we cannot go further forward, and our hearts shrink and we tremble with fear. Even at such times, we must realize that the Lord, who came to remove our sins and removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is the very God who created the universe. We must truly realize it in our hearts and truly believe in Him, and with that faith we must confront the things that lie before us, saying, “What could be stronger than the Lord? What could be mightier than the Lord?” and solve them by faith. If we do so with faith

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that believes in the Lord, the Lord helps us so that we can overcome every difficult obstacle.

Believe in the almighty God and overcome fear

Living until now, I not only believe that the Lord saved me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and that He is my shepherd, but I also believe that the One who saved me is God. He is not a human being like the sages or philosophers of this world. He is not a weak being who gets an upset stomach from just one bad meal and dies if he catches enteritis. He is not a human being but God. I have believed in Him and lived until now. Now that I am old I sometimes find things hard, but after I met the Lord when I was young, I had no fear. I am not good at fighting and have no fists, but no matter whom I met, I did not bow before force. Why was that? Because the God I believe in exists. It is because, although I have no strength at all, the Lord who saved me is the Maker, God, of whom the people of the world speak. God saved me, met me, and raised me up to serve the gospel. That is why I take on challenges even beyond my own strength. If I do it, what is there that cannot be done? It is only that I worry I might become proud; otherwise, if I have faith and fear God and just do not become proud, I think I can do anything at all. Because God exists, I have such faith. The One who saved you is God. You must realize that He is God. You must know it in your hearts.

We say that we have been saved by Jesus Christ, and the point is that the very One who saved us is God. He Himself made the universe and all things in it. Because He made everything come into being with a single word, saying, “Let there be a firmament in the heavens; let there be stars in the heavens; let

the earth bring forth seed-bearing herbs and fruit trees; let there be living creatures in the waters," when the wind blew hard and He said, "Wind, be still," the wind became still, and when the waves were raging and He said, "Be quiet," they simply became quiet. Because He is the source and He is the Master, the wind and the waves and all these things obey and submit. To whom would the wind and the waves submit? Would they submit to created beings like us? The wind is energy and the waves are energy—would they submit because a powerless person spoke? Because He is the Almighty, when He says, "Be quiet," it becomes quiet. The waves must have been two or three meters high, yet they became as quiet as a lake. The wind that had been blowing like a mad wind became air like that of a spring day when the heat haze rises. We believe in that God. We were saved by that God. We are doing the work of that God. Therefore, although we are weak, because we have received His love and accepted that love and been saved through faith, we have come to have a status like that of princes and princesses of the kingdom of God.

Dear fellow believers, we are by no means insignificant people. We are not wretched people. While we live on this earth, we seem to have nothing, yet we benefit many people; we seem to be those who have nothing, yet we are those who have; we seem to have nothing to give, yet we are those who have something to share with many people. Because of us, God is blessing the country we live in. That is actually so. Because of the Church of God, because you and I are doing the work of supporting the gospel, God is blessing this country. It is God's will to bless the country where His children live and to let us enjoy its benefits. I realize that He who saved me, saved you, and leads us is that very God of whom the people of this world speak. I believe that fact. I hope that you will believe it, too.

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I am truly thankful. I have come this far because of God. There were many difficulties and many hardships. There were many enemies and many adversaries. But since the One who saved me is God, I resolved, “No matter what anyone says, let me do God’s work quietly; if I wait long, people will be saved, so I need only tell them, endure, and wait,” and so I have come this far. If I did not have in my heart the faith that my having lived until now after meeting the Lord is because of God, who saved me, I could not live. How many things there are to do, and how many things to worry about! Because human beings are weak, even a small problem can become a matter of life and death. But because the almighty God is our God, because He is the God who saved you and me, we believe in that God and leap over the wall. Believing in that God, we follow the Lord’s will by faith and do God’s work. While we fight against enemies and do good, that God has brought you and me to where we are today.

God meets us through the word

Dear fellow believers, we do not say that a person has faith just because his voice is loud. The question is whether you and I realize in our hearts that the absolute God of whom people speak is the God who saved you and me. And whether we acknowledge it. If we realize and acknowledge it, you and I are people of faith. We are great people. That God has kept you and me in existence until now and has waited long for us. Whenever something comes up, I wait a long, long time. And I look far into the future and run in the present. It is not that I handle something hastily so that it is done temporarily and finished; rather, because once that work is done there is always a goal that lies behind it, I keep going forward in the present, progressively and steadily.

At such times God is with me, and because I believe in God, God helps me.

I give thanks before God. If it had not been for God, could I have lived until now? I am a hot-tempered person, and if God had not saved me and entrusted me with this work, I would already be gone from this world. If my life had been one of opening my eyes, eating, working, and sleeping, then opening my eyes, eating, and sleeping again, going on like that with no sense of worth, no great cause, and no purpose, not knowing whether I was living to eat or eating to live, then, although I would not have taken my own life, I would already have died. When a person has no hope and no expectation, he dies quickly. When there is no purpose, there is no need to look after one's health either. But God had mercy on me and met me. I sought God for more than ten years. Even before that, I sought Him, thinking that there must be an Absolute Being. And God met me through the word. God did it with the word when He made the universe and all things long ago, and now, too, when He meets you and me, He meets us through this word. He is not One who appears in dreams or appears in feelings and speaks. Since even devils can do that, it must not be so. God met me through this word. Since He met me through the word, there is no change. Just as He said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35)*, even if heaven and earth and all things in the universe pass away, the word God has spoken does not pass away. Since that God met me, met you, caused us to live, and caused us to do this work of God, how could I not give thanks? Even if I had ten thousand mouths and said thank you for all eternity, I could not express it all. I give thanks with my heart, with my thoughts, and with my actions. I give thanks before God, who has kept me in existence until now, and I believe in that God. I believe that God, who

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saved me, is God to you as well, and that He who directly saved you is God. So I just give thanks. I am so very, very thankful.

Witnesses who preach that God

It is the Lord's will that we preach the gospel to the whole world, and though we are lacking, we are doing it. Dear fellow believers, do you believe that the gospel will be spread to the whole world, that it will all be spread through us, and that God's will will be fully accomplished? Much of it has already been accomplished now. How could the work done by a gathering of only a handful of people preach the gospel to nearly two hundred countries? Yet much of it has now been accomplished through you and me. There are workers there, and they themselves are working. It is the work of God. It is because God, who saved you and me, is the Absolute Being, because He has power, that He is doing those powerful works through you and me. How amazing it is! A person who has met God can lead another person to meet God. We are witnesses of the living God. We are witnesses of the self-existent One. The God who truly stilled the storm and quieted the waves—that God is the God of you and me. I hope that you will realize this in your hearts, and whenever times are hard and difficult, know that that God is the God of you and me and wake Him. That means praying. If we ask Him for help, saying, "Help us, protect us," He helps you and me. Why is that? Because He has made you and me His own people, His own children. Therefore, we must believe in Him and rely on Him. We give thanks. Though we are lacking, if we unite with one another in faith and serve the gospel, everything will be done. When the Lord has us do some work, He has given us everything.

The work of evangelizing the world is possible not with several thousand people but even with several hundred. Preaching the gospel to billions of people is quite possible with several hundred people. It does not depend on numbers. It is accomplished through those who know who God is and that that God has saved them, and who rely on that God. It never depends on numbers. We give thanks. I give thanks that we have been saved by such a God, that when that God saved me I believed in that God and was saved, and that that God has become my shepherd, our shepherd.

We preach that God. Preaching the gospel is preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit and, at the same time, preaching who the God is who accomplished that gospel. It is preaching who God is, who the true Creator is, why we must believe in that God, why we must accept the love of that God, what happens if we do not accept the love of that God, and what blessings we receive if we do accept it. That God loves you and me. And He intends to love us forever. We must accept that love. If we refuse it, we become eternal enemies. God truly loves us, has prepared everything for our happiness, and wants to give it to us; we may not accept it, but does that make Him a bad God? Is God an illusion? The point is that He truly exists. His name is the LORD, the self-existent One. All things are things that were made, but God is the One who exists by Himself. We believe in that God. We believe in that God, who created the universe and all things in it, caused you and me to be born on this earth through our parents, saved you and me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made you and me His workers and children of God and caused us to do righteous works, and prepared an eternal kingdom so that we may live together with Him forever. We also believe in the power of that God. ✉

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CHAPTER

5

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The testimony entrusted to the man He delivered from the tombs

< Mark 5:1–20 >

“Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.’ For He said to him, ‘Come out of the man, unclean spirit!’ Then He asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he answered, saying, ‘My name is Legion; for we are many.’ Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, ‘Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.’ And at once Jesus gave them permission.

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Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region. And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.' And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled."

The torment that chains could not resolve

People tried hard to keep a man bound. When he broke the shackles and chains, no one had the strength left to control him. But that man did not become free just because he broke his bonds. The text conveys his condition as follows: *"And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones" (Mark 5:5)*. The strength to break the chains that bound him from the outside and the ability to escape the domination that tormented him were entirely different. To this miserable man, Jesus came. No one could make him whole, but Jesus did not abandon him.

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We must not hear this event only as the story of one person far away. Who is this demon-possessed man? He is you and I before we received the remission of sins. The heart of a person who does not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is like the demon-possessed man. A person held captive by sin and craving thinks that living as he pleases is freedom. But if he harms himself and others to fulfill his craving and yet cannot stop on that path, he is not a free person, whatever he may have gained. Even if he sets up religious rules and disciplines his own conduct, the sin in his heart is not washed away. What we need, before rules that bind us even more tightly, is the Savior who will actually deliver us from sin and destruction.

Jesus did not demand that the man first try to fix himself. He commanded, *"Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" (Mark 5:8)*. Salvation came to the man who had been under the domination of torment not because his own strength had grown stronger, but because the Son of God, who had compassion on him, exercised His authority. We, too, must not make the size of our own resolve the basis of salvation, but must look to Jesus, who came to sinners.

Even many demons could not defy the command of Jesus

The demons said that they were many, but without the permission of Jesus they could not go where they wanted. When Jesus gave them permission, the demons entered the herd of swine, and that herd of swine ran down the steep place and died in the sea. Being filled with craving like swine, living with our hearts set only on the craving of the flesh, just saying, "Give me, give me," and then perishing—that is our life before we receive

the remission of sins. The water of the sea speaks of the world, and the fact that a herd of as many as two thousand swine drowned all together shows that countless people live that way in the world and then go to hell. That terrible result reveals that the domination of unclean spirits is not the way that saves life. On the other hand, the Bible records how the man set free from that domination looked, saying that the people *"saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid" (Mark 5:15)*. What the authority of Jesus did was not to add to one man's torment but to restore him.

Here we must clearly know whom we should rely on. The craving that makes us chase after sin cannot take responsibility for our lives. Nor can religion, which boasts of its own righteousness and covers up the sin of the heart, deliver us from the judgment for sin. Jesus came to save us, who were placed in that very destruction. When we know our own condition, that we must be saved, we come to know that the mercy of Jesus is not a teaching that others need but the grace that saves us.

The salvation Jesus has given does not stop at suppressing sin for a while. By receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to His own body once and for all. The sins we have committed throughout our whole lives and the sins that will yet come to light are also included in that sin of the world. Bearing the sins that had thus been passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and He rose again from death and delivered us from sin and death. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He has given us. Those who believe in this gospel do not claim salvation by putting forward their own goodness, but rely on the fact that Jesus has remitted their sins.

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Since it is Jesus who delivered us, who were under the domination of sin, there is no reason to leave Him and rely on craving even after being saved. If we forget the grace we have received and live as our own desires dictate, we again torment ourselves and others. We must keep in our hearts the gospel that saved us and follow the words of Jesus. The grace of salvation is not an excuse that makes us take sin lightly, but the basis that makes us leave the path that was dragging us to destruction and serve the Lord.

The people who asked Him to leave and the man who begged to be with Him

The people of the town saw the man who had come to be in his right mind. They also heard what had happened to the swine. Yet their response was this: *"Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region" (Mark 5:17)*. Even while seeing before their very eyes that a man had been restored, they did not receive Jesus. The fact of having seen a marvelous thing and believing in and receiving the Savior are not the same. To them, the loss of the herd of swine looked greater than the fact that one man had been restored to life. If our interest is bound to what we might lose like this, even when we meet Jesus, who saves souls, we cannot treasure that grace.

The plea of the man who had been demon-possessed was different. He wanted to be with Jesus, because he knew where the change that had happened to him had come from. As we see from that wish, the gratitude of a person saved through Jesus is not a vague religious zeal, but recognizing the One who resolved the torment that no one else could resolve and setting one's heart on Him. We, too, must examine whether we have the gratitude

of believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When our faith that Jesus has remitted our sins is clear, we no longer count following Him as a loss in which what is ours is taken away.

Tell your own people of the mercy you have received

Jesus did not permit the man to get into the boat with Him. Instead, He told him to go home. He did not reject and cast away the man's desire to be with Him; rather, He appointed the place where the man was to tell of what He had done for him. Let us read verse 19.

"However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you'" (Mark 5:19).

What he was to tell was not a boast that he had become a new man by his own will. How the Lord had had compassion on him and done great things was the content of his testimony. What the man proclaimed in Decapolis, too, was what Jesus had done for him. To the man who had been tormented among the tombs was now entrusted the work of telling of the Lord's mercy before other people. This change shows what the life of a person who has been saved should be directed toward.

We, too, must not hide our shortcomings and try to look like admirable people, but must speak clearly of the grace of Jesus, who saved us as we are. The fact that all our sins have been washed away by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is our testimony. Serving the gospel is not paying the price for having been saved. It is a work we take on with gratitude because we know the love of Jesus, who had compassion on us.

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I hope that we will live treasuring the Lord, who showed the mercy of salvation to us, who were once bound by sin and craving, and who made us tell of that mercy. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Fall down before the Lord and plead with Him, as Jairus did

< Mark 5:21–24 >

"Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.' So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him."

A life that the office of a ruler of the synagogue could not save

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue, but in the face of his dying daughter he was a father who needed the help of Jesus. The text says, *"And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet" (Mark 5:22)*, introducing his office and then immediately showing him falling down. Having a responsibility or position among people does not mean that one can protect life as one wishes. In the face of that limit, Jairus did not try to save face.

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Knowing that the One who could save his daughter was Jesus, he came to Him and pleaded with Him.

We, too, in the face of difficulties, often say that we believe in God, yet endure alone without actually asking for help. Before God, we are poor, and God is rich. For one who must receive help not to pray is an arrogant attitude before the Lord. The Lord said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7)*. Knowing prayer well and pleading with the Lord right now are different. The faith of Jairus did not remain in the thought that Jesus had power. He fell down before Jesus and told Him of his daughter's condition. He could ask in that way because he did not hide his problem and acknowledged that he was a person who needed help.

When we come to Jesus, we, too, need this heart. We must not put forward our own knowledge or our record in the life of faith and take the Lord's help for granted. Acknowledging what we ourselves cannot resolve is not abandoning faith. From that acknowledgment comes the plea we offer to the almighty Jesus. Just as the father who could not save his daughter with his own hands asked Jesus for help, we, too, must lay our actual circumstances before the Lord.

The One to whom we plead is Jesus, who gives life

Let us read verse 23.

"And begged Him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live'" (Mark 5:23).

What Jairus asked for was clear. He asked that Jesus come and lay His hands on his daughter and save her life. He did not merely express his own feelings by saying that he was desperate;

he asked believing in what Jesus could do. The power of his plea did not come from the office Jairus held. It came from looking to Jesus, who could give life. Therefore, this word leads us, too, to actually ask for the Lord's help with all our hearts.

In being saved from sin, too, we must know the limits of our ability. A person may recognize the sin in his heart and suffer because of it, but he cannot remove that sin or escape its judgment by his own strength. However earnest a heart one may have, that earnestness cannot bear sin in one's place or receive the judgment for sin in one's place. Salvation is accomplished by Jesus. What a person who hopes for the remission of sins must hear, before any word telling him to strengthen his resolve further, is the gospel of what Jesus has done for sinners.

Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lives, transferred to Him once and for all. Because He had those sins passed on to Himself, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place. And He rose again from death and delivered us from sin and death. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we are to believe is precisely this salvation that Jesus accomplished. The basis for receiving the remission of sins lies not in the hours we have prayed or the amount of our tears, but in the work by which Jesus remitted all sins. When we believe this gospel with our hearts, we receive the remission of sins.

A person saved in this way now lives asking Jesus for help. Because he knows who saved his soul, he also tells Him about his sick body, the difficulties of his life, and the work of serving the gospel. Believing in salvation does not mean that prayer becomes unnecessary. The more we know the Lord's grace, the more we lay down the heart that relied on ourselves and come to

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rely on Him. This is the faith that leads from the gospel of the remission of sins to pleading in actual life.

Keep asking the Lord, who goes with you

The Bible testifies, *"So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him" (Mark 5:24)*. Even while many people were thronging Him, Jesus heard the father's plea and went along with him. The text does not end by saying that the daughter was healed immediately after the plea. The way of going together with Jesus continues. The One Jairus is to rely on is Jesus, who is now going with him to his house. Even though the problem before his eyes is not yet over, the fact that the One who has the power of salvation is with him is his hope.

We, too, must not close our hearts after asking once or twice and stop telling the Lord. If we are sick, we must earnestly ask Him to heal us, and if we face difficulties, we must ask for wisdom and help. Ask the Lord also for the strength and the way needed when you preach the gospel. As the Lord said, *"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do" (Matthew 6:7)*, a prayer that only repeats familiar words without even being clear about what one wants and a prayer that keeps telling the Lord, believing that He will help, are different. We ask because we believe in the Lord's power, and we tell Him again and again because we need help.

When we ask relying on the Lord in this way, even when we receive help, we do not attribute that grace to the result of our own ability. That is because we remember whom we told and who helped us. Faith is not knowledge that ends with knowing the fact that Jesus did great things in the Bible. It is a life of believing that this same Jesus has remitted our sins and telling

Him of our circumstances before Him today as well. Just as Jairus fell down before Jesus and asked for his daughter's life, I hope that we, too, will rely on the Lord, telling Him without concealment of the help we need. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

What was different between the crowd that thronged Him and the woman who touched Him?

< Mark 5:25–34 >

"Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, 'If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.' Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched My clothes?' But His disciples said to Him, 'You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"' And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.'"

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The news of Jesus heard in the midst of long suffering

The woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years tried to be treated by many physicians. But even after spending all her possessions, she obtained no benefit, and her illness grew worse. The time she struggled out of a desire to live was long, but with that effort she could not restore her own body. After speaking of this woman's despair, the Gospel of Mark conveys the fact that she heard about Jesus. The point at which the woman's hope changed was not when she gained new possessions, but when she came to know of Jesus.

The woman believed, *"If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well" (Mark 5:28)*. Because of that faith, she mingled with the crowd and came to Jesus. The fact itself that she had suffered long is not what healed the woman. She saw the power of Jesus as greater than the failures she had gone through, and relying on Him, she touched Him. The woman was healed not because the garment of Jesus was a special object, but because Jesus, who was wearing that garment, had the power of salvation.

We, too, while tormented because of the sin in our hearts, at times try to resolve it by piling up more of our own efforts. Even if we do many religious acts, if we have no assurance that our sins have been washed away, our hearts remain weighed down. What is needed is not to go through more failures, but to know rightly Jesus, who remits sins. A heart that vaguely hopes to get better without knowing whom it believes in, and faith that knows and believes what Jesus has done, are different. Just as the news the woman heard led her to come to Jesus, we, too, must hear the gospel and set our hearts on that Savior.

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The contact of the crowd and the faith of the woman

Many people thronged Jesus. So when Jesus asked who had touched Him, the disciples found the question puzzling, saying, *"You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" (Mark 5:31)*. They did not understand what it meant to distinguish whose hand had touched Him while the crowd was pressing in. But Jesus knew that power had gone out of Him. The fact that many people's bodies were close to Him and the fact that this woman believed in Jesus were not the same.

This distinction is necessary for us, too, who often hear the word in the church. Being in a place where the gospel is preached does not by itself mean believing that gospel with the heart. We must know and accept who Jesus is and how He remitted our sins. If we seek only atmosphere or emotional stirring while the content of true faith is missing, our assurance of salvation is shaken every time our emotions cool. The power that saves us does not come from the fervor of our hearts; it is in Jesus.

Jesus knew us, who live committing sin continually, and resolved all those sins. The flow of blood that does not stop speaks of our state, in which we are born with sin and keep on sinning. Just as she only grew worse even though she went around to many physicians, the religions of the world cannot cure the disease of sin in the heart, but the Lord removed our continually flowing sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, He also had the sins of our whole lives passed on to Him together with them. Jesus, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we had to

What was different between the crowd that thronged Him and the woman who touched Him?

receive, and He rose again from death. Therefore, we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not add our own merit in order to wash away our sins. We believe in the salvation in which Jesus had our sins passed on to Him and paid their price.

This faith is not a thought that forcibly reassures one's own heart. That is because the basis worthy of belief lies in the work of Jesus. Nor is it denying sin when it is revealed; it is believing that Jesus has remitted even that sin while acknowledging one's own sin. We must not reduce the scope of the salvation Jesus accomplished by our own feelings. Those who believe with their hearts in the gospel of the water and the Spirit preached through the word receive the remission of sins and become children of God, as the word says, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12)*. Just as the fountain of her blood was immediately dried up, the moment we believe this gospel, the problem of sin is cleanly resolved from its root.

He spoke peace to the woman who was afraid

The woman, knowing what had happened to her, fell down before Jesus in fear and trembling. Her illness had been healed, yet fear remained in her heart; nevertheless, Jesus did not seek her out to rebuke her. When the woman told Him the whole truth, He spoke of her faith and her salvation and told her to go in peace. Let us read verse 34.

"And He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction'" (Mark 5:34).

The woman knew from the change in her body that her illness had been healed, and now she heard the words of Jesus.

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The Lord called the woman daughter and gave her peace. Jesus knew the person who had secretly approached Him in the jostling crowd, and He clearly brought her faith to light. The word the woman was to hold on to as she went back was none other than the word spoken by Jesus, who had healed her.

We, too, must not look for the assurance of the remission of sins in some special sensation. Even if our emotions change, the salvation Jesus accomplished does not change. A person whose sins have been washed away by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not need to go back to the beginning and seek a new experience of salvation every time his shortcomings come into view. He must once again clearly believe the word of the Lord, who has already resolved his sins. The One who sent away in peace the woman who touched the garment of Jesus is the Lord of our salvation. To us, too, who know and believe what Jesus has done, the Lord says to go in peace. Setting our hearts on that word and living in peace is the faith we learn from this woman. ✉

What was different between the crowd that thronged Him
and the woman who touched Him?

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Even the dead girl arose at the word of Jesus

< Mark 5:35–43 >

"While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?' As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only believe.' And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, 'Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, 'Talitha, cumi,' which is translated, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.' Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat."

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The word He gave after the news of death

The people who came from Jairus's house reported that his daughter had died. They said that there was no need to trouble Jesus any further. While conveying the fact of the daughter's death, they even passed the judgment that it would be of no use even if Jesus went. What the father had hoped for was the healing of his dying daughter, but now even that hope seemed to have come to an end. Jesus, who heard those very words, spoke to Jairus. Let us read verse 36.

"As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only believe'" (Mark 5:36).

Jesus did not leave the fearful father alone. The word in which He told him to believe had an object of faith. It was Jesus Himself, who was going with him. It was not a word telling him to vaguely imagine a good outcome, but a word telling him to rely on the Lord, who could give life even in the face of death. Since people's judgment could not determine even the power of Jesus, the father had to go on holding on to that word.

We, too, at times look at the circumstances before our eyes and conclude that nothing would change even if we relied on the Lord. But the fact that we do not know and that we cannot do something does not mean that the Lord cannot do it either. Faith is not insisting that a difficulty does not exist, but knowing who Jesus is even in the midst of that difficulty. Here is the reason we must ask the One who rules over our lives and follow His word.

Even amid wailing and ridicule, He spoke to the girl

When Jesus arrived at the house, the people were weeping and wailing loudly. The Bible conveys that scene with these words: *"The child is not dead, but sleeping. And they ridiculed Him" (Mark 5:39–40).* They judged the word of Jesus by their own knowledge that the child was dead. But Jesus has the authority to wake the dead and raise them up. Jesus said that the dead child was sleeping, and just as He had said, He raised that child up.

Jesus took the parents of the child and the three disciples, went in, and took the girl by the hand. Then He commanded, *"Little girl, I say to you, arise" (Mark 5:41).* At this time, what raised the girl was not the father's emotions or the expectations of the people around her; the One who gave life is Jesus. Even while the people were ridiculing Him, the word of Jesus was fulfilled, and the fact that the girl immediately rose and walked reveals the authority of that word. Jairus thought that if Jesus came and laid His hands on the place where his daughter was ill, she would be healed, but the Lord raised the dead child with a single word He spoke while holding her hand. The faith the Lord wants from us is not a faith that confirms things through experience or the senses, but a faith that believes the word the Lord has spoken just as it is.

The word we are to believe is also not separated from the authority of the One who speaks it. Jesus is not someone who merely gives good advice, but God, who gives life. Therefore, believing His word is not groundless optimism. It is entrusting our lives to the Savior, who commands even the dead. The more we learn what Jesus has done and come to know Him, the more

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we lay down the thinking that judged the word only by human limits.

Believe in the Savior, who has delivered us from sin and death

The event in which the dead girl arose shows us, who are under sin and death, who the Savior is. Even though we value life, we cannot make everlasting life for ourselves, nor can we escape the judgment for sin by our own ability. Jesus came to give life to such people as us. That salvation is not something we accomplish by steeling our hearts, but something Jesus accomplished by resolving our sins Himself.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He received baptism from John, and through that baptism all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all. The sins of our whole lifetime, which we commit from birth until death, are also included in the sin of the world that was passed on to Him at that time. Jesus, who bore that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place. Jesus did not remain in death but rose again from death. Just as the word says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*, those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit that delivered us from sin and death receive the remission of sins and everlasting life.

Therefore, when we come to know the fact that our sins are great, we must not conclude that there is no salvation. The One who knew the size of those sins and bore them all and resolved them is Jesus. Our weakness is the reason we must be saved, not grounds for giving up believing in the salvation Jesus has accomplished. Like the word of Jesus that raised the girl, the

gospel of the remission of sins is also based on the Lord's actual work. We must overcome fear with a heart that believes that word.

He had them give the girl who had risen something to eat

The people were greatly amazed when they saw the girl walking. The passage ends as follows: *"But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat" (Mark 5:43)*. After the miracle that overcame death comes the work of caring for the child who had come back to life. We must not miss the things we are to do today, entrusting them to the Lord, while gazing only at marvelous things.

Even after we have received the remission of sins, sickness and hardships come to us. At such times, we must not neglect the care right before our eyes while waiting only for a great miracle; believing in Jesus, who will help us, we must also faithfully do ordinary things such as giving food to eat and caring for the body. Even in the midst of that ordinary care, the One who rules over life is Jesus. Jesus, who told Jairus to believe after the news of death and raised the girl, is our Lord. Even when people's judgment adds to our fear, what we must hold on to is His word, which gives life. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The salvation that neither chains, nor wealth, nor position could accomplish

< Mark 5:1–43 >

“Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.’ For He said to him, ‘Come out of the man, unclean spirit!’ Then He asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he answered, saying, ‘My name is Legion; for we are many.’ Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, ‘Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.’ And at once Jesus gave them permission.

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Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region. And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.' And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled. Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.' So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him. Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, 'If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.' Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up,

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and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched My clothes?' But His disciples said to Him, 'You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"' And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.' While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?' As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only believe.' And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, 'Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, 'Talitha, cumi,' which is translated, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.' Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat."

The limits of bonds, wealth, and position

In Mark chapter 5, people who had been living different lives come before Jesus. One man had been living among the tombs, one woman had suffered from an illness for a long time, and Jairus was living as a ruler of the synagogue. Their circumstances were different, but they were the same in that they had no ability to save themselves and their families. The chains that bound the demon-possessed man could not make him whole, the wealth the woman spent could not heal her illness, and the position of ruler of the synagogue could not prevent his daughter's death. Before them were problems that could not be solved by the means people have.

Looking at this limit is something we need. This is because when we have many things of our own, it is easy to think that we have little need to seek help. But possessions and status cannot remove the sins of the soul. No religious framework of the world can cast out the demon inside a person, and many physicians cannot cure the disease of sin in the heart. They cannot change the cravings that constantly arise in the heart into something righteous, nor can they receive the judgment for sin in our place. The Lord also said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Mark 2:17)*. Only when we know our own true condition, that we need salvation, can we know why the grace Jesus bestows is precious.

The three scenes do not end by merely showing the condition of people. Jesus comes to them and meets them. He commands the demon that no one could control, heals the woman, and raises the dead girl. The fact that leads us to hope in this chapter is not that human beings have a hidden power, but that Jesus has the authority of salvation. A road blocked for people is not a road blocked before the Savior as well.

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The salvation Jesus Himself accomplished

The man who had been demon-possessed sat clothed and whole. To the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood, this happened: *"Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction" (Mark 5:29)*. Jairus's daughter rose and walked. Jesus did not merely leave them with the demand that they must change, but actually restored them. Therefore, we who have seen this must not think that we can come to the Lord only after first making ourselves excellent. The very reason we need the Lord is that we have no ability to save ourselves.

The work of remitting our sins is also like this. It is not that He gave only the word to acknowledge sin and left the solution to the sinner. Jesus, the Son of God, came as the Savior of sinners and, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lifetime were also passed on to Him without exception. Jesus bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and rose again from death. By Himself bearing the sins transferred to Him and the judgment for those sins, He gave us the remission of sins.

Believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the faith that saves. It is not believing that our sins have disappeared because we have managed our hearts well. It is believing that Jesus bore our sins and paid their price in full. Through this faith we receive the remission of sins and become children of God. Since the basis of salvation lies in the perfect work of Jesus, we can rely on that grace even when the shortcomings of the flesh are revealed. Without hiding our shortcomings, we acknowledge them before the Lord while setting our hearts on the salvation He has already accomplished.

Lay down the boasting of your own strength

If the restored person has anything to boast of, it is the mercy Jesus bestowed. If the man who had been demon-possessed boasted of the fact that he had broken chains more powerfully than anyone else, he would miss the One who gave him life. Nor can the woman put forward how much wealth she spent as the basis of her salvation. This is because she was not healed by that wealth, but was healed when she met Jesus. Jairus, too, could not raise his daughter with the authority of a ruler of the synagogue. What Jesus did is the reason for thanksgiving.

We, too, after receiving the remission of sins, easily put forward our own life of faith as if it were the basis of salvation. Even though the work we have served in for a long time and the labor we have put in are precious, they are not what washed away our sins. The Bible says, *"By one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19)*, which means that what made us righteous was not our labor but the obedience of that one Man. Moreover, even being able to do that labor is, from the start, the grace of the Lord. If we try to prove our own righteousness, we become exalted by comparing ourselves with others, but if we remember that we were saved by the mercy of Jesus, we come to serve with thanksgiving. We must first know clearly whose grace we have received rather than what we have done.

This grace also leads to the faith that asks for help in life. Jairus begged the Lord earnestly, and the woman came near relying on Jesus. Knowing their own helplessness did not mean they did nothing; rather, they asked the One who would help them. We, too, must ask the Lord at the very place where our own strength falls short. Because the Lord who saved us is alive, we rely on Him and go forward to the work entrusted to us today.

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The thanksgiving of one who has been brought back to life

For one who has been brought back to life, it is clear who brought him back to life. The woman who was healed of the flow of blood knew what had happened to her, fell down before Jesus, and told Him the whole truth. She told the whole truth without hiding even the fact that she had touched Him, and in doing so she confessed before Him that the One who had done that work was Jesus. The thanksgiving of a saved person begins precisely with this confession. It is knowing not what we have done, but what Jesus has done for us.

We, too, must not keep the salvation we have received through the gospel of the water and the Spirit merely as knowledge in our heads. The word says, *"In everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18)*. According to this word, we must give thanks to Jesus, who remitted our sins, and live believing His word. Treasure the days in which you can serve the Lord, ask earnestly when you need help, and do not turn the grace you have received into the result of your own strength. The salvation that human bonds, wealth, and position could not accomplish, Jesus accomplished. Therefore, it is fitting to live a life that exalts the One who gave us life and relies on His grace. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Do not be afraid; only believe

< Mark 5:1–43 >

“Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.’ For He said to him, ‘Come out of the man, unclean spirit!’ Then He asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he answered, saying, ‘My name is Legion; for we are many.’ Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, ‘Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.’ And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had

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happened. Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region. And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.' And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled. Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.' So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him. Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, 'If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.' Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched My clothes?' But His disciples said to Him, 'You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, "Who touched

Me?”’ And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’ While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house who said, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?’ As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe.’ And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, ‘Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.”

Different responses in the face of the same fear

The people of the country of the Gadarenes were afraid when they saw that the man who had been demon-possessed had been made whole. The woman who had been healed of the flow of

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blood also trembled with fear before Jesus. To Jairus, after the news that his daughter had died, the word was given not to be afraid. Mark chapter 5 does not say that only people who had no fear at all met Jesus. People met Jesus in the midst of fear and responded differently from one another.

The people of the Gadarenes asked Jesus to leave. Concerning the woman, the Bible records, *"But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth" (Mark 5:33)*. Jairus heard the word in which Jesus told him to believe and went home with Him. Therefore, what we must examine is not whether fear ever arose in our hearts even once. We must examine whether, at that moment, we push the Savior away or come before Him and listen to His word. Faith is not a prize given to a person who has perfectly controlled his own emotions; it lies in knowing Jesus, on whom we rely.

We, too, must not think that we cannot come to the Lord because our hearts have been shaken. Because of fear, we must listen to the word all the more. Only when we know who Jesus is and what He has done for us does the heart gain a ground on which to rely. If we keep looking only at our own hearts, fear gives birth to yet another fear, but the word of the Savior clearly shows us the One to believe in.

Do not keep the Lord at a distance by your own judgment

The people of the Gadarenes came to see what Jesus had done. The man who had been restored was sitting before them, and they also heard the account of those who had seen what happened. Even so, they asked Him to leave. This is a warning

that one can encounter what Jesus has done and yet not accept His mercy. If one does not believe in Jesus as the One who governs one's life, then even when one sees His authority, one takes it only as something inconvenient to oneself.

The people gathered at the house of Jairus rejected the word in a different way. When Jesus said that the girl was sleeping, they ridiculed Him. They considered the death they had seen to be more certain than the word of Jesus. But it was not they who woke the girl. When Jesus took her hand and spoke, the girl arose. The final standard that decided whether a person's judgment was right or wrong was not one's own experience but the authority of the Lord, who gives life.

Before the word of the remission of sins, too, there is the same choice. We know well that we have sin, but we must not, on the basis of that fact, go so far as to deny the word that Jesus has remitted all sins. Just as our sins are certain, so also is the work of salvation that resolved those sins. We must acknowledge our sins and believe in the salvation of Jesus; we must not push away the word of salvation with our own experience. The Lord, too, called not believing in Jesus sin, saying, *"Of sin, because they do not believe in Me" (John 16:9)*.

The ground for removing fear is the work of Jesus

The reason a sinner is afraid before God is that he cannot resolve the judgment for sin by himself. Even if he counts up his own good deeds to get rid of this fear, the sins he has already committed do not disappear. Jesus bore the very sin that we cannot resolve. Through the baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and in them are included all the lifelong sins of you and me.

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Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death.

Therefore, we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not say that our own feelings have resolved the judgment. We believe that Jesus has resolved it. If the assurance of salvation is bound to the state of our hearts, then when we are at peace we feel as if we are saved, and when we are anxious we feel as if we have lost salvation. But if we make the work of Jesus our ground, then even when our hearts are shaken, there is a truth to return to. It is the gospel that He had all our sins passed on to Him and received the judgment for them in our place.

The woman who had been healed of the flow of blood fell down before Jesus, trembling. Jesus said to the woman, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace" (Mark 5:34)*. It was not the woman's fear but the word of the Lord that became the final declaration. We, too, must believe the word of Jesus, who has already accomplished the remission of sins. It is not that we accept the gospel only once our feelings have settled; rather, because the gospel is true, we entrust our hearts to that word.

Live today according to the word you have heard

Jairus, right where he heard that his daughter had died, received the word, *"Do not be afraid; only believe" (Mark 5:36)*. The reason this word to only believe is not easy for us is that there are many things besides Jesus on which we rely, yet the Lord waits for us to set our hope on Him alone and only believe. To Jairus, that word was given before he arrived home. He did not believe after confirming the outcome with his eyes; rather,

holding on to the word, he walked the road on which the fearful news and the word of the Lord were both present. When he reached home and the girl arose, it was revealed that the word was true. While we walk according to the word we have heard, there are many things not yet seen, but because the One who spoke is faithful, those steps are not in vain.

In our lives, too, there are things to worry about and things difficult to handle. Tell those problems to the Lord and ask for His help. Do not turn prayer into a formality on the grounds that you have already been saved; you must believe that Jesus, who saved you, is alive, and actually rely on Him. Do not miss listening to the word because you are looking back only at the fact that you have fear. The more our hearts are shaken, the more clearly we must make certain of the content of the salvation we believe in and of the faithfulness of the Lord.

I hope you will remember the response of the people of the Gadarenes, who made Jesus leave, and the response of the woman, who came before Jesus even while trembling. We are not people who seek the Lord after getting rid of fear but people who come to the Lord even when we are afraid. The word of the One who remitted our sins and gave us life is more certain than our fear. Hold on to that word and walk today's steps. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Entrust your life to the Lord, who gave us life

< Mark 5:1–43 >

"Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.' For He said to him, 'Come out of the man, unclean spirit!' Then He asked him, 'What is your name?' And he answered, saying, 'My name is Legion; for we are many.' Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, 'Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.' And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. So

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those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region. And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.' And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled. Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.' So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him. Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, 'If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.' Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who

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touched My clothes?' But His disciples said to Him, 'You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"' And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.' While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?' As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only believe.' And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, 'Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, 'Talitha, cumi,' which is translated, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.' Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat."

The word that follows for the person who has been saved

The man who had been set free from the demons wanted to get into the boat together with Jesus. But Jesus did not do as he begged. He said, *"Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you" (Mark 5:19)*. The way the saved man hoped for and the way Jesus entrusted to him were different. He did not deny the grace because his wish was not accepted; he went to proclaim what Jesus had done for him. From this scene we learn that following the Lord is not the same as having one's own wishes fulfilled just as they are.

The other events in Mark chapter 5 also do not end at the moment of restoration. To the woman healed of the flow of blood, the word was given to go in peace; and to the family of the girl who had come back to life, the warning not to make the matter known and the word to give her something to eat were given. The Lord also told each person how to live in the grace they had received. We do not believe in Jesus in order to have one difficult matter resolved and then go back to living only according to our own thoughts. It is because we know that the One who saved us is the Lord of our lives.

When we read these three events together, we come to know that what a saved person must follow is not his own thoughts but the word the Lord has given. To one person He said to proclaim it, and to another household He said not to make it known. He did not make everyone do the same thing; He made them follow the word Jesus had given. Therefore, one cannot call one's own way right merely on the grounds of having zeal. Whom we believe in and whose word we follow come first.

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The mercy of the Lord we must know before we entrust our lives to Him

If one does not know who it is that gave one life, following His word also feels like a burden. What the man who had been demon-possessed was to go home and proclaim was the great mercy Jesus had shown him. Because he was a man who had received mercy, that word became grace entrusting him with a new life. A person who knows how wretched he was is thankful simply that the Lord uses him. The confession, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5),* is the confession of such a person. To a person who remembers how miserable he was and who set him free from that domination, the work the Lord has entrusted looks not like a heavy demand but like work that only one who has been brought back to life can do.

For us, too, there is a mercy that must first be made clear. To save us, who were to perish because of sin, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, and through that baptism He took all the sins of the world upon Himself once and for all. Since Jesus had all our lifelong sins passed on to Him, Jesus also bore the punishment for those sins in our place. By shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, He received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and accomplished salvation. A person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit obtains the remission of sins without offering his own deeds as payment.

This is the ground for entrusting our lives to the Lord. The Lord is not One who tells us to be faithful first while leaving our sins in place. The Savior, who remitted our sins and gave us life, now causes us to live believing in that grace. Accordingly, salvation is not completed by the labor of serving the gospel.

Jesus has already completed salvation, and we labor as people who have received that completed salvation. Only when this order is clear does service not turn into a means of piling up one's own righteousness.

Treasure the work you have received from the Lord

The man of the Gadarenes, instead of staying at the side of Jesus, returned to the people who had known him. Even though he was not where he wanted to be, he could do the work he had received from the Lord. The passage concludes, *"And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled" (Mark 5:20)*. The testimony of salvation is not a matter of displaying one's own eloquent words or experiences but of making known the mercy of the Lord. We, too, when we speak of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must not put our own zeal at the center but must clearly preach what Jesus has done.

To the woman, the word was given to go in peace. Set free from her long suffering, she could return relying on the word she had received from Jesus. The task entrusted to the woman was not to do something more but to return in the peace she had received. Believing in the salvation the Lord has accomplished and living in peace is also a life that accepts that word. We must not let the thought that we must busily do something more take the place of the assurance of salvation.

To the girl's family, the word was given to give the child something to eat. Seeing a great miracle did not mean that everyday care disappeared. Actually caring for the child whom Jesus had brought back to life was needed. We easily regard only

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great and conspicuous things as the work we have received from the Lord. But to live believing the word of the Lord, we must also treasure the people we must care for now and the responsibilities we have been given. A heart that knows grace does not regard the life it has received as trivial.

Commit your whole life also to the One who saved you

Asking for the help we need and following the will of the Lord are not separate from each other. Jairus said to Jesus, *"Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live" (Mark 5:23)*, and actually asked Him to save his daughter's life. On that road, when Jesus spoke, he had to listen to that word. If one comes to the Lord because one has something one wants, yet insists on one's own thoughts when the Lord actually speaks, then one's heart of reliance is not whole. We must believe when we ask, and we must believe when we hear the word.

We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit confess that Jesus has resolved the problem of sin. Therefore, we must now also tell Him the difficulties of life and ask for His help. Because we know that our judgment falls short, we learn the word; and because we lack the strength to cope, we pray as the word says, *"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17)*. The mercy of salvation the Lord has carried out makes that reliance on Him possible. We must not, while believing in the One who saved us, try to live our whole lives as if they had nothing to do with the Lord.

Remember that the man of the Gadarenes lived according to His word even without getting into the boat of Jesus. A life of

following the Lord does not lie in insisting on the shape we ourselves have drawn. It lies in believing in the salvation Jesus has bestowed, joining our hearts to the word He has entrusted to us, and asking Him when we need help. I hope you will entrust today's steps and the rest of your lives to the Lord, who gave us life. ✉

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CHAPTER

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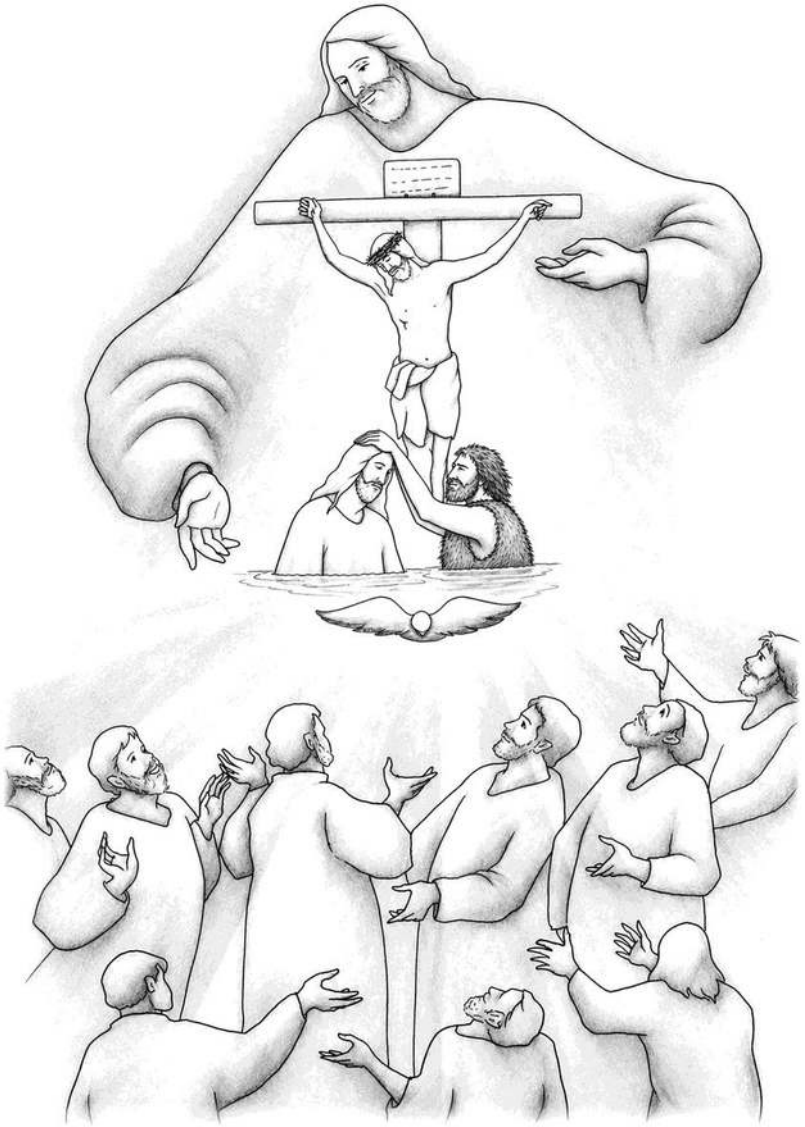

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The people who knew Him only as a carpenter and rejected the Savior

< Mark 6:1–6a >

"Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?' So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.' Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief."

The people of His hometown, who were astonished and yet did not believe

The people of Jesus' hometown, hearing the word He taught in the synagogue, were astonished and asked, "*What wisdom is*

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this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!" (Mark 6:2). But that question did not lead them to believe in Jesus. They put forward the fact that Jesus was the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon, whom they knew. The knowledge by which they thought they knew Him well in the flesh was what actually blocked them from recognizing who Jesus was.

It was not that the wisdom of the word they heard had diminished, nor that the mighty works Jesus had done had disappeared. The problem lay in their standard for judging a person. Because they looked at His ordinary family and occupation and made light even of His word, there was a reaction of astonishment at the word, but faith did not arise. So the Bible records that Jesus *"marveled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:6)*. We must not stop at hearing the wise word and admiring it, but must believe the One who gives that word.

We who hear the gospel often must also take this warning. Just as our closest family members listen to us the least, it is easy, on the grounds that we know the life and weaknesses of the one who preaches, to make light even of the word he preaches with the Bible open. But the basis for judging whether the word is true lies not in a person's appearance and position, but in whether that word accurately conveys the salvation that Jesus accomplished. When we look at a person, we must look not only at the fleshly side but also at the spiritual side. If we know how to see the spiritual side of him, in which he fears God and follows Him by faith, there arises in us the faith that receives into our hearts the word he preaches. Even if we have heard it through a familiar person, the word of God must be heard as the word of God.

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The Son of God, who came in a lowly form

The people of His hometown rejected Jesus, speaking of His family and saying, *"Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon?" (Mark 6:3)*. They knew the fact that He had lived among people, but they did not accept that He was the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a woman. The reason Jesus came in a human body like us was to save sinners. If we look only at that humbling of Himself and deny the glory of the Savior, we cannot receive the grace of salvation that He bestows on us either.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit conveys what Jesus—the very One known only as a carpenter—did for us. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and within that sin of the world all the sins of our whole lives are also included. Bearing that sin which had been passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price for that sin, and thereby received in our place the judgment we were to receive; and He rose again from death and fully accomplished our salvation. The One who delivered us from sin is not an ordinary religious teacher but the Son of God, who accomplished this salvation.

When we believe this gospel, we receive the remission of sins and become children of God, and God sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts and testifies of our salvation. It is not that salvation comes about only when a person of high position preaches it, nor that the work of Jesus becomes true only when there is a special experience. For the basis of salvation lies in what He has already accomplished. Therefore, we must not let the gospel we have heard pass by as a familiar story. Rather than

saying that we know Jesus, what we need is a heart that believes the fact that He has remitted my sin.

Receive the word while you can hear it close at hand

Jesus said, *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house" (Mark 6:4)*. It means that being close by does not automatically guarantee faith. Because the people of His hometown knew Jesus from close at hand, they instead rejected Him, and so He could do no mighty work there and only laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. This record shows how regrettable a result unbelief brings. People's rejection cannot change Jesus into someone else, but those who reject Him cannot receive the grace that is bestowed.

If we now have the opportunity to hear the word, we must treasure that opportunity. Time passes quickly and we do not know when the Lord will come, so do not put off believing, thinking that the same opportunity will be there tomorrow as well. Acknowledge your sins and receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit into your heart. Even those who have already received the remission of sins must not let the word slip past their ears because of familiarity, but must live learning faith through that word. Only when we have a heart that treasures the gospel of salvation can we also accept the teaching when the Lord leads us with other words.

The thought that we know a person's circumstances well must not close our ears to hearing the word of Jesus. The people of His hometown, who knew Him only as a carpenter, rejected the Savior even with Him right before them, but we must know

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who Jesus is through the word that has been preached and believe in the salvation He accomplished. The faith to welcome the Lord does not come from much knowledge about people, but grows from receiving the word of God into our hearts as the word of God, just as it is. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching

< Mark 6:6b >

"Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching."

Teaching that did not stop at the rejection of one place

Jesus marveled at the unbelief of the people of His hometown. For even after hearing the wisdom of Jesus, they rejected Him, saying, *"Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary?" (Mark 6:3)*. But the half verse that follows conveys that Jesus went about all the villages, teaching. The rejection of His hometown could not end Jesus' work of salvation, and Jesus still went to the people who needed to hear the word.

Just as Jesus also said, *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house" (Mark 6:4)*, we, too, at times meet people who do not accept the gospel, and the more closely we know a person, the more regrettable it is when he closes his heart. Even so, we must not judge the truthfulness of the gospel by that person's reaction. For just as Jesus was still the Savior even though the people of His hometown did not believe, the truth of the remission of sins does not disappear because the gospel has been rejected. We must preach the word to other people who need to hear that truth.

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The word that makes the Savior known

We must regard as precious the fact that Jesus taught in village after village even after He was rejected. For what people need does not end with seeing an amazing sight, but lies in knowing who Jesus is and believing the word He preaches. The people of His hometown were astonished, saying, *"Where did this Man get these things?" (Mark 6:2)*, and yet they rejected Jesus. Therefore, rather than getting a reaction of outward astonishment, what is important is to preach so that people receive the word of the Savior into their hearts.

Like that word He taught in every village, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we are to preach also has clear content. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and within that sin of the world the sins of our whole lives are also included. Bearing that sin which had been passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price for that sin, and thereby received the judgment in our place; and He rose again from death and fully accomplished salvation. People receive the remission of sins by hearing this gospel and believing. Since a vague exhortation to take up a religion cannot make known how Jesus remitted sins, we must preach by making clear who the One who saves is and what His work is.

Teaching the word is not a matter of giving people more ways to become righteous on their own, but of causing them to know that they cannot wash away sin by their own righteousness and to believe in the salvation of Jesus. When we remember the path Jesus took to many villages, we, too, cannot keep the gospel of salvation only among those who already know it, because there are people who have not yet heard this word.

Go out to where there are people who will hear

If those who preach the gospel draw strength only from people's praise, they soon grow weary in the face of rejection. When someone comes to believe, we should give thanks, but we must not make light of the word Jesus has entrusted to us just because there is rejection. Since the fact that the Lord has given us the truth and has saved sinners is the basis for continuing to spread the gospel, we must seek the Lord's help with that faith and look for ways to preach.

At the same time, we ourselves must also receive into our hearts the word we preach to others. For we cannot tell only others to believe while closing our ears, saying that it is a familiar gospel. We are to learn the word with hearts that believe in and give thanks for the grace by which He remitted our sins, and share that truth with those who have not yet heard it. Jesus showed us that path when He passed by the hometown that rejected Him and went on just as the word says: *"Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching" (Mark 6:6)*. Let us not linger in the face of rejection in one place, but go out to where there are people who will hear the word of salvation. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel, relying on the Lord, who sent out His disciples with only a staff

< Mark 6:7–13 >

“And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. Also He said to them, ‘In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.”

The authority received from the One who sends

Mark records, *“He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits” (Mark 6:7)*. The disciples were not entrusted with the work because they had first equipped themselves with great ability; rather, they went out because the One who sent them

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gave them authority. Therefore, the basis of their being sent lay not in the disciples themselves but in the Lord who sent them, and they went out to serve people with what they had received from Jesus.

We who preach the gospel must also know this order. If we think that we do the work of saving souls because we are better than others, we come to boast of our own ability rather than of the word; but the One who remits sins is Jesus, and we are those who believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished and preach that fact. Only when we ourselves first realize it and first receive salvation can we preach that grace to others as well. We must not be satisfied with merely relaying words without believing with our hearts in the Savior who resolved our sins.

The disciples who were sent out two by two carried out together the mission they had received from the same Lord. Since it was not a path on which each exalted his own name, those who serve the gospel today must also treasure the fellow workers who labor together with them. Only the tasks and positions entrusted to them differ; the grace of salvation they have received is the same. The fact that the Lord preaches salvation to others through us becomes the reason for unity.

Rely on the Lord even for the needs of the journey

Jesus commanded them *"to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics" (Mark 6:8–9)*. He had them lay down the attitude that they would set out only once they held enough of what the journey required in their own hands, and had them set out on the road believing the word of the One who sent them. Also, by telling them to stay in

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whatever house they entered until they departed from that place, He had the disciples set their hearts on the task entrusted to them.

This command was a specific word given to the disciples whom He was sending on that very road, and what we must learn here is not to put on an appearance of poverty but to have faith that relies on the Lord. If we use the gospel to obtain what we need, our own benefit comes before the word we preach; conversely, if we give up the work the Lord has entrusted to us on the grounds that we have little, we are not relying on the One who sent us. We must seek help from Jesus, who entrusts the work to us, and be faithful to the word we have received from Him.

Those who rely on the Lord's provision do not put forward the grace they bestow on others as if it were their own possession. Since the gospel of salvation we have is grace received without cost, as we preach it we must guard against the heart that shows off its own authority or demands a price. Just as the Lord said, *"Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8)*, preaching the gospel freely, with no connection to money, is the right way to spread the gospel. Since it is a matter of those who have received sharing it in turn, gratitude and service befit it.

Turn from sin and believe in the gospel of salvation

The Bible conveys their work, which they did with the authority Jesus gave them, as follows: *"They went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them" (Mark 6:12–13)*. At the center of their work was the word that turns people from their own way and leads them to the Lord. Repentance is not mere emotional anguish, but acknowledging

one's own sins and wrongs and turning to God from the heart that relied on oneself.

Following the preaching that people should repent, the content of salvation we are to preach is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and at that time He also had the sins of our whole lives passed on to Him together with them. Bearing that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price for that sin, and thereby received the judgment in our place; and He rose again from death and saved us completely. Those who acknowledge that they themselves cannot wash away their sins and believe this gospel receive the remission of sins. For it is not the tears shed in repentance that pay the price of sin; Jesus Himself paid that price.

Therefore, we must not blur the very gospel of salvation while emphasizing only gathering people together or the healing of diseases. Making clear to those who are to turn from sin who the Savior is and how He resolved sin—that is, accurately preaching what we have received from the Lord—is the responsibility of those who have been sent.

Keep the word amid welcome and rejection

Jesus spoke of there being places that would neither receive the disciples nor hear their words, and said, *"When you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them" (Mark 6:11)*. Since the words of those who have been sent are not personal opinions that may be lightly rejected but the word the Lord has entrusted to them, rejecting them entails responsibility. The disciples were to make that

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responsibility known, but they received no command to seize people's hearts by force and push through their own will.

When we preach the gospel, there is both welcome and rejection, but do not change the content of salvation to suit people's reactions. We must know who the Lord who sends us is and preach the gospel we have received from Him. Ask the Lord for the strength you need, join hearts with those who labor together with you, and when someone comes to believe, give thanks to Jesus, who saved them. Even when our hands look empty, like the disciples who set out holding only a staff, the gospel we have received from the Lord is abundant grace to preach to souls. ✉

Preach the gospel, relying on the Lord, who sent out His disciples with only a staff

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Herod, who heard the word yet did not turn from his sin

< Mark 6:14–29 >

"Now King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well known. And he said, 'John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.' Others said, 'It is Elijah.' And others said, 'It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.' But when Herod heard, he said, 'This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!' For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, 'Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.' He also swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.' So she went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask?' And she said, 'The head of John the Baptist!' Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked,

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saying, 'I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.' And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb."

The fearful memory brought to light by the news of Jesus

When the name of Jesus became well known, people said that He was Elijah or that He was like one of the prophets of old, but Herod said, *"This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!" (Mark 6:16)*. Even while hearing of the things Jesus was doing, he did not recognize the Savior but judged, bound by what he himself had done. Following those words, the Gospel of Mark shows how John was put to death, and reveals that the problem of Herod's sin had not ended as a past event.

People think that if they keep away the person who says uncomfortable words, the problem those words exposed will also disappear. But shutting the mouth that pointed out sin does not make the sin that was committed disappear, and so even though Herod had killed John, he was not free from that memory. His reaction of saying, concerning Jesus, that John had risen shows that the sin in the heart cannot be solved by the method of avoiding the truth.

We, too, must not try to avoid the word when our sin is exposed. If, instead of admitting the wrong that has been exposed, we close our hearts to the person who preached those words, the problem of sin remains as it is. What we need is not to do away with the word we do not want to hear, but to acknowledge ourselves before that word and come to the Savior.

Hearing gladly and obeying are different

John said to Herod, *"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mark 6:18)*, and because of those words Herodias regarded John as an enemy and sought to kill him. But Herod, knowing that John was a just and holy man, feared him and protected him, and when he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet heard him gladly. Though he acknowledged the one who preached the word and had the pleasure of hearing those words, he did not go so far as to turn from the sin that had been pointed out.

The mere confession that one likes the words of truth does not solve the problem of one's own sin. For agreeing at the points that fit one's own thinking and not following when one's own desires are touched is putting oneself ahead of the word. Though Herod knew that John was right, he did not entrust his life to the word that rebuked his sin, and in the end that contradiction was exposed when he was faced with an opportunity to commit a greater sin.

We, too, must not remain only in the position of hearing the gospel and evaluating it as an excellent word. Before being knowledge with which to evaluate other people's religion, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word of salvation that we ourselves must accept. We must admit that we have sin and

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that we cannot remove it with our own righteousness. We must lay down the heart that stood like a judge examining the word, and see our own selves through that word.

Herod killed a righteous man to keep an oath made before people

At his birthday feast, Herod swore to Herodias's daughter, who had danced, *"Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom" (Mark 6:23)*. When the girl, as her mother told her, demanded the head of John, Herod was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oath and those who sat with him, he could not refuse, and he commanded that John be beheaded. He valued saving face by keeping his word before people more than admitting that his word had been wrong. Keeping a wicked promise could not become a righteous act.

This is the danger of a heart that does not admit its sin. In trying to hide the first wrong, one commits the next wrong, and in trying not to look weak before people, one commits a greater sin before God. Herod's sorrow did not stop the murder. For if one only clings to the feeling of being distressed and does not turn before the truth, that distress of the heart does not by itself become faith or righteousness.

John's death exposed the sin of those who rejected the word that rebuked their sin, but that death itself did not remit Herod's sin. Since the Savior who remits our sins is Jesus, we must know how to distinguish between the one who preaches the word of God and the One who accomplishes salvation according to that word. However deep one's guilt may be, the way of salvation does not end in fearing the one who preaches the word, but lies in believing in Jesus.

Do not hide your sin, but return to the Savior

Jesus received baptism from that very John whom Herod beheaded. Jesus did not leave sinners as they were but came to resolve sin, and through that baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and at that time He also had the lifelong sins of you and me passed on to Him together with them. Then, bearing those sins, He received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross as the price of those sins, and He rose again from death and accomplished salvation completely. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins. It is not a salvation obtained by pretending not to know one's sin or by saving one's own face, but a salvation obtained by believing in Jesus, who bore sin.

We who have already received the remission of sins must also admit that a wrong is a wrong. The grace that remitted our sins is not grounds for claiming that all our actions are right. Because we believe in the grace of the Lord, we can accept the rebuke of the word without insisting on our own righteousness. Rather than the fear that we will collapse if we admit it, we must put first the faith that Jesus has saved me.

The Bible conveys of Herod that *"when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly" (Mark 6:20),* but though he understood the right words, he tried to protect himself before people, and as a result he committed a greater sin before God. Do not stop at hearing gladly with your ears the word given to us. We must become people who accept the word that exposes our own sin, believe in the gospel of Jesus, who has remitted all sins, and actually turn from the wrong way. The word of the Lord that gives us life is more precious than saving face before people. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Do not look at the five loaves and think little of the grace of the Lord

< Mark 6:30–44 >

"Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread.' But He answered and said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?' But He said to them, 'How many loaves

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do you have? Go and see.' And when they found out they said, 'Five, and two fish.' Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men."

The Lord, who cared for the weary disciples and the multitude that flocked to Him

The apostles who returned from preaching the gospel reported in detail to Jesus what they had done and taught, and to them, who did not even have time to eat because there were many coming and going, Jesus said, *"Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31)*. The Lord did not only look at the work the disciples had carried out, but also knew that the disciples doing that work needed rest. Those entrusted with the Lord's work are also people who feel fatigue and must receive care.

But at the place to which they had departed by boat, many people had run there on foot and arrived first. The Bible tells us that Jesus *"saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark 6:34)*. Rather than the fact that many people had gathered, He saw their condition of having no shepherd to guide them. So He taught them many things, and made the multitude know where they should go and in whom they should

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believe. The compassion of the Lord does not stop at comforting people for a moment, but guides them to the way of life.

When we, too, have much to do and our hearts are weary, it is easy to regard all the needs of other people only as burdens. But while the Lord cared for the weary disciples, He did not turn away from the multitude who did not know the way either. For the church to serve according to His will, we ourselves must first receive care through the word of the Lord, and it is the person who thus receives the guidance of the shepherd who can also preach that word to other souls.

The work He entrusted to the disciples, who knew their lack

When the day was far spent, the disciples suggested sending the multitude away so that they could buy something to eat. This was because they saw no way to feed so many people in a deserted place, and there was reason in their calculation of whether they should buy two hundred denarii worth of bread to feed them. But Jesus said, *"You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37)*, and entrusted that work to the disciples. This command was not a word praising the disciples for having an ability they did not have, but a word that made them see the work the Lord does from the place of knowing their own lack.

What the disciples found and brought was only five loaves and two fish. Just as the word of the Lord says, *"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20)*, these two fish point to the church. Jesus, who received that little, had the people sit down in groups, looked up to heaven and blessed, and then broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples set before the people

what they had received from the Lord. The One who gave food abundantly was Jesus, and the disciples did the work of receiving it and carrying it. If we miss this relationship, we come to boast of the disciples' labor or, on the contrary, give up the work entrusted to us on the grounds that what we have in our hands is little.

The men alone who ate the loaves were five thousand, and they all ate their fill, and the leftover fragments of bread and fish were also taken up, twelve baskets full. They did not merely have a little taste and go back; Jesus satisfied their actual hunger, and the result that He had even the leftovers taken up shows that the supply exceeded the disciples' initial calculation. This One who fed five thousand with five loaves is God, who came to this earth clothed in flesh, and the One we are to rely on is this very Lord.

Preach abundantly also the grace that saved us from sin

Jesus, who fed the multitude in the deserted place, came to save us from sin. Like the disciples, who could not feed five thousand with five loaves, even if a person tries to solve the problem of sin by himself, what he can provide from within himself is not enough. Because adding good deeds and increasing one's religious life cannot do away with the judgment for the sins already committed, salvation can be obtained only when Jesus accomplishes for us the righteousness that sinners do not have.

So Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and that sin of the world includes all the sins that each one of us commits

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throughout our whole life. Then, bearing those sins that had been transferred to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and became the living Lord, who has saved us completely. We receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord accomplished in this way, and our zeal can add nothing to that salvation.

Therefore, the church that preaches the gospel does not treat people as if it had the power of salvation in itself, but first knows clearly what the grace it received from the Lord is and preaches it. Just as the word says of the deserted place where He fed them with five loaves that *"they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish" (Mark 6:42–43),* the Lord abundantly satisfies the hunger of souls and saves them even through a church where few people have gathered. That bread the disciples carried to them is the grace of God and the bread of life, namely, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as He fed the multitude with one small lunch box containing five loaves and two fish, you and I are that very lunch box, and God bestowed grace so that there would be plenty left over, lest there be anyone who could not eat for lack of food. So that whoever hears may believe and receive the remission of sins, we must rightly make known the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, and it is precisely here that the labor of looking into the condition of souls and explaining the word is needed.

Just as the Lord knew the needs of the multitude and fed them through the hands of the disciples, today, too, He has entrusted to us who are saved the work of sharing the gospel. We can value the saints who work with us, care for the weary, and serve in the place entrusted to each of us. We do not buy salvation with that

service; we labor because we are thankful for the salvation we have already received. Do not count only the number of people and what you have and so come to think little even of the grace of the Lord, but rely on the word of the Lord, who has given us life, and share the bread of life abundantly with hungry souls. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who broke the bread and the Lord who came on the sea are the same One

< Mark 6:45–52 >

“Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.”

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The headwind they encountered on the way the Lord sent them

Of what happened after He fed the multitude, the Bible tells us, *"Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away" (Mark 6:45)*. The disciples did not leave as they pleased but went the way the Lord told them to go, yet on that way the wind blew against them, and the disciples strained at the oars. Since there are difficulties like this even on the way of following the word of the Lord, this passage makes us lay down the expectation that if we obey, only a favorable wind will always blow.

While the disciples were struggling in the boat, Jesus had gone to the mountain to pray. As the word says, *"Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them" (Mark 6:47–48)*, the Lord was watching the disciples who were in the middle of the sea. Just because the Lord was not visible to the disciples' eyes did not mean that the Lord had forgotten them. We, too, when we meet something too hard for us to handle, easily think that we have been left alone, but we cannot judge the Lord's care only by the circumstances visible to our eyes.

Even so, this word does not mean that we should not row but just stay still. The disciples were doing their utmost in following the word to cross over, and we, too, must do the work entrusted to us while asking the Lord for help. Labor and faith go together, but if we think that our labor can take the place of the Lord's care, then the moment our strength runs out, our hearts collapse along with it.

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"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid"

About the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came walking on the sea, but the disciples, seeing Jesus, supposed He was a ghost and cried out. Even though the Lord had come near, they took His coming as something to be feared. Merely having seen what is before one's eyes does not mean one can rightly know its meaning, and so if we do not know whom we are looking at, we can be afraid even when the Lord's care is right before us.

Jesus immediately said to the disciples, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Mark 6:50)*. The Lord first made known who He was. Their reassurance did not come from imagining the situation favorably, but arose when they heard the word that the One who had come to them was Jesus. When Jesus went up into the boat, the wind also ceased; so the One who came to the disciples was God, who rules the sea and the wind.

Our faith, too, must have a clear object like this. Because it is hard to endure a difficult reality with only a heart that vaguely expects that everything will turn out well, we must know who Jesus, who saved us, is and what He has accomplished. If we set our hearts on that word, even when we do not know all the ways to solve the problem right away, we can tell the Lord about it and wait for His guidance.

Even after seeing the miracle, there remained something to understand

The disciples were exceedingly amazed in their hearts, and Mark reveals the reason, saying, *"For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52)*. The disciples, who a little earlier had received the bread

that came from the Lord's hands and distributed it to the multitude, saw that work up close and took part in it, and yet did not understand who Jesus, who did that work, was. Much activity and amazing experiences do not by themselves become the understanding of faith.

The Lord who fed so many people in the deserted place had now come on the sea, so the One who did both of these things is the same Jesus. The disciples should have received what they saw with the faith that knows Him. Today, we, too, stand in the same place if we trust only in the fact that we have heard the word many times and have long done church work, and do not examine our hearts. For even while we can know and speak of all the contents of the Bible, when actually faced with the problem of sin and the difficulties of life, we may forget what the Lord has accomplished and count only our own ability.

This Jesus, who came walking on the sea, is not One who left our sins with us and told us to solve them ourselves. Through the baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and among them are our lifelong sins as well. Bearing those sins, the Lord received in our place the judgment we were to receive by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross as the price of those sins, and He rose again from death and accomplished salvation completely. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins through the salvation the Lord accomplished, and God sends the Holy Spirit into that person's heart and testifies of this salvation. Even when our hearts waver, the basis of faith lies not in our own calm feelings but in the Lord's perfect salvation.

Even after being saved, our understanding can be slow and our hearts can grow weak. At such times, rather than hiding our weakness or even doubting the Lord's salvation, we must return

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to the word we have heard, consider again what Jesus has done for us, and ask Him for the help we need. The Lord who broke the bread and gave it to them and the Lord who came on the sea are the same One. Let us rely on and follow that Lord, who saved us from sin, even in the midst of today's headwind. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Like the people who came carrying the sick, bring others to Jesus

< Mark 6:53–56 >

“When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.”

The people who recognized Jesus and took action

The Bible relates what happened when Jesus and His disciples arrived at the land of Gennesaret: *“When they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him” (Mark 6:54)*. They did not stay where they were, merely passing around the news that Jesus had come; they ran through the whole region and, as soon as they heard where Jesus was, came carrying the sick on their beds. Their recognizing Jesus led to the actual action of caring for the sick.

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A person lying on a bed, even if he had the heart to come to Jesus, could not move by himself and so needed the help of others, and the passage records that people carried such sick people to Him. Their role did not lie in boasting of an ability to heal diseases but in helping the sick come to Jesus. When we distinguish the role of the One who heals from the role of those who bring, we can also know how we ought to serve others.

Around us, too, there are people who have not had the opportunity to hear the word or who cannot open their hearts because of hardships. We need to look into what they need and take the trouble to be with them so that they can hear the word. We cannot produce salvation for them, but we can make the gospel of salvation known to them and listen to the questions they ask. The confession that we know the Lord must lead in this way to concern for others.

Look not at the hem of the garment but at the Lord who wore it

In the villages, cities, and the country that Jesus entered, the people laid the sick in the marketplaces, and the Bible testifies that they *"begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well" (Mark 6:56)*. Though it is a short record, it clearly conveys that the power of the Lord was actually manifested to those who had been suffering from disease, and it shows that Jesus resolved what could not be resolved by human methods.

As we read this word, we must not think that the cloth itself had some mysterious power. The people did not go seeking just any garment; as the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood did in Mark chapter 5, they came to Jesus, who wore that

garment, and relied on the Lord, who bestows help. To that woman, too, the Lord said, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well" (Mark 5:34)*, and made it clear that what had saved the woman was not the garment but faith. Therefore, if we alter this word to mean that merely repeating the motion of touching brings the same result, we lose Jesus, who is the object of faith.

We, too, can tell the Lord of our diseases and hardships, and the Lord does not take human suffering lightly. However, on the basis of the healing at that time, we must not demand that every believer always receive the same healing immediately, nor rashly deny a person's salvation and faith on the grounds that his illness remains. We must ask, believing in the power of the Lord, and even while we wait for the answer, we must continue to give the needed care at the side of the one who is sick.

Rightly preach Jesus, who bore sin

Being healed of a bodily disease is a great grace. But if we know Jesus only as the One who heals diseases, we have not fully known the salvation He accomplished for us. This is because man has not only the suffering of the flesh but also the problem of sin, which must be resolved before God, and even if the body becomes healthy, if sin remains, one cannot escape the judgment for sin. Jesus came to save us from this very sin.

That same Jesus, who let them touch the hem of His garment, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and He also had our lifelong sins passed on to Him together at that time. Then, bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins, and so received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us completely.

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Therefore, what we must believe in is not the efficacy of some object but Jesus Christ, who in this way bore our sins and accomplished salvation. A person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and stands as a righteous person before God.

When we say that we bring a person to the Lord, this, too, must mean that we make this salvation known to him. If we only give him the expectation that his difficulties will be resolved and do not explain the relationship between the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross, that person is left without knowing what he must believe in order to be saved from sin. We must preach the word to him step by step so that he acknowledges his own sins and comes to know how the Lord dealt with all those sins.

The Bible records the labor of the people of Gennesaret, saying that they *"began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was" (Mark 6:55)*. Let us, too, look around us with thankfulness for having been saved and not turn away from those who seek help. Rather than trying to save someone by our own zeal, bringing that person to the Lord, who accomplished salvation, and letting him know who He is—this is the service most needed by a person who has not yet encountered the gospel. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Herod saved face, and Jesus fed the multitude

< Mark 6:1–56 >

"Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?' So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.' Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. Also He said to them, 'In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them.' So they went out and preached that

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people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them. Now King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well known. And he said, 'John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.' Others said, 'It is Elijah.' And others said, 'It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.' But when Herod heard, he said, 'This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!' For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, 'Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.' He also swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.' So she went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask?' And she said, 'The head of John the Baptist!' Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, 'I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.' And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and

gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb. Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread.' But He answered and said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?' But He said to them, 'How many loaves do you have? Go and see.' And when they found out they said, 'Five, and two fish.' Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men. Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go

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before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened. When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well."

By what do we judge a person?

In Mark chapter 6, several settings appear where people are gathered. There is the synagogue of His hometown, the birthday feast of Herod, and the deserted place where people gathered to hear the word of Jesus. The purposes of the gatherings differ,

and what took place there differs as well. Yet when we read these settings together, it is revealed whom people hold dear and what they try to protect. Through what we see there, we can examine our own hearts and learn the heart of the Lord, who deals with us.

The people of Jesus' hometown were astonished at His teaching, but they soon brought up His occupation and His family and rejected Him. This was because, even while hearing His wise words, they judged the One who was speaking by the outward appearance they had known, and keeping their own familiar judgment came before receiving the word of God. The very fact that they had known Him for a long time became, on the contrary, the reason they turned away from the truth He was preaching. As a result, the Bible records, *"Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them" (Mark 6:5)*.

We, too, can try to decide the value of the word by a person's status and circumstances. It is necessary to look into who said it, but whether someone has obtained a high position in the world does not determine the truth. When the desire to keep one's own standards is strong, even after hearing the word one cannot lay oneself down before that word. The incident of Herod that follows shows how terrible a result such a heart can bring about.

Herod, who killed a righteous man to save face at the feast

Herod knew John to be a just and holy man and feared him, and when he heard John's words, he was perplexed and yet heard him gladly. But he did not turn back in obedience to John's word, *"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mark*

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6:18). While he seemed to hold a righteous man dear, he did not give up the life he enjoyed and wanted to keep.

At the birthday feast, Herod swore to Herodias's daughter that he would give her whatever she wanted. The daughter, following her mother's wishes, demanded the head of John the Baptist. The Bible depicts Herod at that moment: *"And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her" (Mark 6:26)*. He chose to appear before those gathered at the feast as a king who keeps his word, and as a result John was put to death. Although keeping a wrong oath to the end can never be righteousness, Herod put saving face ahead of stopping his sin.

Sin does not always appear only in a violent form; it also appears in the form of knowing one's wrong and being sorry about it, yet going ahead and doing it anyway out of concern for what people think. Therefore, we must not think ourselves right merely because we grieved or felt the discomfort of conscience. We must acknowledge our sins revealed before the word and turn from them, and we must examine whether the desire not to lose people's good opinion is pushing away the word of God.

The shepherd who looked after people in the deserted place

In the same chapter, Jesus told the disciples who had returned from preaching the gospel to rest. When He saw the multitude that had followed Him even to the place of rest, He *"was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark 6:34)* and taught them, and when the day grew late and they needed something to eat, He fed them with five loaves and two fish. At Herod's feast a righteous man

died because of the king's face-saving, but in the deserted place where people gathered to Jesus, people who did not know which way to go and were hungry were cared for.

This contrast is not merely a matter of degree, as if Jesus were simply kinder than Herod. Herod gave up another person's life for the sake of his own face, but Jesus came to bear sinners' sins and judgment Himself in order to give them life, and gave up His own life. The compassion of the Lord, who had compassion on the multitude, is revealed even more clearly in that work of salvation.

Through the baptism He received from that very John whom Herod beheaded, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The lifelong sins that came from us, even the sin of forsaking righteousness out of concern for what people think, the Lord had passed on to Him at that time. Then, as the price of those sins that had been transferred to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us completely from sin and death. A person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit does not become righteous by putting forward his own face and deeds, but becomes a righteous person who has received the remission of sins through the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Therefore, we must not read Herod's sin as merely someone else's affair. We must know that within us, too, there is the desire to be recognized before people, and that with that desire we can refuse the word. When we do not hide that sin but accept the Lord's judgment, we can lay down the desire to establish our own righteousness and believe in the gospel that gave us life. For a person who has received the compassion of the Lord, thankfulness for salvation is more fitting than boasting that exalts oneself.

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The church that serves others with the grace it has received

The disciples whom Jesus sent out worked with the authority they had received from the Lord; in the deserted place, just as Jesus *"broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them" (Mark 6:41)*, they distributed that bread to the people; and when they were afraid on the sea, they had to hear the word of the Lord, who came to them. In all these things, a disciple was a person who received the help of the Lord, who supplies, and not a person called to exalt himself and lord it over others.

The church, too, must not forget this relationship. The reason we preach the gospel is not to build up the name and prestige of our gathering, but so that other souls, too, may believe in the grace by which the Lord gave life to sinners and be saved. Therefore, we must not treat the saints who labor with us as if they were expendable, but must look into the rest and help that weary people need, and we must also lay down the attitude of drawing near only to those who are useful to us.

Just as the people of Gennesaret brought the sick to Jesus, we, too, can serve so that others can hear the word of the Lord. That service is not a matter of saving our own face but of conveying the compassion of the Lord. Lay down before the word the heart that, like Herod, sought to exalt itself, give thanks to the Lord, who gave us life, and live a life that treasures the gospel of salvation received from the Lord, cares for the weak, and holds dear those who preach the gospel together with you. ✉

Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

Even a disciple entrusted with the Lord's work must learn the word

< Mark 6:1–56 >

"Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?' So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.' Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. Also He said to them, 'In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place.

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And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them.' So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them. Now King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well known. And he said, 'John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.' Others said, 'It is Elijah.' And others said, 'It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.' But when Herod heard, he said, 'This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!' For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, 'Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.' He also swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.' So she went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask?' And she said, 'The head of John the Baptist!' Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, 'I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.' And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse

her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb. Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread.' But He answered and said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?' But He said to them, 'How many loaves do you have? Go and see.' And when they found out they said, 'Five, and two fish.' Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took

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up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men. Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened. When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well."

One can be near the word and yet not believe

If we have heard the word a great deal or have taken on various tasks in the church, we easily think that we know the Lord that much better. But Mark chapter 6 shows us that even in the place where the word is heard and the place where the word is preached, we must still examine our hearts. The people of Jesus' hometown heard His teaching but rejected Him, and Herod heard John's words gladly but did not follow them. The disciples worked with the authority of the Lord and returned, but they did not understand the meaning of His breaking the loaves. Being near the word and believing that word and living by it do not automatically become the same thing.

The people of His hometown were astonished at the wisdom and mighty works of Jesus, so it was not that they did not believe because they had heard or seen nothing; they rejected Jesus because they could not let go of the thought that He was the carpenter they knew. Herod also knew John to be *"a just and holy man" (Mark 6:20)*, but when faced with the word that pointed out his sin, he did not turn his life around, and in the end he killed John on the grounds of the oath he had made before people. In both cases, their own judgment and interest came before the word they had heard.

This can happen to us as well. Even while hearing the word and saying that it is right, we can pick out and accept only those words that do not require us to correct our own thinking. Then the word does not become the truth that leads our hearts but remains knowledge that satisfies us. To learn the word of the Lord, we must lay down the attitude of trying to fit the word to the conclusions we have already decided on beforehand.

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A disciple who is sent works relying on the Lord

Jesus sent the twelve disciples out two by two and gave them power over unclean spirits, and He also told them what to take for the journey, in which house to stay, and what to do in a place that did not receive them. The disciples' work began not with having their own plans approved by the Lord but with following the Lord's sending and what He had spoken.

The Bible conveys how they returned: *"Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught" (Mark 6:30)*. The end of the work did not mean the end of their relationship with the Lord; they reported to the Lord and again received His care, and Jesus told them to rest. A disciple is not a person who receives orders only when necessary and gets by on his own strength the rest of the time, but a person who relies on the Lord both when he is sent and after he has finished the work.

We who serve the gospel today must also work within this relationship. With an attitude that exalts one's own ability when things go well and keeps away from the Lord when things are hard, it is difficult for the heart to grow. We must tell the Lord what we have done, reflect on our own judgment in the light of the word, and also ask the saints who serve with us for the help we need. The fact that we have been entrusted with the Lord's work is not a certificate that we no longer need to learn.

While carrying the bread we have received, we must learn the One who supplies it

In the deserted place, Jesus commanded His disciples, *"You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37)*. The disciples counted

the cost and the number of loaves but could not find a way to feed so many people, and then the Lord broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples set that bread before the people. Through their hands the multitude ate their fill, but when, a little later, they saw the Lord on the sea and were afraid, the Bible makes it clear that they had not understood about His breaking the loaves.

What the disciples needed was not to experience the same thing more often, but to know who had given the bread they carried, and who Jesus, who had accomplished that work, was. If one does not learn the Lord while taking part in the work, even though one's activities increase, one comes to forget the One on whom one must rely in the face of difficulties; conversely, if one acknowledges that one is weak and accepts the word of the Lord, one can learn faith even in the place where one has failed.

This point must be even clearer when we preach the gospel. What we preach to people is not a salvation made by our own efforts, but the salvation the Lord accomplished for us, like the bread the disciples received and carried. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and He also had the lifelong sins of each of us passed on to Him together at that time. Then, bearing those sins that had been transferred to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of those sins and received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and accomplished this salvation completely. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe in testifies of this very salvation the Lord has accomplished.

If we have received the remission of sins by believing in that gospel, then even while preaching the gospel we must not forget who it is that brings about salvation. It is not that the word gains the power of salvation because the one who preaches is

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outstanding; rather, when even we who fall short preach accurately what the Lord has accomplished, those who hear can believe in that gospel and be saved. Therefore, we must not be satisfied with knowing many expressions, but must clearly believe in our hearts the relationship that, because Jesus had sin transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, His Cross was the judgment for our sins.

Receive the word you have come to understand as today's faith

To the disciples who were afraid on the sea, Jesus made Himself known, saying, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Mark 6:50),* and got into the boat. Because He did not abandon the dull disciples but gave them His word again, we gain hope from this care. Acknowledging that our understanding of faith is lacking is not the end of the way of following the Lord, but the place where we can lay down our own thoughts and return to the word.

At the end of the chapter, the people of Gennesaret recognized Jesus, brought the sick, and asked the Lord for the help they needed. Just as their knowledge in recognizing Jesus became actual steps of asking, let us, too, not think of learning the word merely as increasing the knowledge in our heads. In the problem of sin, believing in the Lord, who has already accomplished salvation; in the hardships of life, asking Him for help; and in the work entrusted to us, following the will of the Lord—when the word leads our actual judgments and actions in this way, that is learning the word.

There is no need to think that we have lost even our salvation just because we discovered weakness while examining our

hearts. Because the righteousness of us who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit did not come from perfect conduct but from the Lord's salvation, we need only stand in that grace, correct our wrong thinking, and keep learning. Let us not let the word we have heard slip by as familiar talk. Since Jesus, who taught again the disciples who had not understood about His breaking the loaves, teaches us today as well, opening our hearts to Him, believing in the gospel we have received, and carrying out the work entrusted to us—this is the way a disciple entrusted with the Lord's work learns the word. ✉

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CHAPTER

7

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Even when the hands are washed, the sin that comes out of the heart does not disappear

< Mark 7:1–23 >

"Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, and copper vessels. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?' He answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men.' He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

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For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban'—" (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.' When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!' When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, 'Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?' And He said, 'What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.'"

The Pharisees, who judged cleanness by the rules of men

The Pharisees and the scribes saw some of Jesus' disciples eating bread with unwashed hands. Because they were keeping the washing of hands and vessels according to the tradition of

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the elders, they made an issue of the disciples who did not follow that rule. What is in dispute here is not the habit of life itself of washing one's hands before eating food. The problem was that they had made a rule handed down from men the standard that divides a clean person from an unclean person before God.

Jesus, citing the prophecy of Isaiah, said, *"This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Mark 7:6)*. It was because the godliness that showed on the outside and the actual direction of their hearts were different. While saying that they served God, they put the tradition they had been keeping ahead of the commandment of God. Jesus nailed down precisely this as sin, because not acknowledging the word of God and casting it aside is sin. Nevertheless, the more accustomed they became to those rules, the more they regarded themselves as upright people, yet they did not actually examine what their own hearts were like before the word of God.

We, too, may think that even our hearts are clean on the grounds that we are familiar with the forms of faith. We may know the order of worship, speak godly words well, and look proper to other people. But we cannot say that we have no sin before God on the basis of such an appearance alone. That is because people praise what they see on the outside, but God looks at the heart. The praise of people does not remove sin. Therefore, we must examine what is inside us by the word of the Lord.

The tradition that evaded honoring parents by putting forward Corban

Jesus exposed their wrong concretely by giving the example of Corban. God said to honor one's parents. But they taught that

if a person merely declared that what would have profited his parents had been given to God, he did not have to do anything for his parents. By putting forward the words that it had been given to God, they made it so that what God had told them to do could not be done. So the Lord rebuked them, saying, *"Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down" (Mark 7:13)*.

Outwardly it sounds as though it exalts God all the more, but the actual result was making the word of no effect. Therefore, a teaching does not become the will of God just because it uses godly expressions. We must examine whether that teaching makes people follow the word of God as it is, or whether it makes them sidestep the word in order to keep what people want. A wrong does not turn into truth merely because it has been handed down for a long time.

Our hearts are no different from this. We can attach a good-sounding pretext while avoiding a responsibility we ought to bear. What is needed at such a time is not a more plausible explanation but acknowledging the word that reveals our own hearts. We must examine whether we are hiding our own benefit behind the words that we serve God. The Lord sees even the heart hidden behind the form.

The sin that defiles a man comes from within

Jesus called the multitude and said, *"Hear Me, everyone, and understand" (Mark 7:14)*. It is the word in which He said, *"There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man" (Mark 7:15)*. When the disciples asked Him again in the house, the Lord explained, distinguishing the

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place where food enters from the evil that comes out of the heart. Food enters the stomach and is eliminated, but evil comes out of the heart and defiles a man. This word is not a teaching to ignore hygiene but a word that makes clear where sin comes from.

Evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness come out of the heart of man. Seeing the great wrongs of other people, we easily think that we ourselves are different from such people. But the Lord says that the source of that evil is inside man. Man is not defiled because he committed sins; he is defiled because, from the time he was born as a descendant of Adam, he inherited this evil heart from his parents. We cannot judge our own hearts righteous by comparing only the actions that have appeared outwardly. The evil heart harbored within does not become clean just because it has not been carried into action.

Circumstances can become an occasion that reveals sin. But if we lay all the responsibility for sin on circumstances and other people, we become unable to know our own hearts. When covetousness arises, when we hate other people, and when the thought of exalting ourselves rises up, we must acknowledge that the picture of man the Lord spoke of is in us, too. Because the spring from which sin comes is in the heart, man lives committing such sins all his life. Therefore, the problem of sin cannot be solved by the effort of tidying up the outside alone. However clean we wash our hands, the sin that comes out of the heart remains as it is.

Even when the hands are washed, the sin
that comes out of the heart does not disappear

Believe in the Savior, who bore even the sins of the heart

When we know the fact that sin comes out from within us, it also becomes clear whom we must rely on to wash away sin. Repeating prayers of repentance every day, as one washes one's hands over and over, does not remove the sins of a lifetime. We need the Savior, who bore all the sins committed with the heart and the sins committed in action. The reason Jesus exposed our sins is so that we would not cover up our sins and regard ourselves as righteous, but believe in His salvation.

That is why, when Jesus began His public ministry, He said at the Jordan River, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism from John. Through that baptism, all the sins of the world were transferred to Jesus once and for all. All the sins that we commit with our hearts and actions throughout our lives were also passed on to Jesus at that time. Bearing those sins that had been transferred to Him, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins. It is not that Jesus bore only original sin and that we must remove the remaining sins through a religious life. The Lord bore all the sins of the world.

A person who believes in this salvation is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins, but that does not mean that evil thoughts no longer rise up from the flesh. So even after being saved, we must examine our hearts by the word. When covetousness and pride rise up, we must not justify them but acknowledge before the Lord that they are evil. At the same time, we must believe in the gospel of the Lord, who has already borne even those sins, and turn our hearts around according to the will

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of the Lord. Acknowledging sin and regarding oneself as having gone back to being a sinner are not the same thing. That is because even that sin now revealed is a sin that had already been passed on to Jesus through His baptism and for which He received all the judgment on the Cross.

Our boast does not lie in how well we have equipped ourselves with godly forms. It lies in Jesus, who knows even our evil hearts and has saved us from all those sins. Let us not hide what is inside us in order to win the approval of people. Let us know ourselves rightly before the word, believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and live according to the word of the Lord with thanksgiving for having been saved. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Acknowledge the word and seek mercy

< Mark 7:1–23 >

"Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, and copper vessels. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?' He answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men.' He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban'—" (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let

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him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.' When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!' When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, 'Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?' And He said, 'What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.'"

Various ideas about sin

Today I want to speak about this matter of sin. I want to talk together with you a little about what sin is. Mark chapter 7 tells us well about sin, about what kind of thing sin is. People each have their own ideas about this matter of sin. Some people think that trespasses are sin. And that is how they understand it. And some people think that their own conduct not being upright is sin. In some countries, when one's parents pass away, people think that filial piety is to lay them well in a grave in the ground, then raise a burial mound, cover it with turf, and, for as long as

the children live, tend the turf of that grave well several times a year throughout their whole lives. But it is said that certain tribes in Papua New Guinea or in the Brazil region thought that, when their parents died, the way to practice filial piety toward those parents was for all the children to gather around and sit down and eat the whole of their parents' bodies, so that no beast or worm could gnaw even a bit of their parents' flesh. So this concept of filial piety, too, varies.

And people's concept of this matter of sin also varies. Some people think that their own conduct not being upright is sin, and they judge that sin in their own way. They judge it by their own standards. Some people judge by human ethics and morals, and they say that if one fails to live according to human ethics and morals, that is sin. So some people, looking at things in the light of the spirit of Confucianism, think that if one fails to practice filial piety toward one's parents according to the Confucian spirit, or fails to behave uprightly before people, that is sin. And they think that if they are good to their parents, perform the ancestral rites well according to Confucian thought, serve their ancestors well, and are good to their living parents, then they have no sin. So there are various concepts of sin.

Then we must know about sin. We can know about sin rightly only when we lend our ears to the word of God: what sin is, and what God says to us human beings is sin. As for what sin is, sin is having discarded the word of God. Dear fellow believers, sin is discarding the word of God. It is nothing else. Discarding the word of God is sin.

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The tradition of the elders and the commandment of God

When Jesus was on this earth, the Pharisees and some of the scribes came from Jerusalem and gathered to Jesus, and when they saw some of Jesus' disciples eating bread with defiled hands, unwashed hands, they pointed at Jesus' disciples and at Jesus and said that they were committing sin. Here we must look at what part of the word of God the Jews discarded while keeping the tradition of men, that is, at how much the laws that people have set up cause the word of God to be discarded. The region of Palestine, where Jesus and Jesus' disciples lived, is by nature a dry land with much dust. These days they make artificial oases with things like sprinklers, plant many fruit trees, water them, and produce much fruit. But originally that region is a region of sandy desert. So when going anywhere, people wear sandals, and the people of that region drape a white cloth over their heads. That is because so much sand is blowing about that if one just went around as one was, dirt and sand would pile up like a wall. So it is not that they drape a white cloth over themselves as a fashion; it is because so much sand flies about in that region that, in keeping with the characteristics of that region, they go around with a cloth draped over their heads so as not to be covered with sand and dust. So when they come home after going around covered with dust like this, what is it like? Their hands are covered with dust, their clothes are covered with dust, and their feet are covered with dust. So when a person enters a house, he draws water into a basin and washes his hands and washes his feet, then shakes off his clothes, goes in and sits down, and before eating food, before preparing food, he takes the dishes that had been washed well and set upside down in that

house and puts them into water again and washes them clean. That is why they washed cups, pitchers, and copper vessels.

When the people were covered all over with dust, how dusty must the things inside the house have been as well? So this became the tradition of the people, the custom of that region. So whenever they were going around somewhere and wanted to prepare food and eat, first a person had to wash his hands and feet and wash up to his forearms. If you know the customs of that country, you understand it well. Usually people wash only their hands. So the adults taught the children, saying, "Do not wash only this part of your hands; roll up your sleeves and wash up to your forearms, and wash your feet clean too, and then come and wash all the dishes clean and receive your food and eat." It was because there was so much dust in that region. And so the years went by and went by, and a thousand years, two thousand years passed. Throughout the two thousand years of the history of the nation of Israel, the elders above kept teaching the children that way, and when those children grew up, they all taught the descendants below them that whenever they came back from outside, they must without fail wash their hands and then receive their food and eat.

Then one day Jesus was born in a small village called Bethlehem in that region of Palestine. And the scribes and the Pharisees who had come from Jerusalem gathered where Jesus was. They gathered and were sitting together with Jesus, and there was one group of Jesus' disciples, and there was also one group of people who were not Jesus' disciples together with them. Now, usually when people gather, food is served to the guests. It is similar to Eastern custom. That is courtesy. There are very many things in which the customs of Israel and Eastern customs are similar. So this is courtesy, and food is served. As

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food was being served, it seems that bread came out. I do not know what kind of bread it was.

But the story is that Jesus' disciples did not wash their hands and feet but just brushed themselves off, picked up the bread, and ate it. So what did the Pharisees and the scribes here think? They thought, "My goodness, those ignorant people; their ignorance knows no bounds." Then, since Jesus' disciples had done that, who got the blame? It was Jesus who got the blame. The Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus, *"Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" (Mark 7:5)* and so they challenged Jesus. Jesus said, *"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men" (Mark 7:6–8)*, and He also said, *"All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition" (Mark 7:9)*.

Dear fellow believers, God did not look at the outward appearance, but looked at the center of the heart. The Pharisees and the scribes asked, "Why do Your disciples not keep the tradition of the elders? Why do they not keep what the elders tell them, to wash their hands and feet and then eat?" So Jesus said that Isaiah, the prophet of the Old Testament, had prophesied well about them long ago, and He said, *"This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Mark 7:6)* and *"laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8)*.

"Laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men"

Jesus said that your discarding the commandment of God is sin; He said that having discarded the word of God is sin. People thought that if one rejected the tradition of men, the teachings of men, that was sin. The people of Israel were like that, too. But our Lord said that having rejected the word of God is precisely what sin is. Dear fellow believers, what is sin? Having discarded the word of God is sin. Of course, human trespasses are also called transgressions, people's wrong conduct is also sin, and not doing what we ought to do and our shortcomings are all sin as well. But as for what the fundamental sin, the real sin, is, having discarded the word of God is sin.

As for what our Lord dislikes most of all, He dislikes most of all the discarding of the word of God. And He dislikes most of all the refusal to acknowledge the word of God. Dear fellow believers, as for how the thinking of the Lord and the thinking of the Pharisees here differ, as for how the thinking of us human beings and the thinking of God differ, if we accept and believe the word that He has spoken, God says that it is right and tells us that we have done well. But if we do not acknowledge the word of God and disregard that word, God says that this is sin. What is sin? If sin is missing the mark, then what is that mark? Not acknowledging the word of God is sin. Discarding the word of God is sin. God has been from the very beginning of this world; He has existed from before eternity, and He Himself made this world. He is the Master of this world. And His word is the law.

As for what God said to the Pharisees, seeing them reject the word of God and set greater importance on the tradition of men, on the words of men, Jesus said that this was sin. When Jesus looked at the Pharisees, they were complete hypocrites. He was

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saying, “What do you mean, you believe in God? Do you really honor and fear Me? You boast of the LORD God, but do you really revere the LORD God?” In God’s sight, looking only at the outer shell of man, disregarding the word of God altogether, and regarding the words of men as very important—that is sin. Among sins, it is the greatest sin. A person who does not acknowledge the word of God and discards it, not acknowledging and discarding the word that God has spoken—that is sin. Other things are not sin; other shortcomings are called trespasses. They are called transgressions. The sins we commit by doing wrong because of shortcomings in our conduct—those are sin, to be sure, but they are not the fundamental sin; they are committing transgressions, making mistakes. The Bible calls those trespasses. The Bible has divided these into sin and transgressions.

But as for what is fundamentally sin before God, a person who has not acknowledged the word, even if he has not committed a single transgression—that person is a great sinner before God. That is why our Lord rebuked the Pharisees.

He said that you lay aside the commandment of God and hold the tradition of men. Dear fellow believers, in the five books of Moses, from Genesis through Deuteronomy, there are the words in which He said, “Do this,” and “Do not do that,” aren’t there? Those are the commandments of God. They are the words God has spoken. Even if we cannot keep all of those words one hundred percent, even if we do not have the ability to keep them, we must acknowledge, “This is the word of God; this is the law of God.” It means that we must acknowledge the word of God, the law of God, just as we acknowledge God Himself. We must acknowledge what He has spoken to us from the beginning.

“My word is the law”—who said this? The tyrants of old, the emperors of Rome, said so. These people claimed that whatever

they said was the law. What dictators say is the law. Well then, our God created this world in the beginning. *"Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Genesis 1:3)*. God made everything with His word. And God established the law. And *"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)*—He was the Word in His very essence. He was, in essence, the word of God. Then, as for how He appears to us, He appears to us as the word. He is the Word in His essence, but by being put into documents and written down, He teaches us who He is. God is in essence Spirit, but He does so. That is why we call this Bible the word of God.

So God said here that you lay aside the commandment of God and keep the commandment of men, and the commandments of God number 613. "Do this; do not do that; sleep in this way; do not do this; do that in this way"—the Ten Commandments and the law of God are all things He said to do and not to do, and there are trivial ones too, aren't there? If you read Exodus and Leviticus, there are things God has spoken, such as that men should do this and women should do that, and that if an animal falls into a pit it should be pulled out, aren't there? Those number 613. The 613 commandments—that is the law, and it is what God told us human beings to do and not to do. Because what He told us to do and not to do is not the word of man, we must chew it over, and because it is the word of God, we must obey and follow that word. We do not have the ability to follow it, but we must acknowledge it. We must acknowledge that the word is right.

Dear fellow believers, is there anything in the word that is not right?

But the people of Israel had rejected the word of God at its very root. Whether there were 613 of them or 1,000, they did not acknowledge them at all. And as for what had more authority to

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them than the word God had spoken, it was what the elders above them had said; that had more authority for them.

So even at the time Jesus was born, people believed, understood, and acted that way. That was what Jesus disliked most of all.

The purpose for which God gave the law

God says to us, *"For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all" (Romans 11:32)*. God knows that we cannot keep the word of God perfectly. But we must know that He wanted to make us His children by taking pity on us. Of course, God does not think that we created beings can perfectly keep what He has spoken. But one thing that we created beings must consider before God is this: it is not that we may simply forget or disregard what God has clearly spoken; rather, our Lord gave us His law so that we would acknowledge before God that the word of God is clearly right, but that we are clearly unclean. What is the purpose for which God gave the law to people? It is to make them realize and know sin. The purpose for which God gave the law is that He gave us the law to make us realize and know sin. Do you understand that He did not give the law because created beings could perfectly keep what He had spoken, but that He gave us the law, gave us the commandments, to make us know the shortcomings of us created beings, to make us know sin, to make us know our own shortcomings? That is the purpose.

Well then, of course, it is all right as far as the people of Israel, the Pharisees and the scribes, failing to keep the word of God goes. But it means that one must acknowledge the word of God as the word of God. One must not disregard it. But the people of

Israel disregarded it. I cannot tell you how much they disregarded it. Dear fellow believers, the Book of Romans says that the law was given to make people realize and know their sin, saying, *"By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20)*. Then we know that the law was not given for us to keep. And what did we realize through the law? Through those 613 commandments and the law, in which He told us to do this and not to do that, what did we realize? We realized our shortcomings, our own sin. Before God, human beings, who are created beings, realized their own sin. Then, having realized sin, what should we do? Should we strive to keep it even though we fall short? The purpose for which God gave the law to us human beings is that He gave it so that we would realize and know sin, and so, knowing that we are truly sinners, we would seek help before God and come to believe in Jesus Christ; God gave us the law to make us children of God, to make us the people of God, by believing in Jesus Christ.

But many people are still striving to keep the law even now. Here Jesus said that you lay aside the commandment of God and hold the tradition of men. Dear fellow believers, we must not refuse to acknowledge the word of God just because we cannot keep the law. It means that we must not refuse to acknowledge the law of God. We acknowledge the law of God, and then what we must further acknowledge is that we must acknowledge our shortcomings. It means that a person must acknowledge his own powerlessness and his own sin, that he himself is a sinner before God. It means that he must acknowledge how lacking a person he is when he stands before the law of God, before the word of God. The attitude of acknowledging this and going before God, before Jesus the Savior, and seeking help, asking Him to save oneself, is right in God's sight. It is because God gave the law in order to bring this about. But if someone knows the law and the

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commandments of God, saying, “The law of God is right,” and he knows that the law is right and also knows that he himself falls short, yet says that he will strive to keep it, is that right or not right? It is not right. Why is that? The purpose for which God gave the law is that He did so in order to teach human beings about themselves, what kind of beings they are through and through.

And it means that our God gave the law to the descendants of Adam in order to send His Son Jesus and have them receive the remission of all those sins and make them His children; God gave the law to the descendants of Adam in order to make them realize and know sin, so that they would know that they themselves are sinners through and through, believe in Jesus, be saved from sin, become children of God, and receive all the blessings God has given. Nevertheless, He said that those who, though falling short, try to keep the law, those who want to abide in the law, are under the curse. We must clearly know well the word God has spoken. God Himself, in the beginning, from the very first, made this universe and made people. He made you and me. Then every beginning must be started from God and must be thought through from God, and we must believe from God. We must think, judge, and believe according to the word of God. That is the most accurate thing. We must start from the word of God and believe by the word. If instead one thinks in one’s own way, out of one’s own thinking, out of one’s own heart, and acts accordingly, then that is bound to fall into error, and that is wrong. Dear fellow believers, if the people of Israel, too, had looked at it in the light of the word of God when Jesus’ disciples put their hands into the bread dish and picked it up and ate it, the Pharisees could not have rebuked those disciples of Jesus. That is because what goes into the mouth enters the stomach and is eliminated. It means that what enters from

outside cannot defile a man. Therefore, what really defiles a man is this: it is not that a man is defiled because he eats food in a dirty way; rather, a man has become defiled because of the sin that comes out from within a man—a man becomes defiled because of that sin.

Man is a descendant of Adam. It means that the descendants of Adam, who fell into sin because of the sin of not believing the word of God and not acknowledging that word, the people who inherited that sin—what comes out of the heart of such people are evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, an evil eye; such a defiled heart comes out from within and defiles the other person. It means that it is not food that defiles a man, but the sin inside a man that defiles a man.

"That He might have mercy on all"

We must take a look at this word and talk about it.

"For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all" (Romans 11:32).

What did it say? It says that God committed all to disobedience so that He might have mercy on all. To have mercy means to take pity. It means that it was God's purpose and will to bestow that mercy, that pity, and, through God's taking pity, to make us children of God, to make us the people of God. That is why He caused us to be born as descendants of Adam. And it means that He made Adam a little lower than the angels in order to make us children of God fundamentally through that love with which He takes pity on us. It is not that created beings become children of God because they are superior; rather, it means that God clothed us with the grace by which He made us children of

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God through our receiving His pity, through our receiving the love of God. Dear fellow believers, is it because we are superior that we have become children of God and have no sin? Is it because we have conducted ourselves well? It is not that; rather, it means that God took pity on each one of us, and that, through Jesus' having all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again, and thereby removing all our sins, He caused sinners through and through to believe in Him through Jesus Christ and, by faith, to enter into that grace, into the blessing of the glory of His grace, and so made them children of God. It means that He raised human beings, who are created beings, up to be children of God. *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33)*. Oh, the depth, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How great the wisdom of God is! How well our Lord knows the riches of knowledge! His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out. Dear fellow believers, who knew that God had done it this way, that man was born so lacking? But when we meet Jesus Christ, we come to know it. It is so profound. The Apostle Paul, too, was born again exactly as we were. Because he was born again, he said, *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 'For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?'" (Romans 11:33–34)*. It means, who has become His teacher? Who taught God, telling Him to do this? He Himself thought it out and He Himself did it. That we, who are created beings, have become children of God is not because some person taught Him; it came about through God's own

thought, through His own plan. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

So the angels are startled again and again. The angels were at first higher than man. When God made man, He clearly made him a little lower than the angels. And man is lacking in ability, too. But then one day, it was, *"What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:4)*. Man was lower than the angels, but one day, when the angels looked, man had gone up higher than they. He had become a child of God. Then what about them? They cannot become like God. What are the children of God? They are gods. So what are those who have received the remission of sins called? They are called gods. That is why the Psalms say such a word. *"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3–4)*. It is saying, "Why do You visit us and concern Yourself with us; why, after leaving us in the midst of destruction, did You love us by Your own one-sided pity, remove our sins completely, and make us Your very own people without sin, Your children?" *"O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:9)*. The writer of the Psalms realized this and recorded it just so in the Old Testament. And here in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul is speaking of it. It is such an amazing thing. That a created being reaches the position of a god has come about through God's mercy, through His pity. This is the love of God.

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The person who acknowledges the word becomes a sinner through and through

Dear fellow believers, is it right for us to strive to keep the law even though we fall short? Is it right to abide in the law and strive a little harder, strive with all our devotion? Or did God give us the law so that we would realize sin, know that we are utterly wretched sinners, sinners who can only go to hell, and so look for mercy, for pity, before God? Or did He give us the law so that, though we fall short, we would try to keep it until we succeed in keeping it? We clearly know that it is not so. We know that it is not the latter. We believe that it is the former. So how we understand the word of God is what matters. What is sin? Discarding the word of God is sin, and not acknowledging the word of God, not acknowledging that this word of the Bible is the word of God, is sin. And disregarding the word even while knowing the word is sin.

Then what is sin? Not believing the word of God is sin, and disregarding it is sin. Then, since the word is the law, since the word is God, we must know according to the word of God, think according to the word, and believe according to the word. Only then can we receive the remission of sins.

Dear fellow believers, when a person knows the law, knows the commandments, and acknowledges the word of God, the law of God, he becomes a sinner through and through.

The person who acknowledges the word is a sinner through and through, and such a person goes to God and is completely set free. Dear fellow believers, if you acknowledge the word of God, if you acknowledge the commandments of God, you come to know how truly lacking you are. You do not say that you kept this but failed to keep that. If you truly know the commandments of God, these 613 commandments in which He said to do this

and not to do that, you cannot say, "God, today I kept this one, but I failed to keep the others." You say, "I cannot do any of it. God, please save me." That is what you do. So you acknowledge through and through that you yourself are a sinner, and you come to acknowledge that you are a sinner not because you have done wrong in your conduct but because you are fundamentally a lump of sin. And you come to know yourself that there is within you that which is the exact opposite of the commandments of God. Jesus said that what comes out from within a man defiles a man, that the food God has given can never defile a man, and that all things are clean. And then He said, *"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man" (Mark 7:20)*.

Dear fellow believers, we were born as descendants of Adam. Then, having been born as descendants of Adam, what are we like? Are we born with sin, or are we simply born? We are born with sin. Then, being born with that sin, will we commit that sin or not? We commit it. Now, when human beings who were born with that sin come to know the law of God and know the commandments, the commandments of God are all absolutely and unquestionably right. But the commandments of God are all right, and when a person comes to know himself that what he possesses, the nature of man, is the exact opposite of those commandments of God, he comes to look only to one thing before God: pity. He comes to ask only for that. He comes to know that in terms of conduct he cannot do anything at all. So before God he comes to say, simply and unconditionally, "Lord, have pity on me." Here we come to look at David. David said that if the Lord's word declared him righteous, he was righteous, and that it would be done according to the judgment of the Lord's word. "If You say that I am a sinner, I am a lump of sin and already more than deserving of hell; if You say that I am a sinner, I am a sinner, and if You say that I am righteous, I am

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righteous. If God saves me, I am saved, and if God sends me to hell, I go to hell." It means acknowledging God. That is truly right faith. It is the faith and the attitude by which we can receive the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, you may wonder why I keep insisting on this, since it is something you always hear, but we must truly know rightly what sin is.

Dear fellow believers, because we are descendants of Adam, is there a lustful heart in the heart of man, or is there not? But what does God say? He says not to commit adultery, doesn't He? Is there a murderous heart in the heart of man, or is there not? There is, isn't there? But the word of God says not to murder, doesn't it? Then what does that make us? Is there clearly in the heart of man a heart that wants to give one's parents a hard time, or is there not? There is, yet the word of God says to honor your parents. Then the word of God is absolutely and unquestionably right, and what are we? It means that we human beings are absolutely and unquestionably evil people. Is that right or not? It is right. Then what must we do? We must acknowledge before God that we are, before God, a lump of sin through and through. It is not that I am not a sinner today because I did a good deed, and that I am a sinner when I do not do good deeds; it is not that; rather, once a human being has been born, even if he has not done a single thing wrong, even if he has not committed a single transgression, before God he is a sinner, a complete and perfect lump of sin. It means that he is a being who can only go to hell. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? That is precisely what a sinner is. We are sinners not because our conduct is wrong, because we commit adultery, murder, steal, throw punches, and fail to love others; rather, it means that because we were fundamentally born with sin from the moment of our birth, because we were born with a nature that is the exact opposite of God, we are sinners who can only go to hell. For that reason, we

cannot possibly do righteousness. Because we have no ability to do good deeds, if a person who was born with sin, a person who was born with a murderous heart, a person who was born with a thieving heart, claims that he has not stolen, is that righteous or not righteous? It is not right. That is what is called hypocrisy.

Jesus said to the Pharisees and the scribes, *"Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matthew 23:25)* and said that they were hypocrites. If a person was born as a lump of sin, he commits sin throughout his whole life. That is God's exact eye with which He sees human beings. Then if someone, having been born as a lump of sin, says that he does not commit sin, that he never throws punches and has never once fought in his whole life, that he has never once in his whole life thrown a punch at anyone, never once stolen, never committed even one petty theft, then that is called telling a lie. It means that God says, "You are a lump of sin; you are a sinner," and judges so. Dear fellow believers, for that reason, even if we never once commit sin, we are a lump of sin, sinners, and people who can only go to hell. Even if we have kept the law a little, kept the commandments a little, we are still sinners. We can only go to hell. Then what must we do? We must receive pity before God, and if He removes our sins, we can only be saved by believing in that removal of our sins. If He does not remove our sins, we can only bear our sins and go to hell. Man is the one who was born to such a fate.

"For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Romans 11:36). Everything comes about through God. Why did He make human beings? It means that the purpose for which He made us was to make us His own children and live together with us in the kingdom of heaven forever. He made you and me that way. Genesis chapter 2 is speaking entirely of that word. And Genesis chapter 2 tells us that this lay not in our deeds but in the

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love and grace of God, which He bestowed unconditionally. Dear fellow believers, isn't that so?

Dear fellow believers, the person who acknowledges the word of God comes to acknowledge that he is a sinner through and through, that he is a person who is completely and perfectly bound for hell, and that he is truly a sinner. And the person who acknowledges the word of God also comes to know that he is completely and perfectly righteous. So discarding the word, not acknowledging the word of God, is sin, and the person who acknowledges the word of God becomes a sinner and then becomes completely righteous. So he is born again by the word of God. He receives grace. What is sin? Not acknowledging the word of God, discarding the word, is sin—Jesus nails this down firmly in Mark chapter 7. While explaining as background what the Pharisees and the scribes and Jesus' disciples were doing like this, He does it like laying down the basic bass line in background music and then playing the theme.

If you go to a music concert, the soloist commands the notes and plays over the basic bass that the orchestra has laid down, and even when someone who does not know music well listens, it is truly good. The word of Mark chapter 7 is like that, too.

It means that God wanted people to acknowledge the word of God, so that those who were made by God would become sinners by God and become righteous by God. It means that because He is the Creator, He wanted to bring it to completion Himself. So discarding the word of God is the greatest sin and the sin that leads to hell. Dear fellow believers, not acknowledging the word is sin. So we must know the word accurately. We must know what sin is. And if we truly acknowledge the word, we are complete and perfect sinners who can only die. Let us look at this word.

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse"

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them'" (Galatians 3:10).

What did it say? It said that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. Even now, those who are striving to keep the word of God, the law of God, by their deeds are under the curse of God. Dear fellow believers, where did it say they are? They are under the curse. So where are those who are now trying to be cleansed by offering prayers of repentance for their sins, confessing them by their own deeds and offering prayers of repentance and prayers of confession? They are under the curse. Why did He give the law? He gave it to make us realize and know sin. It means that He gave the law to us in order to make us know that we are sinners through and through, people who can only go to hell. He did not give the law for us to keep. Nor, for that matter, did He give it for us not to keep. He gave it for us to realize sin. What other purpose is there? There is one purpose. So not acknowledging the word of God is sin, and striving to become righteous by living according to the word while claiming to acknowledge the word is sin as well. Dear fellow believers, it is such a tremendous thing, isn't it? That even striving like that is sin, I mean. Isn't that so? It means that trying to become righteous by living according to the word is sin.

Then how is striving to become righteous by living according to the word sin? It is the sin of pride. Among sins, it is pride. It was said that in the heart of man there is a murderous heart, an adulterous heart, and a proud heart, wasn't it? It is the sin of pride. Striving to become righteous by living according to the

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word—that is the sin of pride. Then what is acknowledged before God? The person who believes the word of God, the person who acknowledges the word of God, the person who believes the word of God becomes righteous before God. He receives grace. He becomes righteous before God, goes to the kingdom of heaven, becomes one of the people of God, becomes a son of God, and goes to the kingdom of heaven. He fills up all the blessings of God by faith. Those blessings of God are filled up by believing the word. They are filled up by the law of faith. They are established not by keeping, but by faith, by believing the word of God. All the blessings are filled up. Dear fellow believers, yet among the many people today, there are many who strive to keep the law of God. All religious people are like that. The thought of trying to keep the law is admirable, but one must discard that proud thought of trying to keep that law, of trying to become righteous by living according to the word of God. Only then does one receive the remission of sins. Only when one discards pride does one receive the remission of sins.

In a certain book I saw a story that a boy plugged a hole in a burst dike with his finger, and through that boy's sacrifice the city was saved. Let us think about that boy for a moment.

Dear fellow believers, suppose a person is plugging a hole in a dike with his hand, and if he takes his hand away, the hole will grow bigger and everything will become a sea of water and everyone will die. But suppose that in fact, even if he took his hand away, it would not become like that right away, and there would be plenty of time to go and come back and plug it. But suppose that in that person's mind is the thought, "If I pull out the finger plugging this hole, this whole city will become a sea of water and everyone will die," and with that thought, alone in an empty field where no one comes and no one is around, he keeps plugging it without even eating. Dear fellow believers, if

he keeps plugging it, will he die or not? Suppose that person kept plugging it until he died. But suppose that, objectively speaking, even if he had taken his hand away, the hole would not have grown bigger so quickly, and it was something that could easily have been plugged by going to the village and bringing the adults. But suppose that in his own mind he thought, "If I pull this hand out of the hole, everything will be submerged in water and everyone will die," and while no one at all was coming, he kept crying, "Help!" and died of hunger. Where does the way for this person to be saved lie? It lies in pulling out his hand.

Dear fellow believers, He said that those who are of the works of the law, who try to keep the law, are under the curse. Those who hold the thought that one goes to the kingdom of heaven only by believing in Jesus and also living according to the word of God, thereby being sanctified, becoming clean, and becoming righteous—such people are even now under the works of the law, under the curse. They say that they believe in God but that they must nevertheless live according to the word; but do we become righteous by living according to the word? Dear fellow believers, by acknowledging the word of God, we become sinners through and through, sinners who can only go to hell, and by believing the word of God, the word of grace, by believing the word that Jesus Christ has spoken, we become completely and perfectly righteous. It comes about by faith. Dear fellow believers, for that reason God established the law by which He saves us as the law of faith, and saved us. It means that He saved us not by human deeds but through that faith which acknowledges the word of God, through that faith. It means that He determined it so.

Not acknowledging the word is sin. So as for why those who have not received the remission of sins have failed to receive the remission of sins, it is because they do not acknowledge the

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word God has spoken that they fail to receive the remission of sins. We are all equally lacking, yet some people receive the remission of sins; those who receive the grace of God have received the remission of sins because they acknowledged the word of God. He said, *"Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:41)*. Two people are grinding at the mill alike, but one goes and one is left. Will the one who is left keep turning the mill or not? She keeps turning it. Since that is all there is to do in the time that remains, she has to keep turning it. How is it that one went and one was left? It means that one heard the word of God and believed. But the other did nothing but the things of the world and strove only to keep the law, and went to hell. Why was that one forsaken? It means that because she tried to keep the law, the word of God, while trying to keep it she was climbing up before God, and God shook her off. If a person tries to rise up before God by his own deeds, if he steps forward saying, "I will become righteous by living according to the word," God rejects him. He sends him to hell. So the person who tries to become righteous by his own deeds goes to hell. It is the same in this age as well. *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith'" (Galatians 3:10–11)*. What did it say? It said that the just shall live by faith. Then what becomes of the righteous? The righteous become righteous by faith, and the righteous can live by faith. Even if their deeds fall short, they live by faith.

The way to become righteous by faith

"For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Dear fellow believers, one is not righteous because one does not commit sin. I very much want to say this.

Not believing the word of God, discarding the word of God, is sin. Not acknowledging the word of God is sin. Not believing the word of God is sin. It is the sin that leads to hell. I hope you will know that this is sin. But we cannot keep the word of God. That is because, having been born fundamentally as descendants of Adam from the moment of our birth, we were born as a lump of sin and commit sin until we die. For that reason, there is not the slightest hope in ourselves. If there is any hope at all, there is hope only in Jesus Christ, who has saved us. So we have been saved by believing in that Jesus Christ. By receiving baptism from John, He had the sin of the whole world transferred to Him, and by bearing that sin, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again, He removed all our sins, the sin of the whole world. We have been saved by believing in that, by believing in Jesus Christ the Savior. Dear beloved saints, are we lacking? We are lacking. But how is it? Have we become righteous? We have become righteous. Did we become righteous by deeds? Did it come about by keeping the law? Did it come about because we strove to live according to the will of God? Or did it come about by faith? It came about by acknowledging the word of God. The word of God was proclaimed equally to all people, yet it means that some believed the word and some did not believe. It means that those who did not believe went to hell, and those who believe have become children of God. They have gone to the kingdom of heaven. Not acknowledging the word of God is not acknowledging God.

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Discarding the word of God is sin. Trying to become righteous by living according to the will of God while being a sinner—that is the sin of pride. This is the sin the Bible speaks of. We must discard our stubbornness. We must discard our stubbornness, acknowledge that we are sinners before God, acknowledge that we are those who can only go to hell, and then go back to the word to see how God has saved us by the word, know the word and accept it, and, by not discarding it but holding on to it ourselves, by faith, receive the grace of the remission of sins.

We have received the remission of sins by faith. We give thanks before God. It means that our becoming righteous lay not in our deeds but came about by the word of God. Becoming righteous is the same. One does not become righteous by striving. One becomes righteous once and for all. One becomes righteous by faith. Dear fellow believers, do you understand what sin is? The word clearly and plainly speaks about sin. He rebuked washing hands and washing feet and doing well in terms of deeds. But the disciples did not even wash their hands and, being hungry, ate diligently while the others were washing their hands. Yet God acknowledged the disciples who ate food without washing their hands, while to those who came walking in having rolled up their sleeves and washed up to their forearms and washed their feet, He said that you discard the word of God, lay aside the commandment of God, and set greater importance on the commandment of men, and on another occasion He even scolded them, saying, “Repent, you brood of vipers!” It means that the Lord said to the Pharisees and the scribes that it is not food that defiles, but that your claiming to live according to the will of God when you were fundamentally born as a lump of sin is the sin of pride and that is the sin that leads to hell, and that because you disregarded the word of God, My word, because you discarded My word, you go to hell because of that sin. Dear

fellow believers, do you believe? That is sin. Dear fellow believers, do not be stubborn; turn back and repent and receive the remission of sins. Do not act only according to what you yourself know about what the word says, but learn what the Bible says. If you do not know, you must learn. I hope that you will receive the remission of sins. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The filthy nature of man

< Mark 7:14–23 >

“When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, ‘Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!’ When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, ‘Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?’ And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’”

Is man clean or filthy?

Dear fellow believers, can a person live doing clean things? Is man clean or filthy? Since I am asking such questions at the outset, you may say, “Why do you keep asking us? Just answer it yourself.” Is man clean, or is he filthy? People really want to do clean things and want to become clean people. That is

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probably because we were made by God. Because God made us resemble His own image, because He made us very clean people, it seems that in our hearts there is a desire to live with such a clean heart and to become clean people.

But is man clean? Is he not clean? Is he filthy? Man is filthy. Perhaps it is because I am going straight into the main point, but I am speaking about the gospel from the start without any light talk first. We have a desire to live forgetting that we ourselves are filthy, forgetting our own selves. But in reality, what we human beings are is filthy. In fact, a filthy being is what man is.

But until I reached this age, if someone said that I was filthy, I would rather curse him, and I could not possibly accept it myself. If someone called me a filthy human being, I could not accept it.

But as I went on living, when I looked at my own self, I came to know what a filthy human being I was. Letting it pass when someone says, "You are a sinner," by saying, "Yes, I am a sinner," or saying, like children quarreling, "So you are righteous and I am a sinner? Fine, you are great and I am worthless"—that is nothing. But I could not let the word "filthy" pass like that.

If someone says that I am filthy, I can say before God that I am a filthy human being. I myself can say clearly before God how filthy a human being I am. I myself can say quite nakedly how filthy a human being I am.

Dear fellow believers, before God, am I the only one who is filthy? Are you who are listening to the word really clean? Setting aside whether one is a sinner or a righteous person, are you really clean before God? Or are you, too, such filthy people before God? You must answer that clearly before God. We must answer clearly before this word that God speaks to us, before that word with which God questions us.

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"I am a filthy human being." Or, "I am a clean human being." This is how we must answer God's question. The fact is that I, the person standing before you, am a filthy human being before God; but that does not mean that I am a sinner. To our Lord's question, the question whether I am filthy or clean, I answer, "I myself am filthy." I cannot do otherwise.

What about you? Are you clean or filthy before God? The brave ones say, "I am filthy," but those who do not like it keep their mouths shut. They are saying that they are not filthy.

Dear fellow believers, those who clearly answer God's question, saying that they themselves are really filthy, are great people. And they are people who have found their own true selves. Dear fellow believers, only the person who knows that he himself is a filthy human being before God, only the person who knows that he is a sinner before God, receives the remission of sins. And the person who himself clearly knows that he is filthy, and who clearly knows that he is a sinner before God, can become clean. God clothes that person with cleanness, and God makes that person a righteous person. So one must know oneself in order to receive grace. That is why I am speaking about this from the start.

Blessed is the one who knows that he is filthy

The person who knows himself to be filthy, to be a filthy person, and can express it, the person who can answer God's question, the person who can say, "Yes, I am filthy"—that person is poor in spirit and is blessed. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:3–4).*

Many people live in this world, but there seem to be few who think that they themselves are filthy. They live in forgetfulness. When you look at them, outwardly they are all sleek and glossy. And even when they think about themselves, they think, "Ah, how beautiful," and looking at themselves in the mirror, they are apt to think, "Wow, how good-looking I am."

Dear fellow believers, they say that when people look at themselves in the mirror, they all think that their own faces are good-looking. Do you think so, too? I, too, look in the mirror and think that I am good-looking. Looking in the mirror, I try smiling and try this and that, but however much I groom it, it is still the same face; even so, in any case, I think it is quite all right, and yet in front of people I say that I am not much to look at. Dear fellow believers, the reason I say, "Though I am not much to look at," is this: if I were to say that I am good-looking, people might look at my actual appearance and say that I am putting on airs without even being good-looking; so in my heart I think I am good-looking, but I do not say it in front of people because I do not want to be judged like that, because I do not want to be pointed at. Dear fellow believers, in my own way, I am quite all right.

But in fact, I am all right, yet when I compare myself with others like this, I become disappointed. So, if at all possible, I try not to compare. When someone brings up such a topic and talks about looks, I somehow turn the conversation elsewhere and do not talk much about such things.

But dear fellow believers, in reality I am not good-looking. It is just that I am deluding myself in my own thoughts. And I am giving myself high marks. I have received the remission of sins, but even at the time when I received the remission of sins, I did not think that I myself was so filthy. I said, "Everyone must have this much of it. Yes, I have sin. I am a sinner. But I am not

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filthy. The word of God in the Bible says that I cannot keep the law, that I am a human being who sins, that I am wicked, that I murder, commit adultery, steal, envy, and quarrel, and that I am full of pride and foolishness; yes, I have done such things, and so I am a sinner before God. So I believed in Jesus and received the remission of sins." But the word "filthy" was something I really hated to hear, and this one word alone I did not want to acknowledge. I could acknowledge everything else, but when I heard the words "I am filthy, I am a filthy human being," I felt as if I would crawl into the ground; that hurt my pride more than being told, "You are a sinner; you are going to hell," and it made me feel worse, and the words I least wanted to hear, which I myself could not bear at all, were "You are a filthy human being." Those are the words I least want to hear.

Isn't it so with you? You can listen to anything else, but what if someone says, "That filthy person—ugh, how filthy"? If you become a filthy human being, can you possibly hold your head up and go about? If you go about being called filthy, if you become a filthy human being, there is nothing as truly filthy as that. But the question is whether you acknowledge that you yourself are really a filthy human being. Man is extremely filthy. When a person quietly looks at himself, man is one who always does filthy things as he lives, yet does not know that he is filthy.

Even among the beasts there are animals that rub and wash their faces. Even a dog washes its face. Dear fellow believers, even a dog bathes. It knows what is filthy. Some dogs, when something gets on them, seem to know that it is filthy, and they roll their bodies in the dirt and rub themselves. And they rub the part with the filthy thing on it against a wall. Some dogs just go about as they are, but some dogs try to get it off.

But although man is filthy inside, although he himself is a filthy human being, some people strive to wipe it off, while

others do not even try to wipe it off at all. There are people who, though their filth is glistening on them, still refuse to wipe it off. In Proverbs it says, *"There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness" (Proverbs 30:12)*. It means that there is a generation that says they do not need to wash away their sins. Clearly there is filth in them, they are filthy human beings, and filth is smeared on them, yet they do not wash it off. Proverbs records that there is a generation that goes about in packs, not washing and yet saying that they are all right.

Dear fellow believers, if one is a filthy human being, it is only human to at least wash off the filth, or to try to wash it off, yet people try not to wash. It is very strange. Dear fellow believers, if there is a way to wash, if there is a way to be washed when one clearly knows that one is filthy and really clearly brings out one's filth, then I think I could bring out my filth as much as needed. Honestly.

So people, being the lords of all creation and being wise, want to have their problems solved secretly, quietly and inwardly, without showing them outwardly. They want to solve them. So, trying to wash this away with religion, they try believing in this and believing in that, and try believing in all kinds of things. And they try doing good, and they try hard in their own way. But, dear fellow believers, it does not wash off.

Dear fellow believers, the Bible, our God, our Lord, speaks to us and tells us definitively that man is a filthy being, that we are filthy human beings. How filthy is man? And where does that filth come from? Does man become filthy because of his environment, or does filth flow out from within man fundamentally? Our Lord is telling us this. Let us listen to the word of our Lord.

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"The things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man"

"Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man" (Mark 7:14–15). Our God, our Lord, spoke to us and said that what comes out of a man is what defiles a man. He says that we are filthy human beings. Clearly, pointing to what we are, our Lord says to us, "You are filthy human beings, and you are people who are full of filth and who bring filth out into the open." People rationalize themselves and say to themselves as follows: "I am filthy because my environment was bad. I became filthy. I was originally born clean, but that person did bad things to me, and so I became filthy. I was just minding my own business, but to save his own skin he kept poking me in the ribs; that person enticed me and kicked me, and so I killed him. I am originally good; I am originally a poor, pure, and clean human being, but I met that wretch and threw away all my humanity."

People rationalize themselves. They think that they themselves are good and that they became bad people because of the other party. Is a person born good from birth, or born evil? Then let us look here at the word that our God speaks to us. *"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man" (Mark 7:20).* Then this means that we are born with filth from the time we are born. Then, if we are born with filth, will we live filthily or not? Dear fellow believers, this is so obvious, and it is such a simple matter, but this is the truth.

Dear fellow believers, just as a dog eats dung and a lion catches and eats other beasts, each acts according to the nature with which it was born. If we were born filthy, we do those filthy deeds throughout our whole lives and then we die. That is why

we are called filthy human beings. Although it is such an obvious matter, people strive to live denying this obvious truth. Dear fellow believers, however, we must find our original selves, and from here we must start. To truly become as beautiful as a flower, one must first discover one's own true self. Only then can one become a person as beautiful as a flower, a clean person.

Dear fellow believers, if we were not filthy human beings, if we were human beings as pure and clean as flowers, why would our Lord have come to this earth to save us, and why would our Lord have had to bear our sins and die on the Cross? Dear fellow believers, before the Lord died, why was He spat on in the face before the soldiers, stripped of His clothes, and struck on the cheek? Why did our almighty Lord have to bear our sins and suffer such things? Dear fellow believers, that was the process of His receiving punishment because He had borne the sins of filthy human beings. We human beings are filthy. Yet so many people are good at saying such things as, "No, man is originally clean." Instead of saying that man is filthy, what do they say? They are good at such logical talk as this: man is born a sinner, so he sins, so he must receive the remission of sins, and if he believes in Jesus he receives the remission of sins. But they hardly ever say that man is born a filthy human being. They do not even want to acknowledge it, and they dare not say such a thing to another person. All religious leaders, in any case, say, "Yes, your character is truly noble and your character is so lofty; who has hurt you?" and while the person they know is noble, they freely curse everyone else.

Dear fellow believers, people are very good at saying things that people like to hear. Whoever comes to their church, they introduce so-and-so, saying, "A precious person has come." Dear fellow believers, it is not a precious person who has come; a filthy person has come. That is how one should introduce him.

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One should introduce him by saying that today, too, a filthy person has come, but they do not say that. Because if they say that, people leave at once. But wherever on this earth one may go, if a person is introduced as a filthy person who has come, that place is the Church of God. It is possible only in the Church of God. They say, "A precious person has come," but what is precious about him? It is a filthy person who has come. "A filthy person has come; that person needs the grace of Jesus Christ; I must preach this word to that person; only when he receives the grace of our Lord can that person, too, become a clean person"—isn't that so, dear fellow believers?

My own self as I saw it before the word

Dear fellow believers, when I first started a church, I did not have much money, but I had to start the church and I wanted to serve the Lord, so I rented a chapel in a small city by the sea. It was a very old two-story shack of a building. Right in front was the sea. In the evening, I cannot tell you how much the wind blew in from the sea; the sand came in through every crack it could find. So if I went just two evenings without washing it, I would feel sand underfoot. So every day I would wet one big towel, fold it in half and in half again, and scrub away. When this side got dirty, I would turn it over and wipe with the other side, and when that got dirty, I would unfold it halfway and wipe and wipe; I cannot tell you how much I could wipe with it. But washing it afterward was hard. Since I did not like washing it often, I would wipe everything all at once like that. The stairs going up were made of wood, and since it was a very old building, how old must they have been? The wood was raw timber, and I cannot tell you how much dust settled on it. Still, I

thought to myself, if the stairs going up to the chapel were this dirty, who would come up? So I wiped them. I wiped them clean. I wiped, and because the house was so shabby, I also wiped the walls, worrying about what people would think when they came and left. But even when I wiped them, the walls were fundamentally dirty, so it was no use. I bought paint and painted them; I did that thinking that if it was clean, perhaps people would come in a little. Honestly, do people come in because it is clean? Even so, I bought paint and tried painting this, and wondering why that side was so dirty, I painted that side, too, and painted the door, too, making a great fuss. If there is one thing I realized at that time, it was this: while washing the rag, I thought, "Filthy—it is far too filthy. Filthy people will come up these stairs, and the Lord, by the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of such a person, all his filth, transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so saved these people. So when I preach this gospel, this word of truth by which our Lord has made this filthy person clean, and they believe it and their hearts become clean, I must make this person clean and act as the matchmaker who brings him before the Lord."

"Lord, here is Your bride. This person has received the remission of sins through You. This is Your bride. Take this person to Your kingdom." I realized, "So I am a matchmaker." I had known from the Bible that I was a matchmaker, but as I wiped and looked at that filthy rag, I came to know at that time that what I was to do on this earth was this: to wash filthy people like this clean with the word and bring them before the Lord—that was my task; that was what I was to do on this earth. But that was a matter of those who had not received the remission of sins being filthy, and since I myself had received the remission of sins, it had nothing to do with me. However, as I served and followed the Lord, when I quietly looked at myself, when I

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looked at all the traces of my past, I found that before God I was no different at all from this word. In this word it says that what comes out of a man's heart defiles him, and our Lord said, *"And He said, 'What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man'" (Mark 7:20–23).* Ah, so that is how it is. When I stood before this word, before God, before our Lord, the Lord looked at me and said to me definitively, "You are a filthy person; you were born a filthy human being, and you are filthy seed; you are a filthy person." When I acknowledge the word before God, before our Lord, and look at myself, it is so. "Lord, God, You are right. Lord, You have seen me most accurately. You are most right. You have told me very clearly. You are right. The word is the truth. Yes, that is so. I am such a person who has evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. You are right." When I accepted the Lord's word and looked at myself before God, this word that the Lord spoke to me, looking at me, and that He spoke to you, turned out to be the most accurate. "You are right, Lord. That is what I myself am. I myself am a person who thinks evil thoughts, a person who commits fornication, a person who steals, a person who murders, a person who commits adultery, a person who covets, a person who has wickedness, a person who deceives, and a person of lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. You are right." When I quietly traced back the path I had walked, I found that I was indeed such a person. Our God calls me a person of foolishness, a madman.

Dear fellow believers, in my neighborhood, whenever the village elders saw me, they would praise my parents every day, saying how polite I was and asking whose son that young man was. Every day they would say that the parents who had such a son must be glad. But dear fellow believers, when I look quietly at this word, I have foolishness, and more than enough of it. How proud I am! Blasphemy, that is, hindering others—dear fellow believers, how good I am at hindering, too. From childhood I could not stand to see others having a good time and would interfere to spoil it for them; so, when I look quietly, our Lord spoke most aptly about this hindering as well. That is why He says that I am a filthy person.

An evil eye, lewdness—how lewd I was! In my seminary days, I, too, could not simply pass by a lewd picture, and yet I took pride in the fact that I did not pay money to go into a theater. Whether I saw it from outside or went in and saw it, before God it was equally lewd, yet I did that. Dear fellow believers, does a lewd person before God stop being a lewd person just because he did not pay money to go in there? It is nothing but covering one's own eyes and pretending not to see. Wickedness, covetousness, adulteries, murders, thefts, evil thoughts inside—when I look at my life like this, I am a filthy human being exactly as it is nakedly pointed out here. In a word, I am a filthy human being. That is why I needed the Lord. I needed the Lord, who removed all my sins. Because I was a filthy human being, I believed in the Lord and received the remission of sins. So, dear fellow believers, I received the remission of sins. That is why I believed in Jesus. Because I was a filthy human being. Having received the remission of sins, when I look at the word like this, I am a person who has nothing at all to present before God other than this: that Jesus Christ removed my sins before God. Only the fact that the Lord removed my sins comes to mind; only that

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can I speak of boldly; only that is my pride; only that makes my heart glad; and there is nothing else at all that I can present. I have nothing to present.

Dear fellow believers, the Bible says that human life is for a filthy human being to live doing filthy deeds and then to pass away, to harbor a mad heart and do mad things and then die: *"Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead" (Ecclesiastes 9:3)*. It means that human life is to harbor a mad heart, to live doing mad deeds, and then to die.

Answer God's question

I myself am a filthy human being before God. It is only that the Lord saved me, and so I have been saved. We must now clearly settle the fact that we were filthy human beings, and that we ourselves are filthy human beings, before we go on. Dear fellow believers, before God, are we, is each one of us, a filthy human being or a clean human being? If we set Jesus Christ up in heaven and think only of ourselves as human beings, only of our own selves, then when asked whether we are filthy human beings or clean human beings before God, we are filthy human beings. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? We are filthy human beings.

Is there still anyone who says that he himself is not a filthy human being before God? Dear fellow believers, anyone who still says, "I am not a filthy human being," should truly and clearly look back on the past he has lived, and look at himself once before the word of God, asking, "Am I really such a person or not? Is my conduct really right or not? Is my heart right or not? Are my thoughts right or not? Are these things in my heart or

not? Do I live doing such things or not?" Let us look at ourselves once and, nakedly before God, say either, "I am really a filthy person," or, "I am not filthy"; and if one says that one is not filthy, one should say boldly, "I am not like that. You may be, but I am not." If one is really not filthy before God as well, one should say so before God as well.

"God, I am not filthy." One should say it boldly. But if one is a filthy person, one should say, "God, You are right. I am filthy. I am a filthy human being." "I am a filthy human being, but the Lord has saved me, has He not? I give thanks to our Lord, who saved a filthy human being. I give praise. Thank You, God." Dear fellow believers, those who have received the remission of sins must give glory before God; and if there is anyone who has not yet received the remission of sins, if you have lived your life until now without yet clearly knowing that you are still a filthy human being, and have not yet drawn a clear line on that matter before God, if you have not clearly drawn the line as to whether you are filthy or clean, whether you are a filthy human being or a clean human being, then I ask you to draw the line now.

Dear fellow believers, I will ask once more. Dear fellow believers, are you clean or filthy? Before God we must clearly confess one of the two: clean or filthy. Dear fellow believers, before God, are you a filthy human being or a clean human being? Before God, we are filthy human beings. Whether we have received the remission of sins or not, we human beings in ourselves are filthy human beings. And living while doing filthy things is precisely the fundamental state of us human beings. Dear fellow believers, is that so or not?

When I see young students, I am reminded of the old days. How many filthy thoughts I used to have in the old days! But when I saw girl students, I would just drop my head and pass by. Why did I do that? I had so many filthy thoughts like this, but

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the girl students looked like angels, so I could not lift my head in front of them. It was because I was ashamed. But later I found that there were people similar to me and many who were worse than I. At that time I did not know.

Dear fellow believers, if it is in the heart, it is bound to come out someday. Dear fellow believers, if dung is sitting in the bowels, it comes out someday, whether in the morning, in the evening, or in the daytime. Dear fellow believers, if we were born as filthy human beings, we live doing filthy deeds on this earth and then die. That is human life. But if we rationalize ourselves, saying that we have not lived a filthy life, that we are not filthy, we are not being honest. And that is not the heart of one who is poor in spirit before God. It is not a heart that looks for compassion, that seeks God's mercy.

In Matthew it says, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. Dear fellow believers, the poor in spirit are those who say, "I am really a filthy human being. I was born a filthy human being from birth. And I have lived a filthy life until now. And what I am is one who cannot help but live a filthy life." The person who knows that he really has no righteousness and that he himself is a filthy human being, and who knows only his own shortcomings—that person, it says, is blessed. And it says that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such a person. It belongs to the person who knows that he is a filthy person. That does not mean, however, that the Lord takes him there filthy as he is; rather, as for the person who truly knows that he is filthy, the Lord comes, washes him clean, and takes him to the Lord's kingdom, the clean kingdom, the glorious kingdom. That is why He said that such a person is blessed.

We must honestly lay ourselves bare before God. Even if you have not yet done many filthy deeds, dear fellow believers, as

you get older, you are bound to do them all. Everyone is the same. Human beings are no different from one another at all. It is not that this person is different and that person is different. Dear fellow believers, we are all the same.

Dear fellow believers, think of a lily. Even the name alone sounds so nice. But is a lily in full bloom different from a lily that has not yet fully bloomed? Are they the same? The one not yet fully bloomed, too, will bloom fully if only it draws up enough water and is given enough time. Dear fellow believers, it goes through all the same stages as the lily that bloomed first, and just as that one fades away, it fades away in the same way. We human beings are the same, too. If we were born as filthy human beings, we are the same in that we do filthy deeds and then die. The only difference is whether one matures early or not, whether one's environment is better arranged or not.

What are we like; what is the fundamental state of us human beings? A filthy state is fundamentally our original state—this is what the word reveals. Dear fellow believers, does that offend you? I cannot tell you how glad it makes me. I feel best when I see my own self nakedly. Because after that there is a plan for the solution, I feel really good. The filthiest person can become the cleanest person.

I will ask you. Are you now living a life that is perfectly and flawlessly clean before God? Are you, or are you not? My asking twice and three times is something I do before God. Dear fellow believers, if you clearly know that you are a filthy person, if God has said to you that you are filthy, then before God you must say, "Yes, You are right. When I look at myself, too, I am filthy; God, You are right. I am a filthy human being." Dear fellow believers, then how good it is when you discover yourself! "Yes, I am filthy." And after that, "God, save me. God who said that I am filthy—God, make me clean. You have pointed out my filthy

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state. Many people said that I was clean or great, but only You, God, know my state nakedly and most aptly. You alone are the truth. You are right. God, I am a filthy person. I believe that God can make me clean. God, have compassion on me and make me a clean person." And so, dear fellow believers, hope arises.

Do not deceive your heart, but know your true self

Dear beloved saints, this age is an age of disguise. People cannot possibly see their original selves. They cannot see the fundamental state of man. How much people groom and adorn their outward appearance! That means that the art of disguise has developed that much. But I am not saying this because people groom their outward appearance. How beautiful are those who cultivate beauty, dear fellow believers! But one must not disguise the heart.

Dear fellow believers, the outward appearance is something a person ought to keep clean and groomed, but one must not live disguising even the heart before God and before people. The world is so false that it is hard to live without adorning the outside, but still, dear fellow believers, if you want to live clean, you must not deceive your heart. There is a society in which people live clean. Dear fellow believers, even if this whole world is filthy, not all of it is filthy. If you want to live clean, you can live clean. The church is precisely the place where, if you truly lay yourself bare, you receive precious grace; so never deceive your heart—before God.

Dear fellow believers, Socrates said, "Know yourself," and, dear fellow believers, a person who is born, comes to know his true self, and dies is happy. The person who knows his true self, receives the remission of sins, and goes to heaven is a truly

happy person. He is a very happy person. The person who is born and dies without really knowing his whole true self is the most unhappy person. If one is born, eats and drinks, and dies without knowing who one is, what one is like, what one is before God, what one is before people, and what purpose God had toward oneself, then that person, dear fellow believers, is just as the word says: *"A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, Is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:20)*. Dear fellow believers, such a person is exactly like the beasts that perish. We must know what we are, receive grace before God, live for a brief while on this earth, and become brides who enter heaven, the kingdom of our Lord, clothed in clean fine linen. We must receive, while living on this earth, the blessing of becoming His people before God, the blessing of becoming saints of heaven, of becoming a holy people, and then go to heaven. As for the purpose for which man was born, God caused us human beings to be born in order to make us the people of God. Therefore, since we have been born, we must know our true selves and receive grace before God.

The poor in spirit receive the blessing

Dear beloved saints, have you received the remission of sins? Is there not a single sin in your heart? Dear fellow believers, is there no one who has sin in his heart? There is, isn't there? But you do not say it. If, having heard the word, you yourselves honestly say that you are equally filthy people, you can receive God's grace. The remission of sins that we received first, the grace of God that we received, you, too, can receive in the same way. You yourselves and your families, too, having been born as human beings on this earth, must receive the remission of sins,

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live before God, and go to that kingdom; without receiving the remission of sins, dear fellow believers, however much wealth and honor you may enjoy on this earth, what true happiness is that? Dear fellow believers, that is not happiness. We receive the remission of sins and live on this earth—not only we ourselves receiving the remission of sins, but our families also receiving the remission of sins, and our relatives, our friends, and all who know us receiving the remission of sins and living on this earth, and those who do not know us also living on this earth—and then one day, when our Lord brings the end upon this earth, since our Lord wants to take us to a new kingdom and have us live there, we entrust ourselves to the Lord and, according to His will, go to live in that kingdom. When the end comes for us individually, our Lord takes us away. Whatever tribulation and whatever disaster may come, let us receive the remission of sins, live a life of faith united with the church, live serving the Lord, and go to the Lord's kingdom. If you die without receiving the remission of sins, having just eaten well and lived well on this earth, where do you go, dear fellow believers? You go to hell.

Dear fellow believers, let us look at the last word of Isaiah. *"And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24).*

Dear fellow believers, hell does exist. This earth is not the whole of our lives. The kingdom of God exists. God's remission of sins exists. God caused us to be born on this earth in order to have us receive the remission of sins and to make us His people. For our lives, this earth is not everything. I ask you not to live placing all your hopes on this earth. Besides this earth, in the kingdom of God, in that other world, there is another world that God has made for us to live in. I ask you to receive the remission

of sins while living on this earth and go to the kingdom of heaven. I ask you not to deceive your hearts.

Dear fellow believers, are you filthy human beings or not? You are filthy human beings. I ask you to say honestly that you are filthy human beings. When we have all gathered as equally filthy human beings, is there anything for anyone to condemn anyone about? When all who have gathered are filthy human beings, if someone sits there saying, "I am not a filthy human being," he is rather the one who is condemned. "We are all filthy like this, and you say that you are not filthy? What about you is not filthy?"—dear fellow believers, in that case he is rather the one who gets caught at fault. Dear fellow believers, are you filthy or not? I am a filthy human being. But through our Lord I have received the remission of sins. That is all there is. Do you think that I am a far cleaner human being than you? I am a filthy human being.

Dear fellow believers, those who are poor in spirit before God receive the blessing. Those who lay themselves before God receive the blessing. We praise our Lord. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Acknowledge what you yourself are

< Mark 7:24–37 >

“From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, ‘Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’ And she answered and said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.’ Then He said to her, ‘For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.’ And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed. Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He

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commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, 'He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'"

"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs"

We have read the word of the Gospel of Mark. Here we see that a certain Gentile woman, whose daughter was possessed by a demon, pleaded with Jesus to cast this demon out. But the words Jesus spoke were very surprising. He spoke such words that one would even wonder how Jesus could say such a thing. Of course, there are many spiritual meanings in this passage.

It says, *"But Jesus said to her, 'Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs'" (Mark 7:27)*. He said that it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. The Syro-Phoenician woman had asked Jesus for help, pleading, "My daughter is possessed by a demon, so please come, Jesus, and cast this demon out. Please save my daughter." She pleaded like this, yet Jesus said that it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. Then does this mean that this woman is a dog? One cannot help thinking that this is really harsh. How could Jesus say such a thing?

The reason Jesus could speak like this is, first, that the people of Israel regarded the Gentile peoples as dogs. They treated them as dogs, not even as human beings. The people of Israel at that time held the thought that their own nation alone was a first-class people and the chosen people. When Jesus said that it is not good

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to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs, although the spiritual meaning is not such a thing, in that respect too His words contained the meaning, "How could I feed bread to the Gentile peoples as well, when I am feeding bread to My own people?"

Second, the reason He called the Syro-Phoenician woman a dog, the reason Jesus treated the Syro-Phoenician woman as a dog, was this: it was a word saying that if this Syro-Phoenician woman truly wanted to receive grace from God, she would receive grace only when she had such an attitude of heart as to plead for grace before God, even if she herself were truly treated as a dog, whatever words she might hear.

We must know that He is saying that if we truly want to receive help before God, receive salvation before God, and also receive grace before God, and also receive the remission of sins, only when we have this kind of heart can we receive salvation and receive grace.

The attitude of heart that seeks grace

If she had come before Jesus and said very boldly and impudently, "Jesus, my child is possessed by a demon, so heal her," speaking too confidently, and if there had been no such earnest heart in her that seeks help from God, this woman would not have received grace. When those who have not received the remission of sins receive the remission of sins before God, if they do not have the heart that pleads for grace, saying, "Treat me as whatever You like, only save me," that earnest heart, they cannot receive salvation. In receiving this salvation, whether one is called a dog or whatever one is called, there must be that earnest heart that wants to receive salvation, saying, "That is

right. All of it is right, but bestow grace on me," the heart that seeks grace—such a heart must be there.

The woman said, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs" (Mark 7:28)*. This woman had such a heart that our Lord could not but help her. In our Lord's sight she was truly pleasing, and she passed the test. He is saying, "Yes, you truly seek grace from Me. Even when I call you a dog, you accept these very words, that you are a dog, as fact, just as they are." "Even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. That is right. I am a dog. Do not dogs also receive grace from their master? Jesus, bestow grace on me and my daughter." Her heart that sought grace before Jesus passed the test. *"Then He said to her, 'For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.' And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed" (Mark 7:29–30)*.

In fact, dear fellow believers, this word recorded here contained the meaning that if one truly wants to receive grace from God, the heart that wants to receive grace must be a heart like this, and that one must acknowledge oneself.

We were sinners before God, and to call sinners dogs is a gentle expression. To call a sinner a dog is rather to have elevated him. Dear fellow believers, because man is a sinner who has sin before Jesus, Jesus said, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Mark 7:27)*, and the woman said, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs" (Mark 7:28)*. "You are a sinner, so how can you seek grace from Me?" "Lord, I am a sinner. I am going to hell. If You do not bestow grace on me, I go to hell." The word holds this point: how could one receive grace and receive salvation without being in such an attitude of heart?

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The heart of our Lord appears here: to those who truly acknowledge themselves before the Lord and seek grace, God bestows grace. But I know that this reveals to us this heart of the Lord, that if one does not acknowledge oneself before our Lord and seek grace but is proud and arrogant, one cannot receive grace from our Lord.

Dear fellow believers, if, before you were born again, our Lord had said to you, "You are one like a dog," would you have acknowledged it? When a sinner is called a sinner, he gets very offended. And when a somewhat deficient person is called one like a dog, he gets very angry.

The heart of our Lord shows, toward all peoples, toward the Gentiles, that those who truly want to seek grace must have this kind of heart—that only when they have an earnest heart before God, a heart that acknowledges themselves, and a heart that seeks grace do they receive grace.

Before our God, the heart is important. Of course, deeds are important too, but deeds are secondary, and deeds can be corrected; what the attitude of the heart is like—that is more important. The heart that seeks grace—only when one has this kind of heart does one receive grace.

We receive grace only when we leave those who are false

Second, it says, *"Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him" (Mark 7:32)*. They brought a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech and begged Jesus to heal him, and the fact is that when Jesus healed this man, He took him aside from the multitude and healed him. Why did

Jesus separate this man with the speech impediment, this deaf man, from among the many people, take him far away, and heal him? This passage is saying something here: if we truly want to receive salvation before our Lord, if we want to receive the remission of sins and receive grace, we must stay away from those who hold false teachings. Where our Lord works, we must not be together with those who are false. When our Lord bestows grace while we are together with those who are false, we do not even know that it is grace, nor can we believe, nor can we receive grace.

There is also another record that our Jesus, when He was on this earth, took a blind man aside and healed him. In receiving salvation, no matter how hard we ourselves try while staying together with a gathering of people who are not born again, we cannot receive salvation before God. Our Lord is telling us that only when we are truly separated from those who are false can we receive grace from the Lord.

When our Lord healed this man who was deaf and whose tongue was impeded, it says that He spat. Where does it say He spat? Since it says that He *"put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue" (Mark 7:33)*, it seems to mean that He put His fingers in both his ears, spat, and, having dabbed this saliva, touched his tongue. And in another passage of the word, it says that when He healed a blind man, He spat on the ground, kneaded it, and put it on his eyes.

People spit at a person who is utterly cursed. When they see a person whose appearance is terribly filthy, they spit anywhere and pass by. When passing by and seeing a dead rat with worms crawling out from inside it, they spit, saying it is filthy, and go on; yet Jesus, in any case, spat, dabbed it, and touched his tongue, and put His fingers in both his ears. Not everything is recorded.

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Of our Lord it says, *"Looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened'" (Mark 7:34)*. It says that He sighed. This man, who had to go to eternal hell and had to be destroyed—this man our Lord touched on the tongue with the saliva He had spat and taken onto His hand, and He put His fingers in his ears, and then He looked up to heaven and sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha." This means "Be opened." *"Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly" (Mark 7:35)*.

The grace He bestows on those who acknowledge themselves

What kind of heart is the heart of our God? We can know that our Lord bestows grace on the soul who acknowledges that he himself is the very one who can only be cursed together with the devil and go to hell, and who, whatever words our Lord may speak and whatever He may do, does not mind but seeks grace from our Lord and has the heart that hopes for the Lord to heal him.

Our Lord remits people's sins and solves people's problems, and first of all, He made them leave those who are false. It is the heart of God that He bestows grace on the one who has left those who are false. Our Lord's heart is that even though one is false oneself, one must first of all leave those who are false. One acknowledges one's own deficiency, but one must not acknowledge that falsehood as right. And we must know this heart of our Lord: that He bestows grace on those who acknowledge themselves and also acknowledge, and receive into their hearts, the grace our Lord has bestowed toward them. It is said that He bestows grace on such people.

At that time too, there must have been many people. Although the Lord spat, and then even treated someone as a dog, because they had an earnest heart truly wanting to receive grace before God, He knew the center of such people's hearts and bestowed grace on them—we must know this heart of God, and we must also know the heart of God that bestows grace on those who leave those who are false. This is an absolutely essential condition for being born again.

A person who has the heart to acknowledge, saying, "That is right," whether our Lord calls him a dog or not, whatever God may say to him; a person who acknowledges that our God is the truth and that everything our God says is right—we must know and believe that He bestows grace on those who have such a heart, and that those who have such a heart receive grace from God. I know that all those in this world who receive grace have this kind of heart. Without this kind of heart, one cannot receive grace. How could one receive grace in one's heart?

What was it that we could not acknowledge before we heard the gospel? It was that we could not acknowledge that we were dogs. Because we could not acknowledge ourselves—that we are like beasts, that before God we are those who are to be cursed, who are to go to hell, who are like dogs—we could not receive salvation. If we look carefully at a person who has received salvation, he acknowledges that he himself is so, just as the word of God says. A person who thus acknowledges that he is a sinner like a dog believes that Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had all his sins transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and thereby saved him, and so he receives the remission of sins. On such a person, on such a soul, God's grace of salvation has come. Dear fellow believers, isn't that so?

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Even now, why do countless people fail to receive salvation? It is because they do not acknowledge that they themselves are dogs, that before God they themselves are those who are to be cursed, those who are to go to hell, good-for-nothing ones, those who deserve to be spat upon, and because they cannot acknowledge the word of God, they are living without receiving salvation.

Therefore, when we plow the field of people's hearts, we must make them realize, "You are exactly this kind of person. I, too, was such a person. I am not so now, but I was such a person. Right now you are this kind of person," and speak by faith. This is an essential condition in preaching the gospel. We must preach the gospel too, but showing a person his own self nakedly, saying, "Before God, you are this kind of person," is the plowing of the field.

Just as when we sow seed in a field, we plow the field up thoroughly, break up the soil, put in manure, sow the seed there, cover it with soil, and water it so that grain comes up, so also, in causing sinners to receive salvation, we must thoroughly plow up the field of people's hearts like this. We must teach them this: "Before God, you are one like a dog, one who is to go to hell, one who is to be cursed and hated, and a filthy one."

Know the heart of God and follow Him

Our Lord is truly One whose character is perfect; how then could He have said such words to this Syro-Phoenician woman, who was seeking grace from Him—and at that, to one who was seeking grace not for her own problem but bringing up the problem of her daughter? How could He have said such words

as *"it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Mark 7:27)*?

But we can know that the heart of our Lord was not to disregard that person's character or to disregard that person herself, but that He spoke these words in order to save that person, in order to show her what she really was, to bestow grace on her, and to give her blessing, in order to solve her problem.

Dear saints, Jesus did not always speak only very gentle words. If we know the heart of God more and more, and if we know the heart of God, the life of faith is very easy, and we can follow by faith. But if we do not know His heart, it is really hard. Therefore, through the Bible we must quickly grasp the heart of Jesus Christ, and then believe that heart, and believe all the words He spoke, and follow Him. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The faith of the woman who asked for the crumbs under the table

< Mark 7:24–30 >

"From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, 'Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she answered and said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs.' Then He said to her, 'For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.' And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed."

The woman who fell at Jesus' feet for her daughter

When Jesus entered a house in the region of Tyre, a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard the report and came to Him. The Bible reveals her origin, saying, *"The woman*

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was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth" (Mark 7:26). The woman fell at Jesus' feet and asked Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. Her heart that loved her daughter was earnest, but by her own strength she could not set her daughter free. So she came to Jesus, who could do that work.

As long as a person thinks he can solve things by his own strength, he does not bow his head to anyone. But when he meets a problem he cannot handle, he comes to know his own limits. What this woman brought to the Lord was not an achievement that could exalt herself but the condition of her daughter, who needed help. She put forward nothing before the Lord and stood in the place of one asking for help.

We, too, when we come to the Lord, have no need to hide our problems in order to look good. Before being saved, we can seek the Lord's help with the problem of sin and judgment, and after being saved, with the difficulties and weaknesses of life. We should tell Him our needs honestly, but we must not regard ourselves as having the right to command the Lord to grant us something. A person who asks for grace must also have a heart to listen to what the Lord says. It was with just such a heart that this woman listened to the Lord's word.

The answer that accepted the Lord's word as right

Jesus said, *"Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Mark 7:27)*. It was a word that the salvation God had promised had to be conveyed first to the children of Israel, and that a Gentile woman had no right at all to demand that bread. Hearing that word, the woman did not exalt herself and protest. She answered,

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"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs" (Mark 7:28).

The woman did not deny the Lord's word, and yet within that word she asked for compassion. Even on hearing the word "dog," she said *"Yes, Lord"* and acknowledged herself just as she was. "I am a dog, so please let me eat even the crumbs"—this is the confession of faith. She did not say that she would take away the children's bread, but said that she could eat even the crumbs that fall under the table. She relied on the fact that, if it was grace the Lord bestows, even a help like a small crumb could bring her daughter to life. The fact that she had no right to put forward did not become a reason she could not ask the Lord. That is because she looked not at the size of the bread but at who it was that gives the bread.

This is the faith that lays down one's own righteousness. It is not teaching a knack for moving the Lord's heart by speaking self-abasing words well. One can speak lowly words with the mouth while inwardly demanding that things be done one's own way. The woman's answer came from a heart that accepted the Lord's judgment and relied on His compassion. The Lord received that word and said, *"For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter" (Mark 7:29)*. When the woman went back home, it had come to pass just as He had said.

Stand in the place of a sinner and believe in the grace of salvation

We, too, must examine how we see ourselves before God. We cannot escape the judgment of sin by regarding ourselves as a little better in comparison with other people. When the Lord reveals the sins of our hearts through the word, we must

acknowledge that His judgment is right. David, too, confessed, *"That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge" (Psalm 51:4)*. If we make excuses, saying, "I am a good person; I only made a few mistakes," we end up accepting the grace of salvation bestowed on sinners by turning it into our own righteousness.

But the basis on which we have been saved does not lie in how severely we confessed our own evil. The basis of our salvation is the fact that Jesus, who had pity on sinners, actually bore our sins. By receiving baptism from John, the Lord had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins each one of us commits throughout our lives are all included in them. And bearing those sins that had been transferred to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. Just as the bread went to the Gentile woman who had no right, this salvation came to us who had no righteousness.

When we believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins and become children of God. Casting off one's own righteousness does not mean living while endlessly hating oneself. It means believing, just as it is, the grace of the Lord, who made me, a sinner, righteous. Therefore, a person who has already been saved has no need to think that he still remains in the status of one who is condemned. Just as the woman accepted the Lord's word as right, we must also accept as right the Lord's word that has called us righteous.

Do not exalt yourself even after receiving grace

Just because we have been saved, we must not think that we obtained grace by becoming excellent people through our own

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strength. Without the Lord's compassion, we could not have escaped from sin and judgment. A person who remembers that fact has no reason to boast, even within the church, that he is better than other saints. A person who thinks that he himself is fine is not used before the Lord, but a humble person is used by the Lord. The word, *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6),* is a promise given to us who have received the remission of sins. Therefore, if we can do some work well, we must serve our brothers and sisters with that ability. We must not regard a person lightly because we have a strength that he does not have.

When being recognized by people becomes the purpose of faith, service is also easily shaken when we are not appreciated as much as we expected. But when thanksgiving for having received the Lord's grace becomes the reason for service, we can carry out the work entrusted to us as something precious even when it does not stand out. Humility is not a habit of saying that one has no worth at all, but an attitude of knowing what one has received from the Lord and setting one's heart on His will.

The woman who asked for the crumbs under the table believed the Lord's word and went back home. Let us, too, accept the Lord's judgment and the word of salvation as right. Let us not demand grace by our own righteousness, but give thanks for the grace that has already brought us to life. Let us ask the Lord for the help we need, while regarding as precious the saints who have been saved together with us and serving them humbly. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Hear the gospel with opened ears and preach it with a loosed tongue

< Mark 7:31–37 >

“Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’”

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The Lord, who took one man aside and cared for him

People brought a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech to Jesus and asked Him to lay His hand on him. This happened when Jesus, having passed through Tyre and Sidon and gone by way of Decapolis, arrived at the Sea of Galilee. That man was having difficulty in hearing and in speaking. The people did not leave him alone but brought him to Jesus. But what the text goes on to show in detail is not the zeal of the people who brought him, but how Jesus cared for him.

Jesus *"took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue" (Mark 7:33)*, and so began to heal him. Rather than doing something that would draw attention before many people, He cared for the one person who needed healing right then. There is a reason the Lord took him aside, away from the multitude. If he had stayed as he was among the false multitude, even when the Lord bestowed grace he would not have known that it was grace and could not have believed, and so the Lord first made him leave them. In the Lord's action of drawing near to him, we see the compassion that does not turn away from the suffering of man.

We, too, when we serve people, must look at the condition of each person rather than only at the number gathered together. We must listen to what words they find difficult and what they want to ask. Especially when we preach the gospel, we on the explaining side cannot be satisfied merely with having said everything. We must look at how the listener understands the word of salvation and tell him again the parts he needs.

The ears and the tongue are loosed according to the word "Be opened"

Jesus, looking up to heaven, sighed and said to the man, *"'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened'" (Mark 7:34)*. Then his ears were opened, the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. The word the Lord spoke changed that man's actual condition. The Lord, over this man, who could only receive a curse and perish, looked up to heaven and sighed, and told him to be opened. The problem that had made hearing and speaking difficult was solved by the power of Jesus.

Reading about this event, we must not think that we can heal people if we imitate the same gestures. The text does not teach a technique of healing but shows who it is that healed. The people were astonished beyond measure and said, *"He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak" (Mark 7:37)*. That astonishment must lead precisely to the faith that knows Jesus rightly. If we marvel only at the visible power and take His word lightly, we cannot say that we have known the Lord sufficiently.

Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone, but the people proclaimed it all the more widely. But if we have received grace, we must also follow the Lord's word as to what to do and how to do it. We cannot carry the command given at that time over into a word to stop all spreading of the gospel today, but we can learn the fact that emotion must not go ahead of the word.

Help people hear the gospel and understand it

The text records the actual physical healing of one man. But through this event, we can also think of the fact that we, too,

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need the grace of hearing the word and understanding its meaning. That is because a sound being heard by the ear and knowing what the gospel says are not the same thing.

A person may hear words about Jesus for a long time and still not know how He saved him. He may speak of the remission of sins and yet not know why Jesus received baptism, and speak of the Cross and yet not know clearly whose sins He bore when He was judged. If in that state he only speaks religious expressions fluently, a gap remains between the confession he makes with his mouth and what he believes in his heart. Just as the tongue of a person whose ears are not opened is impeded, a person who has not heard the gospel rightly cannot speak the gospel clearly. It is not only his speech that is impeded; his thinking is impeded. That is why the work of explaining the gospel step by step is needed.

The Bible clearly says where our sins went. When Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, all the sins of the world were transferred to Jesus once and for all. So the next day, seeing Jesus coming toward him, John cried out, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Even the sins that we will commit throughout our lives were all passed on to Him. The Lord's shedding His blood and dying on the Cross was His receiving in our place the judgment for those sins that had been transferred to Him through His baptism. And Jesus rose again from death. We receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the gospel of the Lord, who completed salvation in this way. It is not the number of times we plead for our sins to be washed away that accomplishes salvation; it is believing in the salvation the Lord has already accomplished.

When we come to know this relationship, the confession that we have received the remission of sins also becomes clear. We

do not say that we have no sin because we have gained confidence that we will not sin. We confess that we are righteous because our sins were passed on to Jesus and the Lord received the judgment for those sins in our place. A person who preaches the gospel must help the listener know this basis of faith. He must not stop at winning hearts with moving stories but must preach the content of salvation.

Speak clearly of what the Lord has done

The labor of those who let us hear the gospel is precious. But that labor itself is not what removed our sins. The One who accomplished salvation is Jesus. Therefore, a person who has understood the gospel and believed does not stop at exalting only the person who preached the word to him, but comes to give thanks to the Lord, who saved him from sin. And he also comes to preach to other people what that Lord has done. Like that man, of whom it says that *"immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly" (Mark 7:35)*, a person who has heard the gospel comes to speak the gospel.

Let us remember that the Lord took one man aside and cared for him. If there is someone who does not yet understand the gospel well, let us not push him away because we find it frustrating, but give him the explanation he needs. Let us pray for that person and prepare a place where he can hear the word. We cannot force a person's heart open, but we can faithfully preach the word of the Lord, who accomplished salvation. A person who believes in Jesus, who delivered us from sin, must testify clearly of what He has done. ✉

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CHAPTER

8

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You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The bread left over even after feeding four thousand, the salvation greater than our lack

< Mark 8:1–10 >

"In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.' Then His disciples answered Him, 'How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?' He asked them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven.' So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away,

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immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha."

The compassion that considered even the way back home

The great multitude that had been with Jesus had nothing to eat. Jesus called His disciples and said, *"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat" (Mark 8:2)*. Among them were also some who had come from afar, so if they were sent home hungry, they were in a condition to faint on the way. The Lord did not look only at the appearance of the people gathered before His eyes, but also considered the hardship they would go through on the way back home.

Here is the compassion of the Lord, who looks after people to the end. The multitude was gathered before the Lord, but by their own strength they could not provide what they needed. Before rebuking that lack, the Lord first spoke of their need. Therefore, when we come to the Lord, we do not need to think that we must have no lack in ourselves. The Lord is the One who knows our needs and weaknesses before we do.

We who have received the Lord's care must also not think that we have fulfilled our service by meeting a person for a moment. After preaching the word, it is necessary to look into what that person has understood and what he finds difficult. If someone hears the gospel and rejoices, we should give thanks together, and if he is still confused, we should explain it again. This service, which takes interest even in that person's subsequent life, we learn from the Lord, who cared for us with long patience.

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The One who filled the lack in the wilderness is Jesus

The disciples asked, *"How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?" (Mark 8:4)*. The loaves they had were seven. Neither the place nor the food they had seemed able to meet the need of the multitude. But Jesus had the multitude sit down, took the loaves, gave thanks, and then broke them and gave them to His disciples. The disciples set them before the people and also distributed the small fish as the Lord commanded.

The passage says, *"So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. Now those who had eaten were about four thousand" (Mark 8:8–9)*. The bread, which had been far too little to feed the multitude, passed through the hands of Jesus and became abundant food. The One who accomplished the work was the Lord, and the disciples took part in that work. The reason the role of the disciples was precious is not that they produced a power they did not have, but that they handed to the people just what the Lord had given them.

We who share the gospel must also know this position. Skill in speaking or an abundance of material possessions cannot take the place of the content of salvation. Nor does the salvation Jesus accomplished become insufficient because what we have is little. Therefore, we must first clearly know the grace we have received from the Lord and preach that word just as we received it. Only then will those who hear come to believe in Jesus, who saved sinners, rather than relying on our circumstances.

The bread left over even after feeding
four thousand, the salvation greater than our lack

Believe in the salvation He accomplished once and for all, and share it abundantly

The multitude who ate the bread could have their hunger relieved and return home. But the life Jesus intends to give us is greater than a single meal. To save us, who were to be judged because of sin, the Lord gave up His own body. Because everlasting life cannot be prepared by our own hands, Jesus Himself bore our sins and our judgment.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He received baptism from John at the Jordan River, and with that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Even the lifelong sins of each one of us were all passed on to Jesus at that time. Bearing the sins that had been passed on to Him, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death in three days. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit are saved from all sins and obtain everlasting life. As the word says, *"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10)*, it is not a salvation in which the Lord helps only a little and we must fill in the rest.

Just as seven loaves fed four thousand and still seven large baskets were left over, the salvation the Lord accomplished is greater than our lack. Even when our weakness is revealed after we have been saved, we do not look again for the basis of salvation within ourselves. We acknowledge our wrongdoing without justifying it, but we look to the baptism and the Cross of Jesus, who has already borne even that sin. For our righteousness did not come from our own deeds but from the Lord's salvation. It is not repeating salvation by asking that the remission of sins be accomplished again, but continuing to believe in the salvation

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He accomplished once and for all. The Lord said, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger" (John 6:35)*. While we live in this world, which is like a wilderness, we must eat this Bread of life again and again. It is to ruminate every day on the word that the Lord bore our sins with His baptism and received the judgment on the Cross for us. When we believe that word, we are not crushed and brought down by our own lack, but can walk again following the will of the Lord.

The Lord, who did not simply send away the hungry multitude, has also given us the word of life today. Let us not stop at enjoying that grace by ourselves alone, but let us also preach it to the souls who have not yet heard the gospel. Let us set our hearts on explaining so that one person can hear and believe, and on helping one another so that the saved saints live standing on that gospel. Just as the bread in the wilderness was left over even after being shared, the grace that saved us does not diminish when we share it with others. Let us preach the Lord's salvation abundantly so that whoever believes in this gospel may receive the remission of sins. ✉

The bread left over even after feeding
four thousand, the salvation greater than our lack

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

To those who are walking in the desert

< Mark 8:1–10 >

“In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.’ Then His disciples answered Him, ‘How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?’ He asked them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ And they said, ‘Seven.’ So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.”

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The Bread of life that those who walk in the desert need

Our human lives are spent walking and traveling through the desert. Those who are walking in the desert need water and the Bread of life. For a person walking in the desert, the water and bread that become his food are needed every day. Those who are walking in the desert need bread today, and they need it tomorrow as well. And they will need it in the days to come, too. Our Lord became the food of everlasting life for those who need bread and water. Even now, our Lord is the food of everlasting life for us. We give thanks before the Lord.

Today, too, our Lord is the Bread of life for you and me. For us who are walking in the desert, our Lord, the Bread of life, is a companion we cannot do without. The Lord is giving us the Bread of life even now. He is blessing us. Our Lord knows our frame. Our Lord knows our frame well, how weak we are. The Lord knew that if the multitude went without sufficient food for two or three days in the wilderness, they could become severely exhausted and weakened. The Lord knows our frame well. Our Lord, who knows this, often bestows grace on us. God bestows grace on us, but it is not that He bestows grace once and then does so only once in a while. The grace of God is needed every few hours, every day, yet there are times when we fail to eat this food for two or three days or so. Knowing that if we go two or three days or so without eating that food of God, we will die, and that we will become exhausted and collapse, our Lord appears to us very often—sometimes every day, and when it is less frequent, at intervals of two or three days—and clothes us with grace. That is why you and I are alive now. Dear fellow believers, if we were to go without food for two or three days, we would die. That is why our Lord often clothes us with grace.

In the life of a saint, when we have fallen into weakness, our Lord has reminded us of that Bread of life, this grace of salvation, the remission of sins, and in that way has caused us to gain new strength and receive comfort. Because the Lord appears to us very often and feeds us the Bread of life very often while we pass through the desert, we give thanks to that Lord. The Lord, knowing our frame and knowing that we die if we go without food for even two or three days, became the food of everlasting life for us. We truly give eternal thanks and praise before the Lord. That is why our Lord became the eternal God for us.

The blessing already bestowed on the name of God and on the church

We must know that, while we live on this earth, when we humble our hearts, we receive grace before the Lord. The Lord clothes with grace those who truly need grace and works for them. When the Lord feeds us grace, the Bread of life, He first humbles our hearts. And then He works for us and bestows grace on us. When lack appeared in our circumstances, the Lord sent down the grace of God on all our lack. God bestowed His almighty power on us, removed all the sins of us human beings, took upon Himself all the problems of human beings, and by His power and by His grace bestowed His salvation and His blessing on us. We must know the fact that, as for that blessing of God, God prepared every blessing directed toward us human beings together with the name of God and in union with the church, and also blessed us. Dear fellow believers, this one thing we must know clearly. We must know the fact that the Lord has given all the Lord's blessings in union with the Church of God. God has already blessed His own name. And He has set that blessing

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before us, before people. God has already pronounced God's blessing on this church and set it before us all, and so those who believe in the name of God, Jesus Christ, have already been blessed, and have been blessed for all eternity. Dear fellow believers, we must know well that what our Lord is saying to us human beings is what He is saying to you and me. What it is, is that God has already pronounced a blessing for us on the name of God, on the name of Jesus, and also on that Church of God, on His own name. Dear fellow believers, we must know this, believe it, and live. It has nothing to do with whether we do well or poorly; it has nothing to do with our deeds. God has pronounced a blessing here on this earth, and if you ask where He has pronounced it, the fact is that, first, He blessed His own name. And He blessed His church. God has pronounced every blessing of God on this earth on His own name and on His church. Knowing this, we must live our life of faith. All the problems of life are all in God. And we have received the blessing that solves every problem through the name of God. We must believe that the people of God have received all the blessings of God. We believe that God has blessed us under His name and under the church.

Dear fellow believers, saints must live by faith that God has blessed us. Here, many people saw Jesus Christ perform miracles and followed Him around. While following Him around the fields for two or three days, those who had packed lunches probably ate them all. And all of it would have run out. So our Lord said that He could not send these many people away hungry, and He wanted to satisfy them. The disciples said, *"How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?" (Mark 8:4)*. When Jesus asked, *"How many loaves do you have?" (Mark 8:5)*, they said seven. It says, *"So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven*

loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them" (Mark 8:6). Dear fellow believers, Jesus had already given thanks over those seven loaves, set them before the disciples, and had them set before the people. Then what else did He do? We must know this. What is being said here is that the Lord blessed these few fish and had them set before them. He blessed both and had them set before them. Dear fellow believers, in living our life of faith, we must also look at what Jesus Christ did. Dear fellow believers, our God has already blessed His own name. God blessed the seven loaves. The number seven speaks of a perfect number; God rested on the seventh day, sanctified it, and blessed it. So God Himself has already blessed His own name. Dear fellow believers, those who do not accept by faith that He has already blessed are even now unable to receive the remission of sins. Those who do not know the fact that the remission of all our sins is in the name of Jesus Christ and that the spiritual blessing of becoming children of God is in it, those who do not accept it by faith, still have not received the remission of their sins, while those who accept it, those who believe that God has blessed His own name, receive the remission of sins and are accepting all those blessings.

And God blessed the church. Dear fellow believers, these two fish speak of the church, and how greatly God blesses this church! Even a hymn sings that no one can shake the Church of God built on the rock. Dear fellow believers, there is a place on this earth that God blessed together with His name, and it is that He blessed the Church of God, which is like the city of Zion of God. Dear fellow believers, when God has blessed, could a curse come? Dear fellow believers, if we are believing, we can receive and enjoy that blessing. Since He blesses those who are inside the church even though they are lacking, if we only stay still, we receive blessings. This is a tremendous faith. It is like falling

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down and finding a lump of gold lying there. Dear fellow believers, that is the blessing of God. The blessing of God is like that. As for how I believe in the church, because God has blessed the church, I believe the fact that I am inside the church, the fact that everything is fine as long as I am with the church, and the fact that I have already been blessed. I believe the fact that God blessed the church and blessed all the saints of the church, all its members, every member of the Church of God. If we only stay still, we receive blessings. Dear fellow believers, do you understand what I am saying? This is a tremendous faith. We must know this and live.

Saints who must eat the food of life often in order to live

What is faith? Dear fellow believers, we have the faith that receives salvation. We have received the remission of sins. Have you received the remission of sins before Jesus Christ? If you have, are you eating that grace often? This is what is needed. God has blessed His own name. For those who were now exhausted from going hungry for two or three days, God blessed the seven loaves. And having blessed them, He told them to take them and give them out. The disciples broke them and gave them out. Dear fellow believers, we have received salvation. We have received the remission of sins. We have no sin. We know the truth. It is said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*. And we believe the truth. The truth Himself is Jesus Christ. We have believed. We have no sin. And yet, as we live on, we must eat that Bread of life of Jesus Christ, we must eat Jesus Christ, very often. The point is that the Lord has removed our sins and has removed my sins. That He has

removed our sins means precisely that He has removed all of my sins, and we must call that to mind and live by eating that grace of the Lord. We cannot say that since we have at least believed, we should leave that alone and do something else.

Dear fellow believers, would a person walking in the desert need anything other than water and bread? We must be clothed with grace very often. As we live on, as we walk on in the desert, how often do we get thirsty? Just because we have drunk a mouthful of water, do we not get thirsty? We get thirsty. We get thirsty again. We get thirsty again. Still, we can bear and endure being thirsty, can we not? How long could we endure? Could we endure about a week? After about two days, our mouths would be parched dry and it would be hard to endure. Living in this world is like walking in the desert.

Human beings walking in the desert—as the Bible shows, this is what we actually are. If we are not clothed with grace very often, if we do not very often eat that food of salvation by which Jesus Christ, the Bread of life, had our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for that sin with the blood of the Cross, and removed our sins by rising again, we feel famished and we die. We have no strength and we collapse. The point is that we must eat the food of life very often.

We must eat even while we work, even while we do anything. Even at the workplace, we must eat. How do we do that while doing this and that at the workplace? We meditate in our hearts on the fact that the Lord has removed our sins, thinking, "The Lord has removed all my sins like this, and I have this impurity now, but the Lord bore this as well"—in this way we must eat Jesus Christ, the Bread of life. Among the people living in this world, which is like a wilderness, there is no one who lives without eating bread and without drinking water. We live only

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by eating bread. It is then that strength comes. It is then that the strength to preach the gospel comes. We must receive the word and look at it again and again, and if we do not understand it, look at it again; we must look and look and look again.

Dear fellow believers, how greatly hungry the people of that time were! People who are living in a world like a wilderness are like that. You and I are people who are living in a world like a wilderness. And yet there are so many people who think that they can live without eating.

When I see people who, even after hearing the gospel, go out into the world and live without eating that food, I feel sorry for them.

Dear fellow believers, if we go too long without eating, we will probably eat something that is no real food. We would fill our stomachs by eating sand or something. We might suck up the dew clinging to the leaves. How much dew could there be clinging to the leaves of a tree? Dear fellow believers, we must eat food.

The faith that believes that He has blessed

I believe that the Lord saved us and blessed us on His own name, and that He blessed the Church of God. I hope you also believe this. If we live believing that God has blessed, we can experience how God has blessed. The point is that we can go on experiencing it. We can feel how God solves our difficult problems, how He helps us, how He works, and how the blessing God gives comes upon us.

If we cannot believe this, we leave the church. If we cannot believe that God has blessed the church, we come to look at our circumstances, and when we look at our circumstances, we

waver, wondering whether things will work out or not. If we compare the church to an inn by the roadside, while it is bustling no one notices, but when all the guests have gone away, how empty the innkeeper feels! If it is said that the road is blocked because thieves are rampant, it becomes a matter of whether or not the guests will come.

Dear fellow believers, God has already blessed. We must believe God. It is easy to believe, saying, "I believe that He has already blessed." It is all too easy. All we have to do is believe. If we are believing, it comes. If God sends it, then if it cannot come by the road, it will come by some other byway or come through some other forest. No matter how much people say it cannot be, no one can take away what God has blessed. We must have the faith that believes this. We must believe that God has blessed. We need that faith which says, "Even if we fall over backward, we receive blessings; even if we tumble this way and tumble that way, we receive blessings; God has blessed the church, and He will never let the church be ruined."

That is why our Lord gave thanks over the two fish and had them set before the people. The point is that He blessed them first. He gave thanks and had them set before them, did He not? It was not that He simply set them down and said, "Let there be a blessing"; rather, He first blessed them in His own hands and then gave them to the disciples, telling them to set these before the people, and the disciples received them and distributed them to the people.

Therefore, no one can bring down this Church of God. No one can bring it down. No raging wave of any kind is of any use. Whatever scheme of Satan the devil there may be, whatever shortcoming of man there may be, there is no one who can bring it down. Dear fellow believers, is that not so?

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Having no faith is sin, and it is because we have no faith that we look at our circumstances and wonder whether things will go well or not. Will this thing called the church work out when we have barely preached the gospel to one person? If God has blessed, that is enough. That faith is what we need. It is not a forced faith; since God has blessed, all we have to do is believe and stay still. So, dear fellow believers, when we look around quietly with the faith that He has blessed, what God has blessed is hidden here and there. We gently draw in what God has blessed, bring it to ourselves, and eat it.

Do you think the difficult things we meet as we live on are just one or two? Dear fellow believers, do you think the difficulties in this world, which is like a wilderness, are just one or two? Difficulties are endlessly many. They are not just one or two. Your shortcomings are not just one or two, my shortcomings are not just one or two, the difficulties of our surroundings are not just one or two, and when we look at our circumstances, the things that have a chance of working out are not so many. And yet, when God gave thanks and told them to set the food down, they set it down, and then they gave it out. About four thousand people ate, and there was some left over. The point is that because God blesses, all those problems are solved. Everything is solved through God, yet there are people who, when a problem arises for them, waver, wondering what to do, and then, like Judas, hang themselves and die by their own hand.

Do you know why Judas went to hell? Judas called Jesus "Teacher, Teacher," did he not? "Teacher" is fine. Even after selling Jesus, he saw with his own eyes that He was being condemned (Matthew 27:3). He saw the One who had no sin going to bear the sins of all people. Even the unbelieving Roman centurion recognized it and said, "*Truly this Man was the Son of*

God!" (Mark 15:39). So how could Judas, who had followed Jesus around, have failed to know whether He was the Son of God or not, if he had only looked with his eyes even slightly open? When a person is about to face death, one can truly know everything about that person. Judas, too, could have known.

So if Judas had only accepted in his heart, just as he had confirmed with his eyes, the fact that the Lord bore all sins, believing, "The Lord was truly the Messiah, He was the Savior, He was the Redeemer; I believe. With the baptism He received from John, the Lord had all sins transferred to Him, and because of those sins He received all the judgment for my sins on the Cross and rose again; I believe," he would have received the remission of sins. What happened to Judas is a type for all people. God permitted that event in order to show that a person who does not believe and does not accept that Jesus Christ has blessed and that Jesus Christ has saved mankind from sin, a person who dies without believing, while still bearing his own sins himself, goes to hell.

Dear fellow believers, it is the same. If we do not believe in being united with the Church of God, and do not believe that God has blessed His own name and has blessed the church, then even while living a life of faith in the church, we end up leaving. Dear fellow believers, the Lord has blessed us.

Dear fellow believers, we stay quiet. We watch how the Lord works. And we do not do things by human contrivance. If, in what the Lord shows us, we ourselves have seen His will, then we do it by faith, and we do it with all our strength, mobilizing everything.

But, dear fellow believers, as for you and me living our life of faith in the church and having received salvation, it is through believing that God has blessed us that we come to receive and enjoy all those blessings already. Who is the one who receives

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and enjoys the blessings? It is the one who believes God. It is the one who believes what God has done. We must have faith—faith.

God, who accomplishes His will through the church

Even if people say it cannot be done, if God is pleased and it is God's will, even the impossible comes to pass. When God was bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt and they came upon the Red Sea, the people complained. They complained, asking whether it was because there were no graves in Egypt that he was making them die in the wilderness (Exodus 14:11). But when we look at Moses, he believed that God would never do such a thing. He believed that God would part the Red Sea. Moses said, *"Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today" (Exodus 14:13)*. And with that, he prayed before God. When God told him to lift up his rod and stretch out his hand over the sea, Moses stretched it out, and the waters of the Red Sea were parted. It was an impossible thing.

This is the Church of God. If God wants to do His will through the church, He accomplishes it without fail. If anyone is believing that God has blessed the church, God works for that person. Those who do not believe complain against God and die, and go back to Egypt.

Dear fellow believers, how do we go through our whole lives together with the church, and how do we go forward together with God? God has blessed the church; God has blessed us who are in the church—if so, then whether we live or die, we must go forward together with the church. If God has blessed us, then

we wait for it. We wait to see how God has blessed us. How has He blessed you and me, each one of us? Only when we have the faith that He has blessed us, who are members in the church, can we receive and enjoy everything that God gives in the church. We must see by faith how God works. And we must take hold of it.

He is the God who works for each one of us, the God who blesses each one of us. If we only stay still in the church, God—not because we want it, but by His one-sided blessing—has us do this and has us do that, has us enjoy this glory and has us enjoy that glory, has us suffer this persecution, has us do this and has us do that. Everything that comes about in the church is a blessing.

It is not that there are always only clever and outstanding people in the church. The Church of God is where people who are lacking enjoy blessings in the Church of God by the blessing of God.

Dear fellow believers, if God had not blessed, there would be no one who would remain here. There is not a single person who remains in the church simply because God did not bless and he himself was qualified. Dear fellow believers, is that not so?

Because God has blessed, it is by that blessing, by that blessing by which He changed the curse into a blessing, that we are now living happily and serving the Lord. This is the blessing of God, and how amazing it is! As I serve the church, I truly believe that God has blessed the church.

God has blessed the name of Jesus Christ on this earth, and He has blessed one more place, and that place is the Church of God, which is like the city of Zion; the point is that He has blessed the Church of God. I believe this. God has said this.

I believe that if we stay still, we receive food in due season, and that He gives the blessing of the early and the latter rain. I

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believe that He blesses the saints and the servants of God in due season, and solves all problems according to our circumstances. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

We would have to have something outstanding about us, would we not? Yet there may be some among us who think that they are outstanding. There may be those who think, “In that area, I am better,” but I want you to know the fact that no matter how outstanding we may be, if God does not bless, it is of no use at all.

How our hearts find rest, how comfortable and good it is, what great satisfaction there truly is! When God has blessed, what is there that cannot be done? I never believe that it cannot be done. I believe that it can be done. It is not that we break our nose even when we fall over backward; rather, even when we fall over backward, there is something good.

God has blessed us by making use of our shortcomings. It is not that He blessed us by making use of our outstanding qualities. The point is that He blessed us by making use of our shortcomings and our weakness. He did so in order that we might give glory to God alone.

I give thanks before the Lord for the life in the wilderness that appears here, for His giving thanks here and having the food set before the people. These many people, through that blessing of Jesus, ate bread and fish to the full, and there was some left over. The people were about four thousand, and what was left over after they had all eaten was seven large baskets. Since the number of men alone was four thousand, if the women and children were added, it would be three times that number.

Because God blessed, even after that many people had eaten, seven large baskets were left over. Even now, the blessing of God is continually coming down, without change and without lack, on those who believe the fact that God has blessed us. Dear

fellow believers, do you believe this fact? This is precisely how the Lord has blessed us.

The blessing given with the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth

Isaac gave Jacob the blessing of God. *"And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: 'Surely, the smell of my son Is like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!'" (Genesis 27:27–29)*. The point is that this blessing has come upon us today. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

"Surely, the smell of my son Is like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed" (Genesis 27:27). That clothing speaks of deeds. Everything we do is the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. We are people who have been blessed. Everyone who smells this smell is blessed as well.

"Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine" (Genesis 27:28). The food of our God does not fall in heaps. Manna is said to be a tiny thing like coriander seed, and it is said that it came down like dew at dawn and lay white on the ground. So the people of Israel complained that they loathed this worthless bread (Numbers 21:5). The grace of God comes down in such small amounts. It is daily bread, the food needed at each moment.

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It comes down like that, but suppose the manna, which was like coriander seed, had come down as big as pumpkins. Then the roofs would have been punctured. If anyone went out to gather it while the manna was still coming down, his head would have been split open.

"Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine" (Genesis 27:28). The Lord wanted to give, and the Lord has blessed us. The point is that He has given the blessing to us. Truly, this is that He has given us the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, plenty of grain, and wine. The point is that He has given us joy, and has given us the blessing of being able to gather in the grain of souls. And He has also given us the fatness of the earth.

Dear fellow believers, is the earth fat, or is it impoverished? It is fat. We eat every day the food that people in the old days ate only on special days.

God blesses those who have truly received blessings before Him with the fatness of the earth. We must not try to make it happen by force; if we have faith, the blessing of the fatness of the earth comes in. We should not try by human contrivance to become rich ourselves, saying that it is God's will for us to become rich; if God makes us earn big money, then we earn it. It is simple.

Dear fellow believers, how much joy He has given us! *"Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!" (Genesis 27:29)*. All of this has come upon us. Those who become the people of God in the Church of God and live believing that God has blessed them are blessed people. Those who believe that the name of God is blessed are truly blessed.

Even when I first believed, I did know to some degree that this work of Jesus Christ saving me was this great, but I did not know that it was a blessing that does not disappear. I thought that if I did something wrong, it would disappear and wear away. But this is something that does not change. It was I who thought that way for no reason on my side; on God's side, what He has once given He neither takes away nor withdraws. This is a tremendous thing.

God has blessed like this, and how miserably a person who lives without knowing this lives! That is truly how it is when one lives bound up in deeds.

God has already blessed. The point is that He has given us the church that He has blessed. The point is that we need the faith that believes this. And if we stay still, since God has already blessed, He causes those who are not yet right to become right, He shaves down those who are angular, and God fashions them as He pleases.

Faith like gold, shaped in the hands of God

Dear fellow believers, those who have received the remission of sins are all people who have faith like gold. Dear fellow believers, what is done with gold when it is brought into the tabernacle? It is hammered. "Come here." "No, no. I don't want to, I tell you. I don't want to be flat, I tell you. I like being like this, I tell you." People who were originally shaped like this are the ones who have been saved. People with this kind of personality have been saved, and people with this kind of frame have been saved.

But after we have received salvation, we have the faith of salvation. In our hearts there is the faith of salvation. There is

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the faith that believes that Jesus Christ has removed all our sins and has given every blessing. Do you have faith?

Then what happens once we come into the church? “Come here.” “Why? I’m good-looking, aren’t I? I’m so smooth, just like a peeled chestnut, aren’t I?” “You’re too smooth; that won’t do. I’ll have to make you a bit rough.” He hammers with a hammer. “They said it was some kind of blessing or freedom, but what is this? I’ve been deceived, deceived! They gave me just one thing, salvation, and said it was freedom, but every time we meet they hammer me—oh, I can’t stand the sight of it.”

The blessing of God is more beautiful than something smooth, more beautiful than a diamond. He has made a lid so that no dust gets in. God makes it into a lid and blesses it here. He made the lid in order to bless. All we have to do is stay still. If we only carry out this role well, we live happily all our lives without hardship and without ever being cast away.

Dear fellow believers, that is how it is in the church. Because we have the faith that God has blessed, no matter what anyone says, we say, “You are not opposing me; you are opposing God. It is like striking a rock with an egg. The Lord has blessed, so how could anything go wrong again? There is not the slightest possibility that things will go wrong because you do such things. We will only suffer inwardly for a little while and merely feel bad. Go ahead and try.”

God has blessed. If God had cursed, a curse would come, but since He has blessed, a blessing comes, and there is no way a curse could come. Since God is One who does not lie, all we have to do is stay still. “Ah, God permitted that matter in order to bless. God is having that person act that way in order to bless.” Because we believe on the premise that He has blessed, our mood may go back and forth, but our foundation is not shaken.

The Lord tells us not to waver but to be still, since He has blessed us (Psalm 46:10). Before our God, this faith is great. God has blessed me. God has blessed the church. Believing that God has blessed everything in the church is the greatest faith. After receiving the remission of sins, we must have the faith that believes that God has blessed the church.

Do you believe that this is the Church of God? Do you believe the fact that God has blessed within the Church of God? Do you believe the fact that God has blessed this church? Do you believe that God has blessed the Church of God over all the earth? God has blessed. Then is it not settled? When we eat together, talk about the gospel, laugh, pray, praise, and praise and give thanks for what our God has blessed, God Himself takes responsibility for the children who believe what He has blessed. Since God has blessed, God must take responsibility. God brings it and pours it out on us. This is precisely the blessing of God.

A life lived together with the church He has blessed

Dear fellow believers, saints must believe in the church. Whether we live or die, we must believe that He has blessed the church, follow the proper order of the church, receive the guidance of the church, be united with the church, and live faithfully in the work God has entrusted to each of us in the church. God, who has blessed the church, takes responsibility for all the members in it, guides them, and fills them richly on the way of eternal blessing, on the way of eternal happiness, with the fatness of the earth, with the dew of heaven, and with grain. We must believe this.

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We must cast off our own efforts and live believing the fact that God has blessed. We must cast off our own thoughts. It is different from the world, is it not? The world tells you to do something. But after you are born again, stay still in the church.

Dear fellow believers, the church is the body of God. That is why God has blessed the Church of God, which is His body. The Church of God, which has been blessed, has order; no one is ruined alone, and when one hurts, one does not hurt alone. All hurt together. Dear fellow believers, because we are connected to one another, when one side hurts, the other side prays, makes up for it, and gives support. It does so until there is healing. That is how our body is.

When the place where the fingernail of the right hand is gets injured in our body, the energy of the whole body and all the antibodies rush to support that spot. The head gives the command to support the injured fingernail of the right hand. Then the strength down there under the toes comes up, saying, "Where should we go? Where should we go?" "Come this way. Follow me, follow me." "Can't we go this way? This way looks the same." "I said come this way—this way." And so they give support. "Germs are invading. Block them, block them!" They block them. "Hey, then I'll die." "Even if you die, it can't be helped. Die a heroic death in battle." They give support, and they supply all their strength here. Then the bleeding stops and the healing is complete. Then, "All clear. Everyone return home." They all return home.

This is the body of the church that God blesses. That is why, though a single strand of cord may break, the word says, *"A threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12)*.

Dear fellow believers, Satan the devil employs every means and method to bring down the church that God has established and blessed. Even so, no one can ruin or topple the church that

God has blessed. It only shakes for a moment; the point is that the servants of God and the saints of God who believe the fact that God has blessed are never swayed by their circumstances. It is because they have faith.

Dear fellow believers, first of all, we must have faith. Faith is needed. Faith is truly needed. No matter how good-looking a scarecrow is, it is of no use. There must be life inside it. In our faith, in our life of faith, there must be the faith that God has blessed the church. When we have such faith, we can taste the blessing of God; we ourselves can taste it, and we can also cause all the members who come in after us to taste it. The Lord wants us to have this faith. Do you have this faith? I, too, believe. I, too, have it. That is why I live happily.

Dear fellow believers, our Lord has blessed us. The point is that He has blessed His name. The Bible records this event in order to show us this. It is making known to us, who are living in the desert, that our God has blessed us. It is telling us that it is not that we receive blessings by doing something in the wilderness, but that God has become the Bread of life for us and has become water for us, has become the God of salvation for us every day and has accompanied us, and has become our unchanging shepherd; and it has also told us that our Lord Himself has become the source of our blessing. Our Lord is also telling us to believe that God has blessed the church that God has established. And the point is that our Lord is telling us to follow the Lord peacefully and beautifully in faith, fight the good fight of faith, and then meet Him.

We must remember this one thing. We must live in this world with the faith that believes God, the faith that He has blessed the name of Jesus Christ and saved us, and the faith that He has blessed the church. Though you live in this world, which is like a wilderness, I hope that you will eat food through our Lord, who

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has become the Rock, enjoy abundance at all times, never feel famished at any time, and live happily; and I hope that you will not forget the fact that you are saints clothed with the blessing of God, like the virgins who live in the city of Zion, and that you will live in this world, which is like a wilderness, by faith. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Do not seek a sign, but believe in the salvation He has already accomplished

< Mark 8:11–13 >

"Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, 'Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.' And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side."

Asking in order to believe, or demanding in order to test

When Jesus went to the region of Dalmanutha after feeding the four thousand, the Pharisees came out. They disputed with Jesus and sought a sign from heaven. The passage clearly states that they were testing Jesus. They did not come with a heart to learn who Jesus was; rather, demanding that He produce the evidence they required, they tried to stand in the position of judging Jesus.

Jesus sighed deeply in His heart. The Lord, who had compassion on the multitude and fed them, said to those who sought a sign, "*Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly,*

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I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation" (Mark 8:12). He did not give them a sign, not because He lacked power, but because their demand did not come from faith that seeks the grace of the Lord. Jesus left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. For the Lord is not One who must be dragged about by people's tests and prove His power by showing it.

Having read this word, we must not think that every question is unbelief. Asking in order to learn what we do not know is necessary. If the meaning of the word is not clear, we should seek an explanation. But even when the form of the words in a question is the same, the direction of the heart can differ. We must examine ourselves as to whether we intend to hear the word and correct our thinking, or whether we are setting conditions before the Lord in order to protect our own conclusions.

Look to the salvation the Lord accomplished rather than to your own conditions

As the word says, "*For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:22)*, people may say that they will believe only when they see something special with their own eyes. They may also attach the condition that they will believe if their problems are solved in the way they want. When that happens, the word the Lord has already spoken and the salvation He accomplished are pushed to the back, and one's own expectations become the standard of faith. The problem of the Pharisees who demanded a sign, too, did not lie in the Lord having done nothing, but in their hearts that were unwilling to receive the Lord.

The most precious grace Jesus has bestowed on us is that He saved us from sin. This is a greater miracle than any sign from heaven. This work, in which the Lord gave His own flesh and blood and caused us to obtain new life, is the most precious bread of life. The Lord said, *"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (John 6:54)*. We, who commit sins, had to receive the judgment of God. Since we had no ability to escape that judgment, Jesus Himself came to this earth and bore our sins. When He turned thirty, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. With that baptism, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all, and in them all the sins of our whole lives are also included. If one seeks only amazing spectacles without knowing this fact, one will never come to know how one's own sins are resolved.

Because He had those sins passed on to Him with His baptism, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive, and rose again from death on the third day. In this way, the Lord accomplished our salvation with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who believe in this gospel receive the remission of sins. One is not saved by obtaining a special feeling or a visible phenomenon. It is believing in the Lord, who bore our sins, and in what He has done.

Therefore, when we hear the gospel, we must examine what relationship the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus have with our own sins. Knowing the salvation He has already accomplished, we must not put off believing on the grounds that there is no other evidence. We must accept according to the word the fact that the sins the Lord bore are all the sins of the world and that the sins of our whole lives also belong to them. That is believing the salvation the Lord accomplished as our own salvation.

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From the position of examining the Lord to the position of learning the word

We have the freedom to ask the Lord regarding sickness and the difficulties of life. But asking and testing the Lord are different. One who asks for help relies on the compassion of the Lord. One who tests tries to decide whether to acknowledge the Lord by seeing whether his demands are fulfilled. Even as we tell Him what we need, we must not make the answer the standard that decides whether salvation is true or false.

When we preach the gospel, too, we must not try to persuade people only with visible results or special experiences. We must preach the word so that the person knows his own sins and believes how Jesus dealt with those sins. The testimony of a saved person, too, must in the end not stop at boasting of one's own experience but testify of the salvation the Lord accomplished.

The Pharisees, by putting their own demands first, lost the place where they could receive the word of the Lord. Let us reflect on whether we are harboring such a heart. Let us honestly ask about and learn what we do not know, but let us not test the Lord in order to protect our own thoughts. The Lord said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*. Let us know through the word who Jesus is, who has already borne our sins, and let us come to the Lord not with a visible sign but with faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Why do we not understand even though we remember the seven large baskets of bread?

< Mark 8:14–21 >

"Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, 'Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have no bread.' But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?' They said to Him, 'Twelve.' 'Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?' And they said, 'Seven.' So He said to them, 'How is it you do not understand?'"

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The disciples, whose hearts were bound to one loaf of bread

As the disciples got into the boat, they forgot to take bread. The bread they had was one loaf. Although they had just seen about four thousand people eat and seven large baskets still left over, the disciples' attention was now fixed on the fact that there was not enough bread in their hands. Even though Jesus was with them, the lack before their eyes felt greater than that fact.

Then Jesus warned them, *"Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15)*. Hearing that word, the disciples reasoned that it was because they had no bread. The Lord had told them to beware of the leaven that would enter their hearts, but the disciples took it as a word about their not having brought bread to eat. When our thoughts are bound to what we are worried about, we come to hear even the word the Lord speaks in a way that fits that worry.

This happens to us as well. When our hearts are full of the problems of life, even when we hear the word, we may be interested only in whether those problems will be solved. Even when the will of God and the grace of salvation are spoken of, we may first weigh whether or not it is a word favorable to our own circumstances. Therefore, when we hear the word, we must stop our own thoughts, even for a moment, and examine what the Lord is teaching.

Beware of the heart that pushes away the word

The Pharisees tested Jesus and demanded a sign. Herod, even after hearing the words of John the Baptist, did not follow the righteous word because of his own benefit and his standing

before people. Though their forms differ, such hearts are alike in that they seek only what is visible and fail to recognize Jesus, who is the Bread of life. The reason Jesus told His disciples to beware is that even into them, who followed the Lord, that heart which pushes away the word could spread like leaven.

The warning about leaven cannot be read narrowly as a word to be careful only of conspicuous hostility. One may outwardly follow the Lord while in one's heart valuing the world's esteem and one's own satisfaction more. If such thinking is left as it is, it gradually becomes the standard by which one judges the word. While first weighing whether it benefits oneself and whether one can be recognized by others, one ends up missing the word the Lord speaks.

The disciples did not openly demand a sign as the Pharisees did. But in that they did not understand in their hearts what the Lord had already done, they had to be rebuked. We, too, must not consider that all our judgments come from faith merely because we are in the church. Since even a saved person's heart can be drawn to the thoughts of the flesh, we must keep examining our hearts with the word of the Lord. We must remember the word that says, *"Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace" (Hebrews 13:9)*.

Remembering the numbers and believing in the Lord are different

Jesus asked His disciples how much had been left over when He fed the five thousand and when He fed the four thousand. The disciples answered exactly, twelve and seven, so it was not that they had forgotten the facts. Yet the Lord asked, *"How is it*

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you do not understand?" (Mark 8:21). For remembering the numbers and relying on Jesus, who had accomplished that work, were different matters.

If the Lord had fed the multitude abundantly twice, the disciples should have known who Jesus, who was with them, was. There was no reason to look at one loaf of bread and think of even the Lord as if He were powerless. Also, when the Lord spoke of leaven, they should have known that there was a teaching more necessary than how to obtain bread. To remember the grace already received is not merely to recall the information about the event, but to believe today as well in the One who gave that grace.

Our memory of the gospel must also be like this. Even if we know the words "the baptism and the Cross of Jesus," if we do not believe how our own sins were resolved, no assurance is established in our hearts. When Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, John baptized Jesus at the Jordan River, and at that time all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all. The sins of our whole lives are also among them. Because of the sins He had thus borne, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment in our place, and rose again on the third day. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we become righteous people who have received the remission of sins.

If we believe in this salvation, even when we discover the fact that we are lacking, we do not need to look again for the basis of salvation within ourselves. We should acknowledge our wrongs and turn our hearts, but we must stand on the gospel that the Lord bore even that sin. Beyond remembering and speaking the content of the gospel, we must believe that this content is the very salvation for us. That is receiving the word of life in our

Why do we not understand even though we remember
the seven large baskets of bread?

hearts and living by it. Jesus is the Bread of life, and that Bread is not something we eat only when we first hear the gospel. Whenever our lack and our own rightness are broken, to ruminate every day on the word that the Lord bore our sins with His baptism and received the judgment on the Cross for us is to eat the Bread of life.

Even when there is a problem before us that must be solved right away, let us not forget who the Lord is. Let us ask for what we need and do what we must do, but let us not let worry block the ears that hear the word. Let us examine the heart that wants to protect its own thoughts and the heart that is bound to people's evaluation, and let us accept the teaching of the Lord, who saved us. Let us not stop at remembering only the numbers of grace, but let us rely today as well on Jesus, who bestowed that grace. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

From a faith that sees dimly to a faith that sees clearly

< Mark 8:22–26 >

"Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, 'I see men like trees, walking.' Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, 'Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.'"

Familiarity is not seeing clearly

At Bethsaida, people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged Him to touch him. Jesus took the man by the hand and led him out of the town. He did not leave the man who could not see to find his way by his own strength, but led him Himself. What that man needed was not the ability to guess his familiar way better, but the help of the Lord, who causes him to see.

A person, even if he cannot see, can get along in a familiar place by guessing his way. However, the fact that something is familiar does not at once mean that one sees clearly. There is something similar to this in our faith as well. Being accustomed

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to the teachings we have long heard and to the religious life we have repeated, we may think that we know the truth well. But if we do not clearly know how we receive the remission of sins, we must not be satisfied with familiarity alone.

As for His leading him out of the town, we cannot read it as meaning that everyone must leave the place where he actually lives in order to be saved. The Lord said, *"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)*. To be born again, like this blind man, we must first leave our own town, that is, the town of our own thinking. As we live, we build the town of our own thinking with the knowledge, doctrines, and values we have accepted, and we live familiarly within it. To learn the word, we must also lay before the word even the thoughts that we consider we already know. When the Lord's teaching differs from our own thinking, we must follow the word rather than guard our familiar thinking.

If you see dimly, tell it just as you see it

Jesus spit on the man's eyes and laid His hands on him, and then asked him what he saw. He looked up and answered, *"I see men like trees, walking" (Mark 8:24)*. He did not say that everything was clear just because he could see a little, but told the state of what he could see at that moment just as it was. Then the Lord laid His hands on him again, and he was restored and came to see all things clearly.

The text testifies from beginning to end that Jesus healed him. We cannot judge, on the grounds that He laid His hands on him twice, that Jesus' power was insufficient. Nor should we explain it as a person obtaining the remission of sins little by little and completing it later. For what is recorded here is the process of

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healing by which He caused one man to see completely. The fact that salvation is complete is not to be known by turning this healing process into stages of salvation and explaining it that way, but must be known from how the Lord bore our sins.

What we must learn is the attitude of not hiding the parts we do not know as if we knew them. Just because the expressions of the gospel are familiar to our ears does not mean that the questions in our hearts have been resolved as well. If we do not know how sins were passed on to Jesus, or if it is not clear to us why the judgment on the Cross is related to our own sins, we must learn the word more. Let us not be ashamed of revealing our questions. Only when we admit what we do not know can we hear the explanation we need.

We must know both our state as sinners and the work He did to save us

For a person to be born again, he must first accept the word of God concerning himself. Jesus' spitting on the blind man's eyes means that there is judgment and curse upon those eyes. We must believe by the word that we are those who cannot but receive God's judgment and curse, those who must go to hell. We are people who sin with our hearts and actions, and we were those who were to be judged because of those sins. We cannot escape that judgment on the grounds that we have refined our conduct on our own and have lived a religious life for a long time. God said, *"Though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me" (Jeremiah 2:22)*. If we take our own sins lightly, it is hard to know rightly, too, why Jesus had to bear our sins.

However, salvation is not accomplished merely by knowing the fact that one is a sinner. We must know what the Lord did for us sinners. In the sacrifice of atonement of the Old Testament, sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering, and that offering shed its blood and died in place of the sinner. This lets us know that salvation is not a salvation that simply calls us righteous without dealing with sin, but a salvation in which there is the transfer of sins and the judgment for those sins. Jesus came to complete this salvation.

Just as Jesus laid His hands on the blind man's eyes, in the Old Testament, as it was said, *"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat" (Leviticus 16:21)*, sins were passed on by laying hands on the head of the sacrificial offering. The laying on of hands speaks of the passing on of sin. In the same way, Jesus, by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River in the form of the laying on of hands, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins of our whole lifetime were also passed on to Jesus at that time. The Lord, bearing that sin He had borne through His baptism, shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and is born again. We do not become righteous by making our hearts clean little by little through our own efforts, but we become righteous by believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished once and for all.

Therefore, the confession that we believe in Jesus must have clear content. We cannot stop at knowing merely that Jesus is a good person. We must believe that He had the sins of our whole lifetime transferred to Him through His baptism, and received

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the judgment for those sins on the Cross in our place. Only when we know both our state as sinners and the work of the Savior can we believe in the righteousness the Lord accomplished and give thanks, even while seeing our own sins.

Live according to the word you have come to know clearly

The Lord sent the man who had been healed to his house, saying, *"Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town" (Mark 8:26)*. Even the way he was to go after his eyes were opened was something the Lord told him, and that town where the blind man had lived is none other than the town of his own thinking. Since God has cleansed all our sins through the secret of the baptism, we must now learn the word of truth and live by faith, and must not go back to the old town again. After being saved, there is no reason to make our own thinking alone the standard again.

Even when we who have believed in the gospel discover our weakness, let us not make that gospel dim. The remission of sins the Lord accomplished is not something that becomes half done and then completed according to our feelings. Giving thanks for the grace by which He bore the sins of our whole lifetime, we need only correct our wrong judgments and go on learning the word more. Toward those who do not yet know clearly, too, let us not hastily demand only the right answer, but explain the word of salvation to them step by step. Let us not remain in dim guesses, but stand in the faith that clearly knows and believes in Jesus, who saved us. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Christian life is sacrifice

< Mark 8:27–37 >

“Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, ‘Who do men say that I am?’ So they answered, ‘John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said to Him, ‘You are the Christ.’ Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’ When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’”

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"Who do you say that I am?"

It seems that Jesus, too, when He was on this earth, was aware that many people were making various assessments of Him. When Jesus asked, *"Who do men say that I am?" (Mark 8:27)*, the disciples said, *"John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets" (Mark 8:28)*. When Jesus asked again, *"Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29)*, then Peter stepped forward and said, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. The word Christ means that He is the King of kings, our Savior, and also our God, and yet, in relation to God the Father, the Son of Almighty God.

Having heard Peter make his confession of faith before the disciples, Jesus said openly that before long He would be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, be put to death, and rise again after three days. "Before long I will be rejected by the elders, and by the scribes, and by the chief priests. And I will die and then rise again." That is what He said.

Hearing this word, Peter, quick-tempered as he was, once again pleaded with Him. "Do not do that. Why must You suffer and die?"

Our Lord spoke of what He would do in the days ahead: that He would suffer for the sake of many souls and sacrifice Himself, and that in order to save them He would undergo the sacrifice of giving up His body on the Cross. But Peter loved Jesus too much in human terms, and so he expressed his heart, saying, "Teacher, You must not die. And You must not suffer like that. Why must You do that? You must not do that." Because he truly loved Him, he could not understand that the One he loved would be rejected by people, be nailed to the Cross and die, and then come back to life. Of course, our Lord rebuked Peter.

The Lord, who came to do His own work

Our Lord came to this earth to do His own work. His own work means that He came to this earth to give up His body for many people, to give Himself up as a ransom for the sins of people, as a sacrificial offering, and to remove their sins. This is His own work. Our God came to do His own work. In other words, His own work was to sacrifice Himself for many people so that many people might gain life.

Our Lord came to do His own work, and having come to this earth, He did all of His own work. He received baptism from John at the Jordan River, and He also gave up His flesh on the Cross, and in that state of having borne all the sins of all people, by sacrificing Himself on behalf of all people, He accomplished on the Cross the work of sharing life with all people. And He saved you and me. Our Lord did the work of sacrificing Himself and saving us.

What was the word with which Jesus rebuked Peter? It was this: *"You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Mark 8:33)*. Jesus came to sacrifice Himself and save us, but Peter now was not mindful of the things of God; he was not mindful of these things of God, in which Jesus would receive baptism from John and have the sin of the world transferred to Him, undergo the sacrifice of being nailed to the Cross, and rise again and save many people, but was mindful of the things of men.

The things of men and the things of God

What are these things of men? The things of men were simply this: not suffering pain, not losing loved ones, not

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sacrificing, and also eating well and living well together with one's teacher and one's Lord without any trouble at all—living well like that was what the things of men were.

But the things of God were not like that. Jesus sacrificed Himself and saved us. For us born-again people, too, there is doing the things of God and there is doing the things of men, and we are always struggling between these two kinds of work. What doing the things of God is, is this: just as Jesus sacrificed Himself and saved many people, we born-again people also sacrifice ourselves and do the work of helping many people receive the remission of sins.

Doing His own work—the work of sacrificing ourselves. In reality, even those who have received the remission of sins dislike sacrificing themselves. That is because we, too, are not fools, and we know full well what is profitable to us and what is a loss. At the very least, we know how to subtract and add. But those who do the things of God, those who follow God, sacrifice themselves.

How do they sacrifice themselves? Even though they themselves suffer and have a hard time, they sacrifice themselves in order to share life with people, in order to enable them to gain life. This is what the lives of us righteous people who have received the remission of sins are like. Just as our Lord came to this earth to do His own work, so it is with us, too—with us who have received the remission of sins first. Sacrificing ourselves for people, preaching the gospel to them, and doing the work of enabling those people to receive the remission of sins—this is precisely what our doing the things of God is.

In fact, we Christians, those who are truly born again, sacrifice ourselves. There is a word that says, "*The wicked borrows and does not repay, But the righteous shows mercy and gives" (Psalm 37:21)*. The righteous do the work of lending

without limit. Why is that? It is because our Lord has come into us and dwells within us. Our Lord, who has come into us, came to this earth to do His own work, and He has come into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, and our Lord still, unchangingly, does His own work until the day He comes. What work? He does the work of giving life to people. Through whom? Through you and me, who have received the remission of sins. He does the work of saving lives through us.

As for sacrifice on this earth, the work in which Jesus came to this earth and, by sacrificing Himself, gave us the salvation that removes sin was the prototype of all sacrifice. What all those people in the Bible did who did what was right and were martyred was, all of it, a shadow of Jesus Christ. It was telling us that Jesus Christ would come to this earth in the future and do what is right like this, and suffer in order to give the remission of sins, give new life, and give the kingdom of heaven.

Likewise, so it is with us. You and I, who have received the remission of sins, also give. We sacrifice. Those who believe in Jesus rightly do as Jesus did His work for many people. Those who have the Holy Spirit within them sacrifice themselves. In the position each has been entrusted with, they sacrifice in this area and sacrifice in that area.

Up to now, as we have followed the Lord, we have made sacrifices in many areas. But, dear fellow believers, in reality, everyone who has received the remission of sins makes sacrifices. After we meet the Lord, we think, "Will I live better and prosper more from now on? Or how is this going to turn out?" Before the Lord came into us, we all lived for ourselves. But after meeting the Lord, we came to know that ultimately what we do is not our own work, not the things of men, but the things of God, and that just as Jesus did His own work, we do not do our own work but the work of Jesus.

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It is the same not only for me but for you as well. After we have received the remission of sins, we do not do our own work but, even without intending it, the things of God. There is nothing we do for ourselves. We do everything for God. When those who have truly met the Lord do something for themselves, their hearts become very uncomfortable, and they end up becoming slaves of Satan the devil again. That is why Christians are those who cannot live for themselves. Dear fellow believers, isn't that so?

When we do something for ourselves, the flesh may indeed feel good, but isn't the heart uncomfortable, somehow strange, somehow empty? But when we sacrifice ourselves and follow for the Lord's sake and do something for the Lord, it seems as though we lose something, yet we feel that we gain many things.

A life of sacrifice that burns on the altar of burnt offering

In reality, what the Christian life is, is sacrificing. Sacrifice is the Christian life. Dear fellow believers, in the tabernacle, at the altar of burnt offering, morning and evening, all day long, the smell of burning meat rises, and meat burns on the altar of burnt offering. This is precisely the Christian life. Jesus Christ, too, came to this earth, laid His own flesh on the altar of burnt offering, and became the sacrificial offering. We born-again people also offer sacrifices. This is the Christian life.

Truly, Christians, those who have met the Lord, have no life for themselves. They have a life together with Christ, but they have no life only for themselves. If we think about it in a fleshly way, it seems foolish. Why must we do it that way? It is not that we set up a situational logic, as some people do, saying that if

we want to preach the gospel to the rich, we must become rich before we can preach it. When we sacrifice, testify of the gospel, and sacrifice ourselves, the gospel spreads to the rich, and the gospel spreads to the poor as well.

We must sacrifice. The Lord, who came to do His own work, was rejected by the elders and scribes and chief priests. He said that He would have to be rejected. Why must Jesus be rejected? Did Jesus commit treason? Or did He do something ethically wrong? Did He plunge into politics? Why is He rejected by the scribes, by the leaders of the people? There is no reason at all why Jesus should be rejected. Why must He be rejected by the most senior among the people? There is nothing at all for which He should be rejected. Why must He be rejected by the chief priests, who are the religious leaders? There was no reason for Him to be rejected. All people live for themselves and follow the will of the devil, but because Jesus, following the will of the Father, sacrificed Himself in order to remove the sins of all people and give them life, because He died for all people, He became the enemy of all people and was hated by all people. Because Jesus did what was right, He became the enemy of all people and was rejected by all people.

We, too, while living on this earth, are persecuted by many people when we do what is right. We are called fools. But if we live an ordinary life, we are not persecuted by anyone. Nonbelievers approve of us, and believers approve of us; although we would not be approved by those who believe rightly, we are approved by all.

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The Lord's work, which cannot be done without sacrifice

All of us believe that the work of establishing churches, the work of preaching the gospel through literature, the work of preaching the gospel overseas, the work of looking after the various churches, the work of praying—all the things we do—are not our own work, and we believe that all this work of serving the Lord is the work of sacrificing ourselves. We believe that this work is not living for ourselves. If we were living for ourselves, we would have done the work of receiving rather than giving anything. We would have thought that even if we received everything from God, it would still be insufficient. But our doing the things of God is giving, it is sacrificing—that is what I believe. The work of preaching the gospel overseas can absolutely never be done without sacrifice. Absolutely never. You may think it would be really nice when you hear stories that missionaries flew in by airplane and ate and played every day, and yet people came to them and were saved. But for you to go to the place where the missionaries go, enter a world where neither the culture nor the language is understood, be unable even to go outside, and stay shut indoors for as long as a whole month is a hardship. In whatever area, doing the Lord's work cannot be done without sacrifice. Those who do not know well have mistaken ideas. They think, "How nice. How good it would be if I, too, were sent as a missionary once!" but just try going as a missionary. In some mission fields the water is completely yellow. And if you draw tap water and leave it standing, the dirt settles. Drinking that water, and being in a place where the language is not understood, unable even to meet many people—this is not easy. Sacrifice goes into it.

Also, a great deal of sacrifice goes into our preaching the gospel through literature. Whatever work we do, a great deal of sacrifice goes into it. When we produce a book, you may think, "This is nothing much; he is not even that great, yet he makes quite a lot of them; one volume would be enough," but that is not so. Dear fellow believers, when we try to make a single book, it feels as though our heads will burst. Just as a motor heats up when it is overcharged with electricity, our heads heat up. With speech, even after saying something one way, we can turn it around right away, but with writing, once it has been put one way, it cannot be turned around right away. It must flow in context smoothly from beginning to end. Moreover, bringing out as a book not something that was written but something that was spoken is not easy. And those who work together with me get even more heated in their heads than I do, and it is because there are such small sacrifices that the gospel is preached through literature.

Also, for you to serve the Lord while living your working life and your family life, and to be united with the church—these cannot be done without sacrifice. Is there anything that can be done without sacrifice? You come to the meetings not doing what you want to do and not meeting the people you want to meet, and also, once you are united with the church, you have to sacrifice in many ways in order to serve the Lord, and even if you are bound in some way, without sacrifice you cannot belong there. Only when everyone sacrifices can all become one together.

It is the same with social life. Even to become the person in charge of a village meeting, one cannot do it without self-sacrifice. Even just to hold a parents' meeting at school, one can do it only with self-sacrifice. This church is the same.

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For you to live your working life while serving the Lord and being united with the church is by no means an easy thing. Without self-sacrifice, it is absolutely impossible. That is why the Lord said, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*. So, living a working life requires tremendous sacrifice. When you are at work, there are many distressing things because of your superiors. Some, on the sole pretext that they are the boss, look down on you and order you to do this and do that.

And you have to go out at a set time each day, and while you are there, you have no freedom. If you do something else, they give you disapproving looks. If you listen to a sermon or read the Bible when you have free time, they subtly persecute you, telling you to attend to your work even when there are no customers.

And how much do you have to work? The working hours in a day are about eight hours. After going to someone else's place and working all day long for eight hours, how much do you get? You get a few bills. It is upsetting to think that you have spent the whole day to receive this. You feel that you could receive this much by going somewhere and working just one hour, and if you preach the gospel to one soul, that is not something to be compared with a few bills—since one soul is more precious than the whole world, there is a harvest greater than selling the whole land of the earth—and yet to think, "I worked eight hours a day and received this!" The money received that way was so precious that I wondered where I should spend it; it was too precious to spend just anywhere. Having earned it through such hard work, I wondered whether there was a worthwhile way to spend it.

Money, too, must be spent well. When investing money, we must invest it in the right place; if we invest it in the wrong place,

we throw it all away completely. I, too, went through many such things while living a working life.

Serving the gospel while living a working life or a school life is by no means an easy thing. Whether it is our family life or doing full-time ministry in the church, neither is by any means easy. In a way, doing full-time ministry seems the most comfortable thing in the world. When they gather among themselves, they laugh and chatter, make a fuss about eating delicious food, and say, "Wow, this is really great," but, dear fellow believers, just try becoming a leader once. Is it really that comfortable?

It absolutely cannot be done without self-sacrifice. Even those who have merely taken on meal duty, Sunday school teachers, teachers of the middle and high school department, the brothers and sisters receiving training, the brothers inside the church, and the brothers outside the church—it is because all of them sacrifice that they serve the gospel and follow the Lord.

God, who does not let sacrifice be in vain

Our lives are lives of sacrifice. We must not be mindful of the things of men. The things of men are eating well and living well in this world. It is becoming a well-fed pig. Not sacrificing, not living for what is right, but merely eating well and living well while one's flesh lasts, living without purpose and dying without purpose, living a meaningless life of eating, living, and dying—that is what the things of men are. That is what the things of men are like.

Even so, we want to do what is right. Many people want to do what is right, but they are not able to do what is right. But we born-again people do what is right. What right thing do we do?

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We do the things of God. When we sacrifice ourselves, when we make even a small sacrifice and believe and follow, God does not let that sacrifice be in vain. He surely makes up for that sacrifice. He gives blessings. He said, *"Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35)*. He who seeks to live dies, and he who seeks to die lives.

Dear fellow believers, a brother I know well is an operator who does excavator work in a big city. This brother is a man of very strong will. He married without a penny, and saying that he would buy a house, he went abroad as an excavator operator, earned money, and came back. After coming back, he said he would run a supermarket, and then he lost it all in one blow, and he has gone up to the big city again and is doing excavator work.

It has been a long time since he received the remission of sins, but he has lived only for himself. What he is saying now is that he wants to wind up that job and now move next to the church and live a life of faith. He worked for several years, but in the end all he has managed is to put food in the mouths of his wife, his children, and himself. He went abroad and went through hardships, and he did work scooping up earth and hoisting it up at a subway construction site, and he said that as the earth was being hoisted up, the cable snapped and it fell. He said that it fell when he had gone home and someone else was doing the work, so he survived, and that is why he does not want to do this work.

He worked so much only for himself, yet he has no wealth stored up; rather, he only has debts. By the time he pays off all the debt he incurred buying the excavator, the excavator, too, will have worn out.

Even doing only the things of men, making a living, requires sacrifice, yet nothing gets better. When we do the things of God, even though we sacrifice, there is a reward for the sacrifice and

the sacrifice is worthwhile. That is why we follow the Lord and sacrifice. The Lord's word is that if we lose our lives for Him and the gospel, we will live, but if instead we live only for the things of men, we will lose everything. The Lord tells us to deny ourselves and follow Him when we follow Him. In other words, this word means that we should follow the Lord even if we suffer loss. Then we gain many things. But it is a word that says that if we do not sacrifice and give up following the Lord, we lose many things.

The Church of God, which is built through sacrifice

All of us do the things of God. We sacrifice. To follow the Lord is to sacrifice. By making this sacrifice, we enable many people to receive the remission of sins, and by making a small sacrifice, we gain many things. Even though we sacrifice in a small area, how much we gain! Churches are established in many places, and when a church is first established, there is nothing to see. But when a church has been established and about a year or two has passed, souls begin to join it. Do we not actually see how many souls are saved through the churches God has established and through God's servants and saints? Until a church is established, there is much sacrifice.

Whenever any church has been established, many brothers and sisters and God's servants have labored and sacrificed in many areas, whether in body, in heart, or in faith. That is how the churches have been established. When God's servants do their work, however much they have, they give it all to the Lord and live.

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It is not only the brothers and sisters who sacrifice; God's servants also sacrifice, and all serve the Lord through sacrifice.

In any case, if we want to follow the Lord, we must make sacrifices. It is not that you sacrifice because you are told that you must sacrifice; in reality, you have followed while sacrificing, whether you knew it or not. The very fact that you have followed the Lord until now means that you have sacrificed. Without sacrifice, one can absolutely never follow. If there had been no denying of ourselves and sacrificing, we could not follow the Church of God, and we could not follow the Lord. To follow the church is to follow the Lord.

Know, believe, and follow the Lord's will

What is the Lord's will? What are the things of God? What was His own work that our Lord came to this earth and did? Sacrificing Himself, He received baptism from John at the Jordan River and had all our sins transferred to Him, and by receiving the judgment on the Cross in our place, by sacrificing His own body, He saved you and me. These were the things of God. We are now the people who do the things of God. We who have received the remission of sins do the things of God. Dear fellow believers, it is not only you and I who must receive the remission of sins; not only the people around us, our families, and the country we live in, but all the people of the whole world must hear the gospel and receive the remission of sins. People in some countries receive the remission of sins very quickly as soon as they hear this gospel. How pure those people are! They accept the remission of sins so readily.

We believe that if we preach the gospel more, God will save many souls, and we also believe that a period for the gospel to become firmly established there is also needed.

And when we establish a church in a new place, our families and the souls in our vicinity all come to receive the remission of sins. A church being established there, and our serving the Lord, are not for ourselves alone, but they are for our relatives and for all the people in our vicinity. Just as Jesus sacrificed Himself for all people, our serving our Lord and sacrificing ourselves is for the sake of people.

We know this, and I know that you have many such feelings—that it is difficult and hard, and that at times you want to sink to the ground. "Oh dear, can't I just stop doing it this way now? Can't I just live halfheartedly and go when the Lord comes, go if the Lord takes me with Him, and if He does not take me, go before the Lord myself—can't I live like that?" There is in our hearts a mind that wants to settle down comfortably and a mind that sinks into stagnation, but even so, our sacrificing is the Lord's will, it is faith, it is what pleases the Lord; let us know, believe, and follow the Lord's will. Before long, *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come" (Hebrews 10:37)*, and truly, in this age, in this world, if we do not serve the Lord, if we do not sacrifice for the Lord and do the Lord's work, how deeply we must inevitably be swept away in the waves of sin! All the more because it is like this, let us concentrate on serving and following the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

He who has confessed Christ takes up his own cross and follows the Lord

< Mark 8:27–38 >

"Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, 'Who do men say that I am?' So they answered, 'John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.' Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, 'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his

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own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.'"

People's evaluation and the disciple's confession

On the way to the towns of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples who people said He was. People regarded Him as John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the prophets. Though they regarded Jesus more highly than an ordinary person, they did not rightly know who He was. Speaking words of respect does not at once mean believing in the Savior.

Jesus asked His disciples again. He did not let them stop at conveying other people's evaluation, but had them confess their own faith. Peter answered, *"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29)*. This is a confession acknowledging Jesus as the Savior whom God sent. We, too, must have the faith that goes beyond the explanations heard from others and believes in Jesus as our own Savior.

Christ means the Anointed One. In the Old Testament, anointing was received only by kings, priests, and prophets, but Jesus came to this earth and carried out all three of these works and saved us. In particular, as the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, He had our sins passed on to Him through His baptism, not onto a sheep or a goat, but onto His own body, and died on the Cross and rose again. Therefore, believing in Jesus as the Christ is not a matter of attaching a good name to Him. It is believing that the very One whom God sent to solve our sins is

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Jesus, accepting the way of salvation that He speaks of, and living under His rule.

Peter, who tried to block the way of suffering

Jesus for the first time taught them that *"the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31)*. Then Peter took hold of Jesus and remonstrated with Him. With the mouth that had confessed Him as the Christ, he tried to block the way the Christ had to go. Even an attitude that seems to hold Jesus dear can go against the work of God if one puts one's own thinking ahead of the Lord's word.

Jesus rebuked Peter and said, *"Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Mark 8:33)*. The things of God are the work by which Jesus received baptism and bore our sins, was judged on the Cross, rose again, and saves many people, and the work of preaching that gospel to the whole world. The things of men are to eat well and live well in this world without suffering and without sacrificing. To us who have received the remission of sins is given the task of thinking first of the things of God and then of the things of men. His saying, "Get behind Me, Satan," does not mean that Peter himself was Satan; rather, it was because that thought, which blocked the Lord's work of salvation, was precisely the work Satan does. We, too, while saying that we are for the Lord, may actually expect only the way without suffering, the way of being acknowledged by people. At that time, we must not try to change the word the Lord speaks to fit our own expectations.

The reason Jesus had to be killed is that He bore our sins. If we look at how He bore those sins, there is something Jesus did first, before He suffered. It is that He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River. In that are included all the sins of our whole lifetime as well. Because He bore that sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death after three days, as He had said. By believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins.

If we remove the Lord's suffering and death from the work of salvation, His bearing the judgment for our sins disappears. Also, if we do not know that He had sins transferred to Him through His baptism, we cannot fully explain why that death is the redemption for our sins. We who confess Jesus as the Christ must also believe by what method He accomplished salvation. We cannot pick and choose, according to our own thinking, what the Lord did for us.

Deny yourself and take up your own cross

Jesus called the multitude together with His disciples and said, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*. This is the word He gave after the incident in which Peter blocked the Lord's way with his own thinking. To deny oneself is not to hate oneself as having no worth at all, but to lay down one's own judgment that differs from the Lord's word, without insisting that it is right. The Lord goes ahead, and we must stand in the place of following Him.

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The word about taking up one's own cross contains the meaning of not avoiding the hardships one must bear while following the Lord. We may lose people's acknowledgment, and we may have to lay down our own comfort. There are also times when we must give our time and strength to the work of preaching the gospel. At such times, if we make our own benefit the absolute standard, it is hard to follow the way the Lord has entrusted to us.

That does not mean, however, that our hardships become the price that removes sin. The judgment for sin Jesus has already received in our place. We are not people who are saved by going through much suffering, but people who have been saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Because we follow the Lord's will out of thanks for having been saved, we also bear the labor needed in that process. We must not confuse the redemption accomplished by the Lord's Cross with the labor a disciple bears.

On this way, we sometimes grow weary and are drawn to our own thinking. Each time, we must acknowledge our wrong judgment before the Lord's word and turn our hearts. Never having wavered even once is not a disciple's boast. What matters is that, though we are lacking, we believe in the Lord, who saved us, and follow His will again. Relying on the Holy Spirit and the word the Lord has given us, we must undertake the work we are to carry out today.

Entrust to the Lord the life that is more precious than the whole world

Jesus asked, *"What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36)*, and so brought home the value of life. Even if one gains much in the world, one cannot bring back a lost life with it. Therefore, the choice to abandon the Lord of life in order to protect the gain before one's eyes is not a wise choice. In the faith that entrusts one's life for the sake of the Lord and the gospel, there is the hope of everlasting life, which cannot be exchanged for the possessions of the world. It means that whoever loses gains, and whoever tries to save himself dies. God does not let the sacrifice of us who follow the Lord be in vain, but surely makes up for it.

This word does not mean that we should go looking for suffering itself or treat life carelessly. It is a word that says, even if we meet loss and danger while following the Lord, we must not deny the Savior and try to protect only our own safety. The Lord sternly warned about the one who is ashamed of Him and His word in a sinful generation. We must know that abandoning the Lord in order to be accepted by people is not a light choice.

We must distinguish between being weak and afraid for a moment and rejecting and abandoning the gospel itself. Rather than immediately condemning a fearful saint, we must hold on to the word together with him and help him to rely on the Lord. At the same time, we must guard against the heart that pushes away the word of salvation for the sake of the life one desires. For Jesus is the One who will come again in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. The Bible promises, *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37)*. If we believe that promise, we also come to know that the world's evaluation now is not the final judgment.

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Let us live believing in our hearts the confession that the Lord is the Christ. Let us give thanks to the Lord, who bore our sins through His baptism, was judged on the Cross, and rose again from death. Standing in that salvation, let us lay down our wrong thinking, bear the labor entrusted to us, and hope for the Lord, who will come again. Let us follow by faith the way the Lord, who gave us life, teaches. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Let us confess the gospel to God

< Mark 8:27–38 >

"Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, 'Who do men say that I am?' So they answered, 'John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.' Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, 'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also

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will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.'"

"You are the Christ"

When we look at this word, Jesus asked His disciples, *"Who do men say that I am?" (Mark 8:27)*. The disciples answered Him, *"John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets" (Mark 8:28)*. And Jesus asked His disciples, *"But who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29)*. Peter was the very first to answer. *"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29)*. So Jesus said nothing more and warned them *"that they should tell no one about Him" (Mark 8:30)*. This confession that the Lord is the Christ is truly the right confession, and many things are contained in this short confession.

Even now, among the Hebrew people, they think of Jesus as one of the prophets. Because they think of Jesus as one of the many prophets of the Old Testament, it is extremely difficult to preach the gospel to the Hebrew people. The term "Hebrew people" means the people of Israel. They are the natives of Israel. Because these people know Jesus as one of the prophets, they do not read the New Testament. They do not acknowledge it. Why? They do not acknowledge it because it is the word of Jesus. So those people, with only the Old Testament, are still waiting for the Messiah who is to come.

So if you go to the nation of Israel, there is what is called the Wailing Wall, and they write down their prayer requests, stick them into the wall, and pray while wailing. They pray to be saved quickly. Still, they wait for the Messiah who is to come.

So if we want to preach the gospel to the people of Israel, what must come first is that the thinking that nation has been

holding on to must be broken. What they have believed in and waited for must all collapse, and so they must accept that Jesus is truly not one of the prophets but the true Messiah, the Savior. Then those people believe, just as it is, the whole gospel of the water and the Spirit that you and I believe in. Even now, those people receive as the word of God, just as it is, the sacrificial law of the Old Testament, that is, the law of laying hands on the sacrificial offering to pass on sins to it, slaughtering that offering, and receiving its blood and sprinkling it. Therefore, because they believe so well that in the New Testament Jesus Christ comes and does such and such for them, if only they come to know that Jesus is the Messiah they have been waiting for, they receive salvation.

So Jesus asked what the people of this nation said He was, and the disciples said that some said John the Baptist, some said Elijah, and some said one of the prophets. They had thought He was one of these three, but who is John the Baptist? He is a servant of God. And who is Elijah? He is a servant of God. One of the prophets is also a servant of God, so it means that Jesus could not be the Messiah.

The Christ, who is King, High Priest, and Prophet

Jesus asked His disciples, and Peter said, *"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29)*. Jesus is God and also the Christ. He is our King, and also the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, and the One who, with the baptism He received from John, had our sins transferred onto His body and died on the Cross and saved us, and also the Prophet. With this one word, with this one confession of faith, everything was finished. *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*.

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We, too, need only have this faith. *"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29)*. The word "Christ" means "anointed," and in the Old Testament, the anointing was something that only kings, priests, and prophets received. When a king was established, when a prophet was established, and when someone became the high priest, oil was poured on him. Jesus, our Lord, came to this earth and carried out all three of these tasks for us and saved us. Therefore, Jesus is our God, our Master, the God who saved us, the God who created us, and the Prophet who tells us everything: why we were born on this earth, where we are going, how we receive salvation, and where our lives come from and where they go.

Such confessions must be in your hearts and mine. There must be the true confession that the Lord is the Christ. Our Lord came to this earth and, as the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, did not pass on sins to a sheep or a goat but made His own body the sacrificial offering, had the sin of us, mankind, transferred onto that body by receiving baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us. So the Lord saved us as the High Priest, and the Lord also became the King of kings for us.

Jesus is the King of the Jews. When Jesus was dying on the Cross, Governor Pilate ordered that "the King of the Jews" be written, and so it was written. When they wrote that Jesus was the King of the Jews and nailed Him to the Cross and killed Him, the people of Israel protested and asked that those letters be changed. They said that He was not the King of the Jews, but Pilate said that, in any case, he had written the charge for which Jesus had to be nailed to the Cross and die, and since He was dying because He was said to be the King of the Jews, it had to be written that way.

In reality, Jesus was the true King of believers, of the born-again. For those who are spiritually born again, He is the true King, and He is the true King who made the universe, and in the last days He will descend to this earth and resurrect His people, us who have been born again by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and live with us forever in His kingdom. The Lord is such a King. He is the King who will live with us forever and rule over us. To those who do not believe, Jesus Christ may be a lowly person, but to those who believe in Jesus Christ, He is the true King. He is our true King of creation, our true King of salvation, and the true King of the kingdom of God. And He is the true Prophet.

The Bible is the word about Jesus Christ. The Lord told us everything. Politics, economics, culture, science, the future, the present, the past, the purpose of life, the life of man—He spoke of all these things.

We must have such confessions. I am telling you that in these last days, you and I must have such a confession. Dear fellow believers, do you have such a confession? Do you have faith? We must live with such faith. How long does a person live, after all? Yet how many are there who live refusing to believe in and rejecting Jesus Christ, who is the King of kings, the High Priest, and the Prophet, and then suffer eternal destruction!

The confession of faith that becomes the key to the kingdom of heaven

We must have this faith that the Lord is the Christ. This is Peter's faith. When we look at another Gospel, when Peter made this confession, Jesus said, *"I will give you the keys of the*

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kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19). He gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? What is the faith that goes to the kingdom of heaven? It is that the Lord is the Christ. The Lord is God and our King, and also, as the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, He had our sins transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again from death, saved us, removed all our sins, and gave us new life; He is the God of salvation, and also the Prophet who knows everything about us, who knows the beginning and the end, who governs everything, and who tells us everything.

It means that He gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven when this faith was confessed. Do you also have this faith? Do you have the faith that the Lord is the Christ?

The true King is Jesus Christ. We must have this kind of faith and this kind of confession. The faith that believes with this kind of faith and knowledge is truly the perfect faith, and the faith that can go to the kingdom of heaven. But this kind of faith is not something that just anyone has. There are many people who do not even know the meaning of the name Jesus. There are also many people who do not know what the Christ is. "What does Christ mean?" "I do not know." Or, "It means 'anointed.'" "What does 'anointed' mean?" "I do not know." Only those who are truly spiritually born again know what this means. *"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29)*.

Dear fellow believers, have you believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Do you truly believe? Then you have received salvation by believing that Jesus is the God of creation who made the universe and made you, and that Jesus, as the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, had your sins transferred to Him with the baptism He received from John and died on the Cross, and thereby saved us.

Also, the Lord told us what kind of brood we were and what kind of sinners we were, and also that, by making us know how Jesus removed our sins, we have received salvation through faith and become children of God, and also that He has made us qualified to enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, you are those who have the faith that the Lord is the Christ and have made the confession of faith.

That is right. You ask why I keep talking about it when you already know it all? Dear fellow believers, do you not eat again just because you have eaten one meal? You must keep eating.

Peter, who thought of the things of men

This faith is extremely important. After Peter made this confession, Jesus said that they should *"tell no one" (Mark 8:30)*, and He said that He Himself, who had come to this earth as the Son of Man, would be rejected by the chief priests, elders, and scribes of this earth and be killed by them, but would rise again after three days.

When Jesus said that He would be rejected by the elders of the Jewish religion, the senior men, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise again after three days, Peter actively tried to stop Him. "You said that You are the Christ, so why would You suddenly die? Why would You be rejected by those people?" Peter, with his strong chivalrous spirit, stepped right up and desperately tried to stop Him, saying, "That will never happen. It must not be so. You must not die." He may have told Him to flee. He may have told Him to run away quickly. He had just been praised a moment before, but that praise all came to nothing.

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Jesus looked at His disciples and rebuked Peter. *"Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Mark 8:33)*. Peter was reproached. A moment before, Peter had spoken out as the representative, saying that the Lord is the Christ, so the other disciples had nothing more to say. "I was going to say that…" The disciples who thought that they themselves could have said it were seething inside, and then Jesus spoke again. "I must rise again three days after I die." Peter, this time too, stepped up first and immediately said, "No!" *"Get behind Me, Satan!" (Mark 8:33)*. A moment ago he had been an excellent disciple, but this time he had become Satan altogether.

Why did He call him Satan? It was because he was not thinking of the things of God but of the things of men. It is the same with us. If we do not think of the things of God and think only of the things of men, we become Satan. Was it because a true disciple of Jesus was Satan? It was because Satan, through Peter's thoughts, stopped Jesus Christ from doing the work that He intended to do.

In any case, Peter was a hot-tempered and hot-blooded man. Such people often rush ahead hastily and get crushed. They are praised one moment and crushed the next, yet it is often the hot-tempered people who end up being molded. Isn't it so with everything? There are very many cases where brave people plunge right in and then get badly crushed. Peter was like that, but Peter was not Satan.

Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him

Through this event, Jesus spoke a truly important word to us. He spoke by contrasting the things of men with the things of God, and He also said, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him*

deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34). I believe you all know this word.

We are, in fact, denying ourselves and following Him like that. But there are times when we fail to do so, and so there are times when we must deny ourselves again and again. It is because if we do not deny ourselves, we cannot follow Him. By all means, if we want to follow the Lord, we must deny ourselves.

It did not end with this. In addition to this, He said, *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35)*, speaking of life.

And the Lord said, *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38)*. Jesus spoke many words on this earth, and He said that if we truly believe in Jesus and in the words Jesus spoke, we take up our own cross, and though we are lacking, we deny ourselves and follow the Lord, and we also come to understand the gospel, and so we come to gain many things. But if, because we have no faith, or even though we have faith, in order to follow the flesh, we deliberately throw away the words of Jesus, and if we are ashamed before the people of the world of our believing in Jesus, if we are ashamed of this saved faith that says, "The Lord is the Christ, and Jesus is my Savior," and if we are ashamed of all the words Jesus spoke, then Jesus, too, when He comes to this earth with the glory of the Father and sits in the seat of judgment and judges, will be ashamed of that person.

This faith is connected with life. If we believe, it is none other than everlasting life; if we believe, it is none other than salvation; if we believe, it is none other than blessing; and if we believe the word God has promised, we gain everything. But

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what if we do not believe, and reject it, and are ashamed of it, and deny it, and keep away from it? We lose our life. It is the same in this present world, and it is the same in the world to come. If Jesus is ashamed of that person and is reluctant and ashamed to let him enter the kingdom of Jesus, does that person not die? Does he not perish?

We know these words well, and we know well the word that whoever wants to follow the Lord must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Him, but when we actually arrive at such circumstances, it does not work unless we deny ourselves, and we cannot follow the Lord without taking up our own cross. It is impossible to follow the Lord in a state where there is no difficulty. It is impossible to follow the Lord without denying oneself. Also, a saved person cannot live without following Him in that way.

A life of following Him, not being ashamed of the gospel but denying oneself

When this world comes to its end, as it appears in this word, many events related to this word will happen. It means that many people who deny the faith will come out. “It is too tiresome. It is too hard. The world is so good, so must I really live like this? The gospel is right, that is true, but must I really follow the gospel like this? Spreading the gospel is good, that is true, but is it not all right if I do not do it?” And so they fall away from agreeing with and taking part in serving the work of the gospel of God in union together like this. There are many people who fall away, saying, “Is that really the only thing?” In these last days, this is especially so.

Even now, such things are happening even within the born-again church. To a person who has betrayed the gospel and turned away, the church only exhorts him a few times and does not hold on to him by force. If such a person is entrusted with the work, the sheep get hurt. Of such a person, it was said, *"Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18)*. It means that if someone rejects Jesus in his heart on this earth and throws away the gospel and the word of God, then in heaven, too, Jesus throws that person away.

I am sharing this because that is how it is written in the word here.

I do not know when this earth will end. But one thing I can tell you is that there is a period in which this gospel can be preached. Once that period has passed, it becomes hard to preach the gospel. Even after that, time will still continue on. That we have preached the gospel to the whole world means that the time has come for disasters to come upon this world, and that the time of the Lord's coming is imminent. Even so, I do not know the month, the day, or the hour. How could I know that?

Still, I do not throw away this faith. And though I am lacking, I deny myself, we deny ourselves, again and again. Are there not people who come out for a morning walk bringing along a dog, not a fine dog but an insignificant one? That dog comes out following its master. It follows along, gently wagging its tail, and then what happens? It darts off to the side, sticks its head into a trash can, and sniffs around. Then, when it feels it has gotten far from its master, it runs back to its master's side again. That is how it is.

Though we are lacking, we deny ourselves, follow the Lord, take up our cross and follow Him, and deny ourselves again, and in this way we follow the Lord. There is no one who got it all

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done at one time, and as we live, this happens and that happens, and there are truly many things we must deny. Yet we deny them again. Through whom? We deny them through the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is there, denial becomes possible. If the Holy Spirit is not in your hearts, denial does not become possible. If you have believed in the gospel of the remission of sins, and if you believe in the word of God, then when your own thinking is wrong, if you admit that it is wrong, denial becomes possible. When denial becomes possible, you can follow the Lord. And even when there are difficulties while we follow the Lord, He causes us to follow the Lord while bearing the difficulties well through the Lord. Through the Lord we come to follow the Lord. Only, there is one thing: we must not, by human means, by our own stubbornness, by our own thinking, oppose the Lord, throw Him away, be ashamed of Him, and be ashamed of the word of God. By all means, let us live well, holding the faith that the Lord is the Christ.

The Lord, who comes when the gospel has been fully spread

Now the gospel is being spread throughout the whole world, and in each country it will be spread tens of times, a hundred times faster than now. We must live with faith, with hope, with the faith that the gospel will be spread quickly.

When the gospel has been fully spread, who comes? The Lord comes. Do you believe that the Lord is coming? When the Lord comes, is it good or not good? When our Lord comes, the desires of your hearts will be fulfilled.

One thing is clear: what we desire and hope for in our hearts—things better than that, things tens of billions of times

better—will all be fulfilled. It seems like a dream, like a story that would come out of a storybook, but it is true. Do you believe? I believe. That is why we call this hope. It will surely be fulfilled. It means that it will be fulfilled when the Lord comes. So we must preach the gospel with a heart that wishes the Lord would come quickly.

Dear fellow believers, we must live with hope. Dear fellow believers, it is hard and difficult, isn't it? It is so for everyone. Still, in just a little while, the gospel will be fully spread. Then the Lord comes. Let us wait in hope until then. Let us take heart once more and live. There is still much work to do. Even so, we have done truly a great deal of work. By all means, let us live holding the faith that the Lord is the Christ, with hope, until the day the Lord comes. ✉

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◇ About the Next Series

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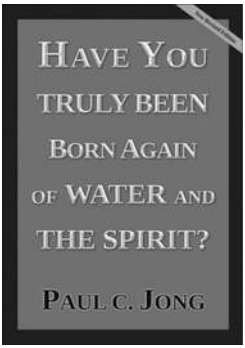
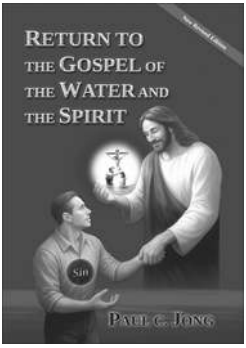
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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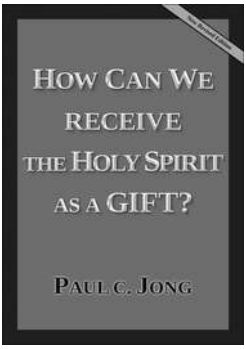
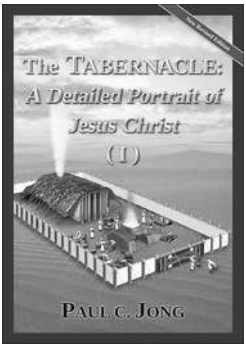


In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]

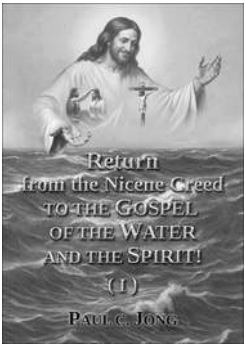


How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

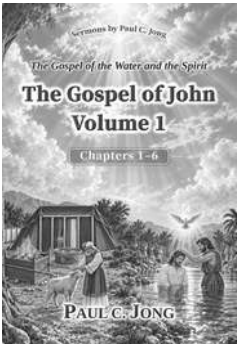
The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

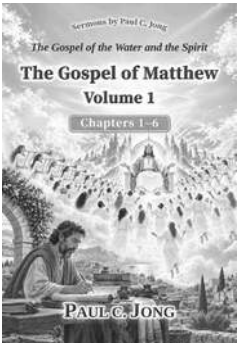
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of John (3-Volume Series)



"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

John chapters 1–6 reveal who Jesus is. He is the Savior—the God who created all things, who Himself came in the flesh, received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, bore the sin of the world, received its judgment on the Cross, and rose from the dead, thereby saving us perfectly once and for all. The testimony of John the Baptist, the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus' words to Nicodemus about being born again, the Samaritan woman, the sick man at Bethesda, and the bread of life all point to the same One, and the Word is unfolded in light of the salvation accomplished by Christ Jesus. Those who believe in the work of salvation accomplished by Jesus, who is God, are born again of water and the Spirit and receive eternal life.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Matthew (4-Volume Series)



The very first thing Jesus did as He began His public ministry was to receive baptism from John at the Jordan River. Through that baptism He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and after He was judged through the blood of the Cross, He rose again and fulfilled all righteousness. This book proclaims, in order, the baptism of Jesus, by which He fulfilled all righteousness; the promised salvation and the assurance of the remission of sins; Jesus, who called His disciples and gave the Sermon on the Mount; and a life lived by believing in the righteousness of God. Through the sermons of Pastor Paul C. Jong, which expound the genealogy and the birth, the worship of the wise men from the East, the temptation in the wilderness, the calling of the disciples, the Beatitudes, and the Lord's Prayer, it proclaims the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the basis of the remission of sins, and the way of living by believing in that righteousness and praying to the Father.

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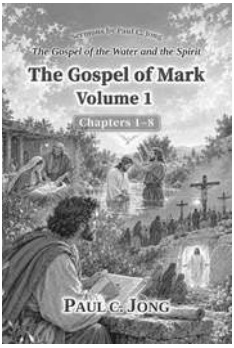
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Mark (2-Volume Series)



Mark chapters 1–8 lead us to the confession, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). Christ means 'the Anointed One.' Jesus is the King who rules over us, the High Priest who remits sins, and the Prophet who preaches the truth of salvation. Jesus, the High Priest, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. I hope that, through the word of the Gospel of Mark, you will accept Jesus Christ, the Savior who is the King of kings, into your hearts.

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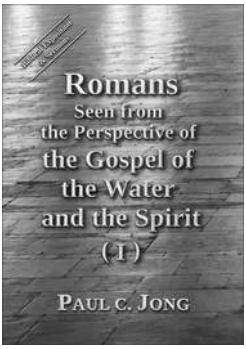
Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

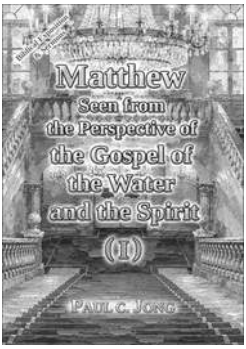
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



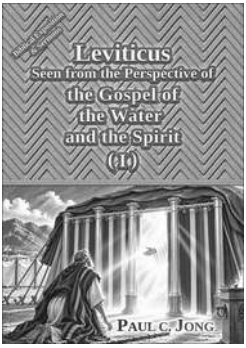
Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

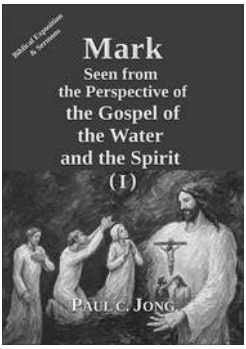


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the consecration ceremony of the priests, Aaron's first sacrifice, and the incident of Nadab and Abihu.

The author, Pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and in this book, he also explains the eternal atonement Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, connecting it to the sacrifices of Leviticus.

How can a sinner be made sinless? This book gives a clear answer to that question through the Bible.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



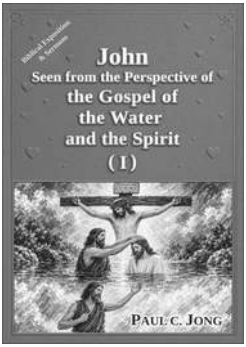
Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

John Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



John seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) is a book that examines, through the entire Gospel of John, how the Word, who is God, came to this earth clothed in flesh and saved sinners from sin.

The author, pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached, through the word of the Bible, "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" that Jesus Christ completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. This book does not explain the signs and words of the Gospel of John as mere knowledge of the Bible or records of miracles, but guides readers to the faith by which they are saved from sin and obtain everlasting life by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

May everyone who opens this book meet Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible testifies, and obtain true life.

Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

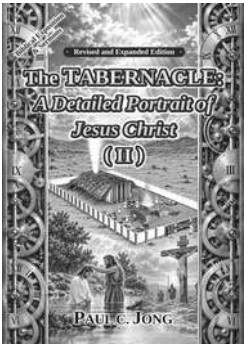


"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central message conveyed by this book is clear. Salvation is not accomplished by human goodness or merit. Rather, Jesus, who is God, received the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross to pay the price for those sins, and rose from the dead, thereby giving complete salvation from all sins to those who believe in this truth.

Pastor Paul C. Jong of The New Life Mission is a servant of God who has devoted his life to preaching the true gospel. Through the Word he preaches, this book will lead souls held captive by sin to the joy of the remission of sins and to eternal life in Jesus.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

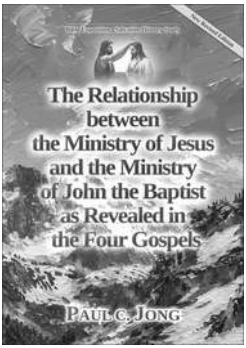
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



God had the tabernacle set up in the wilderness in order to dwell among the people He had delivered out of Egypt.

Through the Biblical Exposition of Exodus chapters 25–31 and the sermons on the tabernacle, this book conveys the heart of God, who wants to make His sinful people holy and keep them near. The promise of salvation contained in the tabernacle was fulfilled when Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again. Looking into the utensils and sacrifices of the tabernacle and the office of the high priest, we come to know the meaning of the remission of sins received by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and of the eternal atonement. Through the tabernacle, we seek to know God's love for us and to share the joy of living together as His people.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels [New Revised Edition]



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

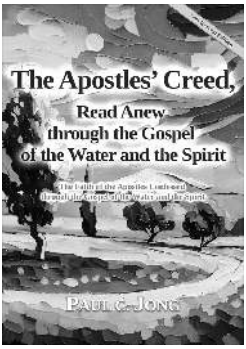
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

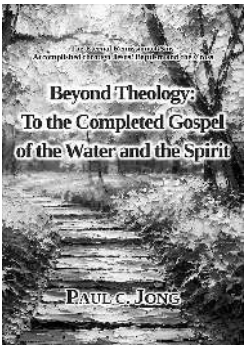


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



Even as we confess that we have been saved, why does the weight of sin still remain in one corner of our hearts?

Countless saints live carrying this question. Each denomination has a different answer, but the Bible testifies to one story from beginning to end.

This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed our eternal salvation through His resurrection from death.

This book does not condemn any church. It only invites you to lay down your familiar theology for a moment and to discover anew, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where unshakable assurance begins.

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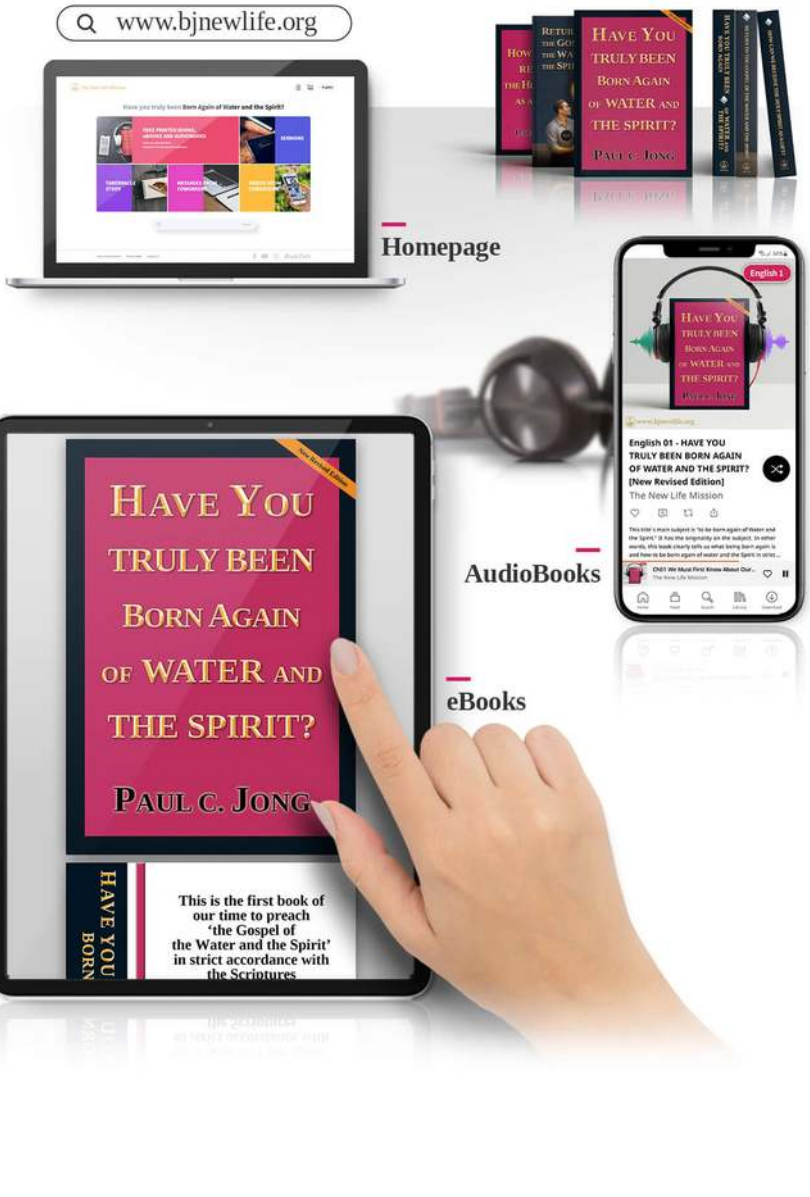

Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

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THE NEW LIFE MISSION
Contact: John Shin, General Secretary
E-mail: newlife@bjnewlife.org



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Sincerely,
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Pastor PAUL C. JONG

Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he had long been suffering because the problem of his sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this suffering, he came to believe that Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist, had the sin of the world passed on to Him once for all, received its judgment in our place through His blood on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

For about 40 years since then, he has been preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who only believe in the Cross, documenting his actual sermons in writing, and publishing sermon collections and Biblical Exposition Series that expound the Bible chapter by chapter, based solely on the Word of God.

His works continue to be published and have been translated into more than 110 languages, reaching readers in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available free of charge at www.bjnewlife.org, while paperback editions can be purchased on Amazon.

You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Jesus, who raised the paralytic, has the authority to remit sins

“Son, your sins are forgiven you” (Mark 2:5)

Even if we regret our wrongs and resolve never to do them again, we cannot erase by our own strength the sins we have already committed or the sins we will commit in the future. Like the paralytic who was carried by others and brought before Jesus, we, too, need One who will remit our sins and save us. Jesus declared the remission of sins to that sick man and made him rise and walk. Through the healing that could be seen before their eyes, He revealed the authority to remit sins, which cannot be seen. The One who spoke that word is none other than our God, who remits sins.

The Lord knew that we were those who would go on sinning all our lives and end up in hell, and through the baptism He received from John, He had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. Then, bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. The remission of sins is thus the perfect salvation that the Lord Himself, out of love for us sinners who could do nothing, like the paralytic, planned and accomplished on His own initiative. I hope that you will accept this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong’s Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.