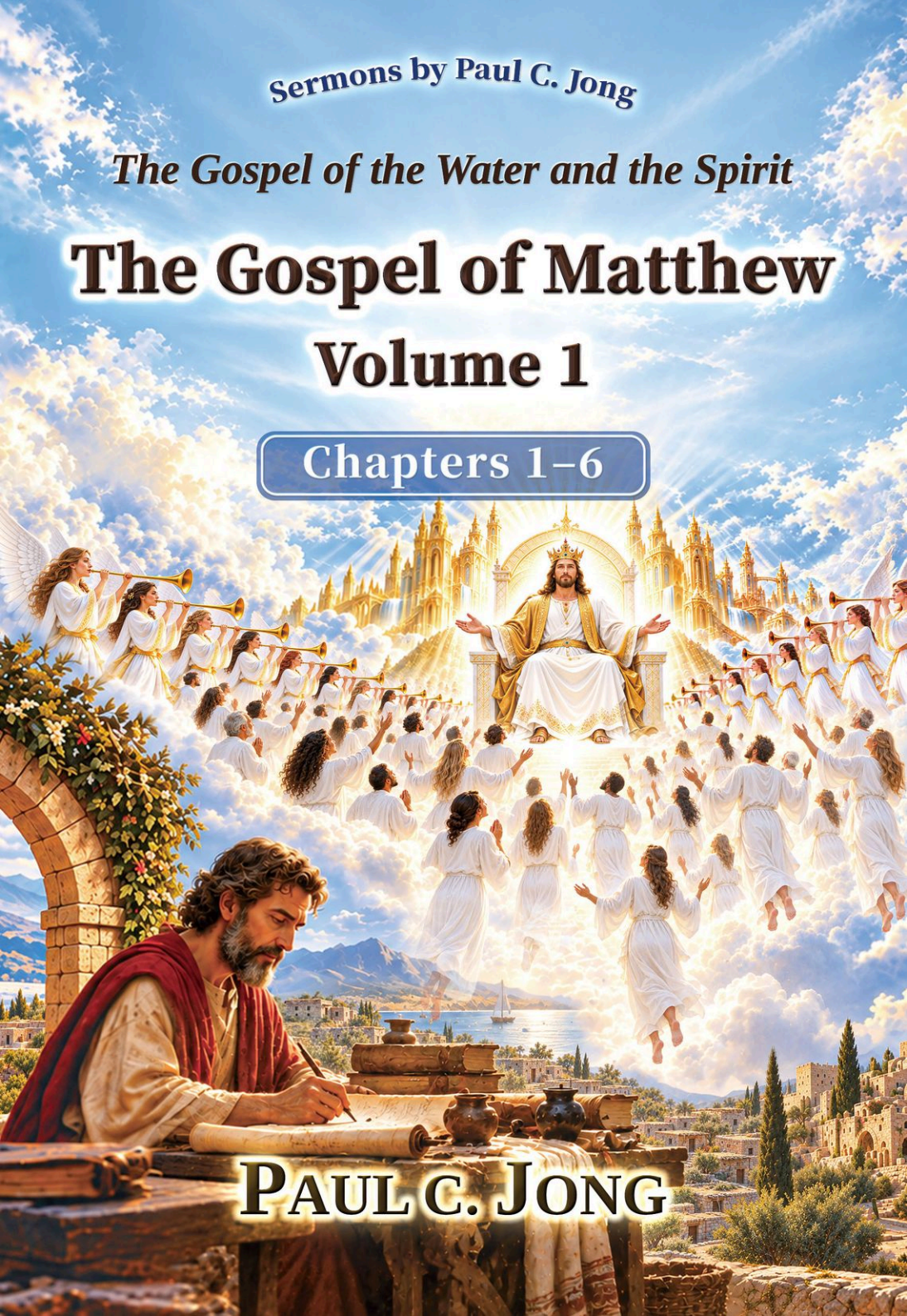
Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Matthew

Volume 1

Chapters 1–6



PAUL C. JONG



“You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21)

The Gospel of Matthew begins by telling us what this name means.

The wise men from the East came looking for the King of the Jews, and the multitudes of Galilee followed Jesus hoping to be healed of their diseases. But the name given from heaven says that, above all, He came to save us from sin.

Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, received the judgment for it with the blood of the Cross, and rose again from the dead. To you who open this book today, the Lord wants to preach the perfect salvation of the remission of sins contained in that name.

This is a book that everyone must seek out

and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

<u>You must believe now.</u>

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The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Matthew

Volume 1

Chapters 1–6

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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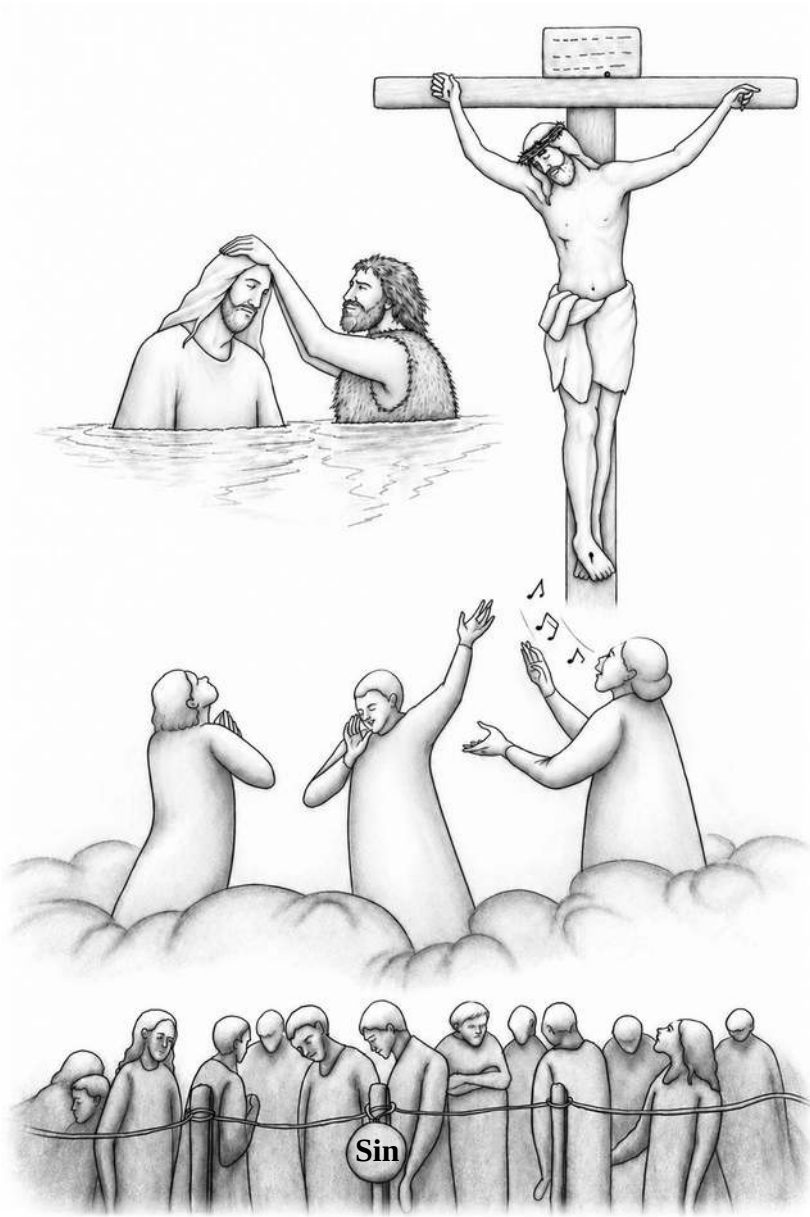

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Preface

The baptism of Jesus, who fulfilled all righteousness

The Gospel of Matthew is one of the books of the Bible that most clearly reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit. In particular, in chapter 3, verses 13 through 17, there is recorded the word that reveals when and how Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him, and why He had to receive baptism from John. When we read the word of Matthew chapters 1 through 6 contained in this book, we must first engrave in our hearts this work that Jesus accomplished at the Jordan River. For only when we know the work of the baptism through which our sins were passed on to Jesus can we clearly believe in His salvation.

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River to receive baptism from John. John tried to prevent Him, saying that he himself rather needed to receive baptism from Jesus. Then Jesus Himself spoke the reason He had to receive baptism. *"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, of which Jesus spoke, is the righteousness of God that saves sinners from all sins. By receiving baptism from John, the representative of mankind, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. At that very moment, our sins were passed on to the body of Jesus. All the sins we commit throughout our whole lifetime with our hearts and our deeds are included in that very sin of the world. When

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we know the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John, we can break free from the efforts and zeal of repenting while vaguely hoping for the remission of sins, and confirm clearly through the word when, to whom, why, and how our own sins were passed on.

In the sacrifices of the Old Testament, a sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed on his sins to it, and the offering to which the sins had been passed on shed its blood and died. This work of atonement that God had ordained was fulfilled through the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. Jesus bore all the sins of the world that had been transferred to Him through His baptism, and by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, He received the judgment for sin in our place. And He rose again from the dead and became our perfect Savior. This is precisely "the gospel of the water and the Spirit." When we know the work of the baptism through which He had sins transferred to Him at the Jordan River, it also becomes clear just why the sinless Jesus had to shed His blood and die on the Cross.

Matthew also records what happened after Jesus received baptism. "*When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16–17).* At the Jordan River there was Jesus the Son, who had received baptism; the Holy Spirit descended; and the voice of the Father was heard from heaven. This word reveals that the triune God works together in the work of saving us.

This word also lets us realize the faith by which we receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit. Those who

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believe in their hearts in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus fulfilled receive the remission of all sins, receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become the children of God. The basis on which He makes us His children lies in the salvation God accomplished through His Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, the word of Matthew chapter 3, verses 13 through 17, is an important word that we must keep in our hearts again and again, even while reading the various words in this book.

The promised salvation and the assurance of the remission of sins

Jesus, who fulfilled all righteousness at the Jordan River, is the Savior whom God had promised long before. Matthew records the genealogy of Jesus Christ, who came as the son of Abraham and of David, and conveys the fulfillment of that promise. Even while the faults of men and the rise and fall of the nation continued on, God did not forget His promise. Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came in a human body, is the God of the promise, who is with us.

The purpose for which Jesus came is already made clear in the word announcing His birth. *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. The reason Jesus came to this earth in the flesh is truly clear. He came precisely to save His people, all mankind, from sin. We must know that what He—the baby Jesus whom the wise men from the East worshiped, the One whom God protected amid the threat of Herod—did after growing up and before being crucified was to have the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. When we read together, following the word, the law of

sacrifice of the Old Testament, the promise of the Savior's birth, the baptism by which the sin of the world was passed on and the blood of the Cross by which the judgment was received, and even the resurrection, we come to know the amazing salvation God has spoken of, and we can only accept the work of the Lord by faith alone.

Even after being saved through the truth, human beings are fundamentally a brood of evildoers, and so, as they go on living, they discover their own shortcomings. If, each time, they make their own conduct the basis of their salvation, their hearts are shaken again. But the sin of the world that Jesus, the unchanging Savior, had transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John includes even that sin which came to light today. We must think again, through the word, of Jesus, who had even the sins of our whole lifetime transferred to Him. When we believe in the salvation He has already accomplished, we can come before God, giving thanks for the remission of sins.

This assurance does not let us cover up our own wrongs. The word of God exposes the sins we have committed and teaches us to admit those sins honestly. We cannot treat even the wrongs we have done to others as if they never happened on the grounds that we have received the remission of sins. What we have done wrong, we must honestly admit and turn from. But instead of striving to wash away that sin again, we must believe in Jesus, who already had even that sin transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and was judged on the Cross. The righteous live only by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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Jesus, who called His disciples and gave the Sermon on the Mount

Jesus, having received baptism from John, was tempted in the wilderness, and He repelled the temptation with the written word. We, too, are shaken because of the problem of making a living and the desire to be recognized by people. At such times, if we try to hold out by clinging only to our own will, we run into our limits. When we hear what God has said and believe that word, we can follow the way of serving God even amid worry and temptation.

Jesus, who called His disciples by the Sea of Galilee, told them that He would make them fishers of men. We, too, who have come to know the joy of the remission of sins, come to think of those who have not yet heard that gospel. What we are to preach is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which reveals how Jesus removed the sin of the world. We hope that those who hear will also know the fact that their sins were passed on to Jesus, and, believing in that salvation, come to call God Father.

In the Church of God, we hear the word together, serve one another, and carry out this work. Those who believed first care for those who come after, and those who are young in faith grow as they learn the word. Through the gospel that we preach together, God lets others, too, enjoy the grace of the remission of sins.

The One who speaks the Sermon on the Mount is also Jesus, who had our sins transferred to Him at the Jordan River. Jesus promises the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit, and speaks of comfort to those who mourn. Those who are satisfied with their own righteousness do not know their need for salvation, but those who know their own sin and poverty seek the grace of God.

When we admit our own sins and come to Jesus, we also come to know how great the mercy of God, who saves sinners, is.

Jesus said that He had come to fulfill the law and the prophets. And He exposed as sin even the anger harbored against a brother and the lust in the heart. Before this word, we cannot boast only of our outwardly visible conduct. If one reads the Sermon on the Mount as a way to enter the kingdom of heaven by building up one's own righteousness, there is no one who can stand before that stern word. We must know our own sins through the word, and believe in the salvation of Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all righteousness. Here lies the reason we must read the Sermon on the Mount with the righteousness of God that He made known at the Jordan River kept in our hearts.

A life of believing in the righteousness of God

We, who have become the children of God by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, call God Father. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks again and again of the Father, who sees the charity done in secret, hears our prayers, and knows what we need. We need the faith that God is watching even in the work that no one recognizes. We come to pray before Him and seek what pleases the Father.

The prayer Jesus taught us has us seek God's name, His kingdom, and His will, and has us ask for our daily bread, forgiveness of one another, and protection from evil. What is the thanksgiving of the righteous? It is precisely to live giving thanks, now calling God, who we once felt was far away because of sin, Father, telling Him our circumstances and asking Him, with the assurance that He hears our prayers.

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But at times, even while praying, we worry about tomorrow. Yet Jesus, speaking of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, has us look to the Father, who cares for us. And He clearly teaches us the purpose of life. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. Those who believe in the righteousness of God, which has saved us from sin, seek that the news of that salvation be preached to other souls as well. Through the word we must learn the faith that, while doing the work entrusted to us today, also asks the Father for tomorrow's life.

I hope that you who read this book will clearly believe, through the word of Matthew chapter 3, verses 13 through 17, the fact that all your sins, too, were transferred to Jesus once and for all through the baptism He received from John. With that faith, pray to the Father and learn a life of seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness. I hope that the gospel of the water and the Spirit will become the joy of salvation to those who do not yet have the assurance of the remission of sins, and the strength to rely on Jesus every day to those who already believe. I give thanks to God, who has given us perfect salvation. ✉

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CHAPTER

1

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The promise of salvation engraved in the names of people

< Matthew 1:1–6 >

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.”

The genealogy that first reveals Jesus Christ

Matthew opens its first chapter with the names of people. One man begets a son, and that son continues on to the next generation. While the names go on, the lives of many generations pass by. But the person who reads this record does not need to wait until he reaches the end to find out whom the story is about. This is because he meets Jesus Christ in the first sentence.

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Let us read verse 1 of chapter 1. *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1)*. Matthew first reveals Jesus and then goes back to Abraham. This genealogy shows who Jesus is and into what history He came. Even when we read the names of people one by one, we must remember Jesus, toward whom those names are directed.

The words *"the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1)* written at the very beginning connect Jesus with the history of the Old Testament. We cannot understand Jesus apart from the word God spoke to Abraham and the promise He gave to David. What God did long ago is joined to the coming of Jesus.

The people who appear in this genealogy lived before the birth of Jesus. Their lives each had their own beginning and end. One person experienced only the things of the time while he was alive, but God passed through those generations and sent the Savior.

If we hurry past a record that seems to list nothing but names, we miss the fact that God worked within human history. Jesus is not a Savior who one day came into being in people's imagination. God recorded the genealogy of people who actually lived, and He made known to us Jesus, who came in the midst of that history.

What do you first call to mind when you think of Jesus? It is easy to first weigh whether He is of help to your own circumstances. Matthew introduces Jesus Christ before speaking of our needs. We will follow the word step by step to see how God sent this Son.

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The word given to Abraham continues on to Isaac

Let us read verse 2. *"Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers" (Matthew 1:2)*. The first link is Abraham and Isaac. To a person who has read Genesis, these two names call to mind the promise God made. God called Abraham and said that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed.

This is the word God gave to Abraham. *"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3)*. The scope of the promise did not stop at the prosperity of one household. It was directed toward all the families of the earth. As we read Matthew recording Abraham at the very beginning, we come to think of how wide the salvation conveyed in Jesus is.

The continuation from Abraham to Isaac is also something God did by actually carrying out His word. *"And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken" (Genesis 21:1)*. Before the fact that a son was born, the Bible first places the fact that God did according to His own word.

So the short words *"Abraham begot Isaac" (Matthew 1:2)* contain what was accomplished at the end of a long wait. Matthew does not explain again here the whole process of waiting. But by recording in the genealogy the birth that had already taken place, he shows that the promise God made was carried on to the next generation.

We must also learn here our attitude toward God's promises. People try to judge everything by the results before their own eyes. But the One who spoke and the One who acts are the same

God. We must not make light of what God has already done on the grounds that we have not yet seen all of it.

The name of Isaac reminds us of Abraham and at the same time makes us look to God, who made the promise to him. It is a name that shows that God acted faithfully. Our faith, too, must not remain at putting forward how long we ourselves have waited. Faith is looking to God, who makes us wait and finally acts according to His own word.

The names that continue on through the house of Jacob

In the same verse 2, we read the words *"Isaac begot Jacob" (Matthew 1:2)*. The genealogy continues from Isaac to Jacob. Even after the time in which Isaac lived has passed, the work God accomplishes continues. The fact that the history of the promise does not all end within the lifespan of one person is revealed in this short link.

The words that follow are *"Jacob begot Judah and his brothers" (Matthew 1:2)*. As the genealogy continues on to Judah, it remembers his brothers together with him. Behind the names that continue in a single line, there is the history of real families and communities. As we read this record, we must not think of a person as cut off from the history to which he belongs.

Let us read verse 3. *"Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram" (Matthew 1:3)*. After Judah, the name of Tamar appears together with his. In the midst of a record that continues from father to son, it reveals from whom the son was born. It does not pass over a person as a mere name, but records his birth and relationships together.

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In this passage Perez and Zerah are written together, but the next link follows Perez. The words *"Perez begot Hezron" (Matthew 1:3)* come next. The genealogy is not a record that tries to explain all the descendants of the house of Judah. It follows the people who lead to Jesus Christ and reveals that lineage.

We tend to read one name and think that the person was recorded because he was excellent in every respect. But the text did not write down each person's achievements. It conveys who was born of whom. If we accept this, we can avoid turning the genealogy into a record in which people compete in their accomplishments.

As you read of the work God accomplishes, do not let your heart be taken up with exalting people. The names of Judah and Tamar, Perez and Hezron also lead on toward Jesus. At the center of the faith that receives salvation is not the fame of those ancestors but the Savior whom God sent. The further we follow the genealogy, the clearer that center should become.

Even the briefly recorded names continue on

The end of verse 3 is *"Hezron begot Ram" (Matthew 1:3)*. And let us read verse 4. *"Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon" (Matthew 1:4)*. It continues from Hezron to Ram, and from Ram to Amminadab, Nahshon, and Salmon. The text leaves the links while not explaining these people's lives at length.

When we read these names, our eyes tend to rest only on the figures we know a lot about. But the sentences of the genealogy connect both the widely known people and the briefly recorded

people. Even within a brief record, God preserved that person's name.

When we move on to the next person from the words *"Ram begot Amminadab" (Matthew 1:4)*, we do not know the whole lifetime in between. It is enough to accept the link the Bible makes known to us.

The link *"Amminadab begot Nahshon" (Matthew 1:4)* also reminds us of the same fact. One generation leaves behind the next generation. The lifetime given to a person has its limit, but the salvation God prepares continues on past that limit. It is a word that makes us lay down the thought of valuing only what is fully accomplished within our own lifetime.

This also touches on our attitude toward the work entrusted to us today. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not determine the value of his life only by his own name becoming widely known. He treasures the word he has received and faithfully cares for those entrusted to him. Even if he does not see all the results himself, he can trust the work God does.

When we pass the record that continues from Nahshon to Salmon, the house of Boaz soon appears. Even the unfamiliar names are connected with the people we know well. Do not pick out only the passages familiar to you from among the things God has done. We must read slowly, down to the briefly recorded names, and accept the whole of the word given to us as precious.

The word that remembers the names of Rahab and Ruth together

Let us read verse 5. *"Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse" (Matthew 1:5)*. Here

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Rahab and Ruth are mentioned together. Just as it recorded Tamar earlier, it reveals from whom the son was born. When God wrote this genealogy, He did not hide the names of those women.

The words *"Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab" (Matthew 1:5)* make us remember Rahab between Salmon and Boaz. Next, the words *"Boaz begot Obed by Ruth" (Matthew 1:5)* make us remember Ruth. The attitude of reading with respect for the names God recorded also makes us look back at the heart with which we treat people.

At the end of the Book of Ruth, too, we can confirm this link. *"Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, 'There is a son born to Naomi.' And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (Ruth 4:17)*. The genealogy of Matthew thus touches on the lives of people recorded in other books of the Bible.

The Book of Ruth, in explaining how Obed was born, conveys that God caused her to conceive. *"So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son" (Ruth 4:13)*. The birth of a son in one family was the real life of that family, and it was also the history that would later lead on toward David.

Even when you look at a person, do not judge him entirely by the conditions that are visible to your eyes now. We cannot fully know with our eyes whom God will use and how. Anyone who reads with respect for the names recorded in this genealogy must cast off the attitude of easily lowering people by his own standards or blocking in advance the way for them to stand before God.

The person who worships together with us is also one soul whom God has called through the gospel. Rather than making that person's background a matter of boasting or attaching it as

a mark of shame, listening together to the salvation Jesus accomplished comes first. As we read the genealogy in which God sent Jesus after passing through people, we learn the heart with which to treat one another before the grace of the Savior.

Even before the throne of David, the record is honest

Let us read verse 6. *"And Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah" (Matthew 1:6)*. To David, the son of Jesse, the word "king" is attached. After passing through the many generations before, it reached a king. The name of David, revealed first in verse 1, now appears within the flow of the genealogy.

God spoke to David concerning his house and his kingdom. *"And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16)*. That the first sentence of Matthew reveals Jesus as the son of David makes us think of this promise. The word God spoke to David leads on to Jesus.

But David's status as king does not erase the next sentence. It records, *"David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah" (Matthew 1:6)*. The text leaves the expression "the wife of Uriah" as it is, together with the words that exalt David's name. In this way, even in the genealogy of a king, it leaves his shameful history alongside as well.

Here we learn the attitude for reading the Bible. The word God left behind is not something that can be changed in order to protect a person's honor. Respecting David and honestly accepting the word recorded about David must go together.

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Also, we must not think of the coming of Jesus as if it were a reward for people's perfect lives. The genealogy is the history of people who had to wait for the Savior. God sent His own Son in the midst of that history. The reason we hold Jesus precious is that we, who are sinners, need true salvation.

The eyes that sought only human glory in the name of David now come to look to Jesus, who came as his descendant. Neither David nor Solomon, who followed him, is the end of the genealogy. We must go on to the point of knowing the Savior who is introduced through those people.

The righteousness Abraham and David looked to

Paul writes as follows concerning Abraham. *"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness'" (Romans 4:3)*. This word is not meant to exalt the man Abraham. It makes known how God regards the one who believes.

Paul also explains the blessedness David spoke of. *"Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works" (Romans 4:6)*. The two names placed together in the first sentence of Matthew also appear in Romans when it explains the righteousness obtained by faith. A way different from the way of piling up human merit and boasting of it before God is clearly revealed.

God also made known the way of atonement for sin in the sacrifices of the Old Testament. *"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)*. It is the ordinance in which a sinner lays his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and atonement is made for him.

Jesus, who came as the son of Abraham and David, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. While bearing that sin, which was passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins apart from works, and receive the Holy Spirit, whom God gives as a gift.

Jesus, who accomplished this salvation, is the Christ introduced in the first sentence of the genealogy. Therefore, what we must know as we read those names is the fact of what kind of Savior God sent. The names of the genealogy lead us to the place of believing in Him. For the one who believes in the salvation already accomplished, there is no reason to add righteousness by putting forward his own origins.

The ground on which you stand before God is also this gospel. Neither the name of a good family nor a long religious career removes sin. Receive into your heart the salvation that God accomplished by sending Christ. God, who recorded Abraham and David in the genealogy, wants us even now to be made righteous through faith in His Son.

The faithfulness of God, which is longer than our short lives

After reading the names from Abraham to David, we come to see that each person’s life, whether much of it remains on record or only a little, continues in one direction. God carried that history on until He sent Jesus Christ.

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In our lives, too, there are many things still in progress now. We cannot fully know how the word we have spoken to our children will remain, or how the people we have served with devotion will go on living. But as we read the history in which Jesus came, we can trust God. God knows even the results that have left our hands, and He carries out His own will.

This faith does not become a reason to neglect today's responsibility. Because we believe in the work God has done from generation to generation, we faithfully do the work entrusted to us today. Even when there is little recognition from people, we hold the word precious, and even when we deal with one soul, we love that soul with care.

Also, we must break free from the thought that we can stand before God only if we dress up our own past well. God, who recorded the genealogy, revealed human history honestly. A person who believes in the salvation accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit can honestly acknowledge the facts and rely on grace.

A person who has become honest before God also treats the names of others carefully. He does not lower someone merely because of his background, nor does he unconditionally exalt someone because of a famous name. He knows that everyone is a person who needs the salvation Jesus accomplished. The various names recorded in the genealogy cause us to think more deeply about this grace.

Even after the last name we read today, history continues. There are the generations after Solomon, and at last Jesus is born of Mary. The fact that the Savior whom God promised came in the midst of a history in which people continued to be born holds the direction of our reading firm to the end.

God, who spoke to Abraham, gave Isaac, and made the promise to David, is faithful. It is this faithful God who sent

Jesus Christ to us. Even if your life today goes unnoticed and you cannot see everything that lies ahead, do not forget the work God has already done. Live faithfully the life entrusted to you today by faith in His Son.

One generation of people passes away, but the salvation God accomplished remains. Rather than letting our hearts be taken up with making our names great, I hope that we will live cherishing Jesus, who fulfilled the promise of long ago and came to us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Even when the throne is inherited, faith must be established anew

< Matthew 1:7–11 >

“Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.”

The fear of God needed even after Solomon

One who is born as the son of a king inherits his father’s name. But rightly inheriting everything his father enjoyed is another matter. In Matthew 1:7–11, the kings after David appear one after another. The genealogy continues, but the lives that those names bring to mind differ from one another.

Let us read verse 7. *“Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa” (Matthew 1:7)*. After Solomon’s name comes Rehoboam. The fact alone that he inherited his father’s name and throne did not make the son’s

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faith whole. His life, recorded in 2 Chronicles, shows that it matters what we use the conditions we have inherited for.

What happened after Rehoboam became strong? *"Now it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel along with him" (2 Chronicles 12:1)*. The kingdom's becoming established was an opportunity to fear God all the more, but he forsook the law. The choice of one king, who departed from the word when he gained power, affected even the community.

Reading the connection *"Solomon begot Rehoboam" (Matthew 1:7)*, we must distinguish between the condition of being a king's son and a life of fearing God. It is dangerous to take for granted the environment of faith we have and not to examine what our hearts are following now.

The book of 2 Chronicles records side by side the fact that his kingdom became strong and the fact that he forsook the law. We cannot judge that our faith has also become better merely because our circumstances have become better. Even when we are at ease, we need a heart that listens to God. It is important that a person who sought God's help continues to rely on that God even after receiving the help.

Treasure the teaching and experience you have received. And set your heart today before that teaching. You cannot consider yourself to be fearing God now merely because you heard the word in the past. The name of Rehoboam makes us ask what a person who has inherited good things chooses next.

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The warning told by Asa's beginning and end

Verse 7 says, *"Rehoboam begot Abijah" (Matthew 1:7)*, and then continues, *"Abijah begot Asa" (Matthew 1:7)*. Among the generations that followed, Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD. The wrong of the preceding king did not block the way for the next king to seek God.

Asa's first deeds are recorded as follows. *"Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God, for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images" (2 Chronicles 14:2–3)*. Even though he received the throne from his father, when he reigned he had to fulfill his own responsibility before God.

Asa commanded the people to seek God. *"He commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment" (2 Chronicles 14:4)*. What a king uses his authority for is revealed. Instead of binding the people's hearts to himself alone, he led them to seek the God of their fathers and to do His word.

But later in Asa's life there was an occasion when he was rebuked. The seer pointed out, *"Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God" (2 Chronicles 16:7)*. Even a king who had once sought God could rely more on human strength in the face of a new problem. The right choice at the beginning did not take the place of all the choices that came later.

What was needed at that time was to listen to the rebuke and turn back. But Asa became angry, put the seer in prison, and oppressed the people. When God reveals a wrong, if the desire to protect one's own position comes first, one adds yet another

wrong to the wrong judgment. The attitude of listening to the word is all the more important for a person who has power.

Even a person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must place his own judgment under the word. The fact that one was faithful before does not make a present wrong right. When you hear the word with which God awakens us, do not put forward past merits. A heart that can acknowledge a wrong and correct it keeps today's faith.

The responsibility that continues from Jehoshaphat to Uzziah

Let us read verse 8. *"Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah" (Matthew 1:8)*. After Asa comes Jehoshaphat. The book of 2 Chronicles reports that he walked in the way of Asa and did what was right in the sight of the LORD.

The evaluation of Jehoshaphat is specific. *"And he walked in the way of his father Asa, and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 20:32)*. But in the next verse it is recorded that the people were still in a state in which they had yet to set their hearts toward God. One person's godliness does not automatically take the place of another person's heart.

In the middle of verse 8 there is the connection *"Jehoshaphat begot Joram" (Matthew 1:8)*. The text links father and son, but it does not say that everyone's faith is also the same. While accepting the relationship that the genealogy tells us, we must remember that before God each person has the responsibility to hear and follow the word.

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And it continues, *"Joram begot Uzziah" (Matthew 1:8)*. Matthew proceeds toward Jesus along the connections dealt with in this genealogy. Here we come to look back on how Uzziah used the strength he received. What happened after the king became strong shows the limit of the authority given to him.

Concerning Uzziah, the book of 2 Chronicles says, *"When he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God" (2 Chronicles 26:16)*. He tried to enter the temple to burn incense, and the priests stopped the king, making clear that burning incense was the office of the priests. Even though the king's authority grew, he could not change the office that God had appointed.

Even a person who serves God has work entrusted to him. Having become good at the work one has been entrusted with does not mean one can decide everything as one pleases. The greater one's experience and ability, the more one must value the order appointed in the word. When we read Uzziah's name, we must seek a heart that fears God before strength.

The choice confirmed between Jotham and Ahaz

Let us read verse 9. *"Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah" (Matthew 1:9)*. Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah are in one genealogy, but the paths they walked before God were not the same. The relationship of parent and child is clear, and what each person followed is also clear. We must read holding these two facts together.

Concerning Jotham, the Bible says as follows. *"And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah had done (although he did not enter the temple of the LORD). But still the people acted corruptly" (2 Chronicles*

27:2). While following the right path among his father's deeds, he did not follow the wrong of trying to enter the temple and rashly burn incense. Even when we respect those who went before us, we must examine by the word the path that person walked.

But Jotham's son Ahaz went a different way. It is recorded that *"he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his father David had done" (2 Chronicles 28:1)*. The genealogy points to the same ancestor, but his life differed from the right path of that ancestor. We see again that inheriting a name and living by faith are not the same.

Ahaz made idols of Baal and did what God hates. The Bible's evaluation did not depend on how strong a king appeared. The standard was what he was like in the sight of the LORD. Our judgment, too, must return to this standard.

The words "handing down the faith" contain the responsibility of imparting the teaching and commending it by one's life. But parents do not have the authority to make their children believe in their place. Parents must faithfully preach the word, and children, too, must receive that word with their own hearts. Love that respects each other's responsibility before God is needed.

It is the same within the church. The fact that a person we live together with lives by faith is something to be thankful for. We must not leave our own hearts empty while only leaning on that person and listening. You yourselves, who have heard the word, must trust God. Seeking God today is the work entrusted to each of you who have heard the word.

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The different deeds left by Hezekiah and Manasseh

At the end of verse 9 there is the word *"Ahaz begot Hezekiah" (Matthew 1:9)*. Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, did what was right before God. The fact that he had seen his father's wrong did not become a reason for the son to have to commit the same wrong. He served God in the time he was given.

Hezekiah's beginning appeared in actual deeds. *"And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them" (2 Chronicles 29:2–3)*. Opening and repairing the doors of the temple took place in his first year. Even in the midst of wrong circumstances, he carried out the responsibility given to him.

Let us read verse 10. *"Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah" (Matthew 1:10)*. After Hezekiah, Manasseh is recorded. Having a father who had acted by faith did not mean that the son also went the same way. Manasseh's wrong went beyond himself and affected even Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The book of 2 Chronicles reports that the people, seduced by Manasseh, did evil. It also records, *"And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen" (2 Chronicles 33:10)*. The fact that there is an opportunity to hear the word and actually humbling one's heart to that word are different things.

Manasseh, when he was in affliction, implored God and humbled himself greatly. Only after God heard his supplication and brought him back did he know that the LORD was God. The word that records together his iniquity and his humbled heart

awakens us not to take evil lightly but to humble ourselves before God.

If a wrong has been revealed in the path you have walked, do not stubbornly persist in it. When God makes it clear through the word, you must humble your heart. Do not make your family or your past life of faith a shield, but listen to the word He gives now. What a person who seeks God needs is an honest heart rather than the stubbornness of trying to protect his own name.

The difference in turning back shown by Amon and Josiah

Verse 10 continues, *"Manasseh begot Amon" (Matthew 1:10)*. Amon followed his father's evil deeds, but he did not follow what his father did later in humbling himself before God.

The Bible makes Amon's wrong clear as follows. *"And he did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more" (2 Chronicles 33:23)*. The responsibility to choose what should be learned from his father's life lay with the son. This record reveals a heart that easily imitates another's wrong while not learning how that person humbled himself before the word.

But in the next connection, *"Amon begot Josiah" (Matthew 1:10)*, we meet a different path. Josiah did what was right in the sight of the LORD and walked in the ways of David. Being born to a father who did wrong did not mean that he had to make that wrong his own path for life.

This is the word about Josiah. *"And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Chronicles 34:2)*. From the time he was young he sought God

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and carried out the removal of idols. Even while facing the problems left behind by the preceding age, he discerned before God what was right.

We sometimes speak at length about the wrongs of those who went before us while leaving our own wrongs as they are. When we read the word, we must look back on our own choices along with the failures of others. We must ask what path we are choosing now. Even if we have inherited something wrong, there is no reason to keep holding on to it while calling it right.

Conversely, if you have met a good example of faith, learn from it with thankfulness. Rather than imitating only that person's name or outward habits, you must learn the attitude of hearing the word and humbling oneself before God. Reading the difference between Amon and Josiah, we must examine with what heart we are standing before the word given to us today.

What the history of being carried away to Babylon teaches

Let us read verse 11. *"Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon" (Matthew 1:11)*. In the sentence where the names of kings continued, the carrying away to Babylon appears. We who were reading the history of a dynasty come to stand in the face of the reality of captivity. The fact that the names of kings continued from generation to generation did not prevent the consequence of a history of rebelling against God.

To understand this passage, we must remember how God dealt with the people. *"And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His*

dwelling place" (2 Chronicles 36:15). God had compassion on them and spoke to them diligently. But they mocked God's messengers and despised the word.

The short expression *"about the time they were carried away to Babylon" (Matthew 1:11)* leaves that heavy history within the genealogy. The record that leads to Jesus contains, along with the glory of kings, God's rebuke and the people's failure. We cannot take sin and its consequences lightly on the grounds that we are in the genealogy of the promise.

This history also shows us how much we need a Savior. The problem of sin did not disappear merely by expecting that the next king would make everything whole. God sent the Savior who would deal with sin. The direction of this genealogy goes beyond the names of human kings and points toward Jesus Christ.

Concerning the sin offering, God said, *"And he shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and kill it at the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD. It is a sin offering" (Leviticus 4:24)*. Jesus, who came at the end of the genealogy of the kings who were carried away into captivity, fulfilled that will. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, and bearing that sin which had been passed on to Him, He received the judgment in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. Jesus rose again from death, and whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

To the person who has received this grace, a life of listening to God is given. This does not mean that we should build a record more excellent than the lives of the kings in order to obtain salvation. Because we believe in the salvation the Lord

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accomplished, we value His word and correct our wrongs. The basis of salvation lies in Jesus, and a life that follows the word is the response of the person who has received that grace.

The person who stands before the word heard today

The names we read today are linked as ancestors and descendants. But there were times when pride appeared after a good beginning, and times when a son who sought God came after an evil father. This difference awakens us to a clear responsibility. It is to hear and follow the word before God in the time given to each of us.

When your circumstances grow strong, remember what happened to Rehoboam and Uzziah. You must not take the word lightly on the grounds that you have gained power. The greater your authority to decide matters, the more you must first listen to what pleases God.

When you are rebuked, remember what happened to Asa. If, in the light of the word, an actual wrong has been revealed, you must acknowledge it and correct it. Even a person who has been faithful needs a heart that continually listens to God.

When you think of your family's faith, remember the difference between Jotham and Ahaz, and between Hezekiah and Manasseh. Love for one's family must not stop at forcing one's own expectations on them but must go as far as helping each one stand before God.

When you are ashamed of your own past, think of Manasseh, who humbled his heart. The reason to keep committing a wrong does not lie in the past. You must lay down the heart that was rejecting the word and turn back to God.

This exhortation sets us ourselves, who read the genealogy of the kings, before the word. Knowing well only the wrongs of others does not make our hearts right. We must acknowledge ourselves as God shows us to be, believe the gospel He has given, and faithfully do the work entrusted to us.

You who have received the salvation Jesus accomplished can live fearing God. Do not linger in words that boast of or blame the environment you inherited. Today, too, God awakens our hearts with His word. Listen to that word, correct what needs correcting, and act humbly, remembering the grace of the help you have received.

Even though the king's name was handed down to the next generation, a heart that fears God was needed by each person. Let us, too, newly humble our hearts before the word we have heard today. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The history that reaches Christ even after the captivity

< Matthew 1:12–17 >

“And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.”

The word recorded after a history that seemed to have ended

In the genealogy of Matthew chapter 1, the event of being carried away to Babylon is recorded. This event, which came after the names of the kings, brings to mind the reality that the nation had fallen. Yet the next sentence does not end with that fall. The names of the people born after they were carried away to Babylon continue.

Let us read verse 12. “*And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot*

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Zerubbabel" (Matthew 1:12). The beginning of this word is *"after they were brought to Babylon" (Matthew 1:12)*. The event of their becoming captives is real, and the event that people were born after it and the genealogy continued is also real.

When people go through a great failure, they easily think that it is the end of their story. This is because the fact of having fallen is great and painful. But even after speaking of the event of being carried away to Babylon, the Gospel of Matthew continues to record names.

Here there is a warning that makes us look back on the wrongs of the past. The history in which the earlier kings and the people rebelled against the word remains as it is. The fact that God carries on His own work does not mean that those sins were trivial. What is important is the fact that God, who recorded the judgment, also recorded the coming of the Savior.

The words *"Jeconiah begot Shealtiel" (Matthew 1:12)* show a new connection. Even after the generation that was carried away to Babylon, life continued. It was not the authority of kings that guaranteed the genealogy to the end; rather, God let that history reach Jesus. Here is the reason to look to the promise of God even in a fallen age.

In your lives, too, you must honestly acknowledge your wrongs and failures. At the same time, you must look to the salvation that God accomplished according to His own word. Both hiding failure and looking only at failure hold us back. The word reveals sin and at the same time makes the Savior known. We must be people who hear those two facts together.

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The memory of the return that remains in the name of Zerubbabel

Verse 12 continues, *"Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel" (Matthew 1:12)*. Zerubbabel also appears in the history of the people who returned from captivity. When we read the name briefly written in the Gospel of Matthew and think together of what is recorded in Ezra, we can know that life after the captivity was not merely a hope in words.

The beginning of Ezra is God fulfilling His word. *"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying" (Ezra 1:1)*. The event of the people coming to return was connected with the word God had already spoken.

After returning, Zerubbabel and the priests built an altar to offer sacrifices to God. *"Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God" (Ezra 3:2)*. Through their actual actions, we can see what must be placed at the center when beginning a new life in the land to which they returned.

The people also had fear. Ezra records that they were afraid of the peoples of the nations. Yet setting up the altar and offering burnt offerings continued. The fact that there was fear and the fact that they served God are recorded together. They did not put off the life God had granted them again until all their problems disappeared.

There is also the word of God given to Zerubbabel. After saying, *"Be strong, Zerubbabel" (Haggai 2:4)*, He told the

people to work. Together with that exhortation was the promise *"I am with you" (Haggai 2:4)*. The strength to carry out the work entrusted to them again lay with God, who was with them.

When we read the name Zerubbabel in this genealogy, we come to think that the history after the captivity was not restored by itself. God spoke and raised up people so that they would do the work entrusted to them. You who have something to start again, too, should not merely measure your own strength, but rely on God, who has already spoken, and do what must be done today.

The record that continues from Abiud to Azor

Let us read verse 13. *"Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor" (Matthew 1:13)*. After Zerubbabel come Abiud, Eliakim, and Azor. Even someone who read on knowing the deeds of Zerubbabel finds it hard, when faced with these names, to tell all the details of their lives. Yet the genealogy passes these men and moves on to the next generation.

The connection *"Zerubbabel begot Abiud" (Matthew 1:13)* shows the genealogy of the Savior continuing even after the rebuilding of the temple. Even after they returned and restored worship, the waiting continued. The one restoration God bestowed on the people and the coming of Christ are connected, but they are not the same event.

We sometimes think that when God resolves one matter, all our expectations have been fulfilled. But God accomplishes His own will even after that. The return from captivity was grace, and the coming of the Savior was the salvation needed by all

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mankind. Giving thanks for the grace received earlier, our hearts must turn even to the Son whom God sent.

The text records, *"Abiud begot Eliakim" (Matthew 1:13)*. It makes known with concrete names the fact that generations continued even after the return from captivity. From the people who returned, life was passed down to the next generation, and that history continues until Jesus is born of Mary.

The words *"Eliakim begot Azor" (Matthew 1:13)* also belong to that history. A generation was not left out of the genealogy just because no conspicuous great event was recorded of it. God sent the Savior after passing through all these generations.

There are also days when nothing special is seen in your lives. On such days, it may feel as if God is far away. But do not take the ordinariness of daily life as evidence that the will of God has disappeared. We who read the genealogy must look at where God led that history rather than at how conspicuous the events are.

The generations that pass from Zadok to Jacob

Let us read verse 14. *"Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud" (Matthew 1:14)*. After Azor there is Zadok, and after him come Achim and Eliud. While the names continue, the purpose toward which the genealogy heads does not change. The record that declared at its beginning that it is the genealogy of Jesus Christ is still going on.

And let us read verse 15. *"Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob" (Matthew 1:15)*. Now we come to the names of Matthan and Jacob. The text records these figures in a relationship in which the one before

and the one after are connected. There is no name that can be put forward as if he alone had accomplished this entire history.

When we read the connection in verse 14, *"Zadok begot Achim" (Matthew 1:14)*, we must also remember that it was a time before the Savior had yet come. We who read the record know the ending, but these men each lived in their own time. We cannot tailor to our hasty expectations the work God did over many generations.

The words in verse 15, *"Eleazar begot Matthan" (Matthew 1:15)*, connect yet another generation. The Bible sufficiently reveals the genealogy that led to Jesus, as much as we need. Faith is based on the word God has made known. It is not that we can believe only when we have found out every gap.

When we move from the words *"Matthan begot Jacob" (Matthew 1:15)* to the next verse, Joseph and Mary finally appear. The long-continued genealogy draws near to the event of the birth. Although each person's life was different, the record keeps heading toward Jesus. What we should look to as we read becomes even clearer in this flow.

Our life of faith, too, must have Jesus Christ at its center. The mere fact of having lived a life of faith for a long time does not mean that our hearts are close to Jesus. While reading and hearing the word, we must know more clearly who Jesus is and what He accomplished. The passing of time and living by faith in Christ must be examined as distinct things.

The words introducing Joseph change

Let us read verse 16. *"And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ" (Matthew 1:16)*. The sentence that kept continuing before is

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concluded differently here. After recording that Jacob begot Joseph, it states that Jesus was born of Mary. We must not miss this difference.

The words attached to Joseph are *"Joseph the husband of Mary" (Matthew 1:16)*. They make known the relationship between Joseph, who is in the genealogy, and Mary, who gave birth to Jesus. Matthew does not mechanically repeat the sentence he was using before and record that Joseph begot Jesus. The preparation to go on to explain the birth of Jesus is within these words.

And it states, *"Of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ" (Matthew 1:16)*. The record that linked the births of the earlier people has reached the coming of Jesus. Jesus actually came in the midst of the history of people. At the same time, that birth is revealed in the word that follows to have come about by the Holy Spirit.

Let us read together the explanation in verse 18, which comes right after. *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18)*. It makes clear that Mary's conceiving before she lived together with Joseph came about by the Holy Spirit.

God sent His own Son to save people from sin. We must believe together the fact that Jesus came into the history in which people live and the fact that His birth came about by the Holy Spirit. If we forget one side, who the Savior we believe in is becomes blurred. The Gospel of Matthew conveys these two facts together from the beginning.

Therefore, we must not think of Jesus merely as one excellent person among the earlier names. He is the Christ toward whom the genealogy has been heading. At the end of the

record, we move beyond waiting for a better person and come to meet the Christ who has come.

The completion of the salvation Christ accomplished

Paul also speaks of the event of God sending His Son. *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4–5)*. The birth of Jesus is connected with the salvation by which we become those who belong to God.

While reading the name Christ, we must also clearly know the content of the salvation He accomplished. If we only vaguely hold on to the statement that God sent Him, we cannot know how our sins were removed. We must clearly hear through the word what Jesus accomplished. The coming that the genealogy showed leads to the work of saving sinners.

Concerning the sacrifice of the sin offering, God said, *"And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering" (Leviticus 4:29)*. It is the ordinance He established so that sin would be dealt with through the laying on of hands and the sacrifice. Because Jesus fulfilled that will, we find the basis of the remission of sins not in our own works but in what He did.

Jesus, who came through the generations after the captivity, had all the sins of the world, including even the sins of our whole lives, passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Bearing the sins thus transferred to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sins in our place, and rose again from death. To those who

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believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, God gives the remission of sins and gives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Just as the genealogy after the captivity reached Christ, the hope of those who suffer because of sin must also turn toward Christ. The sins in the heart are not removed merely by restoring one's circumstances. It is necessary to believe in this salvation Jesus accomplished. God gave us His own Son so that we might obtain the remission of sins.

Those who have received that grace find the basis of salvation in what Jesus did. Neither the times we failed nor the times we labored can be the basis for removing our sins. Because the salvation Jesus accomplished is certain, those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are righteous before God. That Son is our hope.

The purpose of the genealogy arranged into three periods

Let us read verse 17. *"So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations" (Matthew 1:17)*. Matthew arranges the genealogy from Abraham to David, from David until they were carried away to Babylon, and from after that until Christ.

The first division is *"from Abraham to David" (Matthew 1:17)*. The next is *"from David until the captivity in Babylon" (Matthew 1:17)*. It does not mix the road that leads to the king and the road that leads to captivity into the same story of glory. In the history in which God worked, both the things people rejoice in and the painful things are recorded together.

The last division is *"from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ" (Matthew 1:17)*. The end of this record is neither the captivity nor the fame of some descendant. It is Christ. When we read the word that arranges the three periods, we must look carefully at where those divisions arrived.

To know what God has done, we must look together at the history that links many periods. We can neither say, looking only at the time of David, that everything was fully accomplished, nor say, looking only at the time of Babylon, that the promise had ended. We must read to the end the history that the Bible recorded all the way to Christ.

We, too, easily hold on to only a painful period and condemn our whole lives, or hold on to a period that went well and exalt ourselves. The genealogy widens our eyes further. It makes us see what salvation God accomplished. When your heart is bound to your own circumstances, read again this word that continues all the way to Jesus.

Even when we face the record divided into fourteen generations each, we must first take hold of the flow that reaches Christ. That division arranges the names of real people and historical turning points and testifies of the coming of the Savior. We believe in the Son according to the testimony God has given.

Acknowledging what has fallen, we live the today we have been given

Even after Babylon, the names continued. This does not mean that we may treat the failures of the past as if they had never happened. It is the news that God sent Christ through that history. The reason we can have both seriousness about sin and hope in God is in this word.

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If it is clear that you have done wrong, acknowledge it honestly. You must not lightly pass over the hurt others have received or the responsibility you must bear. Those who believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished reveal themselves honestly and rely on the righteousness of the Lord. Within the grace they have received, they can correct their wrongs and bear their responsibility.

On the other hand, do not miss even what you can do today because of what has already passed. Zerubbabel and the people who returned set up the altar and served God. The loss they had suffered was great, but there was also work to be done on the day given to them. We, too, must hear the word, care for people, and do the work entrusted to us in the today God has granted us.

At times that work is done quietly. Like the people briefly recorded in the genealogy, our lives, too, may remain only as a brief record. But a life before God is not determined only by the evaluation others leave behind. Living faithfully today as one who believes in the Savior is precious.

The greatest assurance is the fact that Jesus Christ has already come. The promise of salvation does not remain as a vague waiting at the end of the genealogy. Jesus was born of Mary, and as the Son whom God sent, He accomplished salvation. We hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He accomplished.

Therefore, remember that the Savior is greater than your failures. It is not that we have hope because we regard sin as small. We have hope because there is Jesus, who dealt with sin completely.

Do not use up this day God has given us on excuses for past failures. As befits those who believe in Christ, set right what must be set right, and act faithfully within the relationships you

have been given. God, who saved us, wants us not to remain in hiding our own past but to live in grace.

The names that continued after Babylon finally reached Jesus Christ. Holding on to this fact that Christ has already come, live boldly the today that has been given to you. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

All people must believe in the Lord

< Matthew 1:18–21 >

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.’”

As we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus. When the baby Jesus was born on this earth, He was born from the body of the virgin Mary. Before that baby Jesus was born, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21)*. Sinners must know Jesus, and they must also know the fact that Jesus came precisely for them.

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"He will save His people from their sins"

Sorrow in this world has come to all people because of sin. Because of that sin, Jesus, the God of heaven, abandoned the throne of heaven and came to this earth to save all lowly people like you and me from the curse and destruction, and from sin. Our Lord came to save us from the sins of our ancestors and our own sins, and from all the curse for those sins. That is why, as we celebrate this Christmas, we must truly know that Jesus is our Savior, and we must know the fact that Jesus came precisely for us ourselves. And our Lord, though we do not know when, will someday come again to this earth.

This Jesus, who was born as the baby Jesus, came precisely for you yourselves and for all the people of the whole world, that is, for us ourselves; He came to remove our sins and removed them all. Jesus is the One who came exactly according to the word, *"He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. But in this world there are still many people who have not met Jesus, people who, because they cannot accept Jesus and cannot believe in Him, bear on their own bodies all the curse and darkness for sin and all the curses that God has brought down on sinners, and live in great sorrow. They do not know why they are like that. "Why was I born into this world only to suffer like this because of sin? Not only because of sin but in other areas as well, why can I not live happily, and why is there such misfortune for me? Everyone else lives happily, so why am I like this? I have everything else, so why do I not have health?" And so there are people who regard their own lives as a riddle all their lives and, knowing neither cause nor effect, just live in vain and pass away.

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Only by knowing Jesus can one escape from darkness

All these people must know who Jesus is, must know what Jesus came to this earth to do, and must quickly realize the fact that Jesus came to save them from sin and came to deliver them from all curse and destruction. Only then can they escape from that deep tunnel of darkness. When they listen to the word of God after knowing and believing in Jesus as their own Savior, they come to know why they have been sorrowful and have suffered until now, how they should live from now on, and how they can live to be happy. That is why all people must know Jesus. And they must accept Jesus as their own Savior. Anyone who has sin must accept Him, and anyone who has sorrow in his heart must accept Jesus as his own God and his own Savior. In this there is no exception, whatever race one may be or whoever one may be in the whole world. Everyone must accept Him.

This is because God is the God of all mankind and the God who made the whole universe. God named the baby Jesus because He is the One who will save His people from their sins. In other words, because He came to save us from sin, He was named Jesus. The name Jesus means Savior, and this One is the Messiah. A Savior who saves from what? Because He is the One who came to deliver us from sin, from the curse, from destruction, and from Satan the devil, God called the name of His Son, whom He sent to this earth, Jesus. Therefore, this means that we must believe in this Savior Jesus in our own hearts. Dear fellow believers, you must surely know and surely believe the fact that the baby Jesus came to this earth to save all people, to save you, from sin. You must not think of Christmas merely as one annual event. In many countries Christmas is regarded as a big day of the year and spent as an annual event.

"Every valley shall be filled"

But in this world, those who are poor in heart spend Christmas not as an annual event but as a very meaningful day. Those who have gone through much pain and suffering in this world, those who have suffered much because of sin, regard this day, on which the baby Jesus was born, as extremely precious. And they listen attentively, trying to find out through the word, wondering, "Why did Jesus come to this earth? What does His coming have to do with me? How did He save me? What kind of Savior has He become for me?" So they hear the word through the servants of God who preach the word, come to know, "Ah! Jesus came to save me from sin," and believe so, and they receive salvation. There was someone who came to this earth six months before Jesus, and he was John the Baptist. Before Jesus came, John the Baptist cried out to the people, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2)*. He was telling them to turn and believe in Jesus. And he cried out that in this world the high would be brought low and the low would be lifted up, so that all people would become equally precious. He cried out, *"Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low" (Luke 3:5)*. In fact, when we come to know it, all human lives are the same. Those who have much money and those who have none, those who have learned much and those who have learned little, men and women, old and young alike, are all precious.

But in this world, people who do not know God think that if they have much money and honor, they are special people. Like the people of a society that had the old class system, they think that since they were born as nobles from birth, they are superior human beings, and those born as commoners are inferior human beings. But our Lord has come and brings the high low, and the

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low, those who suffer because of sin in this world and struggle in their lives, are lifted up by coming to know our Lord. They become children of God. In that way, everyone becomes equally precious before God.

Christmas, the day God put on flesh and came to this earth

John the Baptist, who came six months before Jesus, cried out in that way. We must not exalt ourselves, our hearts, before Jesus, the Son of God who came to save us. As the hymn "Silent Night, Holy Night" sings, the King of kings was born. This means that Jesus, who is God, became a man and came to this earth. Although that God put on human flesh and came to this earth to save mankind, as the word *"who, being in the form of God" (Philippians 2:6)* says, in His essence He was God. Because Jesus is God in His essence, we must never boast of our highness or our hearts before Him. This is because Jesus is the God who made you, and the Creator who made this universe and made man.

The day God came as a man is Christmas. It is the day the Holy One, God, was born. The word for Christmas in our language means 'the holy birth,' and it is applied only to Jesus. It is called 'the holy birth' because Jesus alone is holy and is God, and He was born on this earth, taking on human form, to save mankind. But we do not call the day on which people like Shakyamuni, Socrates, or Confucius were born 'the holy birth.' The day Shakyamuni was born is called his birthday. The day Confucius was born is also merely called his birthday. But what do we call the day Jesus was born? It is Christmas, 'the holy birth.' It is the day the holy God came as a man. That is why we

call it Christmas. Not only we but the saints of the whole world commemorate this day as the day the Holy One was born.

He had the sin of all mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John

This baby Jesus came to this earth and lived a life of thirty-three years. Until He turned thirty, He lived quietly, and when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John in the Jordan River and had all the sin of all mankind transferred to Him. Then, for three years, He taught people the word of heaven and taught the truth of going to the kingdom of heaven, that is, the fact that He Himself had had all the sins of people transferred to Him; and at the age of thirty-three, bearing that sin, He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and died. And having died, He rose again on the third day, testified for forty days, and ascended to heaven, and He said that He would come again in the same way as He went up.

This Jesus, who lived a life of thirty-three years, was God and the Son of God, and He was God to us and also our Savior. So we must surely believe in Jesus. Personally, we must surely believe in our hearts. A person who is truly confident that he himself is perfect will feel no need to believe. But anyone who is not a perfect person, who also has needs and needs God's help, and who wants to go to the kingdom of heaven and has desires in his heart, must believe in Jesus without fail. This is because Jesus alone, this God alone, made our lives and made you, and is the God who can grant all the desires of your heart. That is why you must surely believe. All the people of the whole world must surely believe, and anyone among you must surely believe.

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Everyone must surely believe in Jesus

Children must surely believe, and adults must surely believe. A person who believes in Jesus as his own Savior is a very sensible and wise person. He is a person who knows himself. Knowing himself well, he realizes the fact that he is nothing special, and quickly takes hold of and believes in God, who created him and saved him. That is why such people go ahead of others, and not only receive the remission of sins but also become children of God and receive many blessings and protection. That is why we must surely believe in that Jesus. More than anything else, Jesus is the One we must surely believe in. Why is that? Because Jesus has removed all your sins.

If Jesus had not removed your sins, there would be no need to believe. Also, if you were confident that you could go to the kingdom of heaven by living a good life without believing in Jesus, that would be another matter, but you have no such confidence, and it cannot happen that way. That is why you must believe without fail. To say, “I have another religion, so I will not believe,” is only one’s own thinking. How can a human being live without believing in God? So you must surely believe. I hope that you will surely believe. This is not something I say only to you but something I say to all the people of the whole world. Everyone must surely believe. If they do not believe, they will go to the place they must go on account of the price of their own sins. Therefore, you must surely believe in this Jesus, who came to save us, to save you, from sin, as your Savior, and you must surely believe in that salvation which Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John, through receiving all the judgment for you on the Cross, and through rising again—that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. You must surely believe and receive salvation. If you believe, you simply believe.

Even though, however long you think about it after believing, you cannot fully understand this salvation with the human mind, I hope that you will by all means believe well in your hearts.

We give thanks that He has enabled us to celebrate this day, on which Jesus came to save us, and to praise, give thanks, and also believe. We truly give thanks that God has given us this day. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus the Savior

< Matthew 1:18–25 >

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.”

The years go by and the world is in turmoil, but even so, the gospel is still being spread. When we look at the word of Matthew 1:18–25, Christmas comes to mind. Usually, when preaching on the birth of Jesus at Christmas, one begins with this word and then preaches Matthew chapter 2, Luke chapters 1 and

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2, and John chapter 1 in order. But even when it is not Christmas, I want to share grace together with you about Jesus the Savior through this word. I hope that we will think of Jesus a little more in our hearts, receive Him with hearts at ease, obtain comfort through the Lord, have faith, and be blessed in both spirit and body.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows"

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18). Here we can ask the question, "Through whom did the birth of Jesus Christ come about? Did it come about through God, or through man?" The word says that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born before Mary lived together with Joseph. This means that the birth of Jesus Christ, in whom we believe, came about through the triune God, through the plan of God.

It says that it was found that He had been conceived by the Holy Spirit. God planned to send Jesus Christ to this earth, and He caused Jesus to be conceived and born by the Holy Spirit and sent Him to this earth. The purpose for which God sent Jesus to this earth was to deliver sinners from sin. Jesus Christ, who came to this earth, is the Lord of the creation of heaven and earth, and He is God, who created the universe and all things and their origin.

There is great significance in Jesus Christ's coming to this earth. Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came to this earth, as the Creator who created the universe and all things, abandoning all the glory of heaven, solely in order to save

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the sinners of this earth. Although Jesus is God, who created the universe and all things, He came to this earth in person, and so it cannot but be of great significance. That is why it was a tremendously important thing that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came to this earth.

This event, in which Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit through the body of Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph, and came to this earth, is the greatest news and the greatest blessing for mankind. This is because, though He is God, He abandoned the throne of heaven and came to this earth as our Savior.

Joseph, a just man

Joseph appears in the word of verse 19. We can ask the question, "Was Joseph, who was to become Mary's husband, a just man?" Joseph was a man who believed in God and feared God. He was also a very upright man in human terms. This means that spiritually he was a man who waited for the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and in the flesh he was a very just and upright man.

Why was Joseph an upright man in the flesh as well? Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and before they even lived together, it was found that she was with child. That is, her belly had begun to swell. But, as the word *"not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly" (Matthew 1:19)* says, Joseph did not expose the matter, and tried to break it off quietly, as though they had never been betrothed.

Joseph, as a man who believed in God, was a man who did a very upright thing. In Israel, if it happened that a virgin who was not yet married became pregnant, it was reported to the elders of

that town and they examined whether it was true. If the man stated before the elders the evidence that, though they were betrothed, he had not yet taken her to him and lived with her, the matter was made public and that woman was stoned to death by the people of the town.

The law of the nation of Israel is the law of God. The Ten Commandments and the commandments that say "Do this" and "Do not do that," that is, the commandments that must be kept before God, are the law of Israel. In particular, there were commandments that they treated as very important, and if there was only a witness that someone had broken those commandments, whoever it was, he was put to death without mercy.

So Joseph tried to break it off very quietly for fear that the woman betrothed to him would die. Ordinary people could have used this matter as a pretext to plot something evil, demanding money or stirring up all kinds of things, but Joseph did not do so. Because Joseph was a man who believed in God while waiting for the birth of Jesus Christ, he did not harm anyone or seek his own gain by seizing on the other person's weakness.

Joseph was a very just man. He was truly a just man whom God acknowledged. So Joseph, who was waiting for the birth of Jesus, obtained the name of a just man before God. It was because he was a man who believed in God that he could do such a thing.

"But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit'" (Matthew 1:20). We can also ask the question, "Was Joseph a man who had fellowship with God?" When we look at the word, God sent an angel of the Lord to Joseph and told him the whole story. He

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said, “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; what she has conceived is not by man but of the Holy Spirit.”

Joseph was a man who had fellowship with God. He was a man who prayed to God, and a man to whom God could appear and speak; such a man was Joseph. So God sent an angel of the Lord into Joseph’s dream and spoke to him in this way.

Before the Bible was completed, God also worked in this way. But these days He does not do so. God speaks through the written word, and when we believe this word, He has fellowship with us within this word.

Since, in God’s sight, Joseph was a man very fit for God to use, God spoke through him and allowed such things in his life. If it had not been Joseph but a man who did not fear God, God would not have done so. This means that, as God saw him, Joseph was truly a servant fit for God to use, and so God raised him up and used him.

If it is the will of God, we obey

God guides the lives of His servants, and through the lives of those servants He accomplishes His will. That Joseph was just is revealed in the fact that he believed this word, went and took Mary to him, did not have marital relations with her until she had given birth to the baby, and carried out all that the Lord had commanded him. This is a very important passage.

“Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS” (Matthew 1:24–25). What is precious about Joseph is that he carried out the will of the Lord. He took his wife to him as God had commanded, but did not have marital

relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and when the baby was born, he called His name Jesus. If it was the will of God, Joseph and Mary obeyed and acted accordingly.

Joseph was about to get married, and a very strange thing happened within that marriage. When the angel of the Lord said that all of it was something God had allowed, Joseph accepted all that God had said, that is, the will of God. Because it was the work of God, he took to him the one who was to be his wife, the pregnant virgin Mary, and lived with her. Moreover, even while living with Mary, Joseph did not have marital relations with her, according to the will of the Lord and the word of the Lord. Therefore Joseph is a just man. What makes Joseph praiseworthy is precisely that he thoroughly followed the will of God.

We, too, are people who believe in God. As we live our daily lives, there are times when God lets the will that pleases Him show in your lives. Though it is something you never thought of or wanted, there are times when God lets His will show to you in order to accomplish His will. At such times, it is right to follow it even if it does not agree with your own thinking. Who would want to take a pregnant woman to himself and live with her? But when the angel of the Lord appeared and spoke to Joseph in that way, Joseph believed it just as it was, and believing that it was the will of God and that through this the will of God would be accomplished, he obeyed. So Joseph is a just man in the Bible, and he was a man who believed in God and lived truly uprightly. In terms of the Old Testament, this means that he was a man who had received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, who was to come.

Then what about you and me, who have received the remission of sins today? Do we have the faith to accept it in our hearts if it is the will of God? What I am asking is whether, even

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if something does not fit your thinking and is not to your liking, you can accept it by faith, rejoice, and do it that way if God is pleased with it and wants it. I believe that both the saints and the servants of God must do so, if it is something God is pleased with, for God to be pleased. If it is something that pleases God, you and I must of course do so.

You and I have believed in Jesus and received the remission of sins, and Jesus has become the Savior of you and me. We have become His people. We have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our Lord had our sins, as many as the mist, all those sins as black as ink, transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross for us and paid the price of sin, and rose again, and so He saved us. In this way we have become the people of God through faith. Now, after having become the people of God, what matters is whether we follow the will of God or follow our own will.

Joseph followed God as he lived his life, and one day something he could never have imagined happened. God wanted him to do that thing, and wanted Joseph to obey the will of God. So Joseph obeyed, because, though he himself did not want it, it was what God wanted. By obeying God's word, Joseph faithfully took part in God's purpose concerning the birth of Jesus Christ.

Sin does not disappear by merely changing one's heart

There is one thing that hurts our hearts the most as we preach this gospel. In this world there are also churches that say they value the gospel. Such churches, too, say that it is right that Jesus

came to this earth and washed away our sins, as black as ink and as many as the mist, through the baptism He received from John, and that it is also right that Jesus died on the Cross, rose again, and saved us. Yet they do not clearly preach that truth, but unconditionally say only this: "If you believe in Jesus, you have no sin." And it hurts our hearts the most when we see them devoting more effort to gathering material offerings than to clearly preaching the truth.

And they speak of salvation, saying, "Jesus removed all sin as He died on the Cross. So He washed your sins, red like scarlet, as white as wool. Since it says that He washed them white, just as the word says, simply believe it. Though there was sin in your heart, all you have to do is change your heart, believing that Jesus has removed sin. Merely changing your heart is receiving the remission of sins; it is nothing else."

But the Lord does not say so. We are not saved by merely changing our hearts. Merely changing one's heart is easy, but this means there is no way to solve the sins we commit as we go on living. If we regard sin as having disappeared by merely changing our hearts, we feel good for a moment, but there is no way to solve the sins we commit from now on. That is why the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which the Lord has given, is necessary.

What can completely remove our sins, as many as the mist and as black as ink, is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When dark clouds gather and bring rain, how black the sky is! Do not black clouds cover the sky and pour down rain? We commit that many sins. The Lord, saying, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, had all those sins transferred to Him when He received baptism from John. Having thus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through His baptism, He bore that sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross,

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received all the judgment for our sins, and rose again from death. And so He saved you and saved me as well.

Yet such churches do not clearly preach this truth but teach carelessly, "If you believe in Jesus, you have no sin." So the people who receive that teaching say they have no sin even though there is sin in their hearts. Because they do so, even the people who are bound by the law and bound by sin do not come to the meetings where the truth is preached. Also, they devote themselves only to gathering material offerings, regardless of how people's hearts are spiritually. If the material offerings the saints give were used for the right work of preaching the true gospel, that would be a truly righteous thing. But the problem is that many churches gather those offerings and use them to build large church buildings and to fatten the clergy. If those offerings had been used to preach the gospel, the gospel would have been spread amply throughout a whole nation and many people would have received the remission of sins. So I cannot tell you how much it hurts my heart to see them not preaching the truth.

Dear fellow believers, you must make up your minds. If it is something God is pleased with, if it is the will of God, if God wants such a thing from you, what will you do? We act to the extent that we believe, and it is accomplished to the extent that we believe. Even though your faith may be lacking, do you have the heart to obey if God is pleased with it? We do have such a heart.

Joseph was such a man. If Joseph had said he would not take Mary to him, how would the history of the Bible have been recorded? Since the word of the Bible must record things as they actually were, it would have been recorded that Joseph refused to take Mary to him. But the Bible records that Joseph was *"a just man" (Matthew 1:19)*, and that he *"did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife" (Matthew 1:24)*,

but did not have marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son.

Some people say they will believe in Jesus if it is scientifically proven that the virgin Mary could give birth to a baby on her own. There are even some among pastors who say so. They say that they do believe in Jesus, but they cannot believe it, since they cannot understand how a virgin could give birth to a baby by herself. It is a shameful thing in itself that one who does not even believe the word of God becomes a pastor and tells people to believe in Jesus.

Joseph did as the Lord commanded, took Mary to him, and did not have marital relations with her until she had given birth to the baby. Joseph was a man who obeyed the will of the Lord. If this had actually happened to you and me, what would you do? Do you and I also have a heart like Joseph's? Suppose that God has let some will of His show to you in order to accomplish His will, in order to do His work. Then you must consider whether you yourself are a person who can obey that will of God as Joseph did.

Just like Joseph, we, too, are sinless and righteous. Though we are lacking as individuals, if such is the will of God, we have the heart to obey at any time and to do just as He has commanded.

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son"

Through whom did the birth of Jesus come about? It came about through the Holy Spirit. Jesus was born on this earth through the Holy Spirit, upholding the will of the Father. The purpose for which He came to this world was to save His people

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from their sins. He came to this earth to do the work of accomplishing all salvation as the Savior.

Is God One who makes promises to mankind? Yes, He is. God promised through all the prophets of the Old Testament that He would save all sinners from sin. So Jesus Christ came to this earth to fulfill that promise which God had made through the prophets, and He actually fulfilled all the promises of salvation. God sent Jesus Christ to this earth, and Jesus Christ came in accordance with that will.

In what form did the Lord promise to come to this earth? He promised to come through the body of a virgin. The word says, *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel" (Matthew 1:23)*. The reason He had to come that way was so that God could come as a man.

To the virgin Mary an angel appeared and, saying, *"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28)*, conveyed the word of God that the One to be born from her body was the Son of God. Then, when Mary said, *"How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:34)*, the angel told her that her relative Elizabeth had also conceived a son in her old age, and said, *"For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37)*. Mary accepted by faith the word of God that the angel conveyed and said, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)*. When Mary upheld the will of God and accepted that word, Jesus was conceived in her body, and when the days were completed for her to be delivered, He was born.

Why was Jesus born through the body of the virgin Mary? It was because God had to save mankind from sin. If Jesus had been born through a relationship between a man and a woman, He, too, would have become a sinner who must receive the remission of sins; that is why He had to be born by borrowing

the body of the virgin Mary. That is how Jesus could come as the King of kings, as the Creator God, and as the Savior of us human beings. God became a man and came to this earth in order to save mankind from their sins, and in order to come that way, it had to happen just as He had promised through the prophet Isaiah, about seven hundred years before Jesus came, that He would be born putting on human flesh by borrowing the body of a virgin. When the time came, God sent an angel to Mary and spoke to her, and Jesus Christ was conceived in the body of Mary, who accepted that word, and when the time was fulfilled, He came as the One who would save His people from their sins. That is why His name is called Immanuel, and Jesus. The name Jesus means *"He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. Jesus came to this earth as the One who would save His people from their sins.

And God gives that salvation to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and the Lord came to this earth in the flesh in order to be with those who have received the remission of sins. *"Which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:23)*. Here the word *"us"* refers to those who are born again. Those who are born again, that is, those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, have the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is the one with whom the Lord is.

Jesus came to save His people from sin

Was Joseph a servant of God? Joseph is a just and godly man. The reason he was a just and upright man before God is that he upheld the will of God. Because he upheld the will of God,

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Joseph is a servant of God. We, too, who have accepted God's gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, are all servants of God. Individually, we may be like this or like that, but fundamentally we uphold the will of God. Within us there is a heart that wants to uphold the will of the Lord, and when we know that such is the will of God, we uphold that will even though our faith is lacking.

The One born from the body of Mary is Jesus. Jesus became the Savior to those who receive salvation by believing in God and believing in Jesus Christ. Jesus delivered all sinners from sin through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and became the eternal Savior God to all the sinners of mankind. Therefore, we believe that Jesus came to save His people from their sins and has also completed salvation. That Jesus is the Jesus who has become the Savior to you and me. That is what we believe. We not only believe, but we also want to live like Joseph, upholding the will of God if it is His will and doing as He commands. We who have received the remission of sins want to live that way.

The Holy Spirit has given such a heart into our hearts. That is precisely a righteous heart and a righteous faith. I believe that, just as He gave it to Joseph, God has given you, too, such a heart and such faith.

I hope that we will think of Jesus, who came to save us from sin, removed our sins, and saved us, and ruminate once again on His great grace and love. I hope that you will be people who realize your own parched righteousness, ruminate on the abundant righteousness of God, and keep it in your hearts. We believe in our hearts that the Lord has become our Savior, and we give thanks. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The God of salvation

< Matthew 1:18–23 >

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.' So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us.'"

A dark and gloomy age

Jesus said, *"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)*. I think this age is especially an age in which the authority of the saints is being greatly broken. When we look at the world, we keenly feel that it is an age of darkness, and this present age seems to be a gloomy age with no hope for the future, whether spiritually or physically. But God has said that He will compensate the born-

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again saints for all the suffering they have undergone for the Lord's sake while living on this earth. Because we have something to be compensated for, no matter how gloomy this world may be, we have hope both spiritually and physically.

If we look only at this world, there is no hope. We are now living in such an age. We who live in this age must have great faith. Faith as small as a grain of millet soon runs out. Therefore, the gloomier the age becomes, the more we must have great faith, open our eyes wide and look ahead to the future, face the present squarely, and believe in the Lord, and so possess the faith that overcomes the world.

The God of salvation, who came through the body of a virgin

About seven hundred years before our Lord came to this earth, the prophet Isaiah prophesied that the Savior of mankind would be born through the body of a virgin. And the Bible has left us the record that, when the time came, our Lord was born in the land of Judea through the body of a virgin named Mary.

Who is the Lord, who was born through the body of Mary? *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins. So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:21–23).* There is a meaning in our Lord's name. What is that meaning? It is that *"He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. In other words, the name Jesus means that He is the God of salvation.

The fact that the Lord has become the God of salvation to us brings great faith, great comfort, and great power to us who believe. As the saints continue in their life of faith, when their own righteousness is broken and their wickedness, weaknesses, and sins keep being exposed, they come to give thanks in their hearts that the Lord has become their Savior. And in the process, when their own righteousness is completely broken, their hope in themselves diminishes, and although they have been saved, because the state of their flesh is so evil and ugly, they come to rely on God alone.

But on the other hand, there are also times when, because we have no righteousness of our own and are so weak, we get caught by the weakness of the flesh when we should come before God by faith, and it is truly uncomfortable to come forward by faith. At such times we try very hard to fix ourselves somehow. But no matter how hard we try, far from changing, an even more deficient, weak, and sinful state is exposed, and in the end we have no choice but to rely on the Lord's salvation.

What people hate most

People hate most of all for their own righteousness to be broken, but as time goes by, their own righteousness keeps being broken. Because they are so deficient and weak before God, even though they have received the remission of sins, they feel awkward about coming before God, hesitate because it seems there is some darkness in them, and sometimes remain in a state in which they cannot have boldness before the Lord.

As we live our life of faith, every time our own rightness is broken, we become greatly discouraged before God. It is just as the word says, *"If the foundations are destroyed, What can the*

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righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). But the foundation of the salvation of the righteous still remains. Not knowing this, we struggle to fix ourselves, thinking, "How can I come before God when my flesh is so evil and dark?" but in the end we come to see even more that we ourselves are not being fixed. Far from being fixed, as time goes by, only our weakness and evil are exposed, and our goodness is only broken all the more.

At such times, we the righteous who live a life of faith sometimes fall into the despair of the flesh, thinking, "I just cannot do it anymore. Should I give up my life of faith? With the world the way it is now, however much I hold on, how long can I hold on? I have somehow held on until now, but from now on I do not even have the strength to hold on." We examine everything in an attempt to fix ourselves, but seeing that there is no guarantee whatsoever that we can do well from now on, we become disappointed and despair, and sometimes fall into a state of thinking, "Should I just give up my faith now?" Dear fellow believers, isn't that so? At such times, rather than looking at ourselves and being disappointed, we must realize once again the fact that there is Jesus, who is our Savior.

We must look up to God. We are saved and live through our Lord. And our righteousness must all be broken. In our life of faith, we come to experience all these things being accomplished in the Lord by faith. When our righteousness is broken, we come to know what kind of God He is to us, and we become able to ruminate on it with faith in our hearts. Our Lord is the God of salvation to us. *"For He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. This means that Jesus is the God of salvation. It means that God is the foundation of salvation to us born-again saints.

When you look at yourselves and become discouraged, look to God. What kind of God is God to us? If God is the God of

salvation to us, then even if our own righteousness is completely broken, even if we have no rightness or goodness at all, and whatever evil there may be in us, there is no problem.

Human righteousness is all broken

Because the Lord has removed all our sins, we have nothing to worry about. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? The saints try hard so that their own rightness will not be broken, but someday it is all broken. A person with much righteousness hurts more when it is broken, and a person with little righteousness hurts a little less; that is the only difference. Human righteousness is something that is all broken in any case. Our righteousness has all been broken. Is your righteousness still smooth and shiny? Or is it a righteousness with one corner broken off? Before God, human righteousness is a broken righteousness. Whether a saint who is little talked about or a saint who is much talked about, without exception, everyone's human righteousness has all been broken. Nevertheless, God is still the Savior even to the righteous whose righteousness of the flesh has been broken.

What kind of God is the God of the righteous? That God is the God who has delivered us from all sin and evil. He is the God who has delivered us from all the sin of mankind, and the God who is our shepherd. Our Savior, the Lord, had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John in the Jordan River, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, rose again from the tomb, and so He removed all our sins and completely saved us by the power of His own life. No matter how evil and weak we are, the God of the righteous has become

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the Savior to the righteous. It means that the righteous, however deficient they may be, have been made clean.

Salvation is not preserved by works

It is not that if the righteous do well in their deeds before God, the salvation of the remission of sins they have received is preserved, and if they do wrong, that salvation is broken and they become dirty again and become people with sin again. If the righteous say they are clean or dirty according to what they do well or poorly, that is not holding on to the righteousness of God but holding on to their own righteousness. The faith that holds on to the righteousness of God is believing in the God of salvation. It is the faith that believes in the righteousness of God, that God has made us completely clean from all sins. When we have this faith, we can live dwelling in the assurance that we have been saved, and however deficient we may be, we can follow the truth. And with this faith we can preach the gospel to the souls of the whole world. A person whose own righteousness has not been broken cannot preach the gospel when he becomes weak.

We who believe in God are not much interested in whether we ourselves do well or poorly. We just believe in God, just offer praise before that God, and just preach the salvation of that God. There is nothing else. We have nothing to boast of before God, and there is nothing in us that will get better in the future. The Bible says, *"All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6)*. However much we try to polish the flesh, it stays just as it is, and there is no guarantee that it will get any better. There is no guarantee that the longer we live after receiving the remission

of sins, the better our character will become. There is only the guarantee that our faith will become better.

Jesus is our God of salvation

Dear fellow believers, do you think there is righteousness or goodness in yourselves? Because you thought there was righteousness or goodness in you, haven't you, over many long years, agonized and grieved every time your human righteousness was broken? There is no such thing as human righteousness. All human beings are wicked people who commit sins in the world, and the Lord has already saved such people with the water and the blood. Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, bore that sin and went to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again in three days. Our God, who has remitted our sins with the water and the blood, is the God of salvation to us. And God wants us to believe in God in that way. When we call on God and believe in God, He wants us to believe in Him as the God of salvation who has saved us from all sins.

You must have the faith that believes in that God who has removed all the sins you commit throughout your whole life, not in a salvation of the Lord that has removed only part of the sins you have committed. God has become the God of salvation to us. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? No matter how deficient you may be, you must not leave this faith behind and retreat. Whatever may happen, whatever weakness you may have, I hope that you will hold fast to the faith that believes that God has saved you, believe in the God of salvation, and come before God. I hope you will know that only then can you truly live.

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The God of salvation, who delivers us even from tribulation

Our Lord is the God who saves from sin and, at the same time, the God who also saves from all tribulation. He is the God of salvation who delivers us from all tribulations and difficulties. The Bible says of Jesus, *"For He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*.

When we read the Books of Kings and Chronicles, we see that Solomon the son of David sinned and the kingdom began to decline, in the days of Rehoboam the son of Solomon the kingdom was divided, and after going on like that for a long time, in the end the kingdom was completely destroyed. In fact, the people of Israel were taken captive to Babylon and for seventy years could not farm their own land.

In this word there appear several kings who lived by faith. As those kings lived their life of faith before God, they revealed God in their hearts in two ways. First, they revealed that God is the God of salvation, the God of the remission of sins. Second, they revealed that God is the God who delivers from all adversaries and enemies.

So it is with us as well. We have not only received the remission of sins; we have also received salvation from God in the midst of this dark and gloomy age, in which we come to harbor worries and anxieties about what to do in the future. When we watch television and read the newspaper, this world is truly hopeless and pitch-dark. The Book of Revelation records many things that will happen in the future: a third of the earth and the trees will be burned up, a third of the sea will become blood, and a third of mankind will be killed. The time when such things will be fulfilled is not far off. Once the time of famine has passed, all these things will come upon us. Since it has now

slowly begun, when we think about it, the days ahead are pitch-dark.

For each of you individually as well, things have been all right until now, but when you think about the future ahead, it will seem bleak. From now on, living will become harder and harder, and our hearts will also become more and more burdened. These days even people who run small shops are dispirited, saying that business is bad. Because we who have been saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit are also the same human beings, if the world goes to ruin, we also go to ruin. I know that you, too, have worried and anxious hearts. Nevertheless, whatever difficulty or danger there may be, the God we believe in, the God who has become our Master, is the God who always saves us. Jesus, as the God of salvation, always keeps us.

We must believe in God as the God of salvation. We must believe in Him not as the God who has saved us only from all sin, but as the living God, the almighty God, who also keeps us and protects us from all danger and is with us. The God we believe in is the God of love. I hope that, in whatever tribulation, you will believe in this God of salvation and come boldly before God. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Give thanks to God

< Matthew 1:18–23 >

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’”

The greatest event in this world

The greatest thing in this world is that God came to this earth. That Jesus, who is God, loved us, gave up the throne of heavenly glory, and came to this earth is the greatest event in heaven and on earth, in this universe. There can be no news as amazing and miraculous as the fact that God put on human flesh and came to this earth. There are many events in this world, and we see many things, but where is there anything greater than this, that God

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came to this earth? And there can be nothing that remains more deeply in our hearts than that God loved us and came to this earth.

Today we have read a word that we have always known. This is the word that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the body of the virgin Mary—that is, the word that God loved us, mankind, and came to this earth to save sinners. How amazing and great an event this is, and what a thing to be thankful for!

Man is a being who lives amid truly many problems. There is probably no created being with as many problems as man. Unlike animals, people have many spiritual problems in their hearts. Countless things happen in the human heart. That is why the word of Proverbs says, *"Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23)*. Why did it say to keep the heart? Because if the heart goes wrong, everything goes wrong. How many sins we commit with our hearts! With our hearts we murder, commit adultery, steal, envy, and hate; we commit all kinds of sins with our hearts.

Yet unless a person solves the problem of the sins of the heart, he can never live happily. An animal is fine as long as it is given something to eat, but a person lives burdened with many problems because he cannot keep his heart. It is from all those very sins committed with the heart that our Lord came to save us. Sin, whether it is sin committed with the heart or sin committed by deeds, in the end kills and destroys a person.

How could the event of God sending Jesus to this earth in order to make human beings who commit so many sins His own people not be a great and amazing thing? The Lord's salvation is truly great and amazing. If the Lord had not come to save us from the sins committed with the heart and the sins committed by deeds—from all those sins—what would have become of us? Could we even have lived at all? If the Lord had not come to

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save us, this world would already have been destroyed, and each one of us would already have been finished. We cannot do anything by ourselves. If the problem of all the sins of the heart had not been solved, we might have collapsed in despair as we lived.

There is nothing greater than the gospel

Jesus came to save us from sin. The Lord took upon Himself all the countless sins we commit with our hearts and all the sins we commit with our flesh, and became our Savior. Therefore, we who have been saved and become children of God regard this gospel as the greatest and most precious thing. There is nothing greater or more precious than this gospel.

I ask you to examine carefully whether or not there is anything greater than the gospel in your heart. There is nothing greater than this gospel. There are countless events on this earth, and there are also many things we must do, but there is no greater work than preaching this gospel, that the Lord came to this earth to save sinners. What is the work we must do all our lives, the thing we must commemorate all our lives? It is the spread of the gospel. Since the Lord has saved us, the greatest work we must do on this earth is the spread of the gospel. We must always remember that God has saved us, that He has removed all the sins we commit with our hearts.

We must think of the Lord, who removed all the sins we commit with our hearts throughout our lives, sins like fog, like dark clouds, and saved us from all sins. There is nothing greater or more important than this. We set our hearts on many things in this world. We learn talents and skills, obtain certificates, invest ourselves and our possessions in some work, run businesses, and

do many things. But what we must regard as most precious and love most is the salvation by which the Lord removed all our sins, that is, the gospel by which the Lord has saved us. There is nothing greater than this gospel.

The Bible says, *"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have" (Hebrews 13:5)*, and it says, *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10)*. In fact, if one loves money, falls into it, and lives one's life only for money, one falls into countless evils, grows distant from God, and comes to do anything whatsoever for the sake of money.

Therefore, the Bible says, *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2)*. In season and out of season, we must preach to all people this gospel: "Jesus has removed your countless sins. The Lord came as your Savior. Do you have sin? The Lord has completely removed your sins." This is precisely our work. Where is there any work greater and more complete than this?

The perfect and upright word of the LORD

The psalmist sings as follows. *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:7–10)*.

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It says, *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7)*. How perfect is the law of the LORD! And how it revives the soul! When we look at ourselves in the light of the law of the LORD, we come to know how many sins we are committing with our hearts. The law seems to kill us, but in fact it points out our sins and makes us come again to Jesus Christ. So in the end it revives our souls.

It also says, *"The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7)*. How surely God has saved us! The testimony of God truly makes the simple wise. To know the Lord is to believe in the gospel. Everyone who knows and believes in the gospel gains wisdom. Those who know and believe in the gospel are truly wise. Compared with them, the wise people of the world are nothing. Those who believe in the gospel know for certain how they should live and what truly does not bring loss. They live foreseeing both the beginning and the end.

It says, *"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart" (Psalm 19:8)*. How upright are all the teachings of God! In our lives God teaches us, "Be united with the church," "Live by faith in the word of God," "Live in the fear of God," "Follow God," "Spread the gospel," and "Live united with the church for the gospel." If we follow the word of God and believe all these words, we come to know that the word is the truth.

Therefore, the teachings of the LORD are truly upright. There is nothing in this world as upright as the word of God. Only God can give teaching that guides us to the way of truth so uprightly and rightly, makes us live straight, and keeps us perfectly. No one in this world can do that. So those who have lived by faith in the word of God obtain true joy in their hearts. They come to know that the gospel is the precious and sure truth, and that it is truly right to live by faith, united with the Church

of God and serving the gospel, after receiving the remission of sins. They come to realize, "There are many standards in this world, but the standard of faith is the most absolute and the best standard." So those who live following the word of God obtain joy in their hearts and enjoy the greatest happiness.

It also says, "*The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:8)*. All these words in which God said to us, "Do this," and, "Do not do that," enlighten the eyes of our hearts.

"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever"

It says, "*The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9)*. What is the way of fearing God? It is that God loved us, and the Almighty came to this earth in the body of a created being and saved us from all sins. How clean this way of salvation is! And how pure, too, is every word God has spoken to us! Do you who believe in this clean way that endures forever have sin, or not?

We sometimes flounder, sunk in the many affairs of this world. But even then, when we lay down the dregs of our hearts, the things we have done wrong, before God, we come to know again that Jesus Christ has saved us from sin by the water and the Spirit. Jesus said, "*Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism from John, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, and as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)* died on the Cross and rose again. When we believe this word, I cannot tell you how pure our hearts become again. The way of salvation God has given, every word of God, is clean. It purifies us from

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the sins of our souls and the sins of our flesh. That is why it says that the way of fearing God is clean, enduring forever.

The love of God is the eternal remission of sins

Among born-again people, is there anyone who has sin in his heart? Is there any born-again person who has not received the love of God? For a born-again person, is there anything greater than this salvation by which God has saved him? The Lord's salvation did not remove just one or two of our sins; it removed all our sins, as many as fog. Then how could we not be clean? How could we not be pure?

The Bible says, *"For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again" (Proverbs 24:16)*. That the righteous rise again like this is because the way of the LORD is clean, because God's saving of us is pure, and because there is power in the word of God. That is why we rise again and stand again.

Because God has a heart that loves us, He actually forsook the glory of heaven and came to this earth. The Creator put on the body of a created being. Sometimes scientists say that there is a possibility that some asteroid will collide with the earth, and they talk about whether the earth will indeed be destroyed. That becomes very big news. If even one lump of rock falling is big news, how great a piece of news is it that God, who made this universe, became a man! How great a thing it is that this God actually loved us! It is a truly tremendous thing.

We have not received a little love; we have received tremendous love. We have received from God a love greater than this universe. Is there anyone who has gone to the end of this universe? Is there anyone who has seen to its end even with a telescope? The reason I am saying this is to say that, although

we have received the remission of sins, we cannot fully know its grace and power. Our salvation is so great that we cannot even fully feel that all our innumerable sins have been remitted.

We commit, with our hearts and by our deeds, more sins than the countless stars in the sky, than the stars in the universe. Do you know this fact? Though we are such people, God has saved us all. Who, having believed in Jesus, could say that he has sin, that he is not pure?

The word of God does not change

It says, *"The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold" (Psalm 19:9–10).* The ordinances God has established are sure. Who could change all these words of God? The word that tells us to receive the remission of sins and live united with the church, the word *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19)*, the word that tells us to live for the glory of God—all these words are not only sure and right, but they cannot change.

People may think that, from an ethical, scientific, or social point of view, the Bible does not fit the times. But even though the times change, the Bible is the truth. It is sure, righteous, and right. What does not change no matter how much time passes is the Bible, the word of God. Those who are not born again think that the words of the Bible, too, must change with the times. But those who have been made clean know that even if this universe disappears, God exists forever, and that the word of God will never pass away, as the word says: *"Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18).*

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The word of God is entirely sure. Is there anything wrong among the words God has spoken? Is the word that says to honor your parents wrong? Is the word that says to have no other gods before God and to serve God alone wrong? Among all the words in which He said not to take the name of God in vain, not to make idols and bow down to them, not to chase after the material things of the world, to keep this salvation God has given, to honor your parents, and to stay far from murder, adultery, theft, and covetousness, is there anything wrong?

It is the same with the systems of society. God has said that if people fear God and preach the gospel, that nation will do well. A person who thinks of the universe and realizes that he himself is a created being comes to fear God, and a person who acknowledges his own lack and weakness becomes wise and understanding by knowing the written word of God. Can a person see even one inch ahead into his own future? How can one know what result will come from doing some work now? We must realize that neither science nor any human knowledge is anything before the world of God. Judging God with the knowledge of the world is like striking a lump of iron with an egg.

The work we who have received the remission of sins must do is the spread of the gospel

Compared with God having saved us, everything in the world is worthless; it may be there or not, and it makes no difference. But what God has done in saving us is so very great. Our Lord came to this earth to save us, and through the baptism He received from John He had our sins transferred to Him. And by bearing the sin of the world, shedding His blood and dying on

the Cross, and rising again, He made us people who have no sin at all and gave us the privilege of becoming children of God. Here, the world means the time from the beginning of this universe until it disappears. We must give thanks for that salvation of God and preach the gospel to those who have sin. The only thing we who have received the remission of sins can do is this spread of the gospel.

Our earning money, holding jobs, and associating with people of the world are also for preaching the gospel. The work that pleases God is making disciples of all nations and serving this gospel of the water and the blood together. Nothing else gives satisfaction to the hearts of the righteous. No matter how unsettled the times become, the work we must still do is to spread the gospel of salvation, the remission of sins. Even though the world changes, the salvation by which the Lord saved mankind from sin does not change. For everyone who has believed in Jesus Christ and become a disciple, there is no work to do other than spreading the gospel.

I ask you to give thanks that the countless sins in your hearts have been remitted. I ask you to give thanks that the Lord came as the Savior. And I ask you to preach the gospel. Even though people change, the gospel does not change, and our souls are satisfied only by the gospel. We are made new by the gospel, and we receive blessings through the gospel. The world of God is the world of the gospel.

Dear beloved saints, let us be people who give thanks that God has saved us. And let us devote all our strength to the work of preaching the gospel until the end of the age. ✉

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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 words “I will worship” and the people who fell down before the baby

< Matthew 2:1–12 >

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.”’ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.’ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

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And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way."

The people who heard the same news of the birth

There is a distance between saying that we respect someone and laying down our own will before that person. In today's text, which tells of the birth of Jesus, there also appear people who speak the word "worship." When we follow where they actually go and before whom they fall down, we also come to examine our own hearts as we welcome the Lord, who came as King.

Let us read verse 1. *"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem" (Matthew 2:1)*. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and the wise men came to Jerusalem. While Matthew first makes clear the period of Herod's rule, he places Jesus, who had been born, at the center of the story.

Let us read verse 2. *"Saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him'" (Matthew 2:2)*. In the question of the wise men, the One they were seeking and the purpose for which they came are contained together. The text goes on to show how the purpose they made known appears in action when they meet the baby.

The wise men ask where the King who has already been born is. Who Jesus is does not depend on the evaluation of the people who come to Him. We must lay down the heart that would

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decide the Lord's place for Him, and go forward to the place where we recognize the Lord, who has already come.

Let us read verse 3. *"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3)*. Herod and all Jerusalem became greatly disturbed. The text records the reaction that the news stirred up in the whole city. We cannot say that someone has believed and accepted the good news merely because he has heard it.

One side goes forward to the baby, and the other side gathers information about the baby. What people do after learning the same news reveals the direction of their hearts.

We, too, can hear the Bible and say many familiar things. We need to look back on whether we are using the word we received at that time only to support our own plans. When the Lord speaks, we must leave room for our thoughts to be corrected.

Where is the knowledge the king gathered headed?

Let us read verse 4. *"And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born" (Matthew 2:4)*. The king calls those who know the fact he does not know and tries to get an answer. Even such careful confirmation of the content of the Bible can lead to entirely different results depending on the heart that receives the answer.

Let us read verse 5. *"So they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet'" (Matthew 2:5)*. The answer they gave was Bethlehem of Judea. To this answer is attached the basis that it is the record of the prophet. In the process of Herod asking and their answering, the fact that God had already spoken is placed before the king as well.

Knowing the written word is important. The problem lies in what attitude a person who has heard a clear answer takes before that word. Even after Herod comes to know the way to find the baby, he moves on holding fast to his own purpose.

After the answer of the scribes, there is no record that they went to Bethlehem. When we read as far as the text shows, instead of rashly condemning those who know the Bible, we can turn the question to ourselves, who are hearing that word.

What decision are we making before the word we already know? Knowing that we must admit our wrong, we can protect our own face first. While explaining the word that we must care for our neighbors, we can turn our backs on the person who actually needs help.

When we read along Herod's question, we come to know that purpose matters even in exploring the Bible. There can be a heart that, after obtaining information about Jesus, tries to confine Him within its own will. Accepting the Christ whom the Bible makes known so that He may correct our judgment is the attitude fitting for a person who learns the word.

The One who rules is the shepherd of the people

Let us read verse 6. *"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel" (Matthew 2:6)*. The One who would come out of Bethlehem is a Ruler, and the shepherd of God's people Israel.

In the book of Micah it is written, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting"*

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(Micah 5:2). If we evaluate what happens in a place only by the size of the place, we miss the promise of God. The meaning of Bethlehem lies in the fact that from there the Ruler whom God sent comes forth.

Let us read the middle part of verse 6 again. *"Who will shepherd My people Israel" (Matthew 2:6)*. God calls that people His own people. It means that the authority of the king is related to the life of the people. When we think together of the action of Herod, who heard this word, and the work of Jesus, who came according to that word, the difference between the two kinds of rule becomes clear.

To David also there was the word, *"You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel" (2 Samuel 5:2)*. A person entrusted with God's people receives the responsibility to care for them. A king who tries only to keep his own position comes to go against that responsibility.

That we receive Christ as King includes the meaning that we trust in His care. If we think that when He rules us He will take away what we need, we close our hearts. But the King whom God sent is the shepherd of His own people.

Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11)*. Therefore, we who serve the Lord must also look after the good of the people entrusted to us. If we have taken on responsibility in the family or the church, we must look back not only on how much people follow our will but also on how much we value their lives.

The secret question and the promise to worship

Let us read verse 7. *"Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star*

appeared" (Matthew 2:7). After finding out the place where the baby was born, Herod investigates the time when the star appeared. The scene moves from the one in which he gathered the chief priests and scribes to the one in which he now secretly calls the wise men.

Let us read verse 8. *"And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also'" (Matthew 2:8)*. Herod explains his purpose with the word "worship." He uses the same word as the purpose the wise men made known when they first came. By hearing the words alone, it is hard to distinguish the hearts of the two sides.

Let us read the end of verse 8. *"That I may come and worship Him also" (Matthew 2:8)*. But in the very next passage, the angel makes known that Herod intends to kill the baby. Herod's word that he would worship was hiding the purpose he actually harbored. This event reveals that even an expression that exalts the Lord can be used as a means of hiding one's own desire.

In Isaiah there is the word, *"These people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me" (Isaiah 29:13)*. We cannot fathom all the hidden intentions of others, but when we realize that our own words and hearts are divided, we can acknowledge it before the Lord.

When a person wraps his own benefit in the words "the will of the Lord," it becomes hard for him to listen to honest exhortation. Because he has already attached a pious reason, changing his own decision also becomes frightening. We must examine what we are trying to protect, and lay open our hearts to the Lord, who knows even that greed.

Herod's words show the fact that the expression "worship" itself does not guarantee faith. When we call Jesus Lord, we

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must examine what we are seeking, and willingly accept His rule.

The joy of the people who reached the baby

Let us read verse 9. *"When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was" (Matthew 2:9)*. The movement of the star that Matthew recorded leads to the place where the baby was. The recorded event tells us the fact that they finally reached the One they had been seeking in order to worship.

Let us read the latter part of verse 9. *"Stood over where the young Child was" (Matthew 2:9)*. The baby they had been seeking is there. Even when we speak of our experience of faith, if we emphasize only our own labor, who the Lord really is can become blurred.

Let us read verse 10. *"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy" (Matthew 2:10)*. Think together of the commotion that arose earlier in Jerusalem and the great joy of this scene. There were those who feared the news of the King's birth, and there were those who rejoiced at reaching that King. Depending on what kind of person we accept Jesus as, the response of the heart differs when faced with the same news.

This difference appears also when we come to change our own thoughts after hearing the word of the Lord. If we think only that our will has been thwarted, every exhortation is heavy. But if we have the faith that the Lord knows us and leads us rightly, even discovering what we must correct can be received as grace.

We must not turn this joy into a demand that we must always maintain a bright feeling. What we are to hold on to is, rather than a command to force ourselves to produce joy, the fact that

the King to be worshiped has actually come and the way to go forward to Him has been opened.

Let us read the first part of verse 11. *"When they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother" (Matthew 2:11)*. The meeting takes place inside a specific house. The word of seeking the King led here to an actual meeting. Those who spoke of Jesus from afar now come to stand before Him.

The King who saves His people

Let us continue reading verse 11. *"Fell down and worshiped Him" (Matthew 2:11)*. The One who received worship is Jesus, the baby. The word they spoke at first, that they had come to worship, appears here in action. What Herod promised in words and what the wise men actually did part ways at this point.

If we read the scene of falling down before the baby merely as an example of a humble attitude, we may miss the One who receives worship. Jesus came as the One who would save His people from sin. It is not that the act of humbling ourselves in itself washes away sin; it is going forward in faith before the Savior, who came for us.

In the atonement sacrifice of Leviticus, it is written, *"He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD" (Leviticus 4:4)*. This sacrifice, in which sin is passed on to the sacrificial offering and that offering is sacrificed as a substitute, shows that sin and judgment must actually be dealt with.

This baby Jesus, before whom the wise men fell down and worshiped, grew up and, through the baptism He received from

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John, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and this includes all the sins we commit throughout our lives as well. The Lord, who had that sin passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received the judgment for sin in our place. The Lord rose again from death and accomplished salvation, and whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

A person who comes to this Savior has no reason to hide his sins. Because he knows what the Lord bore, he can honestly acknowledge his sins. The heart that showed its own piety and demanded to be accepted is also laid down. Worship is the response of faith that gives thanks to the One who saved us and exalts Him.

We, too, while speaking of the Lord's salvation, easily hold on only to the claim that we are right. But a person who has received the remission of sins has the freedom to admit his wrong. Instead of hiding the facts in order to save his own face, he can speak honestly, relying on the grace he received from the Lord.

We must not turn falling down before the Lord into a demand to lower ourselves unconditionally before people. The One to be worshiped is Jesus. When we truly exalt the Lord, we abandon the greed to dominate people at will, and learn a relationship of serving Christ together.

The gifts offered by opening the treasure boxes

Let us read the end of verse 11. *"When they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).* After falling down and worshiping, the

wise men offered gifts. The text makes clear what they offered, but it does not compare their value or the amount each one gave. The center of worship is Jesus, who receives the gifts. The people who offered the gifts are also directed toward Him.

Herod told them to bring the information to him, and the wise men offer what they have to the baby. The words of one side make others move for its own purpose, and the actions of the other side are directed toward the One to be worshiped. When we see this difference in the text, we also come to look back on what we use the words of faith for.

While saying that we are helping someone, we can bind that person to ourselves. While saying that we serve the Lord, we can also calculate whether people's recognition will come back to us. If, after giving, we demand a reward and assert our own rights, we must think again about what we gave and to whom. When we believe in the Lord who receives, our hands also become free.

That does not mean we can conclude that the more one gives, the better one's faith is. If we turn it into a competition that ignores one another's circumstances, our eyes return again to people. Thanksgiving toward the Lord must be expressed truthfully in the life entrusted to each of us.

The work of making words and reality one can begin with small decisions. It is to actually convey our gratitude to the person we said we were thankful to, and to faithfully carry out, within our own circumstances, what we said we would help with. Such a life must be, rather than a means of piling up our merit, a response that exalts in daily life as well the Lord we have already accepted by faith.

As we look at that scene, we look at the One who receives the gifts rather than at the reputation of the people who offer them. The Lord came to find us first, and we respond to that grace. When we remember that order, the need to judge others

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by holding up what we have given also lessens. Thanksgiving changes the demand that we ourselves should be treated well into the grace we have received from the Lord.

The last steps that did not return to Herod

Let us read verse 12. *"Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way" (Matthew 2:12)*. Herod had told them to let him know if they found the baby, but the wise men did not return to him. At the end of the story of worship is placed the sight of the wise men leaving by another way. Their last steps parted from Herod's demand.

Let us read the middle of verse 12. *"Being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod" (Matthew 2:12)*. It is not recorded that the wise men found out all of Herod's inner intentions by themselves. God did His work even in the midst of a threat that the people did not yet know, and the way of those who worshiped the baby became different from the direction Herod had set for them.

This ending makes us, too, think that following people's requests unconditionally is not the whole of faith. Even when the words of exalting the Lord are attached, we must examine what that request actually makes us do. If it is a demand that makes us harm others for our own benefit, we must stop.

The wise men said they had come to seek the King and worship Him, and after falling down before the baby and worshiping, they went back. Herod also said he would worship, but in the text there is no scene of him falling down before the baby. Rather, the wise men received the instruction not to return to him.

Dear fellow believers, what words are we offering to the Lord? We must examine whether the heart and the steps that match those words are there together. If you have discovered a heart that tries to use the Lord to accomplish your own will, do not hide it but lay it down before Him. The King who cares for us knows the person who comes forward with an open heart.

In the house the wise men entered, there was the baby who was to be worshiped. Today we, too, must humble our hearts before the Christ we meet in the word. Let us yield to Him, in our actual lives as well, the place of the Lord whom we have confessed with our lips. Let us believe in Jesus, who came as the shepherd of His people, as King, and respond with honest steps fitting that faith. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

What kind of faith we should offer to the Lord

< Matthew 2:1–11 >

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.”’ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.’ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped

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Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Today is Christmas, the day that commemorates the Lord's being born as a man on this earth through the body of Mary. The Lord came to us in order to save mankind, who had sinned. Today, let us look together at what kind of faith we should offer to the Lord.

The wise men from the East come seeking the baby Jesus

The Lord was born when Israel was a colony of Rome, in the days of King Herod. At that time, wise men came from the East. They were astrologers who read the stars to tell fortunes; seeing a certain star move, they thought that a great king had been born on this earth, and following that star, they arrived at Jerusalem in Israel. But there the star could not be seen. Thinking that a king would have been born in a great city, they stopped following the star and went to Herod's palace, and said that it seemed a king who would rule the world had been born in Jerusalem. When Herod heard this, he trembled inwardly, but since he himself did not know, he gathered the chief priests and scribes together and asked them.

When he asked where the Scriptures recorded that the Christ was to be born, the chief priests and scribes, who knew the Scriptures well, cited the prophecy of the book of Micah and answered as follows: *"So they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;*

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For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.”’” (Matthew 2:5–6). Then Herod told the wise men to go to Bethlehem and, if they found the baby, to let him know as well, saying that he too would go and worship Him. Jerusalem is a great city, and Bethlehem is a very small country village. When the wise men set out for Bethlehem, the star they had seen in the East went before them and guided them, and when they followed that star and arrived at Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, who had been born there, was there.

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:10–11).

That Jesus Christ was born on this earth in the days of King Herod tells us that He came as the Savior at the very time when Satan the devil was ruling over the descendants of Adam and Eve. Also, that Jesus came having put on human flesh means that, according to the word of prophecy, Jesus, who is the holy God, was born on this earth through the body of Mary, having put on a human body, in order to be with us.

Offer the gift of faith to the Lord

What I want to speak about today is that the wise men from the East found the baby Jesus and Mary, fell down before Him and worshiped, and opened their treasure boxes and offered gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The wise men from the East offered gold, frankincense, and myrrh; what, then, should we offer to the Lord?

Jesus Christ came to save us without even asking us. And through His life of thirty-three years, He had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross and died, and rose again, and so He completed the work of saving us perfectly from sin. He came and saved us; what, then, is it that we must offer before God?

The first is gold. People often speak of faith like gold. This is because gold does not change. Of course, even gold can change if it is in a bad environment, but gold speaks of our faith. It is gold that gives off light even in the darkness. The Lord came to this earth as our Savior, and when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John the Baptist and had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again, and so He saved us from sin just as it is written in the books of the prophets. It means that we must offer to the Lord the faith that believes in that Savior.

The Lord came to this earth, did all the work He was to do, and saved us from sin. Then there is now something for us to do. Since the Lord has saved us from sin, what is it that we must offer to the Lord? The three gifts the wise men from the East offered tell us what we must offer to God. The first is the faith that believes in the word of the Lord. In order to save you and me, the Lord received baptism from John the Baptist and had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and so He completed our salvation. We must offer before God the faith that believes in that Lord as our Savior.

The second thing we must offer is frankincense. Frankincense is the incense burned when offering sacrifices, and it speaks of the prayers we offer to God. It means that if we believe that God is our Savior and our God, we must have the

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faith that prays, telling Him our wishes and praying for the will of God and for the work of supporting the gospel.

The third is myrrh. Myrrh is a preservative that keeps a corpse from decaying. In ancient times, when their ancestors died, people often made them into mummies, and they applied myrrh to the skin so that the corpse would not decay. Even today, mummies thousands of years old are sometimes discovered. But in this world there is nothing that remains unchanged forever; only the truth does not change. We must offer to the Lord the faith that believes in the unchanging truth, that is, the word of the Lord.

This word is saying that, just as the wise men from the East offered three gifts, we too must offer to the Lord the faith that believes in this salvation, which He accomplished according to the word of prophecy recorded in the Old and New Testaments, that is, in this word of truth. This word is extremely important. It must not end with our merely singing that the Savior has come, so let us rejoice and let all the people welcome Him. Those who believe in the word of truth must offer to the Lord the faith that believes in this word of truth: that in order to save none other than me, each one of you, the Lord came to this earth, received baptism, was judged on the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, and so became the eternal Savior.

"We believe in You according to the written word. The Lord is our Savior and our God." This word is saying that when we offer before God such faith—the faith that prays to Him, the faith that He has saved us, and so the faith that He has given us everlasting life in the world to come—the Lord receives glory.

This Christmas is not a day that is merely commemorated once a year and then over. The Son of God came to this earth to save sinners, and at the age of thirty He received baptism from John the Baptist and had our sins transferred to Him and washed

our sins away, and in order to receive the judgment for our sins Himself, He was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again, and so He made us live again and gave us everlasting life. It must be a joyful Christmas in which we offer to the Lord the faith that believes in that Savior Jesus Christ and His work, and that believes that this Lord is our God, our Savior, and our shepherd, and the One who has given us everlasting life.

What matters more than the date is faith

When Christmas comes, some people say that Christmas is of no use at all. They say that in fact December 25 was the day on which those who believed in the sun god offered sacrifices to the sun god. Who was it that served the sun god? It was Emperor Constantine of Rome. The emperor's father also served the sun god, and Constantine served the sun god as well.

So in Roman Catholicism there is an ornament with a cross placed in the middle of the shape of a shining sun, and some point out that traces of sun-god worship are mixed into this. They say that the festival of the sun god, which had spread widely and which people had celebrated since before Jesus Christ came—that day became Christmas, and merchants made use of it in order to sell many goods. That is why, they say, today when Christmas comes, people exchange gifts with one another and buy and sell merchandise. So some denominations do not keep Christmas. Even among those who attend church, there are people who do not keep it, saying that it is the festival of the sun god.

But when we look at the Bible, we can see that when Jesus Christ came, shepherds were outside tending their sheep. So we can surmise that He may have come at least after April, and

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before the cold set in, around October or the middle of November. This is because when it is too cold, neither sheep nor shepherds can stay outside. Therefore, the date is not what matters. Jesus came on some day of the year. He was born on this earth through the body of Mary, and when He reached the age of thirty, He received baptism from John the Baptist and had your sins and mine transferred to Him and washed them away clean, and bearing our sins He went to the Cross and received the judgment for our sins, and rose again from death, and so He saved you and me.

We must know this, believe in the work the Lord came to this earth and did, and become people of faith who believe that the Lord is our God and the Absolute One, and who pray. Christmas is the day that commemorates this. Because this is important, we must believe. The Lord came to save from sin you and me, who, having been born as descendants of Adam and living as such, could not help but go to hell.

The Bible could simply have recorded that it was when Herod was ruling Israel, but that it deliberately recorded *"in the days of Herod the king"* tells us that the Lord came as the Savior at the very time when the devil, *"the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2)*, had seized control of this world and was dragging people to death. It is the same when Jesus received baptism. The Bible points to the time, saying, *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him" (Matthew 3:13)*. At that time Jesus was thirty years old, and John the Baptist was also thirty years old. Because Jesus had turned thirty, the time had come when He could carry out the office of High Priest of the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist, too, having turned thirty, was qualified to play the role of high priest of the earth. So when they had each turned thirty, Jesus received

baptism from John, was hung on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so He saved us.

The Savior, who came in an age of despair

Even now, Satan the devil, who holds the power of the air, is deceiving people and dragging them to hell. Even people who do not believe in Jesus enjoy Christmas, but on the other hand, we also hear news of people who take their own lives, saying that life is too hard. Satan the devil has planted despair in their hearts. They have believed the devil's word that things will only become harder in the days ahead, so what hope could there be? It was at just such a time that God the Father sent His own Son. *"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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16–17)*. God the Father sent His Son not to judge us but to save us from sin and to give us everlasting life.

We, too, as we live on this earth, are sometimes discouraged. It has also been a long time since we began preaching the gospel through literature and the Internet. There have been many hardships, but even now, every day, many people are reading and listening to our books and sermons and receiving the remission of sins. I work with a goal set before me. I believe that before long the gospel will be spread throughout the whole world. Then those who have heard that gospel will also have a gift to offer to God. That gift is the faith that believes that the Lord came as my Savior, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so removed all my sins once and for all.

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The Lord has saved us and has fully accomplished our salvation. He has washed away all our sins, and He has accomplished everything so that we will not receive judgment either. We must accept the Lord's work of salvation and have the faith that we have been saved. First, we must have the faith that He has already accomplished it all. Second, we must pray to Him. We receive help not by praying to the petty gods of the world but by praying to Jesus Christ and to the Father of Jesus Christ. The One who hears our prayers and leads us to everlasting life and blessing is the triune God. He alone is our God. We must have such faith.

Third, we must believe according to the word of truth. God gave us this word of the Bible; the people who wrote the Bible number about forty, and the period over which it was written is about 1,600 years. About forty people wrote it over 1,600 years, yet they consistently speak about Jesus Christ. If this were the word of man, it would change after just one era. The words of philosophers change, and the words of novelists change. But those who wrote earlier and those who wrote hundreds of years later all wrote alike about Jesus who was to come, Jesus who would come and accomplish salvation. That is why the Bible is called the 'canon.' It means a measuring rod. The Bible is the truth. Jesus received baptism from John, was hung on the Cross and died, and rose again, and so He has moved us, who had jet-black sins, into the kingdom of gold, the glorious kingdom of heaven.

I hope that this Christmas will be a precious Christmas in which we who believe in the Lord confess before the Lord, "We believe the word You have spoken." ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The gifts of the wise men from the East and the guidance they received

< Matthew 2:1–12 >

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.' When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel."' Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.' When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

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And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way."

The wise men who came from the East

Today is Christmas. Today I give this message in commemoration of the birth of Jesus. When Jesus was born, there were wise men who came from the East, who went to find Him in order to meet Jesus. In the Bible there are also people who went to find Jesus, and there is also the event in which angels announced the birth of Jesus.

Looking at today's passage, the time when Jesus was born was when Caesar was emperor in Rome, the land of Israel was being ruled by King Herod, and Bethlehem was also under his jurisdiction. So it begins with the word, *"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king" (Matthew 2:1)*.

But the wise men who came from the East arrived in Jerusalem and said, *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:2)*. Hearing this, King Herod was greatly alarmed. "Where is the King of the Jews? I am the King of the Jews, so is there another king besides me? Or does this mean that another king besides me has been born? This will not do. I must find out whose son He is and nip it in the bud." So after the wise men had gone back, he gave an order. Since the wise men might have been late in bringing the news, he ordered

that all the male children, from newborn babies up to those two years old, be killed.

It was a blessed day because of the birth of Jesus, but along with that birth, countless little children were killed. This commotion arose because the wise men who came from the East followed their own thoughts, went to the palace in Jerusalem, and asked, "We hear that the King of the Jews has been born; where was He born? In which palace was He born?" Looking at the Bible, the wise men followed the guidance of the star, over mountains and across waters, but when the star stopped at Jerusalem, they too stopped, and then they went to the palace in Jerusalem as they pleased.

Jerusalem was a great city of Israel. "Of course, that is how it is. A king is born in a great city." That is how the wise men from the East concluded. "Now we can just look for Him here." They no longer looked at the star but looked at the ground and asked the people on the ground. They asked the king and also asked many people. "The King of the Jews has been born; where was He born?" "Who are you?" "We are wise men who came from the East over there. We can know everything by looking at the stars; a King has been born in the nation of Israel, and He is no ordinary person. Where is He?" Because of this, the palace in Jerusalem was in a stir, and King Herod, feeling threatened, gave the order to kill every one of them, from newborn babies up to those two years old.

Following one's own thoughts kills people

Through this word the Lord teaches us that there is something we must be careful about in following Jesus. First, we must pay attention to the part that says "wise men from the East."

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Those who think of themselves as wise men, those who think they know the Bible well, those who think that if they go looking for God themselves they can meet God—people like this, who have much worldly knowledge and rely on their own knowledge, are the ones it calls wise men. The Bible is saying that such people cause many problems and cause other people to die.

Because the wise men from the East considered that they knew well, they naturally thought that a king is born in a royal palace. Human thinking can be like that. That is why wise men are the problem. It is because they know too much, and so they do not hold on to and follow the word of God but hold on to their own thoughts.

To meet Jesus, we must surely follow the star. What does the star mean? In the Bible, this star means the servants of God who are on this earth. When we receive the guidance of the servants of God who are on this earth, we can meet Jesus Christ, and not only meet Him but also receive the remission of sins that Jesus Christ has given, obtain new life, be born again, and receive the blessing of being able to call God our Father. But these wise men from the East received the guidance of the star at first and later followed their own thoughts. Because of that, countless people came to die.

Dear fellow believers, through this word we must know the fact that, in following the Lord, a person who follows his own thoughts, thinks he is somehow superior, and says he will take care of things and solve them by himself not only perishes himself but also brings countless people to death because of himself. Even today, countless people think that they know Jesus. And they think that they can go and find Jesus by themselves. They think that even without the guidance of the star, they can meet Jesus if they read the Bible themselves, and that they can be born again by believing the Bible on their own. So people

study hard in their own way and go to famous people to hear what they say.

But how many people are dying through those who do so! How many people are going to hell because of wise men who spread a mistaken understanding! Because they preach, according to their own thoughts, the Jesus whom they themselves do not know and have not met, those who receive that preaching fail to meet Jesus, and countless people who believe in Jesus end up perishing in both spirit and body. It is the same now. Even now, countless people, while claiming to believe in and preach Jesus, do not know who Jesus is or how Jesus has removed their sins. So even while preaching Jesus, they never meet Jesus in the end, and ultimately some even come to deny Jesus in the face of death.

In the past, too, there were those who claimed to have received the power of the Holy Spirit, drove people into a frenzy, and in the midst of it gathered up people's material possessions. There were even some who at first told people to believe in Jesus, but later went so far as to revile Jesus and claim that they themselves were the Savior. Today, the scale of such groups has grown enormously, so that even if you go and listen to their words, it is hard to tell what is true. Therefore, we must hold on all the more to the written word.

We must become disciples, not wise men

Those who consider themselves superior claim to believe in Jesus and preach Him even though they do not know who Jesus is. Even if one holds an office in the church, if one has not truly met the Lord, one can deny the Lord in the face of death. However high one's office may be, a person who has not

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received this blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit denies the Lord in the face of death. Even if such a person believes, that is only his own will; it is not truly believing in the Lord.

Knowing that these wise men from the East caused countless people to die, we must not become wise men before God. We must become disciples of Jesus, not wise men. A disciple is one who learns what the teacher does. This is a true disciple. Before God, we are sheep. Sheep must be guided. By whom must we be guided? We must receive the guidance of the star, that is, the guidance of those who have gone ahead of us. And we must live helping one another.

A person who considers himself a wise man knows everything well, with nothing he does not know, when he is asked, but when he is actually told to do it, he is apt to step back. I hope that we will not become such wise men.

"Gold, frankincense, and myrrh"

After hearing what the wise men said, King Herod asked the scribes of Jerusalem, "What is written in the Scriptures?" The scribes answered that it is written that He would be born in Bethlehem. The word the scribes gave as their basis was the word *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2)*. So the wise men asked what was written in the Scriptures, looked into it, and then went to Bethlehem.

Where had they gone before? They had gone to the great city called Jerusalem. And because they said something wide of the mark, afterward all the little children in that area came to be

killed. Now they looked into the Scriptures again and went to the region of Bethlehem. Since it was a small village, it was easy to find the house where the baby was born. They were able to meet Jesus right away. The people of that town all knew that the baby Jesus had been born.

The wise men from the East offered three gifts to the baby Jesus. *"And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11)*. The first was gold, the second frankincense, and the third myrrh. What does gold mean in the Bible? It means faith. This means that the wise men from the East offered the faith that believes, "This One is the God of salvation who removes all the sin of mankind."

Also, frankincense is the incense burned when praying. They offered the faith that says, "This One is the King of kings, so if we pray to Him, He, as King, hears the prayers of His people and answers them."

The third is myrrh. Myrrh is a preservative. When a person dies, myrrh is applied so that the corpse does not decay quickly. This means the truth that never changes forever. That the wise men from the East bowed before the Lord and offered these three gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, means that they had the faith that says, "You are our Savior who never changes forever, the King of kings and the God who hears our prayers, and the Savior who saves us from all our sins," and offered that faith before the Lord.

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The three kinds of faith we must offer to the Lord

When we believe in the Lord, what kind of faith must we have? Through these three gifts that the wise men from the East offered before the Lord, we can know what kind of faith we must have. The Lord is our Savior who came to this earth putting on human flesh. As the Savior who came to this earth to save us from sin, He is the Savior who was born to actually remove all our sins, received baptism from John at the age of thirty and had all our sins transferred to Him, died on the Cross in our place and rose again, and so saved us. We must offer this faith before the Lord.

On this Christmas, offering other things before the Lord may also be important, but we must offer these three gifts. The first is this kind of faith: "The Lord is my Savior. He is my God and the Savior who has saved me from sin. Lord, I believe in You. The Lord has removed all my sins. So I have no sin. I have become a righteous person. The Lord is to me the Savior who never changes forever and the God of salvation." We must offer the faith by which we have been saved, the faith that the Lord has become our Savior.

Second, we must offer the faith that if we pray before the Lord, we receive an answer. As we live in this world, things are difficult and hard, but when a person who has received the remission of sins prays before the Lord, the Lord helps. He surely helps. This is because the Lord is alive. We must offer this faith before the Lord, and we must come before the Lord with this faith.

Third, this means that we must offer the faith that believes this unchanging truth: "The truth of the water and the Spirit is the truth that never changes forever. All the philosophies and all the things of this world change, but this salvation, by which the

Lord came to this earth and saved me with the water and the blood, never changes forever." The Lord is not pleased when we claim to believe in the Lord and yet offer other gifts. God is pleased with our offering these three gifts like the wise men from the East, that is, offering these three kinds of faith.

What kind of faith do you have? Do you believe that Jesus is truly your Savior? Do you believe that Jesus had all your sins transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John in the Jordan River? Do you believe the fact that Jesus had all the sin of the world that you commit throughout your lifetime transferred to Him through that baptism, bore the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross and was judged in our place, and then rose again and is alive even now, and so has become our true God of salvation? Do you believe the fact that the Lord is alive even now, hears our prayers, helps us, and blesses us? Do you believe that this truth, that the Lord came by the water and the Spirit to save us, is the truth that never changes forever? The Lord is pleased to receive this faith. A person who has this faith is a person who has met the Lord, and a person who has received the blessing that the Lord came to this earth and gave us.

The Lord came not to receive but to give

We sing, "Joy, the Savior has come; let all peoples receive Him," but this means that it was not all peoples; even among those who believe in Jesus, only a very small number have believed like these wise men from the East. This means that only a very few righteous people have offered the three gifts, that is, this kind of faith, before the Lord. Many people are not offering gold, frankincense, and myrrh like the wise men from the East, but are only bringing lots of money.

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Is Jesus short of money? Is He pleased when we give Him money? And yet, when Christmas comes, some emphasize special offerings and spend much of the time of worship calling out the names of those who gave offerings and praying for blessings on them. As a result, the saints sometimes give offerings as if in competition. On Thanksgiving Day, too, they pile up fruit in front, saying that since God has given so much, we must give thanks, and they make that day as well a holiday for gathering in material possessions.

Would the Lord be pleased with such things? Is it right for the church to do this? We must truly offer faith. We must have faith. Our Lord came to give us salvation. Just as He intended, He has given us salvation. He had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and so He washed away all our sins. I hope you know that the Lord came to give us salvation, to give us everlasting life, and to give us blessings in both spirit and body, not to receive something from us.

What would He receive from the poor? What would the King of kings receive from us who are poor? Gathering in the money of people in hardship under the pretext of Jesus is no different from robbing people who would still be in need even if they were given more. Among those who believe in Jesus today, there are many people who are wounded in heart and suffer because of sin, and people for whom nothing goes well no matter what they do on this earth. Instead of giving salvation to such people, is it acceptable merely to gather in their material possessions? Is it acceptable for the church to be like this?

In the kingdom of heaven, everything done on this earth is revealed. Deceiving people in the name of Jesus, gathering material possessions under the pretext of the day the Lord was born, gathering them in the name of Thanksgiving, gathering

them under the pretext of the day the Lord died on the Cross, and gathering in material possessions on this or that holiday—none of this is hidden. Such people will finally be judged.

This is who our Lord is

The Lord came to this earth to save us and to remove our sins. So at the age of thirty He received baptism from John. Through that baptism He had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, bore the sin of the world and received the judgment on the Cross in our place, and rose again from death, and so He saved us. And now He has ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father, living forever. Our Lord has given us blessed salvation and everlasting life. That is why this day is called the holy birth, Christmas, in the sense that it is the day on which the holy Son of God, our Savior, was born on this earth.

We have been saved through faith in the Lord. It is truly a fortunate thing and a thing to be thankful for. Even though you are lacking, our Lord loves you, and knowing full well that you would be like this, He came to remove all your sins. Knowing that you would commit sin, the Lord gave up His own body, had our sins transferred to Him, and sacrificed His own body, and so He gave us salvation. The Lord became the bread of life for us by receiving baptism from John, and He became the drink of life for us by bearing the sin of the world, hanging on the Cross and shedding His blood, and rising again from death. Jesus received all the judgment for all our sins on the Cross. Jesus received baptism from John, had our sins transferred to Him, and fulfilled all the righteousness of God. And He died on the Cross and rose again, and so He made us sinless and saved us.

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This is who our Lord is, and He has become our true Savior. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Never be deceived by false people. Raking in material possessions under the pretext of Jesus goes against the will of the Lord, no matter how great a doctor of theology does it. Our Lord came not only to deliver us from sin but also to deliver us from the devil, and to deliver us from those who deceive people. Not only that, He also came to deliver us from the judgment we would have to receive in the future. How good our Lord is, therefore! Where is there anyone better than He?

We truly give thanks to the Lord. How could we ever fully express this thanks? Those who believe in the Lord are the Lord's sheep and the Lord's people. We live like this on this earth, and in the future, when the Lord calls us, we go before the Lord. At that time the Lord will take us to the kingdom of heaven, which is thousands of times more glorious than the splendor of Christmas, and let us live there forever. We will live enjoying eternal blessings in that place full of glory. This is who our Lord is. He is the Lord who gives us salvation, gives us love, gives us blessings, gives us everlasting life, and gives us the kingdom of heaven. We must have this faith. A person who has this faith is a person who has blessed faith. We give thanks to the Lord. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Those who believe in the word obtain salvation

< Matthew 2:1–23 >

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.”’ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.’ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they

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presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.' When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son.' Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more.' Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead.' Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'"

Everything in the written word is true

Because everything recorded in the Bible is true, archaeologists refer to this Bible to find ancient relics. Without the Bible, it is not so easy to find the ruins that existed in ancient times. Why do I say this? If we look at verse 22 of today's word, a man called *"Archelaus"* appears. Archelaus became the one who ruled Judea after Herod. That time was precisely when Jesus was born. Later, historians set the year A.D. 1 based on the time when Jesus was born. This is to tell you that the birth of Jesus, salvation, and the work of God are truly the highest peak of all human history.

But some people say things like this: "The Bible is a myth. How could a serpent have talked with a human? So it is a myth." Also, when we look at the Bible, Adam and Eve had Cain and Abel, and after Cain sinned, he said, *"Anyone who finds me will kill me" (Genesis 4:14)*, and God said that He would not let anyone who found him kill him. So there are also those who say, "In that age there were many people besides Cain and Abel. So the Bible is a myth. It is something made up by humans, not fact. Noah's flood is also a myth."

But the people of the beginning had no diseases, bore many children, and lived for hundreds of years. Since they bore children for hundreds of years, they must have had many children, and since those many children in turn bore children for hundreds of years, their increase must have been tremendous. In ancient times, when there was no disease, it was rare for the children people bore to die early. That is to say, Adam and Eve did not have only Cain and Abel but had many children after them as well. Everything recorded in the Bible is true.

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The wise men who followed the star and then followed their own thoughts

At the time when Jesus was born in Israel, too, certain wise men from the East saw a star and came looking for Him. While these men were following the star on their way to Israel, they stopped looking at and following the star, and with the human thought that "a king would be born in the biggest city," they asked people, "It is said that the King of the Jews has been born here; where was He born?"

This word reached Herod's ears, too, in an instant. Herod was the king who ruled Israel. "Has another King of the Jews been born besides me? Such a one must be nipped in the bud. He must be killed while young." So King Herod ordered that they all be killed, saying that if all those two years old and under were killed, the baby called king would be among them. Thus there came to be a great sound of wailing in the land of Bethlehem as the children were killed.

What lesson does this word give us? We must think about this from this word. The wise men from the East saw a great star and, guided by the star, came all the way to Israel, where the baby Jesus was born. They crossed waters and climbed over mountains to get there. In that age, astrology, which told fortunes by looking at the stars in the sky, was well developed. When a star fell, they would divine that a great man of that nation had died. Whether the wise men from the East were fortune-tellers or whatever they were, they came from a faraway country, guided by the star, in search of the King of the Jews who would be born in Israel. And they offered three gifts to the King.

The star we must find is the realization of the word

Here we can think about how we should live our lives of faith from now on. In order for us to receive God's guidance even in this present age, must we also look up at the stars in the sky and study the stars, and when a star moves, climb over mountains and cross waters to follow it? Must we receive guidance that way and move from this town to that town? No. Then, following the lesson of this word, what is the right way for us to live our lives of faith? We must look into these matters together.

The wise men from the East saw a great star and followed it. Even today, astronomers look at the sky through telescopes and study the universe. They keep observing to see whether there are new stars that have not been seen until now. So they find stars that were not seen before and sometimes discover new facts. A newly found star is reported to the academic world and given a name.

Just as astronomers observe the sky and discover new things, we must discover such new stars as we live our lives of faith. That star can be found within the written word of God. It is none other than the perception that realizes the word—that realization is the star. It means that as we look at the word of God, we must hear with our ears, see with our eyes, and learn what this word is saying, and so gain spiritual realization. It means that through the word of God, the realization, 'Yes, so this is what this word meant,' must arise in our own hearts and thoughts as 'Ah, so that is how it is,' and come to us as faith.

Because we have such realization, we can receive guidance. We can receive guidance from none other than the Lord. Through all the words of God, we can be guided.

Here the wise men from the East came to Israel blindly and said, "It is said that the King of the Jews has been born; where

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was He born?" Then King Herod called together all the Bible scholars of Israel and asked, "It is said that a king is to be born in Israel; what on earth is written in the Scriptures? What is written in the Old Testament?" The Bible scholars answered by citing the word, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2)*. They said that it is prophesied in the Old Testament that the king would be born in Israel, to be sure, but in a small country village called Bethlehem.

"As we live our lives of faith, how, really, will we meet Jesus Christ? Can we meet Him at all?" To solve this problem, we must hear with our ears and learn the written word of God, whether the word of the Old Testament or the word of the New Testament, and have a clear realization. When we learn one thing after another and have realization, we gradually draw near to Jesus Christ, and in the end we come to meet Him.

Those who follow what is visible come to ruin

If there is no spiritual realization in our hearts, we will, like the wise men from the East, just blindly follow a star and make a decision by our own judgment, and in the end we will come to great ruin. This means that if we follow and believe in the Lord by some visible phenomenon as we live our lives of faith, we will surely, like these wise men from the East, go down the wrong track, suffer much ruin, and cause countless people to die. We must not forget that because of the hasty and arbitrary judgment of the wise men from the East, all the little children in Bethlehem two years old and under were killed. The soldiers even snatched away the children their parents were holding and

killed them all. Our life of faith must be by faith. If we want to believe in and follow the Lord, if we want to believe in Jesus as the true Savior and to know about Jesus, we must not follow visible phenomena. It means that if we follow visible phenomena, we suffer such ruin.

How are you today as you believe in Jesus? Are you not following what is visible? There are people who, claiming to heal diseases, make a wound on a person's body, grab and pull out the clotted blood, and say, "I have pulled out the root of the disease." Those who see this sometimes believe, without even verifying it, that the disease has been healed. But the disease remains as it is, and rather, they sometimes suffer greater harm because of the wound.

If we follow the Lord by visible phenomena, countless people end up being deceived by false people, suffering loss, and being killed. Therefore, when we follow the Lord, rather than any visible phenomenon, we must hear with our ears and learn what God recorded and said within the word of the Old Testament and the word of the New Testament, and believe that word in our hearts. When we hear the sure word with our ears and learn it, the realization comes: "Ah, so this is what this word meant. This is what it meant." Stars rise up in our heads.

Spiritual realization must rise up in us. It means that the realization, "Ah, so this is what this word is," must rise up. If instead we live our lives of faith only by what is visible, we end up ruined. If our hearts are captivated by a fine voice and grand music, it is easy to fail to discern the word and just follow along as we are told.

Dear fellow believers, if only the setting is good, even I can pass for a decent sort of person. If I place a grand instrument behind me, speak with dignity so as not to lose points, preach while mixing in a philosophical story now and then, and tell you

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a story pleasing to your ears now and then, I could make your eyes grow wide. But because that is leading you to the way of destruction, I cannot do so.

If you follow and go after such visible things, you become like the wise men from the East. This means that not only do you yourself die, but you also cause countless people to die. If people follow after such things, saying, “The power of the Holy Spirit has appeared in that man,” in the end they lose everything they have and see only a wretched end.

The wise men from the East saw a great star and followed it. Crossing waters and climbing over mountains, that is. Saying “crossing waters and climbing over mountains” may sound like beautiful words, but just try actually going through the rough journey of climbing over several mountain peaks and crossing rivers, falling down and falling in. It is never as easy as it sounds. From afar it looks extremely beautiful, but when you go near, there are many thorn bushes and many rocks, and I cannot tell you how rough it is. Yet even in this present age there are many people who act like the wise men from the East. Then how should we live our lives of faith? We must hear, see, learn, and believe the word of the Old Testament and the word of the New Testament, and obtain salvation.

We must learn the word and continue in sure faith

The Bible scholars said, “It is written that the king will be born in Bethlehem of Judea.” They spoke to the king, citing the word of the Old Testament as their basis. King Herod later sent men and ordered that all the babies in Bethlehem of Judea two years old and under be killed. The king was so full of suspicion

that, thinking, "What if He was born two years ago?" he killed all those two years old and under.

Dear fellow believers, we must not live our lives of faith like the wise men from the East; we must hear with our ears and learn the written word and continue in sure faith. It means that we must do it by faith that believes the word. We must believe the word, learn the word, realize the word, and continue in the faith that believes the word we have realized. The Apostle Paul said, *"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of" (2 Timothy 3:14)*.

In our life of faith there must be realization through believing this written word. "Ah, Jesus came to this earth to save us; He was born on this earth in human form through the body of the Virgin Mary, and at the age of thirty He received baptism from John the Baptist and had my sins transferred to Him. Jesus received baptism in order to have my sins transferred to Him. When Jesus went to John the Baptist and said that it is fitting for us thus to fulfill all righteousness, it was that the Lord would bear the sins of all people in order to remove those sins. That is why the Lord received baptism from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins, He died on the Cross and rose again." It means that through this word itself, and by examining the context before and after it and the Old and New Testaments, we must know precisely what this word implies and have realization. Only then is there progress in our life of faith. Only then do we fully meet the Lord, and after fully meeting Him, we do not labor in vain again.

We have not experienced everything. The Lord is telling us that to meet the Lord this Christmas, we must learn the written word and have sure realization. Is your faith like this? Or are you following what is visible? When will you ever have met everything and experienced everything? And is a person the

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truth? No. Who is the truth? Only the word of God is the truth. That is why, when I go up to the pulpit, I preach centered on the word of God instead of useless talk. You, too, have come to church to learn the word of God, not to see how great a person is.

The Apostle Peter said, *"Which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:19–20)*. If the Bible is interpreted privately, it cannot be unraveled. However much I may have studied theology, I cannot interpret even one chapter of the Bible by human means. Yet strangely, once we are born again, the Holy Spirit within us becomes our Teacher, and every time we look at this word, God gives us realization.

That is why God told us to hear, see, and realize through the church. It says, *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 2:7)*. Since God gives those servants whom He has established as His own servants the word to speak and causes them to preach it, just as He gave the word to the prophets long ago, and gives them the wisdom to guide and the understanding to read rightly, we have only to hear and realize the word the church preaches.

You and I are the same saints. If there is a difference, it is that I was born again first. Though I am lacking, God drove me so that I could not help but do the Lord's work. And when I did so, the Lord gave me, day by day, the wisdom, faith, and understanding to see all things in the Lord. That is the only difference between you and me. It is only that, because I am one who became so first, I guide you on that way and do not guide you on a wrong way; as for having received salvation, we are the same. We receive salvation by the word, and we live our lives of

faith within the word, too. Therefore you must never say, like these wise men from the East, "How can I know when I have not gone and seen for myself?" Nor must you have such faith.

"Gold, frankincense, and myrrh"

People commonly say that since the wise men from the East offered three gifts, there were three of them. But we cannot know exactly whether there were three or a hundred, and the Bible simply says "wise men from the East." And people greatly revere the wise men from the East, but in fact the wise men from the East failed. Who made the real thing known? The star. Yet because the wise men from the East went down the wrong track and spoke to King Herod, countless people came to be killed. Parents fainted and wailed in the face of their children's deaths.

The wise men from the East came out of the royal palace and looked again at the star that had guided them. That star had moved over to a small town called Bethlehem. The wise men from the East went to the place beneath it, and the baby Jesus was there. The baby Jesus had been born in an animal shed and was lying in a manger, and the shepherds went to that place. The wise men from the East afterward asked around and found the house where the baby was. They offered three gifts to Jesus and worshiped Him.

What were those three gifts? They were *"gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11)*. Myrrh is a preservative applied to the body of a dead person. A corpse slowly rots however well-ventilated the place where it is kept. So the preservative called myrrh is applied to the body. When myrrh is applied, rotting is prevented and a good fragrance is given off. In Israel they applied this. The second gift is frankincense. This refers to

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prayer. The third gift is gold, and gold refers to pure gold, that is, to faith.

Why did they offer these three? Gold refers to faith, frankincense refers to prayer, and myrrh refers to the truth that never changes. The birth of Jesus Christ was prophesied by God through the word long ago, and our Lord came just as He prophesied. This truth—that our Lord came and, when He turned thirty, actually received baptism from John and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, died on the Cross, rose again from death, ascended to heaven, and became our eternal Savior—is the truth that never changes. The faith that believes this unchanging truth is gold. And frankincense refers to the fact that those who believe pray. That is why they offered the three gifts.

The Bible did not say that we should offer wealth before God just because today is Christmas. Yet some pastors say, "You must not come empty-handed at Christmas," and say that the wise men from the East met Jesus and offered three gifts. "First, they offered gold. They offered material things. Second, they offered frankincense. They prayed. Third, they offered myrrh. They believed the word of the truth of God. By faith they offered gold." In this way some even interpret the meaning of the gifts by changing it into material things.

Dear fellow believers, what do the gifts the wise men from the East offered refer to? They refer to the fact that Jesus Christ Himself is the truth. He is the King of kings and the Savior of all mankind. This does not change. They offered this faith. They expressed faith through material things. They offered myrrh, they offered gold, and they offered frankincense.

The Jesus Christ we believe in is not One who became the object of faith by chance. He is different from a man who practiced self-cultivation, attained enlightenment, was revered by people of later generations, and became the founder of a

religion. Jesus is not One who was revered by people through self-cultivation; He is the One who was already predestined from the time mankind began. The birth of Jesus and His saving of all mankind were already predestined from before Adam and Eve sinned, that is, before we sinned. It means that God, who knew that we would sin, predestined in advance to save us and sent Jesus Christ. Just as He had predestined, our Lord came. And when He had grown up and turned thirty, He received baptism from John, died on the Cross and rose again, and became the true Savior of all who believe in Jesus Christ. This is the truth it speaks of.

Myrrh refers to the truth that never changes, gold refers to faith, and frankincense refers to prayer. Only those who are born again can truly pray before God. Only those who are born again have the Holy Spirit within them, and only they can truly believe in and follow Jesus Christ as their own Savior. The Holy Spirit dwells in those who believe this truth—that Jesus Christ was born on this earth, received baptism from John, bore the sin of the world and died on the Cross, rose again from death, and is alive even now and has become our true Savior—and those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells can pray. The Bible says, *"The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26)*. That is why they offered the three gifts.

The faith that realizes and believes causes us to preach the gospel

We must have realization. It means that we must have not a realization of what is visible, but the realization that comes from learning the word within this word, though it is an invisible word,

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and listening carefully to what this word says. I want you to have this realization.

When you hear this word, you need to listen carefully to what it is saying. It may seem that I am repeating the same story, but this is to emphasize again and again the truth that is in the Bible. Rather than thinking it is tiresome because of the repetition, please first judge whether the one preaching the word is laying open the word of God and speaking the word of God, or whether he is speaking his own thoughts. And if the preacher is truly speaking the word of God, you must believe. If the word the preacher preaches is the word of God, the Holy Spirit within you will say amen. If you are born again, the Holy Spirit dwells within you, and if the Holy Spirit dwells within you, He will surely acknowledge it so. Since I speak by the Holy Spirit who dwells within me and do not speak of myself, I believe that it will become a realization for you, too. It is right to believe the word of God, to have fellowship within the word, and to follow the Lord quietly within the faith that believes the word. Because we have quietly kept our place and served the gospel, many people receive the remission of sins when they hear this word. Dear fellow believers, do we receive the remission of sins by the word, or do we receive the remission of sins by works? We cannot receive the remission of sins by works. Must one perform wonders and miracles to be a servant of God? Even without performing wonders and miracles, the one who rightly preaches the word of God is a true servant of God. Those who do not stand firmly on the word end up putting forward wonders and miracles.

Though I am lacking, I studied various theologies for a long time. But the conclusion was that it was all in vain. However deeply I studied countless theologies, theology was all the same. It differed a little only at the start, and the result was the same. I prayed before the Lord, and the Lord met me. For a long time,

there was no one who told me the word of God clearly. But because God taught me after He caused me to be born again, I came to know what this Bible says.

Because we believe this word, we are now preaching the gospel to the whole world. As we preach the gospel through literature, things are happening in which people in many countries read these books and ask us to send more, saying that they have learned what they could never learn from anyone before. Because we preach the gospel to the whole world even though our gathered number is not large, people are both amazed and puzzled, and because they cannot ignore us even if they want to, we are held in check and hated as well. But the reason we can do the Lord's work like this is that we believe this word. Because we believe this word, we can face any theologian or pastor with the word.

That we are now preaching the gospel to the whole world is something that comes about through knowing by faith and realizing the word that was written that He would be born in Bethlehem. Seeing great visions and tasting miracles is not what is important. I, too, was once a person who set my heart on speaking in tongues, wonders, and miracles. But after meeting the Lord, I regarded all of them as dung and threw them all away. The Apostle Paul also said, *"I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8)*. This is because I know that believing in God through such things is the faith of the wise men from the East, who followed a visible star and, by one judgment of their own, caused countless little children to die.

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"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"

Dear fellow believers, is the Lord who came to this earth the true Savior to us, or not? He is the true Savior. Our Lord was born on this earth with a human body like ours, and when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John the Baptist, fulfilling all righteousness and having all our sins transferred to Him. And bearing those sins, He died on the Cross and rose again. Do you believe that? The question is whether you realize that word, which is right here. Turn over just one page and that word is there.

"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, Jesus came up immediately from the water" (Matthew 3:13–16). The Lord, who in that way had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore that sin and died on the Cross and rose again.

Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and it says that John then allowed Him and Jesus received baptism. Do you have realization in this word, in which Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, saying that He would fulfill all righteousness? The two of them, Jesus and John the Baptist, fulfilled all righteousness by giving and receiving baptism. Removing the sins of all people—that is all righteousness. And by bearing those sins and dying on the Cross and rising again, He accomplished our salvation. Do you have realization of what this

word means? Then the morning star rises in your heart. There is a star in your heart, and there is realization.

This word is more detailed when we look at it in the original language. The word *"thus"* is houtōs in Greek, which means 'in the most fitting way,' 'in a way that cannot be otherwise than this,' and righteousness is dikaiosynē. That is, it means that only by this method, the baptism He received from John, did He have the sins of all people transferred to Him and remove them all. The word *"thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)* itself has that meaning.

In the East, the character meaning righteousness is made up of the character meaning 'I' and the character meaning 'sheep' combined. It contains the meaning that I become righteous by means of the sheep. That is what is right. Then Jesus said that He fulfilled all righteousness by receiving baptism from John the Baptist; what does this mean? Is it not precisely His bearing our sins? Through that baptism Jesus had our sins transferred to Him, and He died on the Cross and rose again. Because Jesus had all sins transferred to Him when He received baptism from John, He had the sins of all people, without a single one left out, transferred to Him, and He died on the Cross and rose again. Because He thus bore all sins, He became the sacrificial offering and shed His blood and died on the Cross, as the word says, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. It means that the Son of God received baptism from John in order to become the sacrificial offering that removes the sin of the world. And because He had all the sin of the world transferred to Him when He received that baptism, He was nailed to the Cross for that sin of the world and died, saying, *"It is finished!"* and He rose again three days after His death and became our eternal Savior.

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What will you do if, even though the word is like this, you do not believe? Must you become the wise men from the East? Though this word is revealed so clearly, you must not be without realization. Apply the word even at this very moment. In the conversation between the two, John the Baptist and Jesus, Jesus is saying, "You baptize Me and pass on all the sin of the world, and I have all sins transferred to Me through your baptism; thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Put yourselves into what the two of them did, and think about whether or not Jesus and John the Baptist dealt with your sins. We must believe and hold fast to this written word.

Even if you do not know the whole Bible, through this one verse of the word you can remove sin. This word means that just as in the Old Testament the high priest passed sins on to the sacrificial offering by laying his hands on it, just as he passed on a whole year's sins with one laying on of hands, Jesus came to this earth as the Lamb of God to bear all the sins of this world once and for all. He did not receive baptism twice; He received it once and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him. The Lord was born once on this earth clothed in human flesh, had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him at one time, went to the Cross once and died once, and rose again once, and has now become our eternal Savior who lives forever.

Everything was accomplished once and for all. The Lord was born once, received baptism from John once and had all sins transferred to Him, died on the Cross once, and rose again from death once, and so He accomplished eternal righteousness. Dear fellow believers, I hope you will believe. Think over the word by yourself. That is called meditation. Quietly, alone, thinking over the word and thinking about yourself, you can realize the word.

If we see the word and yet do not believe, we are like the wise men from the East

There is the word, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. What do you think of the sin of the world? Is the sin of the world just the sin of the world, or must it be divided into original sin and actual sins? Within the sin of the world, all the sins of your whole lifetime are included. Jesus took away that sin of the world. The sins you committed from the age of one to the age of thirty are also the sin of the world, and they, too, were all passed on to Jesus. The sins you commit now after believing are also the sin of the world, and all those sins were passed on. All the sins that people commit from the time mankind began until the day this earth ceases to exist are the sin of the world. Jesus Christ took away all this sin. By receiving baptism from John once and for all and dying on the Cross once and for all and rising again, He removed it all. However much you may sin and however lacking you may be, our Lord had even those sins transferred to Him and took them away. The Lord has resolved all your sins with His baptism and blood. Dear fellow believers, do you have sin?

Jesus, God who takes away the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross. Nails were driven through both His hands and both His feet, and He poured out all His blood. Blood is the life of a person. If a person sheds all his blood, he dies. However healthy the heart may be, without blood one dies. Because our Lord had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross. Because our Lord came to this earth and was born, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, received all the judgment for our sins, and rose again, He has given us new life.

Some people fit the Bible to their own thoughts. They explain the sin Adam and Eve committed by twisting it into

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something absurd, and even go so far as to put themselves forward as saviors. But the Bible says that Jesus clearly knew that we would sin throughout our lives, and that in order to remove all those sins, He received baptism from John the Baptist, had all our sins transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again. Then were all sins passed on to Jesus, or not? They were all passed on; so how can it be right to interpret the Bible strangely and believe that?

The truth is extremely simple. We have only to understand and believe the word itself as it is. Then there is realization. Because Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, He is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. All the sins we have committed in our lives, whether we did well or badly, our Lord had transferred to Him once and for all and took them away, and He received all the judgment on the Cross and rose again. Dear fellow believers, do you have realization?

Dear fellow believers, have you only followed the visible star, or do you have a star in your heart? Do you have realization? The wise men from the East received God's direction and returned by another way. Thanks to that, they at least preserved their lives. From whom do we receive direction? Do we see, hear, and believe the written word and receive guidance as this word says? Or, apart from this word, are we guided by what we hear with the ears of the flesh and see with the eyes of the flesh? We are the people of God who are guided by the word of God. Preaching the word of God is also done by believing the word of God.

We give thanks to God who has saved us. We give thanks that He has let us know this truth and has kept us from becoming like the wise men from the East. We give thanks that He has let us know and believe that this is the true truth recorded in the

Bible. We also give thanks that He has given us in our hearts, together with the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, who is the qualification to pray to God. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Offer the gift of faith before the Lord

< Matthew 2:7–11 >

“Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.’ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

God tempers us

As we live, we go through many things. But we must know that in all those things God is always with us. God bestows grace in everything, keeps us as the apple of His eye, and blesses us. I have seen that the faith of the saints has grown much, and I have seen that the Holy Spirit rejoices. I believe that in the days ahead as well, when we do the work of God and are united with one another, God will give us much joy and new grace.

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Right now there are some whose faith is growing in their hearts, and some whose hearts are being tempered a great deal. The one who is being tempered may think, "Why am I like this now?" but being tempered is a very good thing. The Bible says, *"Take away the dross from silver, And it will go to the silversmith for jewelry" (Proverbs 25:4)*. For us to become workers, our hearts must be tempered a great deal.

Think of when a vessel is made of gold or silver. First, the gold or silver is put into a crucible, and a fire is kindled to melt it. Once it is melted, the dross rises to the surface; all that dross is skimmed off, and then it is poured to form the shape. What has just been poured out in this way is very soft. It is soft enough that if you bit it with your teeth, they would sink in. But if it is beaten with a hammer, stretched, and tempered this way and that, it becomes a vessel that does not break even when it holds something heavy. This is because it has been refined much. That is why the utensils used in the Tabernacle were also made by beating gold or silver. They are made not by simply stretching but by beating. Once made that way, it becomes a usable vessel. I hope that God will temper you in that way and establish you as usable workers.

It is the same within the church. When faith grows, one is tempered and tempered again, and when something lacking is revealed, one is tempered again. That is how the work within the church is. Until a saint stands as a worker, and also in order to stand as a worker and stand fittingly in that position, one is tempered a great deal. Knowing this, I hope you will have the faith to be in the church even if you die and to be in the church even if you live.

Among plants, there are some that grow lying down. If they grow lying down, they do grow well. But in the end they must rise up so as not to be trampled, yet when they try to rise, many

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things are already covering them from above. Because they grew lying down, it is too hard for them to stand up on their own. So when the owner pulls them up, sets them upright again, and plants them in the soil, from then on they come to grow properly.

You may think of the church as a mortar. Do you know what a mortar is? In the old days, people gathered up ears of rice, put them in a mortar, and pounded them. But if you strike too hard, the grains fly out. Then you gather them up and put them back in, and if they fly out again, you gather them up again and put them back, and pound them to the end. When the husks came off in this way, people winnowed them with a fan, obtained the rice, and cooked porridge to eat. When we live a life of faith, we can see that God, too, keeps on until it comes to be so. When something does not work, people give up and leave it, but God does it to the end. And yet, unlike people, God shows mercy. That He is One who has mercy is what makes Him different from people.

The sages who came from the East

Today I will speak centering on the word of the Gospel of Matthew. The people here called the wise men from the East are sages who came from the East. They were very wise people. Knowing that the Savior would be born, they came looking for Him, but when they came to Jerusalem, they lost their way. Having come to a big city, they lost sight of the star and went to the royal palace and spoke there. At that time Herod was king. “Do you mean a king has been born other than me? I must nip it in the bud beforehand.” So Herod ordered that the baby Jesus be found, and when he asked the scholars of the Scriptures, they said it was written that He would be born in Bethlehem.

Hearing this, Herod sent the wise men, saying, *"Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also" (Matthew 2:8)*. When the wise men set out, the star that had been guiding them appeared again and went before them to guide them, and following that star, they went to a small country town called Bethlehem. When they went and looked, the baby Jesus had indeed been born. The sages fell down before Him, worshiped, and presented gifts. *"And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11)*. The sages worshiped because they knew that Jesus, who is the King of kings and God who made the universe, had come to this earth as the Savior, clothed in human flesh.

The faith that gold, frankincense, and myrrh speak of

Here gold, frankincense, and myrrh appear, and gold speaks of faith. Frankincense is the incense burned on the altar of incense when praying. Myrrh is the preservative that was applied to the body when a person died. When myrrh is applied, the body does not decay. The sages presented these three things.

What does this speak of? Since it was said that gold speaks of faith and frankincense speaks of prayer, in the end it is the faith that Jesus Christ, who came as a man, is the almighty God who made the universe and the Savior who came to deliver us from sin and the schemes of the devil, and the faith that if we pray to Him, God hears us. And myrrh means that the faith

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which believes that Jesus has saved us by the water and the blood never changes. When we come before Jesus Christ, we must offer such faith and worship. This is the true gift offered before God.

We live a life of faith, but what is a true life of faith? When faith is young, we have only received salvation, but in fact we live a life of the flesh. As we go on living, all of that is revealed. Also, when we devote ourselves fully to the work of God, we ourselves are startled at how much of the flesh there is within us. Therefore we must cast away the thoughts of the flesh. We must receive the guidance of the star, we must cast away the thoughts of the flesh, and we must worship God with true faith. We must offer the unchanging faith that worships by believing the pure word of God and holding on to Jesus Christ—not our own thoughts, not our own resolutions, not our own will, and not what we have learned from people. That is right worship.

Offer the gift of unchanging faith

We ought to respect and look up to the almighty God and give glory to Him. Also, before God, who shows us mercy, we must offer the unchanging faith that says, "You are truly my Savior, my God, the Creator who made me, and the God who is to receive worship forever," even if this body dies and dies again and its bones are crushed.

When our circumstances change, our thoughts change. There are times when we follow the thoughts of the flesh, and times when we follow the thoughts of the Spirit. Always, the thoughts of the flesh that benefit oneself rise up first. When the thoughts of the flesh rise up, the heart is uneasy, and that the heart is uneasy means that the Holy Spirit is uneasy. If we cast away that

thought, hold on to the word of God, and, even though we are lacking, hold on to it and believe, the Holy Spirit governs that heart. Then peace comes to the heart, and if we worship God with that faith, that is exactly what it is to truly look up to, love, respect, and serve God. I hope you will examine your faith and, like the sages who came from the East, offer such worship and such a gift of faith. What gift of faith must we offer? We must offer gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Jesus Christ is the unchanging God. He is the almighty God; to the Father He is the Son, but to us He is the eternally unchanging Savior and God. When you are in difficulty, if you pray to Him, ask for help, and tell Him what is in your heart, Jesus Christ is the almighty God who helps. That is why it is gold. He is the perfect and pure God, with not the slightest falsehood mixed in. He is the God who does not change forever and remains the same forever. We must believe in Jesus Christ, offer worship before Him, and go forward with a faith that does not change even as the years pass. When we do so, God gladly receives it and guides us.

Our Lord came to this earth to save us from sin, had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again from death, and became our eternal Savior. The faith that believes in this salvation is precisely the unchanging faith.

We must receive the guidance of the Lord

The wise men came by the guidance of the star, and even after they worshiped, as the word says, *"Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way" (Matthew 2:12)*,

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they received guidance and were able to return safely without being killed by King Herod. If they had ended it, saying, "We have met Jesus Christ and have done all we had to do," and so God had let go of their hand, they would have been killed. But because they received the instruction not to return to Herod, they lived.

How about you? How old are you in spiritual faith? How long have you lived a life of living by faith, not relying on the things of the flesh but believing in spiritual things? We need the guidance of the Lord, and we must receive the guidance of the Lord. Just as the wise men received the guidance of the star, there is guidance received directly from the Lord, there is guidance received by believing the word, and there is guidance received through the servants of God and those who went before us. When we receive guidance through all of these, they work together for good.

Receiving guidance is not being ordered about by someone. Faith maturing is itself a blessing. Faith growing is a blessing. God is doing many things in order to give you blessings. I hope you will do so by faith, and I hope you will receive guidance by faith.

As we celebrate Christmas, God has given us many precious gifts, has given us many blessings over the past year, and has also caused our faith to grow much. I am truly glad and thankful. I hope that God will give health to those who are sick in body, and will guide the lives of those who are going through difficulties and bless them. For us there is no way to live other than God. If we leave God, leave the church, and leave the servants of God, we are cursed forever. There can be no blessing there.

The Bible says, *"It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down*

on the edge of his garments" (Psalm 133:2). All blessings come down from above, from God, through the servants of God. Let us have faith and, whether we live or die, believe in our God and live that way in the Lord. As we celebrate Christmas, I am truly thankful and glad. I hope that the new year, too, will be a year in which we receive the guidance of the Lord with spiritual faith, bear spiritual fruit, and receive blessings. I hope it will be a year in which many souls are saved. I pray that God will keep us and bless us both in spirit and in body. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The word recorded on the path of flight and in the wailing

< Matthew 2:13–18 >

“Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.’ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘Out of Egypt I called My Son.’ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more.’”

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From the place of worship to the path of flight

After a joyful event, we hope that everything will continue peacefully. But today's text conveys how a family fled in the middle of the night after the wise men had worshiped and departed. Beside the good news that Jesus was born, the threat of murder and the wailing of parents are recorded.

Let us read the first part of verse 13. *"Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying" (Matthew 2:13)*. After the wise men departed, the word was given to Joseph. The baby who had received worship was still under His mother's care, and now Joseph receives the instruction to take his family and leave.

Let us continue reading verse 13. *"For Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him" (Matthew 2:13)*. Herod had said earlier that he too would worship, but in fact he intended to kill the baby. Only when we know this fact can we rightly understand what the flight that follows was fleeing from.

In the world the Lord came to, there were not only people who welcomed Him. There was also a king who threatened even the life of a baby in order to hold on to his own will. The Savior came to a world where sin and suffering actually exist. We can also honestly bring before Him the pain of the world in which we live.

The fact that there is danger and the fact that God speaks are placed in the same verse. The angel of the Lord makes known Herod's plan and teaches Joseph what to do. Avoiding what must be avoided and protecting the one who must be protected becomes the way of responding to that word.

We too, when we meet with difficulties, ask why such a thing has happened when we have faith. The text first lets us see that danger came even to the family that had Jesus with them. We

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cannot judge that they were going a wrong way merely from the fact that they experienced danger. God knew their situation and gave them the word they needed in that place.

He commands both the leaving and the waiting together

Let us read the command in verse 13. *"Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word" (Matthew 2:13)*. He was to take the baby and Mary and flee to Egypt, and stay there until the next word came. The act of leaving and the time of staying are contained in a single instruction.

Protecting the baby included taking Mary along as well. Joseph had to leave together with the family entrusted to him. Moving according to the word is connected to the responsibility of caring for those close to us. We must not neglect the people already entrusted to us on the grounds that we are serving God.

Let us read the last part of verse 13. *"Stay there until I bring you word" (Matthew 2:13)*. Joseph was not given a date for returning. He had to leave according to the word he had now received and entrust what came afterward to God.

Leaving is a visible decision, but waiting requires continuing faith. Even though the word first received was clear, as time passes we come to want to set the end by our own judgment. A heart that entrusts things to God is needed both in the resolve at the time of departure and in the patience during the time of waiting.

We cannot regard all our dreams today as the same as the instruction Joseph received. Here is recorded the special event in which God preserved the Savior. What we are to learn is, more

than a method of reproducing that event as it was, the attitude of actually fulfilling the responsibility entrusted to us when God speaks.

When someone is going through hardship, rather than only telling him to hold on by faith, we must look at what we can actually help with. In the text, the task entrusted to Joseph was the concrete action of taking the baby and Mary and fleeing. We too can go beyond worrying in words and look to the needs of the person beside us.

He rises by night and takes the baby and His mother

Let us read verse 14. *"When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt" (Matthew 2:14)*. Joseph's action follows the command he had heard before. The word God spoke and what Joseph did are placed close together.

Let us read the middle of verse 14. *"He took the young Child and His mother by night" (Matthew 2:14)*. How afraid they were, and what and how much they prepared, are not recorded here. Rather than filling that empty space with imagination, we must see the fact that he who heard the word actually arose.

Obedience sometimes appears in the form of leaving a familiar place. Faith that God takes care of us is not always expressed only as the resolve to keep one's present place. In the text, the way given was flight, and Joseph went that way.

If we make risking danger itself the measure of the size of faith, we may miss the person we ought to protect. Joseph was not instructed to go before Herod and confront him. He was instructed to take the baby and Mary to safety. What we must do

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now can be known only by looking at both the word of God and the responsibility we have been given.

Let us read the first part of verse 15. *"Was there until the death of Herod" (Matthew 2:15)*. These words connect with the command to wait that we heard in verse 13. Joseph's obedience did not end in a single scene of moving but continued as a life of waiting for the time when he would be told to return.

Even after we have done what we can do, there may remain a time in which we must wait. At that time, we need not drive ourselves by saying that we should have known all the results from the beginning. For Joseph too, the timing of the next step remained a matter left entrusted. The faith that faithfully fulfills today's task and entrusts tomorrow's way to the Lord is needed also in passing through small days.

In Joseph's rising by night and leaving, there were together both care for his family and trust toward the word. We may say the word is important while neglecting the person beside us, or we may make light of a clear word in the name of caring for people. The text shows the concrete steps of one person who, following the word he received, cared for the life entrusted to him.

The word concerning the Son called out of Egypt

Let us continue reading verse 15. *"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Matthew 2:15)*. Matthew connects this flight with the fulfillment of the word. Though it was a dwelling moved in haste because of a threat, that event did not lie outside the work God had been doing. Before Herod's plan, there was the word the Lord had spoken.

In Hosea it is written, *"When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1)*. In that context, it looks back on how God loved Israel and called him out of Egypt. Remembering this context, we must examine the meaning Matthew conveys by connecting that word to Jesus.

Hosea goes on to say, *"As they called them, So they went from them" (Hosea 11:2)*. The history of coming out of Egypt was not something accomplished because the people themselves were excellent. The grace of God, who first loved them and called them out, lies at its beginning.

God says, *"I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love" (Hosea 11:4)*. Matthew connects that word, in which God called Israel His son, to Jesus' stay in Egypt and His return. The work of salvation that God accomplishes through the Son continues even in this family's movement.

That Matthew wrote that it was to fulfill the word does not mean calling Herod's evil a good thing. God's salvation was stronger than that evil intention. God preserved the baby and went on accomplishing what was recorded in the word.

We too, when things go differently from our plans, easily judge at once that God's will has failed. The text shows that the fulfillment of the word proceeded even in the difficult move that was the flight. That does not mean we can promise the same result for all of our own plans. The ground of our faith lies in the salvation that God, who is greater than each of our expectations, accomplished through Christ.

Herod's anger harms young lives

Let us read the first part of verse 16. "*Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly*

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angry; and he sent forth" (Matthew 2:16). When the wise men did not return, Herod became angry. The anger that his own will had been thwarted led to a command that harmed the lives of others.

Let us keep reading verse 16. *"All the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts" (Matthew 2:16)*. The object of the command Herod gave was the male children of Bethlehem and the surrounding region. The king's anger was directed at young lives that could not stand against it. Matthew records the harm concretely, making clear who became the object of that command.

Let us read the latter part of verse 16. *"Put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men" (Matthew 2:16)*. The act of asking in detail about the time the star had appeared is used here as the standard for the killing. The information gathered about the baby was used to harm other children as well.

In this event, the one who gave the command and sent men was Herod. Together with the anger he felt, we must see the responsibility for the command he gave. We too must not make light of the wrong we have done to others on the grounds that we were angry. Feelings can be explained, but responsibility follows an action that harmed a person.

While reading that the baby was protected, we must not pass over the deaths of the other children. God's protecting of the Son is clear, and the grief of the children killed by Herod and of their families is also real. The Bible records this pain together within the story of salvation and lets us hear it.

We who read this scene must also reflect on how evil power treats life. When keeping one's own position becomes the most important thing, the suffering of others goes unseen. We must

examine for what purpose we are using the authority we have been given. We need a heart that treats even the person who makes us uncomfortable as a life standing before the Lord and holds that life precious.

Even the wailing that refused to be comforted is recorded

Let us read verse 17. *"Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying" (Matthew 2:17)*. Matthew brings in the word of Jeremiah after the deaths of the children. The word of God is not connected only to the baby's flight. The wailing of those left behind is also recorded together with the word. The Bible records the voices of those who suffer also within the story of salvation.

Let us read verse 18. *"A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more" (Matthew 2:18)*. This word conveys together the weeping of one who has lost children and the heart that refuses comfort. What we are to do before this text is also to accept the weight of that wailing rather than readily adding explanations.

In Jeremiah's record it says, *"A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children" (Jeremiah 31:15)*. Matthew connects this weeping to what happened in Bethlehem. The pain of those who lost their children remains in the word God caused to be recorded.

Let us read the last part of verse 18 again. *"Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more" (Matthew 2:18)*. Telling someone who has lost a loved one that it will soon be all right

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can be ending the story before listening fully to that pain. The text records, as it is, even the grief that cannot accept comfort.

Jeremiah goes on to say, *"There is hope in your future" (Jeremiah 31:17)*. In that context there is the promise that He will bring them back. But what Matthew quotes here is the wailing that is heard first. Even when we speak of hope, we must not skip over the place of grief. The heart that believes the promise and the heart that waits beside the one shedding tears must be together.

We must not conclude that a person sunk in grief is weeping because of a lack of faith. The text conveys the loss and weeping that such a person goes through. The one who wants to comfort needs a heart that stays with him and listens to his words. We must look not at how quickly the other person stops crying but at how much we respect that pain and are with him.

Among you there may be some who carry a long-standing loss. Before today's word, you do not have to pretend that you have put all that grief in order. Open your heart to God and tell Him your grief. Also, if there is someone weeping beside you, you must respect the day he is now bearing and be with him.

The preserved Son came to save sinners

The preservation of the baby who fled to Egypt leads to the work of salvation that followed. He is Jesus, who will save His people from sin. Herod tried to harm that life, but the Son whom God sent accomplished that mission.

In Leviticus it is written, *"Then he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill it as a sin offering at the place where they kill the burnt offering" (Leviticus 4:33)*. Hands were laid on the head of the sacrifice that was to bear the sin, and that

offering was killed. The sacrifice that required the death of a sacrificial offering that had the sin passed on to it makes us look toward the work the Savior would come and do in bearing our sins and judgment.

That baby Jesus, preserved from the hand of Herod, grew up and, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. Having thus had the sins passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, received the judgment for those sins in our place, and rose again from death, and so completed salvation. To those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, God gives the remission of sins and gives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Because the Lord bore the judgment for sin, we cannot take sin lightly. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must honestly acknowledge their wrongs and set their lives right within the grace they have received.

As we look at Herod's evil, what we are to hold on to is not a heart of retaliation toward others. We must discern evil and make responsibility clear, but entrust it to God, who is the Lord of judgment. The Lord is the One who saves sinners and judges evil. Therefore, in the place where we must help those who suffer and stop what harms them, we must faithfully fulfill what we are to do.

The wailing of Bethlehem makes us think deeply about why this world is a world that needs a Savior. Into a world where human desire devours life, God sent His Son. While listening fully to the pain, we must preach the gospel so that they too may place their hope, together with us, in the Lord, who delivers us from sin and death.

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Believing the word, we stand beside those who weep

In today's text, command and execution, flight and preservation, killing and wailing are recorded in turn. We must hold together both the faith that God protected the Son and grief for the children who were killed.

We must not justify evil actions by attaching the expression "the fulfillment of the word." Herod killed young lives for his own will. God accomplished the work of salvation even in the midst of that evil, and to Herod there remains the responsibility for the evil he did. Rather than covering the suffering of victims with words of faith, we must make clear what was evil and stand on the side of those who suffer.

Also, we must not turn the fact that Joseph's family was protected into a promise that danger will always pass us by. Within the text too there are families that suffered great loss. What we believe for certain is the fact that the Son whom God sent accomplished His mission and opened the way of salvation for us. Holding on to that hope, we honestly face the suffering of reality.

To Joseph was entrusted the task of taking his family and leaving. To us today may be entrusted the task of caring for the person beside us. What some people need is actual help, and what some people need is one person who will listen to them. We can convey the love we have received from the Lord to the life that is now near us.

There is a limit to explaining the reason for every grief. But we can be with the one who weeps. We can listen to a painful story to the end, pray together, and help with what is needed today. Those who believe the word of God must remember that within that word the voice of the one who wails is also recorded.

On the night they took the baby and left, and at the time when wailing was heard in Bethlehem, the Bible conveys the word of God. Do not hide your pain before that word. Relying on the Lord who saved us, care for the life entrusted to you and stay beside those who grieve. I hope that the hope and love we have received from the Lord will be revealed also in our lives as we weep together. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The family that stayed in Nazareth at the end of the road back

< Matthew 2:19–23 >

“Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.’ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene.’”

The word is heard again in the place where they were waiting

We think that once something we have waited for a long time is resolved, the next road will be simple. But Joseph’s return did not end so directly. Even after leaving Egypt, he met a new situation, and he went to Galilee and came to live in Nazareth.

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Let us read verse 19. *"Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt" (Matthew 2:19)*. After Herod died, an angel of the Lord again conveys the word to Joseph. God is not One who only said to leave and then forgot that family. Even in the place where they were waiting, a word for the next step was given.

Earlier, Joseph had received the instruction to stay in Egypt until God told him. While he stayed, there were things he had to do, and when the time came to leave, he had to move again. Entrusting things to God cannot be a matter of continually insisting on only one form.

Let us read the first part of verse 19. *"Now when Herod was dead" (Matthew 2:19)*. An end came even to the life of the king who had threatened the baby's life. The order he gave caused people great suffering, but his power was not eternal. This short record corrects the eyes with which we look at human power.

Look at the word God spoke to Joseph after the king's death. The news that the one who had threatened them was gone is connected with the time when the family could return. The story moves forward following God's care for the baby and His family.

We, too, sometimes think of a time of waiting as a blank in which nothing happens. But a life entrusted to God continues even in the days of staying quietly. In the meantime there are people to care for and responsibilities to keep. When the situation has changed, rather than holding on only to the choice we made before, we must examine again before the word what has now been entrusted to us.

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A new direction is given to the same family

Let us read verse 20. *"Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead" (Matthew 2:20)*. It is a word telling him to arise, take the baby and His mother, and go. But this time the destination is not Egypt but the land of Israel. The same God, while caring for the same family, lets them know the next step that fits the changed situation.

Let us read the middle of verse 20. *"Take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel" (Matthew 2:20)*. Now, when returning, he must also take with him the baby and Mary, whom he had taken with him when he fled. Even though the direction has changed, the responsibility of care continues. We must not forget the person already entrusted to us on the grounds that we are starting something new.

Let us read the end of verse 20. *"Those who sought the young Child's life are dead" (Matthew 2:20)*. The word telling him to return also contains its reason. Rather than listing their names further, Matthew conveys that this word became the basis for the return.

Before, fleeing to Egypt was obedience, and now leaving that place is obedience. Even though the heart that trusts God is the same, the outwardly visible action differs. If we make a past choice the only shape of faith, we may miss the next responsibility. While being thankful for the help we received before, we must know how to newly accept the work we are to carry out now.

Joseph goes on his way as the one entrusted with the baby. Matthew records the word of God and the act of taking the family and moving according to it. We, too, can make more honest decisions before the word when we think about how to

care for the people entrusted to us, rather than trying to prove how well we have judged.

When we must change the direction of our life, we need to examine two things together: what the changed circumstances are, and what the responsibility is that we must continue to bear even within them. For Joseph, the destination changed, but the work of caring for the baby and His mother continued. In our life of serving the Lord, too, even if the schedule or the place changes, love toward our neighbors must continue.

Joseph, who came into the land of Israel

Let us read verse 21. *"Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel" (Matthew 2:21)*. Joseph arose as he had heard, and took his family and came in. Verse 20, which conveys the command, and verse 21, which conveys its carrying out, are connected by closely matching words. The Bible records that he actually moved, rather than saying that he explained the necessity of returning at length.

Let us read the middle of verse 21. *"Took the young Child and His mother" (Matthew 2:21)*. That this expression appears repeatedly makes clear the fact that he took the family with him and moved. Together with him on his journey were the baby and His mother, who needed to be cared for.

We easily think of faith only as a resolution within an individual's heart. But Joseph's arising and moving changed the life of his family. Rather than thinking only about whether something is convenient for us, we must consider what burden the people living together with us will come to bear. A heart that

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values the people entrusted to us must be part of the process of choosing.

The statement that he came into the land of Israel shows the fact that he responded to the word God had spoken. After that, Joseph hears new news. Having obeyed at one stage does not mean that everything that must be examined afterward disappears.

When difficulty appears afterward even though we made a decision by faith, we may think that everything was wrong from the beginning. But there is no need to deny the whole of our past obedience merely because a new problem has arisen. It is enough to examine honestly the facts we have now come to know and to seek the right way from where we are.

Also, we must not try to avoid hearing the news of reality by saying that we trust in God. After returning, Joseph heard who the ruler of Judea was. A person who carries out the responsibility entrusted to him must listen to the facts he needs. A heart that believes the word and an attitude that sincerely examines one's circumstances can go together.

Even after returning, there was fear

Let us read the first part of verse 22. *"But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod" (Matthew 2:22)*. Herod was dead, but in Judea his son Archelaus had become king. The news alone that the former king was gone did not make all the circumstances simple. Joseph heard this fact, and the text goes on to record the reaction he showed.

Let us continue reading verse 22. *"He was afraid to go there" (Matthew 2:22)*. Joseph was afraid to go to Judea. There was fear in the man who had heard the word when he left for Egypt and

had also heard the word when he returned. We cannot read this text as saying that a person who has obeyed by faith feels no anxiety whatsoever afterward.

After the fact that he was afraid follows the statement that he was directed through a dream. We must not pass judgment on our own faith or another person's faith for the single reason that fear was felt.

In the Psalms it is recorded, *"Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You" (Psalm 56:3)*. The confession that there are days of fear and the confession that one will trust in the Lord are within one sentence. We do not need to hide our hearts in order to look like bold people. We can tell our circumstances to the Lord, who hears our words while knowing our fear, and ask for help.

The same psalm says, *"In God (I will praise His word)" (Psalm 56:4)*. When our hearts are shaken, the ground on which to trust is in the word of God. It is not that we can go to the Lord only after we have completely calmed our feelings by ourselves. Faith that trusts in the Lord can grow even on days of fear.

What and how much Joseph anticipated is a matter outside the text. What is certain here is that he heard the news about the new king of Judea and was afraid to go there. Helping does not require knowing everything in another person's heart. Care can begin from listening seriously to the fear that has been expressed.

Receiving direction, he heads for Galilee

Let us read the latter part of verse 22. *"And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee" (Matthew 2:22)*. The record of fear does not end with a blocked road. Joseph received direction and headed for Galilee. The

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word telling him to return to the land of Israel and his going to Galilee are connected within this story.

We must distinguish whether Joseph received a command that he had to return to Bethlehem without fail. The word of verse 20 was to go to the land of Israel. If we first fix a destination that is not in the text, we come to read his going to Galilee as a choice that departed from the word. Hearing accurately the word God has spoken also includes examining the thoughts we have added to that word.

Let us read verse 22 again. *"Being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee" (Matthew 2:22)*. It is not recorded that heading for Galilee was something decided impulsively on the basis of the rumor about Archelaus alone. Following that direction, this family comes to live in Nazareth. Fear about the situation and God's guidance appear within the same journey.

The road of following God's will sometimes differs from the destination we first had in mind. At such times, we must not conclude that our faith has been shaken merely because the plan has changed. We must be able to hold fast to the clear word and examine again the other plans.

Conversely, we cannot say that every time our plans change, it is all a special revelation. Joseph's dream is an event that the Bible records as God's direction. We must explain our choices honestly in the light of the written word. We must guard against the attitude of hardening our own wishes in the name of God and blocking other people's questions.

The road familiar to us is not always the right road. Because of the burden of having to keep the schedule or place we first set, we sometimes miss the very people we should be caring for. In Joseph's story, the care for the family continues, and the place to stay changes. If there is a plan that must be revised in order to

protect the people entrusted to us, acknowledging it is also one form of sincerity.

On the road to Galilee, Joseph was not so much a master designing his own life as he pleased as a person entrusted with the baby and caring for Him. We, too, can lay down the burden of having to take the lead in everything and return to the place of faithfully carrying out the work entrusted to us. It is enough to believe in the work the Lord does and to make sincerely the decisions needed today.

They came to live in Nazareth

Let us read the first part of verse 23. *"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth" (Matthew 2:23)*. After several moves, a life of staying in one town began. Jesus was not One who existed vaguely on this earth. He lived in an actual place together with a family, and that life is later testified of also by the name Jesus of Nazareth.

The text does not explain at length the things that happened day by day in those days. It only records that they came and lived there. A life of following the word includes not only the moments of leaving but also the days spent in one place doing the work entrusted to us.

Let us read the end of verse 23. *"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene'" (Matthew 2:23)*. Matthew explains the coming to live in Nazareth, too, as the fulfillment of the word. The family's moving does not end as a story that merely drifted along, pushed by circumstances. What God had spoken was fulfilled within the life and dwelling of actual people.

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Matthew does not reveal in which chapter of which prophet this word is found. What is clear is the fact that Matthew testified of the settling in Nazareth by connecting it with the word of God.

After meeting Jesus, Philip said, *"We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45)*. The name Nazareth and the testimony of the law and the prophets appear together. Philip preached that the One known to people as Jesus of Nazareth was the very Christ of whom the Bible testified.

Nathanael asked, *"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)*. But Philip urged him to come and see Jesus. Preconceptions about origin can hinder recognizing Him. We must reflect on the heart that tries to judge the Lord and His work by familiar evaluations alone.

The salvation that Jesus of Nazareth accomplished

Peter, too, proclaimed, *"Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst" (Acts 2:22)*. Jesus, who had lived in Nazareth, afterward accomplished the work of God and was proclaimed in the testimony of the apostles. The name of the place where He quietly grew up was remembered together with the work of the Savior.

The baby who, in today's text, moved while being protected grew up and carried out the mission of saving sinners. If we read the settling in Nazareth only as the stability of one family, we miss who He is. God's work of caring for this family leads on to Christ's work of salvation.

Leviticus has the congregation offer the sin offering when it realizes the sin it has committed. And it says, *"And the elders of*

the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD. Then the bull shall be killed before the LORD" (Leviticus 4:15). The laying on of hands, which passes the sin of the congregation on to the sacrificial offering, and the death of the offering are recorded together. This sacrifice shows the fact that for sin to be dealt with, a sacrifice is needed that bears its responsibility and judgment.

Jesus, who had lived in Nazareth, through the baptism He received from John had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and had even the sins of our whole lifetime all transferred to Him. While bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who believe.

Even on a day when we hear fearful news like Joseph, the salvation the Lord has accomplished does not change. Trusting in the grace we have received, we can tell Him honestly our present circumstances and ask for strength to carry out the responsibility entrusted to us today.

In Peter's testimony there is the word, *"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:24)*. The One in whom we trust is the Lord, who is alive even now. Praying to the living Savior, we can entrust even our present road to Him.

Entrusting by faith does not mean that the responsibility given to us disappears. Joseph actually took his family and moved within God's care. We, too, must sincerely do what we have to do while praying to the Lord. The grace of salvation we have already received sustains today's labor.

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A life entrusted to the Lord continues even in the place where we stay

Joseph heard the word in Egypt and came into the land of Israel. He heard the news about the new king and was afraid, and receiving direction, he went to Galilee and lived in Nazareth. It was not that he could walk rightly only if he had known all the next scenes when he first set out on the road.

In your life, too, there will be places where plans have changed. You may not have been able to stay where you first had in mind, or you may have had to revise your direction because of new circumstances. Do not judge that all your faith has failed on account of that change alone. Examine the word you now clearly know and the responsibility entrusted to you. Asking the Lord for help, you can honestly choose what you must do today.

In particular, we must remember the people living together with us. Every time Joseph moved, the baby and His mother were recorded together. We must not examine only which decision makes us comfortable, but think about what effect it has on our family and neighbors. We must see to it that caring for them is not left out of a life of serving the Lord.

Nor does having fear mean that the qualification to come to the Lord disappears. After Joseph's fear came God's direction. We, too, can bring our fearful hearts before the word rather than hiding them. Rather than struggling to produce all the answers alone, we must ask the Lord for wisdom, examine the facts we need, and receive help.

Behind the short statement that they came and lived in Nazareth are the days that continued. In our faith, too, there is the life that follows a conspicuous decision. They are the days of doing the work entrusted to us, caring for those close to us,

and living according to the word of the Lord. Do not regard the place where you now stay as insignificant. That very place is where you can put your heart that believes in the Lord into today's responsibilities.

The road back was not a road on which Joseph knew everything from the beginning. It was a road of hearing the word, moving, and being guided again. At the end of that road, life in Nazareth followed, and the word God had spoken was fulfilled. You, too, allow yourselves room to examine your own plans again before the word. Trusting in the Lord, who saved us, live faithfully in the place where you stay today. ✉

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CHAPTER

3

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Fruits worthy of repentance and the will of the heart

< Matthew 3:1–12 >

“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.”’ Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and

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gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'"

The response of the person who hears the news of the kingdom of heaven

Many people came out to the wilderness to hear the cry of John the Baptist. But the mere fact that people gathered did not mean that their hearts, too, had returned to God. John asked the people who came to that place what they were relying on.

First, let us read chapter 3, verses 1 and 2. *"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'" (Matthew 3:1–2).* In the news John preached, a command and its reason are found together. It is that because the kingdom of heaven has come near, we must repent. Before the rule of God, we cannot hold on to the heart and life we have had until now as if they were right just as they are.

The command to repent does not apply only to the person who has noticed his own wrong. When God calls, the person who hears that word must examine his own heart. Repentance is revealed in accepting the word of God as right over one's own judgment.

Let us look again at the word of verse 2. *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2).* The news about the kingdom of heaven is not a story we hear as if watching something far away. Jesus came as the Savior. If we rely on our own righteousness even with the salvation God bestows right before our eyes, we are pushing away by ourselves the grace that has come near.

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Therefore, in this cry there are together the sternness that points out sin and the grace that calls us to return to God. If a person admits his sin as it is and yet insists that he can resolve it by his own strength, what he relies on has not yet changed. The person who repents listens to the word of the One who will save him.

When you hear a word about faith, to whom do you apply it first? Before weighing the shortcomings of others, you must place yourself before the word. The news preaching the kingdom of heaven that has come near demands a response from you who are hearing it today. Only when you accept it as the word God speaks to you does your heart turn.

The word about preparing the way of the Lord

Let us read verse 3. *"For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."'" (Matthew 3:3)*. Matthew connects John's cry with the word Isaiah preached. John's authority did not arise from the fact that many people came to him. Because he was the one who prepared the way of the Lord according to the word God had spoken beforehand, people had to listen to his cry.

Look at the word in the same verse, *"Prepare the way of the LORD" (Matthew 3:3)*. The owner of the way is the Lord. A person cannot make the savior he wants and wait for that savior. To welcome Jesus, who has already come, we must hear what the salvation Jesus bestows is, and throw away our own thoughts that block it.

The word that follows, *"Make His paths straight" (Matthew 3:3)*, is also directed toward the Lord. The purpose of turning

back does not lie in having oneself highly esteemed. It is to humble one's heart so that the person who has realized his sin can go forward to the Savior. When we admit our own sin, which is revealed through John, we come to know why the grace of Jesus is needed.

Let us read verse 4. *"Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey" (Matthew 3:4)*. The Bible records John's clothing and food specifically. But what is required as the fruit of repentance is not wearing those clothes or eating the same food. Rather than imitating John's outward appearance, we must respond to the will of God that he preaches.

If we remember only the unique appearance of the person who preaches the word, we can miss the word. Following the word that records John's way of life, the confession of the people is recorded. We must set our hearts on the problem of sin that John exposed and on the salvation of Jesus that he pointed to.

In this way, returning to God cannot be finished by copying what is visible to the eye. Changing one's outward appearance is easily shown before people, but what one believes to be right and whom one relies on are made clear before the word. The person who hears the word to prepare the way of the Lord examines whether his own heart is not blocking that way.

The people who confess their own sins

Let us read verses 5 and 6. *"Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:5–6)*. People came out from many places. The places they set out from were different, but what they had to admit was their

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own sin. The person who returns to God cannot substitute words blaming others for his own wrong.

In verse 6 it is recorded, *"Confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:6)*. To confess sins is to admit as one's own sin what God calls sin. Even a wrong that we regarded lightly by comparing ourselves with others is sin before the word. We must lay down the heart that defended itself by changing the name of sin.

Admitting sin is truly necessary. But the number of times one has confessed and the amount of one's tears do not pay the price of sin. Even the person who has spoken honestly of his own sin still needs the Savior who will wash away that sin. John's cry does not intend to keep people in self-reproach but makes them look to Jesus, who comes after him.

The place where they received baptism from John is also recorded: they *"were baptized by him in the Jordan" (Matthew 3:6)*. The people came to John admitting their own sins. Between this baptism of repentance and the baptism Jesus received from John, we must distinguish who received it and what it meant. Jesus is not One who came to John to confess His own sins.

People need to turn from sin, and Jesus came to save those people. If we place the power of salvation in the rite itself that a sinner receives, we miss the meaning of John's pointing to Jesus. The heart that has admitted sin must go on to hear how God removes that sin.

If you are in anguish because of sin, do not keep confirming only your own anguish over and over. After admitting your sin without hiding it, learn and believe what Jesus did for sinners. The person who hears the cry of repentance rightly looks at his own sin and, at the same time, waits for the word of the Savior who delivers him from that sin.

The people who came along to the place of repentance

Let us read verse 7. *"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'" (Matthew 3:7)*. There were people who came to the same place but received a strong rebuke from John. It records that he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming. It does not take the mere fact that they came as evidence that repentance had taken place.

Pay attention to the question John threw out. *"Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7)*. This word shakes the heart that regards judgment as nothing serious. The attitude of trying to escape the wrath of God while not turning one's heart before God deserves rebuke. One cannot regard oneself as safe for the reason that one took part in a religious gathering.

John did not lower the intensity of his words by looking at a person's position. This is because before God, even leaders need repentance. A record of having taught the word to someone cannot take the place of believing that word oneself. Even a person who has received people's respect must stand before the word that points out sin.

We must apply John's rebuke to ourselves. John's words make us, who are now hearing the word, examine our own hearts. Whatever you have done for a long time, the fact that you must admit the wrong God points out and turn back is the same.

The *"wrath to come" (Matthew 3:7)* of verse 7 is not a small problem that may be put off. Judgment belongs to God, apart from people's evaluation. We must not think lightly of our own sin for the reason that people regard us as fine. Receiving God's warning when He warns is the attitude of the person who repents.

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Even after coming to the place where repentance is heard, one can in one's heart insist that one is right. What is needed then is not putting on a new outward appearance but correcting one's attitude toward the word. We must rightly receive even the word that humbles us, and value the way of salvation God has established above the boasting we were holding on to.

The fruit of laying down the boast of bloodline

Let us read verses 8 and 9. *"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matthew 3:8–9)*. After demanding fruits worthy of repentance, what John pointed out first was the boast of bloodline in the heart. If a person says he has turned back yet still makes the name of his forefather the basis of his safety, his own thinking has not come down under the word.

The *"fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8)* of verse 8 show that the mouth that spoke of repentance and the heart behind it must match. One cannot say that he is returning to God while refusing His word. If we have admitted our sin, we must also turn from the attitude of demanding salvation by putting forward our own righteousness.

In verse 9, John says, *"Do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'" (Matthew 3:9)*. Even the will of the heart that is not spoken with the mouth is exposed before the word. Even if one knows the name of Abraham and boasts of the fact that one is his descendant, that cannot take the place of the heart that believes in the Savior whom God sent.

The word that follows humbles man's boasting and reveals the power of God. *"God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matthew 3:9)*. The grace God bestows is not bound to the qualifications people put forward. Therefore, the person who was looking for something to put forward before God must look to the power of God, who will save him.

Today, we too can make a believing family or a long life of faith the basis of our boasting. But the fact that our parents believed and our believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are distinct. Even if the time we have spent in the church is long, the basis of salvation lies in what Jesus did. Each person must accept that gospel in his heart.

We must not change the word to bear good fruit into a demand to pile up merit for being saved. A sinner cannot remove sin by making his own deeds perfect. It comes first that the person who relied on his own merit believes in the remission of sins God gives. In the life of the person who has received that grace, the attitude of rightly accepting the word follows.

The warning of the ax laid to the root

Let us read verse 10. *"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10)*. John's warning shows where the tree is standing now. The ax is laid to the root. It means that examining one's own state before God cannot be put off to some distant future day.

The word says, *"Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees" (Matthew 3:10)*. Even the person who boasts of bloodline cannot stop judgment. The reason it said in the preceding verse

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not to put forward bloodline becomes clearer here. When God judges, people's boasting does not make a way of escape.

The expression *"every tree which does not bear good fruit" (Matthew 3:10)* in the same verse is also weighty. There is no promise that God exempts from the warning only people who hold some special position. The need to be delivered from sin exists for all people. One cannot cover over one's own problem of salvation with the fact that another person's wrong is great.

The last part is *"cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10)*. If we regard the consequence of sin lightly, even the word urging repentance sounds excessive. But because judgment really exists, the cry to turn back is urgent. While God is warning, we must hear that word and go forward to the Savior.

If, hearing this warning, we only resolve that we must become stronger by ourselves, we remain in holding on to our own ability again. God has opened the way to be saved from sin. What the person who admits his own sin and judgment needs is to know Jesus Christ, who removed sin. John now turns the eyes of those listening toward Him.

Do not separate the warning and the news of salvation from each other. If we erase the warning, why the remission of sins is needed becomes blurred, and if we do not hear the news of salvation, only fear remains. The text, after making people lay down what they relied on, clearly shows Jesus, who is mightier than man. Salvation and judgment depend on Him.

Faith toward the Savior who gives the Holy Spirit

Let us read verse 11. *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with*

the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). John clearly distinguishes his own work from the work of the One coming after him. We must not be satisfied with the fact that we came to John, who cries out for people to repent. Following that cry, we must know and believe who Jesus is.

John makes known the purpose of his work, saying, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance" (Matthew 3:11)*. That purpose is not accomplished by people esteeming John highly. We must hear John's words and return to God. More than the fact that we know well the person who preached the word, believing in the One that word pointed to is what matters.

Of Him it says, *"He who is coming after me is mightier than I" (Matthew 3:11)*. Jesus is not someone to be set side by side with John and chosen according to which one we like better. John himself says that he is not worthy even to carry His sandals. The power to save belongs to Jesus.

The word that follows, *"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11)*, points to the two outcomes that will appear before Jesus. On the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes. For the person who refuses that salvation, there is judgment. The wheat and the chaff in the next verse also go on to show this distinction.

Jesus, whom John said was mightier than he, had all the sins of the world, including our lifelong sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Bearing the sins that had thus been passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so received the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

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Therefore, the basis for receiving the Holy Spirit also does not lie in one's own bloodline or religious career. It lies in Jesus, who saved sinners. If your heart is weighing your own qualifications, look to that salvation which has already been accomplished.

Before the One who gathers the wheat

Let us read verse 12. *"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12)*. In the final scene, Jesus thoroughly cleans out His threshing floor. The One who judges and separates is Jesus. People's acknowledging one another cannot take the place of that judgment.

The word says, *"His threshing floor" (Matthew 3:12)*. Jesus does not judge by borrowing another person's standard. The One who saves also carries out judgment. Therefore, the person who accepts the gospel He gave as the most trustworthy basis of all is wise.

In the same verse it says, *"Gather His wheat into the barn" (Matthew 3:12)*. There is the grace of the Lord receiving those who believe. The person who has received the remission of sins must stand firm in faith in the Savior rather than doubting grace while looking at his own weakness. Even when we lay down the qualifications we boasted of, the salvation Jesus gave is certain.

But of the chaff it says that *"He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12)*. In the face of this warning, the fact that one stood together with others cannot be a comfort. More than the memory of having been among the crowd, what

one believes now matters. We must accept in our hearts the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished.

At the beginning of the text, people gathered to John, and at the end, the Lord gathers the wheat. Taking part in a place where many people have gathered and living as a person whom the Lord receives are distinct. Place your heart before the cry of repentance, and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as your own salvation.

The person who has that faith does not try to protect his own face first when he hears the word. When his wrong is pointed out, he admits it and corrects it, and even when an opportunity to boast arises, he thinks first of the grace that saved him. Such a life is not a price paid to obtain the remission of sins but a response worthy of the grace already received.

Do not use John's rebuke only for applying it to others. Examine what power the bloodline, career, and outward appearance that you thought would protect you have before God. The heart that believes in the salvation the Lord gives must carry over into today's words and choices as well.

The news of the kingdom of heaven has been preached to you. Now do not push away that news with a heart holding on to your own boasting. Set your heart on Jesus Christ, who accomplished the remission of sins, admit your wrong before the word, and act as befits a person who has returned to God. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The will of the Son, which He made known at the Jordan River

< Matthew 3:13–17 >

"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, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Jesus, who came to receive baptism

John tries to prevent Jesus, who has come to the Jordan River. The one who cried out to sinners to repent says before Jesus that he himself must receive baptism from Him. But Jesus makes known His intention to receive baptism from John. In this conversation we see what the Savior determined to do and the response of the one who receives that word.

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Let us read chapter 3, verse 13. *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him" (Matthew 3:13)*. Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. The Bible clearly records the purpose of that journey. It is that He was going to receive baptism from John. As to what work Jesus came to do, we must first listen to His will.

The will of Jesus appears in the words of the same verse that say *"to be baptized by him" (Matthew 3:13)*. It is not that someone persuaded Jesus and entrusted Him with a work He did not want. Jesus came first and was going to do that work. The salvation of sinners is based in this way on the work that the Savior determined in His will and did.

People easily think of how earnest they were as the basis of salvation. But Jesus did not wait for our earnestness and then determine the way of salvation. We must know what Jesus, who came to the Jordan River, wanted. Then, even when our hearts are weak, we can clearly hold on to the basis of salvation that we must believe.

In this word, Galilee and the Jordan River are the place from which Jesus actually came and the place He reached. Salvation does not remain a comfort made up inside a person's heart. There is a work that Jesus, having come among people, did Himself. Our faith is a faith that hears and accepts what He has done.

Verse 13 makes clear the subject of the event with the word *"Jesus."* It records the action of Jesus, who saves, before the zeal of the person who waits for salvation. If we keep this order in mind, we can clearly distinguish between the one who receives grace and the One who bestows grace.

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John, who knew his own need

Let us read verse 14. *"And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?'" (Matthew 3:14)*. When John saw that Jesus had come to him, he tried to prevent Him. If he had regarded Jesus as a person lower than himself, he would not have said such words. John made it clear that he himself was one who had to receive from Jesus.

Look at the part of John's words that says *"I need to be baptized by You" (Matthew 3:14)*. Even the one who had been giving baptism to many people speaks, before Jesus, of the grace he himself needs. Just because the duty entrusted to a person is great, that does not make him the same as the Savior. John knew his own position before Jesus.

From such a John, Jesus is going to receive baptism. Here one question becomes clear. What is the reason Jesus came to John? People came out confessing their sins, but the purpose for which Jesus came lies in saving sinners. Even within the same scene of coming out to the Jordan River, we must distinguish the subject and the purpose.

John asks, *"Are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14)*. These are words he speaks in the face of the fact that, although he himself should go to Jesus, Jesus has come to him. John had a heart that exalted Jesus. But in order to fully accept what Jesus had determined, he now had to listen to the explanation He gives.

You, too, while thinking of Jesus as an honorable One, can receive what He has done sifted through your own thoughts. A heart of respect must lead all the way to lending an ear to the words of Jesus. When we know and accept what He did in order to save, the confession that we exalt Jesus comes to hold concrete content.

The story does not end at the words of verse 14, *"John tried to prevent Him, saying" (Matthew 3:14)*. Even though John recognized Jesus, there was now a word he had to hear further. The fact that there is a truth one already knows is no reason to stop learning from the Lord.

Obedience before the word that said to permit it

Let us read verse 15. *"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)*. Jesus answered John's question. He let him know the work John was to take on, and He even made clear the reason that work had to be done. John allowed it after hearing the word of Jesus.

First, look at the word *"Permit it to be so now" (Matthew 3:15)*. It is a command Jesus gave to John. The burden John felt at first cannot come before that command. Since Jesus had made His will known, John had to follow that word. A person cannot keep blocking, by his own judgment, the work the Savior Himself intends to do.

Jesus did not push John out of his work. Rather, He had him do the work entrusted to him. A heart that knows it is smaller than Jesus is no reason to refuse the work entrusted to him. True humility is revealed in following the work Jesus has spoken of, rather than in the attitude of choosing only the work that seems to suit oneself.

At the end of the word it is recorded, *"Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15)*. John did not hold on to his first judgment and end the conversation. He heard the explanation of Jesus and changed his action. Being able to change one's own judgment

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according to the word when one has heard the right word is a precious form of faith.

We, too, can think that only keeping to the end what we first understood is faithfulness. But when the word of God shows us a mistaken thought, we must correct that thought. Faith is not a matter of boasting of the consistency of our own judgment but of accepting the will the Lord has determined. John received the command of Jesus and actually gave baptism.

The words of verse 15, *"Jesus answered and said to him" (Matthew 3:15)*, make clear who it is that explains. John did not determine the purpose of the baptism by himself. Since the purpose Jesus made known lets us know the meaning of the baptism, we must not leave out that word and look only at the rite.

The fitting work of fulfilling all righteousness

Let us read again the reason Jesus said to permit it. *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Jesus did not explain this work as merely a rite that He Himself wanted. He made clear that it is the work of fulfilling all righteousness. He spoke of what the work the Savior does accomplishes.

Here John gives baptism and Jesus receives baptism from John. It is not that the two took on the same work. Through John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, Jesus has all the sins of the world passed on to Him. For this work of making sinners righteous, the work of the two is accomplished according to the method God determined.

In the sacrifices of the Old Testament, too, the passing on of sins came first. *"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). God determined that sins should be passed on by laying hands on the head of the burnt offering. Instead of claiming atonement by a method he himself had prepared, the sinner had to follow the word God had given.

The baptism Jesus received from John is connected with the meaning of this laying on of hands. Jesus, who is without sin, had all the sin of sinners transferred to Him. John the Baptist undertook this work on behalf of mankind. In the work Jesus commanded John, there was the clear purpose of the Savior, who would remove sin.

The *"all righteousness"* of verse 15 lets us know that salvation is not a matter of covering sin over while leaving it in place. In order to save sinners, Jesus took upon Himself the problem of sin. People call to mind only the wrongs they remember, but in the sin of the world that Jesus bore are included all the sins we will commit throughout our lifetime.

By the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and bearing that sin which had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment for sin in our place. The Lord rose again from death, and to those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit He gives the remission of sins and gives the Holy Spirit as a gift. What Jesus, who came to the Jordan River, wanted was in this way to actually save sinners and make them children of God.

Therefore, the person who believes this word does not think that he must now perform some new act of passing his sins on to Jesus. He believes what Jesus has already done. He knows the relationship between the passing on of sins accomplished at the Jordan River and the judgment accomplished on the Cross, and accepts that that salvation applies to all his own sins.

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In the words of verse 15, *"Thus it is fitting for us" (Matthew 3:15)*, the one who directly hears the word is John. You who read this word do not need to perform again the passing on of sins of that time. You believe, through the recorded event, the salvation already bestowed.

Jesus, who did just as He had said

Let us read verse 16. "*When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him" (Matthew 3:16)*. After saying that it was fitting to fulfill all righteousness, Jesus actually received baptism from John. The purpose He spoke of and the work He did are connected. The will of the Savior appeared in His actual action.

This fact makes our faith firm. For Jesus did not merely make known His will to save us and stop there. When we look for the basis of our faith, rather than first examining our own feelings and resolutions, we must pay attention to what Jesus said and did. What He did has been conveyed to us.

Verse 16 records that He "*came up immediately from the water" (Matthew 3:16)*. It is the scene in which Jesus receives baptism from John and comes up. What Jesus had wanted earlier was actually done. The story does not end with John refusing to the last and the will of God being blocked. John, who received the word of Jesus, fulfilled his duty.

At this point we must distinguish between the One who saves and the servant entrusted with the work. The One who bore sin is Jesus. John performed the duty God entrusted to him. When we clearly know the subject and the roles of the work God

determined, we can escape from the confusion of exalting a person above the Savior or ignoring a person's role.

We, too, need to actually follow after believing the word. It is not in order to add something to the salvation the Lord has already accomplished. It is because we believe that salvation and give thanks that we correct the thoughts we had wrongly held and faithfully fulfill the work entrusted to us. The scene in which John allowed it shows that hearing the word and following it are connected.

The words of verse 16, *"When He had been baptized" (Matthew 3:16),* continue to record Jesus as the subject. The One who commanded earlier now receives baptism from John. When we see this event, in which the exalted One Himself bears our sins, the love of the Savior is revealed concretely.

The Jordan River, where the heavens were opened

Next, let us look at the words of verse 16. *"The heavens were opened" (Matthew 3:16)*. After Jesus received baptism from John, the heavens were opened. On earth Jesus acts, and from heaven it is clearly revealed who He is. The judgment about this work was not left to human thoughts alone.

The Bible records, *"He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him" (Matthew 3:16)*. The center of the scene of the coming of the Holy Spirit is Jesus. He is also the One to whom we must give our attention. Instead of trying to separate out only the visible phenomenon and imitate it, we must accept God's intention in revealing Jesus.

The testimony of John recorded in the Gospel of John also points to the same One. *"And John bore witness, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained*

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upon Him'" (John 1:32). John does not explain his own ability; he testifies of what he saw. He testifies of who it is on whom the Spirit remained. That testimony guides us to believe in Jesus.

John concludes his testimony as follows. *"And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34)*. The One who received baptism from John at the Jordan River is the Son of God. His having borne the sin of sinners does not diminish His honor. That the Son of God Himself did the work of saving us is the good news of the gospel.

We believe in Jesus, whom God has revealed. If we put our own experience above the word of Jesus, our faith becomes bound to our own condition. Conversely, if we accept the testimony God has given, we can believe that Jesus is our Savior even when nothing special is seen by our eyes. This is because God has revealed the Son.

In the word God gave to John, He said, pointing to the One on whom the Spirit remains, *"This is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33)*. We who hear the testimony must look to Jesus, who gives the Holy Spirit, rather than to the sign itself.

The Son in whom the Father is well pleased

Let us read verse 17. *"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17)*. After the conversation that began with John's question, the voice of heaven is heard. The Father Himself spoke of who Jesus is. In this work of saving sinners, the will of God the Father and the work of the Son are revealed together.

The Father said, *"This is My beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17)*. The One who received baptism from John is none other than the

beloved Son. The Father was pleased with this work of bearing our sins. The Son whom the Father loves did the will of the Father.

He goes on to say *"in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. The Father is pleased with the work Jesus did in order to fulfill all righteousness. Our believing the gospel of the remission of sins is not a matter of demanding that God acknowledge a method made by man. It is accepting the work of the Son, in whom God is well pleased.

Connect this word to your own life of faith. There is no need to think that on days when your heart is fervent salvation is certain, and on days when you have no strength salvation collapses. The work of the Savior that the Father is pleased with does not change according to our feelings. By the faith that believes in that work, we enjoy the grace of God.

The love of God is made clear in the Bible as follows. *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10)*. God, who loved first, sent His Son. Therefore, even a person who has discovered that his own love is lacking can turn back toward the love of God. When we believe the grace He bestowed first, thanksgiving and obedience grow again.

The purpose for which God sent His Son is also clear. *"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9)*. The sending of the Son and His work are the love that gives us life. As people who have received that love and come alive, we come to give thanks to God.

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Entrusting our hearts to the will Jesus made known

The record in verse 17, *"A voice came from heaven, saying" (Matthew 3:17),* makes clear the source of the testimony. Do not judge the work of Jesus by reputation among people. Believing in the Son whom the Father Himself revealed is the response we are to take.

The text shows in order the purpose for which Jesus came, John's question, the explanation of Jesus, John's obedience, and the testimony of heaven. Even what John did not understand at first became clear through the word of Jesus. In the midst of hearing and following the word, the work God accomplishes was revealed.

If you want to obtain the assurance of salvation, above all you must know why Jesus received baptism from John. If, without knowing that reason, you only confirm your own earnestness, the object of your faith becomes blurred. Know the will of Jesus, who intended to fulfill all righteousness, and accept His work in your heart. The assurance that knows and believes what the Savior has done is clear.

Also, when a thought you must correct is revealed as you listen to the word, correct it without hesitating. John, too, allowed it when Jesus made His will known. He did not refuse the command of Jesus in order to keep the words he had spoken first. We, too, must humble our hearts before the will of the Lord that we have come to know through the Bible.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, there are days when we are disappointed in ourselves. At such times there is no need to hide our lack or exaggerate our faith. We have only to look to Jesus, who loved us first and accomplished the work of salvation. Giving thanks for the grace given to those who believe

in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can live the day entrusted to us.

At the Jordan River, Jesus said what He wanted and did just as He said. From heaven, the Father testified that He loves that Son and is pleased with Him. Our salvation is based on His will and on what He did. In the heart that believes the will of salvation that Jesus made known, there is a reason to rely firmly. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

We must know God's plan

< Matthew 3:1–12 >

"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."' Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'"

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In this word, John the Baptist appears. The four Gospels show that, together with the coming of Jesus, John the Baptist appears and does the work he is to do. To know at what time John the Baptist came, we first need to take a look at the history of Israel.

The history of Israel and the four hundred years of silence

If we look at the Old Testament, in Israel there was first Moses; after Moses there was Joshua; and after Joshua there were the judges. After the judges there were kings; the first king was Saul, and the second king was David. After that, kings continued on and on until destruction came. A large part of the Old Testament is a record of the age of these kings. When we look at the history of Israel in this way, Moses, Joshua, the judges, and the kings are strung together in a single line.

Through the time of Moses and Joshua, and up to the time of the judges, things continued well, centered on the LORD God. The people of Israel had many hardships—they lived as slaves in Egypt and fought against the Midianites and the Amalekites—but under God's protection they were able to enter the land of Canaan. However, after Joshua died, problems gradually began to surface. Even so, there were the judges, the leaders whom God had raised up. There was Samson, and there was Jephthah. While the judges were there, the people of Israel were delivered from the hands of their enemies and lived in peace. Toward the end of the time of the judges, Eli the priest was the spiritual leader, and after him Samuel, the last judge, became the leader and led the people of Israel well.

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But Samuel's sons were wicked. So the people of Israel asked that a king be set up for them too, like the other nations. God did not like it, and neither did Samuel. The objection was that it would be hard for them, for if the king were a tyrant they would have to serve such a king, they would always have to send their sons out to the battlefield, and they would have to pay heavy taxes. Even so, the people of Israel asked that a king be set up. So the king set up as the people wanted was Saul. God was not pleased, but because the people wanted it so badly, He set him up. But after Saul became king, he overstepped his authority by performing the duties of the priest, which were not his to covet, and he did not obey God's commands but did as he pleased. So God removed Saul and set up David, a man after God's own heart, as king. After David, Solomon became king, and after Solomon, Rehoboam, while Jeroboam broke away separately. In this way the kings continued on until Israel was destroyed, and when the time came, Jesus came.

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

The Bible says, *"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'" (Matthew 3:1–2)*. The phrase *"In those days"* refers to that time, after the age of the kings had passed. If the kings had served God well, the people of Israel would have received protection and blessing, but the kings feared God a little and then quickly betrayed Him and served idols. So the king and the people were disciplined together and destroyed. This kept repeating over and over, like a squirrel running in a wheel. The people of Israel were taken captive to Babylon and lived in slavery for seventy years. After

that, God restored the nation and had them rebuild the temple, but they again went against God's will. Things went on that way, and later they were conquered by Rome. From the prophet Malachi until that time, for four hundred years there was no servant of God. There should have been a servant of God who, moved by the Holy Spirit, strongly preached the will of God whether the people listened or not, but there was no such servant.

At such a time, John the Baptist appears. His father was Zacharias and his mother was Elizabeth. Zacharias, a priest advanced in years, met an angel while he had gone into the temple and was burning incense. The angel told him that his prayer had reached God and that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son. When Zacharias did not believe, the angel made him unable to speak. That is how John the Baptist came to be born. John the Baptist was conceived in the womb of the aged Elizabeth and was born six months before Jesus. And he cried out, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2)*. It was the cry of a servant of God who had at last come forth after four hundred years.

That Jesus came to this earth is a tremendous good fortune and a tremendous blessing for you and me. It really is so. When Jesus came to this earth, John the Baptist had already been born and was growing up. He was six months ahead, so they were the same age. That John the Baptist cried out in the wilderness of Judea, telling people to repent, that the kingdom of heaven had come near, and to turn back. In an age when there was no servant of God, a servant of God appeared and cried out in the wilderness. Since the kings and the people of Israel had countless times repeated serving idols and being destroyed, he was telling them now to turn back.

When John the Baptist was crying out like this, Jesus had already come to this earth. Since the Savior had come, he was

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telling them to turn back from despising God and serving all kinds of other gods, and to return to God. John the Baptist also testified of Jesus. He cried out, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*, saying that the Savior who was to come was that very One. John the Baptist appears together with Jesus. It is also said that he *"was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey" (Matthew 3:4)*. He was a very set-apart man. He was a man who was not tainted by the world and not tainted by politics. When one is tainted by politics, it is easy to bend the truth in order to gain people's popularity.

John the Baptist was the last high priest of the Old Testament

God sent John the Baptist in order to save the people of Israel and all mankind from sin. That John the Baptist cried out in the wilderness when Jesus came is a tremendous event. John the Baptist gave baptism to people, and he also gave baptism to Jesus. He gave baptism to people so that they would turn back and be washed of the sins they had committed, and he gave baptism to Jesus in order to pass the sin of mankind on to Him. John the Baptist is a servant sent by God. As a descendant of Aaron, he began this work at the age of thirty. He was the very last prophet and the last high priest of the Old Testament age, the last high priest who represented mankind on this earth. Jesus is the High Priest of the kingdom of God. Jesus is the High Priest who came to this earth to have the sin of His people transferred to Him through baptism, and He is the sacrificial offering of God who came to remove the sin of mankind. He came as the

sacrificial offering for you and me. So John the Baptist was a very special person.

The book of Isaiah speaks of this as follows. *"'Comfort, yes, comfort My people!' Says your God. 'Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD's hand Double for all her sins.' The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken'" (Isaiah 40:1–5)*. All of this word is the work that John the Baptist does. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, saying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*, and he was entrusted with the office of making it so that people who heard his testimony would be comforted and receive the remission of sins. He cried out that that One is the Lamb of God, the High Priest of mankind, and the One who came as the sacrificial offering, and that He would take away the sin of the world, die, rise again, and become the Savior of you and me.

That every valley shall be exalted and every mountain brought low means that among all people there will be no more high and low. It means that anyone who simply believes that Jesus, the Lamb of God, came as our Savior, received baptism from John the Baptist and had our sins transferred to Him, was hung on the Cross and died and rose again, and so saved us, comes to have the same standing. It means that even classes such as nobles and the lowly disappear, and that if they simply believe, all alike become children of God. The one who cried this out was John the Baptist.

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John the Baptist is a special person. When the Old Testament age was coming to an end, God said, *"I will send you Elijah the prophet" (Malachi 4:5)*, and Jesus testified of John the Baptist, saying, *"He is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. John the Baptist also testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God and that, though He is the Son of God the Father, He is the sacrificial offering who came to have the sin of mankind transferred to Him and remove it.

Jesus said of John the Baptist, *"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)*. This means that from the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. John the Baptist testified of who Jesus is: that He is the Savior who, as the Son of God the Father, came to have the sin of all mankind transferred to Him, and that mankind obtains salvation by believing in that Savior. Therefore, whoever believes can enter the kingdom of heaven, and whoever does not believe cannot enter. That is why the appearance of John the Baptist is extremely important.

At this time when Jesus came as the Savior of mankind, John the Baptist also came. John the Baptist did the work of giving baptism to Jesus and passing the sin of mankind on to Him, and he testified that Jesus is the Son of God the Father. And he proved that Jesus is the Savior who had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, went to the Cross and died, rose again, and saved mankind. Even though Jesus came to do the work of saving mankind from sin, if there were no one to testify of this, we could not be saved. That is why the role of John the Baptist was extremely important.

"Brood of vipers!"

John the Baptist pointed out people's sins and cried out for them to repent, and he gave baptism to the people who flocked to the Jordan River. But when he saw the Pharisees, the religious leaders, and the Sadducees, the political leaders, coming to where he was giving baptism, he rebuked them very strongly. *"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones'" (Matthew 3:7–9).*

To understand this word well, we must know that in the age of the kings in the Old Testament, they all served idols and still did not turn back. When Jesus came, too, there were the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Judaism, and there were the Sadducees, the political leaders. Because Israel was a theocracy, a nation governed by the law of God, the religious leaders were the leaders of that nation. In the eyes of John the Baptist, the Pharisees performed the religious rites well, but they only came before God as an empty shell and took part in the burnt offerings and sin offerings; they did not truly believe with their hearts. Look at how, when Jesus came, they were buying and selling offerings in the temple and making money. How were the religious leaders and politicians of that time any different from the kings and leaders of the previous age of the kings? That is why he rebuked them, saying, *"Brood of vipers!" (Matthew 3:7)*. These are not my words; it is written so in the word. And along with that, he told them to bear fruits worthy of repentance.

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They should have truly returned to God and served and believed in God, but they did not believe. They only did so as an empty shell. So they were people who would go to hell. That is why he rebuked them strongly.

If there had been no testimony of John the Baptist

What we must know here is the fact that John the Baptist is an extremely important figure, not only for the people of Israel but also for the Christian believers of today and for all mankind. Without the testimony of John the Baptist, we cannot know about Jesus. Even if Jesus had come alone, had all the sins of you and me transferred onto His own head and borne them, died on the Cross, and finished all this work before He left, we would have to know it before we could either believe or not believe, would we not? Only when we know what Jesus did for you and me can we believe. How can we believe when we do not know? When selling a product, if you do not let people know what the product can do, they cannot know, so how could they buy it? It is exactly the same. That is why the role of John the Baptist is extremely important.

John the Baptist is a servant of God. He is not the Savior. But he was born in the same year that Jesus, the Savior of mankind, was born on this earth. And John the Baptist knew by the Holy Spirit who Jesus was. While he was giving baptism to people in the Jordan River, Jesus came to him and asked for baptism, and he tried to prevent Him, saying, *"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14)*. This means that John the Baptist knew who Jesus was. He gave baptism to all the others even while rebuking them, saying, *"Brood of vipers!"* Yet only when Jesus came did he say, "How can I give baptism to

You?" It was because he knew by the Holy Spirit who this One was. He was saying, "I need to be washed of my sins by You; how could I tell You to have Your sins washed?"

Jesus was the Savior who came to this earth to have the sins of not only the people of Israel but also the more than eight billion people now living, the people who lived in the ages before and after, and all the people yet to be born transferred to Him once and for all, and to remove our sins. When He came to John the Baptist and told him to give Him baptism, John the Baptist at first flatly refused. He was clearly saying that the Savior who washes away sins is Jesus, not John the Baptist.

Then it is written, "*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)*. That is, John gives baptism to Jesus and passes the sin of mankind on to Him, and Jesus receives baptism from John, has all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, dies on the Cross, and rises again, and so becomes the Savior of mankind. To do this work, a representative of mankind was needed, and that was John. That is why He said that it was fitting to fulfill all righteousness. It was right that John should pass on the sins of all people, and that Jesus should have those sins transferred to Him, receive the judgment, die, and rise again, and so become the Savior of mankind, so that all people might believe and obtain salvation and enter the kingdom of heaven. So John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus, and Jesus had the sin of mankind transferred to Him.

So the role of John the Baptist is extremely important. He taught us who Jesus is, and he gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of mankind on to Him. And after passing on the sin of mankind, he testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* He was saying that that One, though

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He is the Son of God, is the One who had already had our sins transferred to Him in order to save us, who were bound for hell. He was saying that the sin of the world had been passed on to Jesus and that that One was bearing that sin of the world and going toward the Cross. He testified that that One is the Son of God, sent by God the Father, and the Savior of us, all mankind. Thanks to that testimony, I, too, was able to know, and you also were able to know. The role of John the Baptist was not as great as that of Jesus, but he was one who helped the work of Jesus.

Like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, when he cried out, the low places were raised up and the high places were brought low. In this world there were classes and differences in standing, and the poor and the rich lived in many different layers, but it means that with the coming of Jesus Christ, men and women also became equal, and whoever believed became a child of God, so that all could become equal. John the Baptist is the one who played an absolutely crucial role in letting us know whether Jesus had our sins transferred to Him through baptism and whether Jesus is truly the Son of God and the Savior. Therefore, we must surely keep in mind the role of John the Baptist. If John the Baptist had not given baptism to Jesus and passed the sin of mankind on to Him, and had not testified that that One is the Son of God and the sacrificial offering, we could neither have known nor believed in Jesus.

We must know God's plan

God the Father sent His own Son to this earth in order to save mankind from sin, and He raised up one man as the representative of mankind and had him give baptism, and so He passed the sin of mankind on to His own Son. Then He had His

own Son nailed to the Cross and put to death, and raised Him again, and through that Son He has saved those who believe from all sins. This is God's plan. We must know this plan of God. If history, too, is strung together in a single line, even thousands of years of history can be strung together in one sentence from beginning to end. However long the history of any nation may be, if we study it properly, we can grasp it at a glance and tell it at a glance.

The people of Israel, too, really needed a Savior. However much they tried to fear God and serve Him well, they were people who could not do so, and they were people who, when things went well for them, forgot God instead. They surely needed a Savior, and so Jesus came. And God the Father gave a son to Zacharias the priest six months before Jesus, and that son was John the Baptist. Both of these two were born by the special power of God. How could the aged Elizabeth bear a child? God accomplished the impossible and caused John the Baptist to be conceived, to be safely delivered, and to grow up well. Jesus, too, was born from the body of a virgin, and that also is the work of God. Of these two, one testified, and the other personally accomplished the work of saving all mankind from sin. That is why it is so very important.

When we learn the history of the Old Testament, we come to think that Jesus truly had to come and that we are so thankful that He came in this way. We are truly thankful for John the Baptist too. Everyone was headed for hell, but the Savior appeared and saved mankind from sin—how amazing and how worthy of thanks that is! Are you not thankful that Jesus was born on this earth? That has to do with you and me. That John the Baptist was born on this earth is also something to be thankful for. If John the Baptist had been born and taken on that work but had only kept it to himself, hiding away and mumbling,

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you and I would have been finished. Crying out *"Brood of vipers!"* to the Pharisees and Sadducees in the wilderness was something he did at the risk of his life. In the end, he was killed. That is what is great and what we are thankful for. If he had not testified, we would not have known. So we must not disregard the role of John the Baptist.

Our role is important, too

Then, is the role of you and me, who in this age support the gospel and testify of the word of God and serve this gospel through literature, through paper books and e-books, important? It is extremely important. Without us, the people of the world cannot know that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, bore that sin and was nailed to the Cross and received all the judgment, shed His blood and died, and rose again. Through our devotion in serving the gospel, people who did not know this gospel of the water and the Spirit come to know it, and they testify that although they attended church for a long time, this was the first time they had heard it, and that their hearts have been changed. Though our role is not as great as that of John the Baptist, our role is also important. This is because we are those who testify. The Lord said, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8)*. This means that it comes about naturally. When we receive the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, and when the Holy Spirit is in us, we come to do the work of testifying in union with the church, whether by supporting and

serving this gospel or by preaching it directly. Through our testimony, all the people of the world come to know.

Just as the role of John the Baptist is important, the role of you and me is also important. I truly feel that way once again. If Jesus had not come, the people of Israel would have been in serious trouble. We, too, would have been in serious trouble if Jesus had not come. Not even knowing that we were going to hell, we would have lived fretting and fussing on this earth, and then, having been born, grown old, and fallen sick, we would have died and gone to hell. But how fortunate it is that Jesus came, that God caused John the Baptist to be born on this earth, and that he testified. That we are now doing this work is also something for which people should truly be thankful. Let us renew our hearts and serve the gospel once again.

Even if we do not preach something tremendous, being faithful to the most basic thing is best. In business, too, being faithful to the basics is important. Rather than dazzling people and making them lose their heads so as to sell goods for a moment, it is important to be faithful to the basics—to let a person know that this product is beneficial to you in this way, and to make that person feel that it really helped him a great deal. Then customers keep coming back. Even if, when we preach, we do not string together famous sayings of well-known theologians, philosophers, or educators, it is important to be faithful to the Bible and, even if it is something we have said before, to believe this and preach it again with thanksgiving. That is what I do before God. The Bible says, *"Though your beginning was small, Yet your latter end would increase abundantly" (Job 8:7)*. The people who hear the gospel and believe will become very many. So I give thanks and give thanks again. I am truly thankful that John the Baptist came, and for his work as well.

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The faith and the knowledge that know and believe this must be clear in our hearts. Knowing a great deal of the Bible cannot be a cause for boasting. Knowing much only makes a person showy; it never benefits people's souls. I am so thankful that I have come to believe, so thankful that I have met the Lord, and so thankful that I have come to serve this gospel. I give thanks before God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The role of John the Baptist

< Matthew 3:1–12 >

“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.”’ Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’”

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The time when John the Baptist appeared

If we look at Matthew chapter 3, which we have read today, John the Baptist appears. Matthew chapter 3 unfolds against the background of the time when thirty years had passed since Jesus came to this earth, that is, when Jesus and John the Baptist had turned thirty. It says, *"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'" (Matthew 3:1–2)*.

At that time, the religious leaders of Israel were in a wretched state. While claiming to believe in God, they kept idols in their hearts and prayed for blessings before them. The whole nation was like that, and the leaders who claimed to believe in God were like that. At that time John the Baptist appeared. What kind of person was John the Baptist? It says, *"For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."'" (Matthew 3:3)*. John the Baptist was the very servant whom God had promised, through His servants such as the prophet Isaiah and the prophet Malachi, that He would send. This means that the word of prophecy in Isaiah 40:3 was fulfilled. It means that God sent John the Baptist and had him prepare the way of the Lord.

Then what way of the Lord did God have John the Baptist prepare? What did our Lord come to this earth to do? Jesus came to this earth to save all people from sin. But before Jesus came, this earth was already full of religious leaders, Pharisees, scribes, and false prophets.

The paths spoken of here refer to the way by which the Lord would come. God said to John the Baptist, *"Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight" (Matthew 3:3)*. Why did God send John the Baptist? It was because, although Jesus Christ

would come to this earth, have all the sins of all people transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, and remove all those sins, before that there were far too many who opposed, resisted, and pointed fingers at Jesus Christ. He was to subdue those people with the word of the truth of God. John came beforehand to make the way of the Lord straight, so that Jesus Christ could come to this earth and freely do the work of saving mankind from sin.

John the Baptist rebuked people strongly. John came to help the work that Jesus Christ would come to this earth and do, and to drive away those who hindered that work. He said, *"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7),* and he cried out that if they did not repent and did not turn back, *"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10).*

How did John the Baptist live?

How did John the Baptist live? It says, *"Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey" (Matthew 3:4).* Dear fellow believers, those who belong to this world, those who belong to the religions of the world, do not know how wrong those religions are. Even while attending church, they are not saved from sin, and they are busy going to church every day, offering prayers of repentance, paying tithes, and following formalities. How frightening that is: once they fall into it, they can neither quit nor continue. Those who belong to religion are following it without knowing how wrong it is.

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When we look at a mountain from afar, it looks beautiful. But go near and look. If we go into the forest that looked green and beautiful and look closely, trash that people have thrown away and left behind lies buried, and the traces of fire are eating away at the forest. Those who are sunk in religion today should also step back just one step and take a look at the faith they are believing in. If they look objectively and coolly at the church they are attending, they may come to realize that there are things in it that go against the word.

Whether the church members are well off or not, I cannot tell you how many names there are for offerings. Offerings are collected under countless names. If we step back just one step and look, there are cases where the saints are zealous to the point of breaking their backs, yet that labor does not actually lead to serving God. A person who does not care for the flock but serves himself is not a shepherd but a hireling.

Dear fellow believers, John lived dressed in camel's hair and a leather belt, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And John the Baptist did not go in among people and live with them. In the fields he prayed to God, listened to the voice of God, and served God. And he ate the food God gave him in the fields. Wild honey refers to the honey that bees have gathered in their hives. John lived by eating the honey that flowed out of the hives and catching and eating locusts. So what kind of person would John the Baptist have become? He had the appearance not of a finely groomed man but of a man who had lived roughly in the fields. Yet he had fellowship with God. This was because he was a man sent by God.

So when John the Baptist saw the Pharisees and the religious leaders of that time, he rebuked them strongly, calling them a brood of vipers. Dear fellow believers, it is right to see what is wrong and say that it is wrong. Would it be right, just because

one is a clergyman, to cover up what is wrong and speak only genteelly? John the Baptist looked at the religion of that time and cried out in that way. Dear fellow believers, you must not be trapped in the religions of this world. At least once, you should step back and examine your own church. You should carefully examine whether that pastor is doing things properly, whether the goal of this church is properly set, and what is being done with the offerings that are collected.

Dear fellow believers, is everyone a clergyman just because he is a pastor? Just because someone claims to preach the word of God, is he necessarily preaching the word of God? If the church members have sin, a true pastor preaches the word of God and removes that sin for them. That is a true pastor. Merely repeating to the church members that they should repent is not the work of a pastor. If a patient comes to a hospital and the doctor does not treat him but only tells him to live carefully, can he be called a good doctor? It is the same. If a pastor cannot give the remission of sins and only tells people to offer prayers of repentance, that is leaving the saints just as they are, in sin.

Bear fruits worthy of repentance

When John the Baptist was giving the baptism of repentance in the Jordan River, people came and tried to be baptized. It says that when John saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to the place where he was baptizing, *"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from*

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these stones'" (Matthew 3:7–9). It is not a difficult thing for God to make people children of God. God is One who can make children of Abraham even from stones. But they came before John the Baptist and merely confessed their sins with their mouths, and only tried to wash away their sins with the baptism John gave.

John the Baptist told them to bear fruits worthy of repentance, and not to do so only with words. Of course, this is a very difficult demand. However, even though we cannot make our deeds perfect, we can believe the fact that Jesus has removed your sins and mine. It is impossible for us to completely correct our own deeds and come before God. However, we can believe that Jesus came to this earth and cleanly removed your sins and mine by the water and the Spirit. God loved us and removed all our sins, and by hearing, knowing, and believing through the word that work in which God, on His part, removed our sins, we can receive the remission of sins.

John the Baptist said as follows: *"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10)*. For what purpose was John the Baptist said to have come? He came to do the work of making the way straight so that people could believe in Jesus, when Jesus came to this earth and did the work of having the sins of people transferred to Him and removing those sins. Countless people did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God and sneered at Him. Jesus came to this earth and received much sneering. This was especially so from the religious leaders.

So John the Baptist cried out that the ax was already laid to the root of the trees. This means that those who have not received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, those who

have not been saved from sin, will all be cut down and thrown into the fire.

In the past, there were many places in the mountains with no trees. I cannot tell you how much wood people had cut and burned for fuel; the mountains were bare. Even so, people went to gather wood. They took not a saw but an ax. When they struck a few times with the ax at a stump, whose trunk had already been cut away and only the base remained, it came right out, roots and all. Since there were no trees, they pulled out even the roots and burned them for fuel. Dear fellow believers, I cannot tell you how well the fire catches when you put roots in and light it.

This word says that trees without fruit are cut down and thrown into the fire. Can you keep all of the law? Can you live perfectly? Are you confident that you can? He said that if there is even the slightest sin, He will put that person into the unquenchable fire. Jesus said, *"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28)*. He was saying that even thinking in one's heart is already sin. So who could dare keep all of God's law? It cannot be kept. What we must do is believe.

The reason John the Baptist rebuked people was that, even though Jesus Christ was the One who would come, have all their sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bear those sins, be nailed to the Cross and die, rise again in three days, and save them, they did not believe. This means that he was rebuking them for not believing in Jesus as their Savior and for not believing that Jesus had received baptism from John and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him. Therefore, we must know Jesus Christ as the Savior and believe in the salvation of the water and the Spirit that He accomplished for us.

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This means that those who do not receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ will be judged and enter the unquenchable fire. John the Baptist was a servant of God; he was born six months before Jesus Christ, and he was a servant who came to help the work in which Jesus Christ would come to this earth, have all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, and remove that sin. Therefore, you and I must believe in Jesus Christ and have all our sins washed away, receive the remission of sins, and be saved from sin. We must be saved by faith. Would sin disappear just because you come to church, weep while offering prayers of repentance, and learn many doctrines? It is not true that sin disappears by living a good life.

Do not serve the golden calf

Dear fellow believers, no matter how good a life we live, we cannot avoid committing sin. People commit sin when the circumstances arise. But the point is that leaders like the Pharisees and Sadducees tell the church members to live good lives, while they themselves keep idols in their hearts and call on God. Even now there is a golden calf in the church.

Dear fellow believers, do you know about the golden calf? In the Old Testament, Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the two stone tablets of the law and stayed there for forty days. At the foot of the mountain, the people whispered that, seeing that Moses was not coming down, he seemed to have died. Who could live without eating for forty days? So they all thought Moses had died. So it is said that they proposed making a god for themselves—making a golden calf, enshrining it as a god, and making it their guide.

Dear fellow believers, what does an ox symbolize? It symbolizes strength. That is to say, it symbolizes the strength of the flesh. So the people of Israel took the gold rings from their ears, put them into a boiling crucible, melted them, and poured them into a mold in the shape of a calf. When they took the cooled lump of gold out of the mold, it came out as a golden calf. They polished and rubbed it and exalted it as their god.

When Moses came down from the mountain, there was an uproar. He had received the two stone tablets before God and come down, but the people had set up the golden calf and were dancing and making a commotion. Moses became angry and threw down and broke the two stone tablets he had received before God. When he asked who had done this, Aaron said that he had done it because the people wanted it. Then Moses said that whoever would stand on God's side should come over to him. On one side gathered those who stood on God's side, and on the other side gathered those who regarded the golden calf as their god. Moses had those who stood on God's side take up swords and strike down those who had served the golden calf. And concerning that deed, Moses said that they had been consecrated to the LORD. God was making known that all those who try to obtain salvation by keeping the law are destroyed in this way.

Dear fellow believers, God gave Moses the law, but were those two stone tablets broken, or were they not? They were broken. Dear fellow believers, the law is something that cannot be kept. How could you keep it? Are you confident that you can keep it? God said, *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*, but can you avoid violating it? Even today, some churches, as if they had hidden a golden calf behind a veil, put forward the word *"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 1:2)*

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and say that those who give many offerings receive blessings. So a competition to give more offerings breaks out, and people even come up with what they do not have in order to give offerings. Behind it, as it were, a golden calf is hidden.

The One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire

Dear fellow believers, God said that He cuts down trees without fruit and throws them into the fire. This means that if we have not received the remission of sins, no matter how well we claim to believe in God, how many offerings we give, and how good a life we have lived, we go to hell because there is sin in our hearts. It means that we are cut down before God and thrown into the fire. So John the Baptist said, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11)*. Who is He? Is He not Jesus?

Today, we will look only at the role that John the Baptist played. It was said that Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and fire. Jesus sets two things before each and every person. If a person knows, hears, and believes the word that Jesus has removed all his sins, he receives the remission of sins; and if he believes in his heart that He has given the remission of sins, he is saved and at the same time receives the Holy Spirit. God gives salvation and the Spirit of God, makes those who have received the remission of sins His children, and takes them to the kingdom of heaven. But what happens if a person does not believe that Jesus has saved him by the water and the Spirit? Of the two—the Holy Spirit and fire—it is the fire that comes upon him. That is, he comes to enter the fire of hell.

Concerning our Lord, it is said, *"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12)*. Dear fellow believers, does the kingdom of heaven really exist, or not? Some people interpret all of this as a parable. But why would this be a parable? Jesus, with His winnowing fan in His hand, really separates the wheat from the chaff. Jesus is the Creator, our Savior, and the Judge. Jesus is King, Priest, and Prophet. Jesus holds these three offices together.

Jesus is the Creator who made us. It says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)*, and, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26)*. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit made us, and Jesus Christ, in obedience to the Father's will, came to this earth and saved us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

But what happens to those who do not believe this? The chaff is burned with unquenchable fire, and the wheat is gathered into the barn. The barn refers to the kingdom of heaven, so the wheat goes to the kingdom of heaven. Since He said that the chaff is burned with unquenchable fire, it goes to hell. Dear fellow believers, Jesus Christ not only saved us from sin but also gave us the Holy Spirit. If we know and believe that Jesus has removed our sins, the sin in our hearts disappears. However lacking you may be, you are saved from sin.

Dear fellow believers, do not try to be saved by works. And do not serve the golden calf. Do not follow such things. If someone makes a grand outward show and leads people to serve a golden calf instead of God, is that not leading people into the fire of hell?

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Dear fellow believers, to truly meet God, you must meet a servant of God and meet the Church of God. The Church of God does not lie in outward appearance. It has only the minimum needed to hold worship services, uses the offerings it collects to preach the gospel and save people's souls, and saves as much as possible to help people. It makes sure that the offerings you have given are not in vain. And it saves you from sin. If it does not save you, it is of no use at all.

We, too, must become servants like John the Baptist

John the Baptist came to this earth and prepared the way beforehand for the work in which Jesus would remove all the sin of sinners and save sinners. And with the word he rebuked those who opposed and subdued them all. Toward those who were plunging people into hell, those who blessed when given money and cursed when not given money, John cried out sternly. John the Baptist was truly a servant of God, and he was the servant of God who came to this earth and passed the sin of mankind on to Jesus.

We must not take the role of John the Baptist lightly. The Book of Isaiah speaks of John the Baptist, and so does the Book of Malachi. It says, *"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me" (Malachi 3:1)*. John the Baptist is a servant of God prepared from of old.

Dear fellow believers, what kind of people must you and I become? Like John the Baptist, we must make the paths of the Lord straight. Jesus Christ came to this earth and removed all the sins of all people. We must not stand in the way of that. We must teach that Jesus has removed all of your sins and mine through

the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, and we must not hinder the work of God. If we cannot help, should we not at least refrain from hindering?

You and I, too, like John the Baptist, must have this faith and live a life of faith, and lead each and every person to Jesus Christ. Just as John the Baptist fought against the Sadducees and Pharisees, we must confront those adversaries, and we must guide people who are like gentle sheep that know nothing, so that they may meet the Lord. That is precisely the role of you and me, who have received the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, it is not over just because you and I have received the remission of sins. Everyone must do this work, like John the Baptist. We must not, while failing to do this work, try to extract riches from people or deceive people, or, because we know a little of the word of God, seek instead to be treated with honor, or offer false prophetic prayers for people.

Dear fellow believers, let us keep in mind what John the Baptist did and become such servants ourselves. What must those who believe in Jesus do in this world? They must lead people to receive the remission of sins and teach them the gospel. Since you have received freely, you must share freely. You must enable people to meet Jesus Christ so that they receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit. That is what we must do. Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again in three days, and became our eternal Savior. I give thanks that our Lord has given us grace so that we can do this work. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

It must be the baptism that removes sin

< Matthew 3:13–17 >

“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, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

The baptism that removes sin

If you want to believe in Jesus as the Savior, believe in the baptism Jesus received from John. This is because Jesus had all your sins transferred to Him in the Jordan River. If you do not believe in that baptism, you end up believing in Jesus in vain. Why is that? Because it is denying that your sins were passed on to Jesus and forsaking the love of Jesus by yourself.

Today I will speak about the gospel of the baptism that God accomplished, which Satan the devil hates most. In this word appears the first thing Jesus did as He began His public ministry,

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that is, the scene in which John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus. Whether this baptism Jesus received from John was truly His having all the sins of the world transferred to Him—we intend to look into this point in the word and confirm it by the word.

Was the baptism Jesus received from John truly His having all the sins of the world transferred to Him, or was it not? The only answer to this question is the word of truth, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Nowhere in this world is there any Scripture that records that Jesus came to this earth and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, other than the word of Matthew chapter 3, verses 13 through 17.

Did that baptism really take away sin? Is this word right? Is it a word that records that Jesus came to this earth and had all the sins of the world transferred to Him? Or was it one ceremony that Jesus, being so humble, received from John as a sign of that humility? We intend to look for the evidence of the Bible on this point and confirm whether or not the fact is so.

Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the trespasses and all the sins of man transferred to Him, bore those sins, died on the Cross, and rose again. Everyone knows that Jesus is the Savior of this world. But the biggest problem in Christianity is whether, when Jesus received baptism from John, all the sins of the world were truly passed on to Jesus, or whether this was one ceremony. This very baptism is the watershed that distinguishes the genuine truth. How will you accept and believe that all righteousness was fulfilled through the baptism Jesus received from John, and that He bore that sin, died on the Cross, and rose again?

In the old days, the apostles whom God sent testified of the baptism Jesus received from John. The apostles testified that sins were passed on through that baptism, and that the remission of

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sins was received through the blood of the Cross of Jesus Christ. But today's Christianity, while knowing much about the Cross of Jesus, is ignorant of the baptism He received from John and of the righteousness of God. Though the written word is there, it does not examine it deeply.

Why is that? Because people would achieve salvation, the fundamental purpose of believing in Jesus, if they came to know the reason Jesus received baptism from John, Satan the devil never lets them know or believe the secret of the baptism by which sins are transferred, even though they may know and believe the result of the Cross and the resurrection. That is why the baptism Jesus received from John is like a hidden treasure to those who are not born again. But God did not hide it. He taught it to everyone in great detail so that they might believe and receive the remission of sins.

The baptism Jesus received from John was His having the sin of the whole world transferred to Him, and Jesus' having the sin of the world transferred to Him means that He had transferred to Him the sins of all the people who have been on this earth from the time of creation until now, and all the sins of trespass that all the people yet to be born will commit until the time of the end of this earth.

"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"

What is the first evidence that all the sins of this world were passed on to Jesus when John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus Christ? *"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, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were*

opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:15–17). To save sinners, Jesus first of all received baptism from John and had sins transferred to Him, bore those sins, died on the Cross, and rose again. This is the sign that He has saved us so completely. And at that time God the Father Himself testified: that this is His Son, and that His Son received baptism from John in order to save you from your sins and would die on the Cross and rise again.

The word baptism is 'baptizo' in Greek, and it has the meanings of being immersed, being washed, being buried, and being passed on. The baptism Jesus received in the Jordan River is the same as the laying on of hands of the Old Testament, that is, placing hands on the head of an animal. The baptism Jesus received from John refers to the sacrificial offering in the Old Testament receiving the laying on of hands and having the sinner's sins transferred to it. Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, died in the place of sinners, and rose again in order to give life to all mankind, so that whoever believes in Him receives the remission of sins. That is why Jesus said, "You baptize Me. Permit it. We must fulfill all righteousness in this way."

Jesus said, "We must fulfill all righteousness in this way," and what does the phrase *"all righteousness"* here mean in Greek? It means the most appropriate, the most fitting. Therefore, this word is explaining the reason Jesus received baptism from John. The reason was to have all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, and to bear that sin, die on the Cross, and rise again. John the Baptist, who gave baptism to Jesus, is the representative of mankind. Jesus testified of him, saying, *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater*

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than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11). This method, by which John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, gave baptism to Jesus and passed on sins so that all the people of the world were made sinless, was the most appropriate and the most fitting. This is because there is no way for a person to obtain salvation other than the baptism Jesus received from John and the punishment of the Cross.

This word, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus" (Matthew 3:15)*, means, "In this work of removing the sins of all people, it is the most appropriate method for Me to have all sins transferred to Me through that baptism." The Greek word 'dikaiosyne' means the most appropriate, the most fitting. In this *"all righteousness," "righteousness"* means a right deed. Jesus' removing the sins of all people was His accomplishing the most right deed. The work of completely removing the sins of all sinners is the righteousness of God and the right work of the Lord. This is the most righteous work, the blessed work, the righteous work of accomplishing the remission of sins, that the Lord does for us.

What is it that people hope and wish for from God? It is precisely that all their countless sins be remitted. Jesus came to this earth to remove the sins of sinners. So He said, "We must fulfill all righteousness in this way. This method, in which you baptize Me and pass all the sins of sinners on to Me, and I have all the sins of sinners transferred to Me through you so that every sinner obtains salvation from all sins, is the most fitting," and He received baptism from John, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again.

Dear fellow believers, there would be no one who could raise an objection to Jesus' having come to remove all the sin of mankind. Also, no created being has anything to complain about regarding Jesus' having had all the sins of every sinner in the

world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and having become our Savior. Whether a person is saved or not depends on whether or not he believes, whether or not he accepts, the salvation Jesus accomplished by having all the sins of sinners transferred to Him through that baptism. Therefore, there would be no complaint either about the fact that those who accept the gospel of the remission of sins go up to the kingdom of heaven, and those who do not accept the gospel of the remission of sins, which is the truth, go down to hell.

He accomplished it once and for all by the most fitting method

But opinions among people are divided about the method by which Jesus Christ came to this earth and removed the sins of all the people of the world. Some say no, and some say yes. But let us listen to the voice of Jesus. Jesus said, "To remove the sins of all sinners, this method of My receiving baptism from John is the most appropriate," and for that purpose He received baptism from John the Baptist, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again. God, loving us sinners unilaterally in His own way, in order to save sinners from all sins, caused His Son Jesus to have sins transferred to Him through that baptism, and saved sinners from all sins.

Some people also ask, "Why did John the Baptist give baptism to Jesus?" The answer is as follows. Because Jesus could save mankind from all sins only by receiving from the representative of mankind a baptism that is like the laying on of hands, He received baptism from John, bore that sin, died on the Cross, and rose again.

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Jesus did not do, as in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the work of laying hands on a sheep or a goat and passing on one day's sins or one year's sins. He had all the sins of sinners transferred to Him once and for all, by the most fitting method and most appropriately. The priests of the Old Testament offered sacrifices every day, and the high priest offered the sacrifice once a year. But even so, the work of remitting sins did not come to an end. This is because people sin until they die, and whether for a year's sins or a day's sins, a sacrifice had to be offered every time when the time came. When a priest died, his son was commissioned and became a priest in turn, and when that priest died after diligently offering sacrifices, his son did it again, and there was no end to the sacrifices. Therefore, there was a need for Jesus, who is God and not man, the One who lives forever, to come clothed in human flesh and remove all the sins of every sinner in the world once and for all. So Jesus came as a man, received baptism from John in order to have the sins of the sinners of the world transferred to Him, died on the Cross and shed His blood representing all the sinners of the world, and rose again.

Our Lord did not do it with the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament, but sanctified us by offering His own body once and for all. *"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11–12).* The Lord needed to offer the sacrifice once and for all in order to save sinners from all the sins of the world. And He needed to come to this earth and receive baptism from John. This is because, through that baptism, which is like the laying on of hands, He most appropriately had all the sins of the

world transferred to Him once and for all, died on the Cross in the place of sinners, and rose again, so that every sinner can be saved from his sins through that baptism and the blood of the Cross. The first evidence is precisely the word, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*.

Baptism is a burial and a washing

As the second evidence, the meaning of the baptism Jesus received is 'to be immersed.' To be immersed means to be buried. Jesus came to this earth. Jesus is One who has no sin and is holy. To save mankind, He came to this earth by borrowing for a short time the body of the virgin Mary, who had not known a man. Just because Jesus put on human flesh, would He have sin? Because He was conceived in a virgin from the beginning, He did not inherit sin as people do. And Jesus never once committed sin after coming into this world. Being God in His very nature, there was nothing in Him to find fault with.

Then why did Jesus receive that baptism? That Jesus came to enter the water, came to enter the tomb, and was buried in our place was because He had all the sins of sinners transferred to Him. Because He received baptism from John and had all the sins of the world transferred to Him, He died on the Cross and rose again. If He had not had all the sins of us sinners transferred to Him, Jesus would have had no need to go to the Cross and go to the tomb. But our Lord had all the sins of sinners transferred to Him and died on the Cross, and so He delivered sinners from all sins and received in their place all the judgment sinners were to receive. Therefore, the Lord became the Savior of the sinners of the whole world.

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Whoever believes becomes His people and becomes righteous, and whoever does not believe departs from His side. That is why Jesus is called the Savior of sinners, and the Lord came to sinners; He did not come to the righteous of this world. If you are a sinner, accept Jesus as your Savior. Then, by the grace of the Lord, you are released from all sins. Jesus has become your true Savior. I hope that you, too, will believe and be saved.

The word baptism also has the meaning 'to be washed.' Jesus said to John the Baptist, "You baptize Me. We must fulfill all righteousness in this way." When Jesus received baptism from John, He said that *"thus"* was the most appropriate method. Because Jesus received that baptism from John, had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again, sin is washed away from the hearts of those who believe in Jesus Christ in later ages.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

The third evidence was the testimony of John the Baptist. The one who testified that Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred to Him was John the Baptist. John the Baptist, who gave the water baptism to Jesus, personally testified, *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).*

The sacrificial offering of the Old Testament is none other than Jesus. Jesus is the Savior who had all the sins of the world, all the sins of sinners, transferred to Him. John the Baptist testified so. He was able to testify because John the Baptist himself gave baptism to Jesus and passed on all the sins of the

world. There could be no clearer witness than the very person who gave the baptism. John the Baptist was the witness who testified that Jesus bore all the sins of the sinners of the world.

The gospel of the baptism that the apostles testified of

The fourth evidence is the testimony of the apostles who were the disciples of Jesus. *"'Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection'" (Acts 1:21–22).* After Jesus Christ rose again and ascended, the apostles had to appoint one more person.

Judas, one of the twelve disciples, sold Jesus and, suffering pangs of conscience on his own, hanged himself and died. So they had to choose again a disciple who would testify of the fact that Jesus Christ had become the Savior of mankind. And as the condition for becoming that disciple, it lists the faith that believes that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again. To become a true disciple of Jesus, one had to believe why Jesus received baptism from John, and His shedding of blood on the Cross and His resurrection.

For a disciple of Jesus to become an apostle sent by God, he had to have several qualifications. First, he had to be a person who had gone about with Jesus when He was in this world; second, he had to be a person who knew well why Jesus received baptism from John; and third, he had to be a person who knew exactly that Jesus rose again three days after dying on the Cross

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and went up to heaven, and by what method He removed the sin of sinners. The apostles whom Jesus sent spoke of the baptism Jesus received from John. They clearly testified of the baptism of John in the work of salvation. They testified that through the baptism of John, Jesus had all the sins of sinners transferred to Him. The reason for the baptism Jesus received from John was to have all the sins of the world transferred to Him. Jesus received that baptism in order to become the true Savior of sinners, and died on the Cross and rose again.

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:3–5).

It says, *"As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:3),* and, *"If we have been united together in the likeness of His death" (Romans 6:5)*. The death of Jesus Christ is none other than our death, and Jesus Christ's receiving baptism from John and having all the sin of mankind transferred to Him was to save us from all the sins of the world, and He bore that sin, died on the Cross, and rose again. This was the testimony of the Apostle Paul.

The epistles of the Apostle Paul are also epistles of the gospel of the baptism. In Paul's epistles is contained the gospel of the baptism, that Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. We can die on the Cross together with Jesus and rise again together with Jesus. And we can enter the kingdom of heaven and live, united with Jesus. Our entering the kingdom of heaven is because Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John,

received the judgment for sin on the Cross in our place, and rose again, so that those who believe in Jesus, through faith, both receive the remission of sins and can also go to the kingdom of heaven, where Jesus has gone. That is what it means to have been united.

Jesus came to this earth to save us. The first thing He did after coming was to receive baptism from John, that is, first to have our sins transferred to Him. And the second thing He did was to bear all the sins of the world of the sinners of the world, go to the Cross, and be nailed to it, and the third was to rise again from death. The sins that are revealed outwardly after one is born into this world, that is, the sins of trespass, the sins committed in the heart, the sins of hypocrisy—these are called the sin of the world. Also, the sins a person commits from birth until death are called the sin of the world. If we look at the beginning of one person, we can know the beginning of this world, and if we look at the end of one person, we can know the end of the world. From the beginning until the day this earth ends can be called the world.

The first thing the Lord did to save sinners was to receive baptism from John in order to have our sins transferred to Him. Through that baptism He had all the sins of the sinners of this world transferred to Him. According to God's law that the wages of sin is death, we must die. So, second, Jesus suffered the punishment on the Cross in our place and rose again from death. In place of our having to give up our lives and die, Jesus gave up His blood, which is His life. By sacrificing His own body, He paid in full all the price of sin of the world, the price of the judgment for sin before God the Father. And in order to make us wholly the people of God by believing in Jesus, He rose again and is now seated on the throne at the right hand of God the Father.

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That is what it means to believe in Jesus and go to the kingdom of heaven. If we believe in Jesus rightly, we go to the kingdom of heaven. Because Jesus removed all the sins of sinners and has gone to the kingdom of heaven, by believing in Him we become the people of God through His merit and enter the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God.

We died together with Christ and were raised together with Him

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). It says that we have been crucified with Christ. The Apostle Paul is testifying that because his sins were passed on to Jesus through the baptism Jesus received from John, he himself was crucified together with Jesus, and that he, too, was raised again together with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And he testifies that his living is living by faith in the Son of God.

That the born-again, the people of God, those who have obtained new life, are alive in their souls is because they obtained new life through that faith in the Son of God, and by that new life they live and will live forever. Because they believe in Jesus, the heart of a sinner has obtained new life as the heart of a righteous person, as a child of God, and has come alive. Because we wholly believe in our Lord in our hearts as the Savior, we have been raised again.

From where does our heart, our soul, live? It lives through faith in Jesus, the Son of God. To save us, Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him; through that baptism He received in the

Jordan River through John the Baptist, He had all the sins of the world, all our sins, transferred to Him, bore all our sins on His own body, died on the Cross in our place, suffered the judgment, rose again, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Through faith in the Son of God, the heart that was bound by sin, the heart that was placed under judgment and under the curse, has been raised again. This is the love of God and the righteous judgment of God. It means that we have received the remission of sins through the Son of God, that the righteousness of God was accomplished through the Lord, and that the salvation by which we can be saved from all sins was accomplished in the birth of Jesus Christ, the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. God, being merciful, did not hold sinners accountable for their sins, but passed our sins on to His own Son and judged the sins of all the people of this world in that Son.

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Whoever believes the fact that Jesus Christ had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John has put on Christ. It means that he has put on the garment of salvation, that he has been saved, and that he has been born again. The Apostle Paul expressed in this way that Jesus had not only all of Paul's own sins but all the sins of the whole world transferred to Him through that baptism.

Everyone whose heart is alive wholly believes what Jesus did. Therefore, to receive the remission of sins, to follow the Lord, we must deny ourselves. Without denying ourselves, we can neither be saved nor follow Him. Whoever wants to follow the Lord must deny himself. If we deny our own thoughts and believe the word, we are saved from having been sinners, but if we do not deny ourselves, saying, "In my opinion," we cannot be saved.

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I do not understand why people, while believing in Jesus, deny this even though the word of God speaks countless times of the importance of the baptism. When I say that the baptism Jesus received from John was the method of transferring all the sin of mankind, they must confirm whether or not that word is so. It is written in the word that the Bereans were more fair-minded than the Thessalonians and so searched the Scriptures to find out whether these things were so. If the word of God records it so, it is something to deny oneself and accept, saying, "Amen, that is right," yet they do not believe it because the group they belong to does not speak of it. In that way they make the grace of God void. A gathering of people is not God. God is God.

Dear fellow believers, if you believe in the baptism Jesus received from John, you go to the kingdom of heaven, and if you do not believe, you cannot receive the remission of sins. That baptism Jesus received from John is important. What is the first thing Jesus did to save us? It is the baptism. If we take that baptism out of the work by which Jesus saved us, the work of redemption, of the remission of sins and the salvation of sinners, becomes a shell with the contents missing.

The evidence of salvation is the Spirit, the water, and the blood

The Apostle Peter also says that this baptism is the sign of our remission of sins. He testifies that through the baptism Jesus received from John we have obtained the sign of salvation. *"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).*

It says that the baptism Jesus received from John is not the removal of the filth of a sinner's flesh, but His having all the sins of our souls transferred to Him. It is saying that it does not mean that a sinner, having received the remission of sins and become righteous, does not commit a single sin in the flesh. It said that it is only a good conscience seeking after God. The best conscience is to accept in one's heart the fact that when the Lord received baptism from John, He had all our sins transferred to Him. The one who believes this receives the remission of all sins, becomes righteous, and becomes the person with the best conscience before God. Jesus came to this earth, had all the sins of sinners transferred onto His own flesh through the baptism He received in the Jordan River, suffered the punishment on the Cross in the place of sinners, rose again three days after He died, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God the Father, and so He confirmed that He has become the perfect Savior of sinners. Jesus has now become the Savior to whoever accepts His birth, baptism, Cross, and resurrection. Then how, with a believing conscience, can anyone say that Jesus is not our Savior? Jesus is the Savior God who has saved us.

The Apostle Peter explains this salvation in detail. Long ago, at the time of the flood of Noah, people were judged by water. "I will send rain on this world. I will submerge it in water and kill them all. But if only you come into the ark of Noah, you will be saved." God spoke like that. God told Noah and all the people of that age that there would be the judgment of water at the end of the old world. But the people did not believe the word of prophecy of God and of Noah. So only the eight members of Noah's family entered the ark and were saved. Just as the word said, rain came down and covered and killed all the living creatures of the whole world.

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In the Old Testament, they were judged because they did not believe that word that God would judge with water. In the New Testament, it means that those who believe that by water, that is, by the baptism Jesus received from John, He had sins transferred to Him, was judged on the Cross, and rose again, have received from the Lord, through that faith, the remission of sins by which they enter the ark of salvation. Connecting this part to the event of the flood of Noah, Peter said that the water is the sign that saves us, that is, baptism, and testified that if we believe in this water, that is, the baptism Jesus received from John, we are saved.

A person who believes in Jesus must deny his own thoughts, his own stubbornness, his own convictions. Without denying them, no one can believe in the Lord or follow Him. So God has made it so that only those who deny themselves follow the Lord. The Lord said, *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me'" (Matthew 16:24)*. If we want to truly believe in our Lord and receive the remission of sins and go to the kingdom of heaven, we must deny our own thoughts. We are saved only when we acknowledge the word of God alone. This is because only God gives salvation. Whoever has received the remission of sins has denied himself and been saved from sin.

"(This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV). If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not

believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:6–12).

If even one of these three, the water, the blood, and the Spirit, is missing, a sinner cannot be saved from sin. The evidence that a sinner has been saved is the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Ordinary people believe in the blood of Jesus Christ. They believe only that Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, that He died for them. And they also believe that Jesus, the Son of God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit. But there are also people who reject the fact that He came by water, that is, that Jesus had all their sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. Those who reject it do not have the testimony of the water, the blood, and the Spirit in their hearts. In the heart of a person who acknowledges the Spirit and the blood but rejects that baptism, there is sin.

That is why God gave these three testimonies to the person who has been saved. It says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16)*. Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Our Lord did not come by water only, nor did He come by blood only. It means that He came by the water, the blood, and the Spirit together. Our Lord received baptism from John to remove the sin of sinners, gave His own flesh over to the judgment of punishment on the Cross, and rose again. Therefore, our Lord has become the Savior of sinners.

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The laying on of hands of the Old Testament and the baptism of the New Testament are a pair

Then, is such evidence only in the New Testament? Where is it in the Old Testament? Let us look for the evidence of the Old Testament. It says, *"He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:7–10).*

Leviticus chapter 16 speaks of the yearly sacrifice of atonement in the Old Testament. For this sacrifice, two goats had to be brought. One was for the scapegoat, and one for the sin offering to be offered before God; and the word 'scapegoat' (Azazel) means 'to put out.' God had one offered before Himself, had all the sins of the people passed on to it, and had the blood of that animal taken and sprinkled on the mercy seat and on the altar. The other He had put out for the people, and had the high priest lay hands on it before the eyes of the people and pass all the sins of the people on to it. He made it so that the people, seeing this sacrifice, might be set free from the sin in their hearts through faith. What this word of the Old Testament testifies is that the baptism Jesus received from John was none other than the laying on of hands of the Old Testament.

"If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally by doing something against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and is guilty, or if his sin which he has committed comes to his knowledge, then he

shall bring as his offering a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering. Then the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour all the remaining blood at the base of the altar. He shall remove all its fat, as fat is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma to the LORD. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him" (Leviticus 4:27–31).

For the people of the Old Testament to receive the remission of sins before God, four things had to be in place. First, they had to offer an unblemished sacrificial offering. Second, they had to bring a goat, a sheep, or a bull as the sacrificial offering and lay hands on it. The laying on of hands is the method of passing on sins. The sinner had to lay his hands on the head of the animal and pass his sins on to it without fail. The meaning of the term laying on of hands is 'to be passed on, to be transferred.' Third, they had to kill the sacrificial lamb. After passing his sins on by the laying on of hands, he had to kill the animal, take its blood, and without fail put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour it on the ground. Fourth, the priest had to offer the burnt offering or the sin offering on behalf of the people. These four things had to be in place, and if even one of them was missing, the sinner's sins were not remitted. This is because God had so ordained it.

The offering given to God had first to be without blemish. That is why, for us sinners to be saved from all sins forever, Jesus, the Son of God, was needed. Jesus is the holy Son of God. Second, for a sinner to receive the remission of sins, he had to pass his sins on to Jesus Christ. Just as the people of the Old

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Testament laid hands on a goat or a sheep and passed their sins on to it and received the remission of sins, the people of the New Testament receive the remission of sins by believing that the baptism Jesus received from John was in order to have all their sins transferred to Him. Third, the blood of the sacrificial lamb was put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, because the life of the flesh was in the blood. Because Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John and had sins transferred to Him, according to the disposition of the law that the wages of sin is death, He died on the Cross in the place of sinners and rose again. He bore it all on His own flesh, shed His blood in the place of sinners, received the judgment of God, and so gave sinners their lives back again.

What Jesus did after coming to this earth was, first, to offer His unblemished self as the offering in place of sinners and give up His own flesh and blood, and second, to receive baptism from John, have all the sins of the world transferred to Him, die on the Cross, and rise again. That method is precisely the baptism, which is like the laying on of hands.

Baptism is this: just as, according to what God promised in the Old Testament, sinners laid hands on the sacrificial offering and passed their sins on to it and received the remission of sins, so in the New Testament our Lord Himself came and, to remove the sins of all the sinners of the whole world, Himself became the sacrificial offering and saved sinners. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him. The laying on of hands of the Old Testament and the baptism of the New Testament are exactly the same. God is the One who spoke the word of the covenant and fulfilled that word of the covenant. What is the corresponding pair through which the sins of the people were transferred in the Old Testament and in the New Testament? In the Old Testament it is

the laying on of hands, and in the New Testament it is baptism. This was the pair.

And fourth, the priest had to offer the sacrifice without fail. It did not end just because the sinner's sins were passed on by the laying on of hands and the sacrificial offering died; only when it was cut into pieces without fail, its fat was removed and placed on the altar of burnt offering, and the priest burned it with fire and offered the burnt offering and the sin offering, did all the sinners of Israel receive the remission of sins.

He came as the unblemished Lamb and accomplished it all

Must these four things surely be in place? Yes, they must. Jesus came to this earth and offered Himself as the unblemished offering. Though He is One without a single sin, He gave Himself for us and became the sacrificial offering. Second, what was accomplished? He received the laying on of hands on His head. Just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament had the sins of the people transferred to it, Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sin of mankind transferred onto His own body. Here some people speak dividing the chosen people from the people not chosen, but there is no such thing. Jesus fairly and justly had all the sins of every sinner transferred to Him.

Third, Jesus shed the blood of His life. Jesus sacrificed Himself on the Cross for all the sinners of this world. Jesus was the Savior who had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment by shedding His blood, rose again, and gave us new life.

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Fourth, Jesus is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven. The word Jesus means Savior, and the word Christ means the One anointed. Therefore, Jesus is a prophet, a priest, and a king. Just as a prophet is anointed by God, a priest is also anointed, and a king is also anointed. Jesus is the King of kings, the Savior of mankind, and the High Priest of heaven.

The Gospel of Matthew records the baptism Jesus received from John, and this is a record that the King of kings had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through that baptism. Jesus has become the Savior of mankind. Jesus told us exactly how He had the sin of sinners transferred to Him. He played the role of a prophet, letting us know in advance that He would thus have all the sins of sinners transferred to Him once and for all through baptism, be judged, and remove them. Also, our Lord came as the Priest of heaven, Himself established the priesthood within the Tabernacle, appointed Aaron, the brother of Moses, as the high priest, and ordained that all the people of Israel would receive the remission of sins on one day through the high priest's performing the yearly sacrifice of atonement.

Our Lord made this promise and fulfilled all of it. In order to fulfill that word spoken in the Old Testament, *"So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him,"* He Himself came, even though He is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven. Though He is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, by receiving, like a sacrificial lamb, the baptism that is like the laying on of hands from John the Baptist, a descendant of Aaron, the high priest of the earth and the representative of mankind, and by dying on the Cross and rising again, He fulfilled and accomplished all the word of God promised in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the high priest without fail passed on the sins of the people of Israel. That day was the tenth day of the

seventh month. On that day the high priest without fail passed the sins of the people on to a goat in the form of the laying on of hands, sacrificed that goat on behalf of the people, and saved the people of Israel from sin. Likewise, Jesus became the sacrificial lamb, received baptism from John, the representative of mankind, had the sin of all mankind transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so He saved mankind.

He sent John the Baptist and sent the Lamb

God sent John the Baptist into the world to save sinners, to transfer the sin of the world to Jesus. Jesus testified that John the Baptist was the representative of mankind. The people of Israel lived through a blank period of four hundred years without a servant of God, a prophet. Everyone was waiting for the representative of mankind. At that time God gave a baby to Elizabeth, a descendant of the house of Aaron. He was none other than John, who gave baptism to Jesus. Only after first sending John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, to this earth was the appearance of Jesus to take place.

"For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 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. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:10–12).

Jesus came to this earth and offered His unblemished body to God to save sinners, and had all the sins of every sinner transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. And by sacrificing His own flesh, He received the judgment for

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our sins in our place and rose again. But there was one thing that had to be fulfilled without fail. That one thing the Lord promised in the Old Testament was that the high priest passed on sins by laying hands on the sacrificial lamb on behalf of the people. Because the high priest transferred the sins of the people, the people of Israel and the sinners of the whole world could be set free from all sins before God.

Jesus is the Lamb of God and the Son of God, and the God who saved sinners from all the sins of the world. If a sinner could pass his sins on to a sheep or a goat and receive the remission of sins, would the sheep or the goat have had the sins of the people of Israel transferred to it on its own? Only when someone passes sins on to the offering can it have them transferred to it. That is why God established the priesthood. Just as the people of Israel passed on their sins through the priests of the tribe of Levi, our Lord determined to save sinners in that way. So He established John the Baptist as the representative of man, had him pass all the sins of sinners on to Jesus, and saved all sinners from the sin of the world.

God the Father ordained that the remission of a sinner's sins be by laying hands on the sacrificial offering, and our Lord Himself came to this earth as the Lamb of sacrifice and had the sins of all the sinners of this world transferred to Him. The sacrificial offering that would save sinners is clearly Jesus, but Jesus needed someone to lay hands on His head and pass sins on to Him. So He sent John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, the greatest among those born of women, six months ahead of Jesus. Because Jesus Himself had to be born into this world, God first caused John to be born through Zacharias and Elizabeth, descendants of Aaron. Jesus is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven. But the High Priest of heaven determined to remove all the sins of sinners not with the blood of goats and

calves as in the Old Testament, but by offering His own body. Our Jesus was the High Priest of the kingdom of God and, at the same time, the Lamb of God.

And when the time of salvation came, six months after John, He was born through the body of the Virgin Mary to save mankind from sin. He is the Savior of sinners, the King of kings, God the Creator of heaven and earth, the King of righteousness, the Savior of sinners, and the Prince of Peace, Jesus. When they each turned thirty, the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, who is the King of kings, and the representative high priest of the earth met. In that way He saved sinners from sin. Sinners were saved by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. The people of the Old Testament received the remission of sins looking forward to the Messiah coming to this earth and having all sins transferred to Him through a baptism in the form of the laying on of hands and removing sins once and for all. Then how do the people of this age of the New Testament receive the remission of sins? They receive the remission of sins by believing that our Lord received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and had all the sin of the world transferred to Him.

Is it right that the baptism Jesus received from John was His having all the sins of every sinner in the world transferred to Him? Yes, it is. It is testified by the Bible. To testify before God that one has been saved, one must have these three, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and if even one of them is missing, it is not salvation. The one who is truly saved is the one who believes that Jesus, the Son of God, had sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment on the Cross in his place, rose again, and saved him from all sins. He has the evidence that he has been saved in his heart. Is that evidence in your heart?

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I believe that Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. I have received the remission of sins. I have not a single sin in my heart. In the past, even though I believed in Jesus, I had sin. But now I have not a single sin. No matter how evil a person may be, no matter how deficient a sinner may be, whoever only believes what Jesus Christ did is delivered from all sins.

For a long time I always had a question: "Why did Jesus receive baptism from John? It is strange. There must be something to it." Then I searched the Old Testament and searched the New Testament, and came to know what the baptism Jesus received from John tells us, and why He had to have the sin of the world transferred to Him through that baptism, die on the Cross, and rise again. When I did not believe in that baptism, I had sin in my heart, but after I believed in that baptism, the sin in my heart disappeared.

Now I am wholly born again and have no sin in my heart. The evidence that I have been saved is this: that the Son of God came to this earth for me, had all my sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John in the Jordan River, received the judgment on the Cross in my place for me, rose again three days after He died, and went up to the right hand of the throne of God. And because I believed that Jesus has become the Savior who saved me, I received the remission of sins. In my heart there is that evidence of believing in the Lord, and there is the evidence of what the Lord came to this earth and did for us. The baptism the Lord received on this earth, the blood He shed on the Cross, and His resurrection were precisely the evidence that I had been saved. I hope that you, too, will have this evidence in your hearts. Amen! ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Let us think of Jesus, who removed our sins

< Matthew 3:13–17 >

"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, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Let us think of the fact that Jesus removed our sins

When we look at this word we have read here, how can anyone say that Jesus did not bear sin when He received baptism from John? Yet there are people who wrongly understand that He did not bear it, and this is regrettable. It is recorded so clearly, both in the original language and in our language, and so I cannot tell you how frustrating it is that people understand the Bible so wrongly. The word clearly records that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, had all our sins transferred to Him,

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died on the Cross, and rose again. So today I want us to think together about one or two things.

First, I have a desire to think about the fact that Jesus removed all our sins. Jesus came to this earth, went to John, who was giving baptism, and received baptism from him, and so He had all our sins transferred to Him, and bearing those sins, He died on the Cross and rose again. It means that in order to fulfill all righteousness, Jesus wanted to receive baptism, and with that baptism He removed all our sins.

We come to think of the fact that the Lord has saved us. I think about how great a thing it is that our Lord saved you and me. How many things there are to think about in this world, and how much work there is! When we are in charge of one of those tasks, our thoughts are always sunk in it, and so, though we say we are working diligently, there are many times when we forget Jesus. And there are often times when we forget this salvation, that the Lord has removed our sins. It means that if our hearts do not dwell on this, that Jesus has removed our sins, there is no strength in our hearts, there is no joy, and whatever we do becomes tedious.

We see that although people have obtained this salvation, that Jesus removed their sins, they have little fellowship with Jesus because they are buried in the many affairs of this world. I understand that it is because what they always think about is something other than Jesus. That is why they often experience disappointment in their hearts and loss of strength. So now I am saying that we should think again of the word that gives strength and gives hope, namely the word that Jesus has removed our sins, and think once more of the good news that our Lord has removed our sins.

How did the Lord remove our sins on this earth? And how much of them did He remove? When we think of the Lord, we

see that the Lord came to this earth and received baptism from John the Baptist in order to fulfill all righteousness and remove all sins. It means that the Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist just as this word says, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again. So you and I, by believing this, have been washed of our sins and have obtained the remission of sins.

He fulfilled all righteousness with the baptism He received from John

The Bible records it this clearly. Yet people treat this word coldly. Saying, "How can sins pass on when Jesus receives baptism? A person has to work hard; a person has to offer prayers of repentance," they are much interested in the part called human effort, contrary to the will of God. But we must think of what Jesus has done for you and me. That is faith and belief; it is not faith to merely think about what one has done for Jesus without thinking about the fact that Jesus removed our sins.

There are many who think not only of what they have done for Jesus but also of how good a life they have lived before people. But what I am saying is that we should think of Jesus. When it is so clear that Jesus removed our sins like this, how can we pass it by, pretending not to know? Here it says that Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism. It says that with that baptism He received from John, He fulfilled all righteousness.

The words "all righteousness" mean that He has removed our sins. The word "righteousness" means rightness, justice. It means that Jesus, as the Son of God, came to remove our sins, and very rightly, not only in word but in actual fact, bore our sins

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in His own body and removed all our sins. This is the very righteousness of God. When Jesus has so clearly removed the sin of the world completely, can anyone say that He did not remove it?

Even when we know this Bible and believe in Jesus, we must know exactly, through this word that records what God has said, what the word is saying, the meaning of the letters, and know the meaning of its clear point, and believe accordingly. If we believe without knowing this clearly, we become people who have sin and go to hell. Because there are so many things people wrongly understand, and Satan the devil has caused us to have so much wrong knowledge, God also speaks to us frequently and repeatedly. It means that He spoke repeatedly and frequently of what Jesus did, that is, of the work by which the Son of God removed our sins.

The word clearly says, *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan" (Matthew 3:13)*, and here *"Then"* refers to the time when Jesus turned thirty, just as in the Old Testament the son of a high priest had to be thirty years old to receive the office of high priest. That is why it is expressed as 'then,' and Jesus came to this earth as the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, and not with the blood of animals but by now receiving baptism on His own body, giving His own body over on the Cross as a sacrifice, and rising again, He saved all mankind. It means that He came to this earth to receive baptism from John in order to remove, once and for all, on Jesus' side, all the sins of those who believe in Jesus. So, because He received baptism exactly according to the purpose for which He came, He fulfilled all righteousness.

Jesus, in order to remove your sins and mine, received baptism from John and had all sins transferred to Him, and then went to the Cross and died, and so He washed away all your sins

and mine, received all the judgment for your sins and mine, and rose again, and so He saved you and me from all sins. Those who believe in Jesus are saved because they believe that this Jesus received baptism for us, died, and rose again, and so removed the sins of everyone. As for those who do not believe in Jesus, because they do not believe, their sins remain as they are, and so they are not saved.

The meaning of the Holy Spirit coming upon Him like a dove

"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16–17). Here it says that after Jesus received baptism from John, when He came up from the water, the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended like a dove.

Then does this mean that Jesus received the Holy Spirit at this time? That is not what it is saying. It is said that the Lord was, from the very beginning, conceived by the Holy Spirit when He was born on this earth. Because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit when He was conceived in the body of Mary, when we confess our faith following the faith of the apostles, we confess, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary." Fundamentally, Jesus is the One in whom the Holy Spirit Himself is present. In Him Himself, the Holy Spirit was present from the time He was conceived through the body of Mary.

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It is not that the Holy Spirit came upon Him like a dove after He received baptism because He did not have the Holy Spirit, nor is it saying that Jesus received the Holy Spirit after He received baptism. It is speaking about how we receive the Holy Spirit. Here, when Jesus received baptism and came up from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon Him like a dove, the voice of God the Father was heard, and Jesus was there; so the triune God appears here in full.

The Holy Spirit coming upon Him like a dove here was to teach that, for a person to receive the Holy Spirit, those who believe that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, had the sin of all mankind transferred to Him, then died on the Cross, and then rose again from death and removed the sin of mankind—that is, those who believe that He removed not only all the sins of those who believe in Jesus but even the sins of all who do not believe—receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit.

To the question, "How does one receive the Holy Spirit?" this word answers as follows. When Jesus received baptism from John and came up from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon Him like a dove. That is, it means that Jesus' receiving baptism was in order to give the Holy Spirit to people. How does a person receive the Holy Spirit? One receives it by believing that the Son of God came to this earth as the Savior and, at the age of thirty, received baptism from John and had all your sins and mine transferred to Him. Jesus received baptism, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, and went into the water. His going into the water tells us that He bore the sin of the world and died on the Cross. If one is washed from all sins by believing in that Jesus, who bore the sin of the world, died, received the judgment for sin, and rose again—that is, if one is washed of one's sins by believing in one's heart that Jesus has washed away all one's

sins—then upon the person who has been washed of sins the Holy Spirit comes, just as the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus like a dove. The word shows this clearly.

How does one receive the Holy Spirit?

How does a person receive the Holy Spirit? One receives the Holy Spirit by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. So if one believes that Jesus removed all one's sins, one receives the Holy Spirit in this way. One receives it meekly, like a dove. It is not that one makes a loud noise claiming to have received the Holy Spirit; the person who has received the Holy Spirit becomes meek in spirit. It means that even though the outer man looks rough, one becomes a person whose heart is gentler than any gentle animal. It is because one is God's people, because one is holy, because one has no sin.

It means that when Jesus came up from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon Him. This means that when one believes in Jesus Christ, who came to this earth in flesh and blood, as one's Savior, one is washed of one's sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift before God the Father. Receiving the Holy Spirit is not difficult; it means that if one believes in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection and is washed of one's sins, one receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Those who have received the remission of sins have all received the Holy Spirit.

Jesus came to this earth to have the sins of all the people of this earth transferred to Him once and for all and to remove them. And at the Jordan River He received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and went into the water.

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The laying on of hands during the baptism signifies that He had our sins transferred to Him, His going into the water signifies death, and then His coming up out of the water signifies His coming back to life. It means that if one is washed of one's sins by believing in that Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes upon him.

God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—this triune God: Jesus has a Father, and Jesus, while being the Son of God, is our Savior, and He saved us with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and gave the Holy Spirit to those who believe in it. The Trinity is not difficult. Jesus has a Father, and He is God the Father; there is Jesus, who is the Son of God; and there is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who is holy; and it means that these three are the same one God to us.

The Holy Spirit is received by believing what Jesus did when He came to this earth. In fact, the person who believes in Jesus as his Savior by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, that is, the person who knows the meaning of the baptism and the Cross and believes the letter of the word exactly in his heart, has received the Holy Spirit. This is how the Holy Spirit is received. How simple and how clear it is! The truth is not difficult. God knows well that our wisdom does not amount to much. If, though we are so lacking, God were to speak in a difficult way about the coming of the Holy Spirit, how could we know it? It means that God made it very easy so that we could know it exactly.

The Holy Spirit is not received by offering prayers of repentance. Nor is the Holy Spirit received by fasting or by praying on a mountain with great effort, or by praying without eating for forty days. The Holy Spirit is received as a gift, at the same time as one receives the remission of sins, when one believes in Jesus as one's Savior—Jesus, who came to this earth and, with the baptism He received from John, had all your sins

and mine transferred to Him, washed away all our sins, bore the sin of the world, went to the Cross, received all the judgment, rose again, and saved us from sin.

Why must we believe this way in order to receive the Holy Spirit? The reason we must believe in Jesus, receive the remission of sins, and have the Holy Spirit come upon us is to make us God's people. Without the Spirit of God, one is not God's people. That is why the person who believes in Jesus as his Savior and receives the remission of sins by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross receives the Holy Spirit. It means that one is acknowledged in this way: "Your faith is right. You are My child." It means that the Lord gave us the Holy Spirit in order to make us children of God. Dear fellow believers, the Holy Spirit has come upon the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Because the Holy Spirit has come upon us, we can confess, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*, and we can confess, "Jesus is my Savior. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus had my sins transferred to Him, shed His blood on the Cross, rose again, and removed my sins." Apart from the Holy Spirit, no one can confess that Jesus had his sins transferred to Him with the baptism He received from John.

The triune God testifies of our salvation

By believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross—by believing what Jesus did—we have received the remission of sins. For the person who has received the remission of sins, what testifies? The Holy Spirit testifies,

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and God the Father testifies. Who testifies that we have been saved? God the Father testifies, and the Holy Spirit testifies.

Who did the work of removing our sins? Jesus did. Who is the One who planned it? It is God the Father. Who is the One who testifies that Jesus removed our sins? It is the Holy Spirit. Who is the One who finally stands as guarantor for it? It is God the Father. The triune God made us, mankind, and the work He planned in order to make us, mankind, His own people, Jesus accomplished and the Holy Spirit testifies of. So it means that our final salvation is acknowledged by all three of the triune God. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*.

The person who has the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, in his heart is God's people. He is a child of God. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. It is not that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus when He received baptism and came up from the water because He did not have the Holy Spirit; Jesus is, from the very beginning, God. Nevertheless, the reason the Bible records it this way is to tell you that if you want to receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit, and become children of God, you must believe that God removed the sin of mankind in this way through His own Son. It means that upon the one who believes the Holy Spirit comes, and the one upon whom the Holy Spirit has come, God the Father makes a son of God in Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. It means that the Holy Spirit seals him.

One cannot receive the Holy Spirit through prayers of repentance

People think that the Holy Spirit is received by praying. It sounds plausible, but what does the Bible show? When Jesus received baptism from John and came up from the water, the Holy Spirit immediately came upon Him. What does this tell us? It means that if we want to receive the Holy Spirit, all we have to do is believe in Jesus as our Savior—Jesus, who came to this earth, received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, received all the judgment for sin on the Cross, and then rose again from death. It means that the Holy Spirit comes into the heart of the one who believes in Jesus the Savior.

When one believes this way and the Holy Spirit comes into one's heart, God the Father says, "You are My son." God the Father's saying to Jesus Christ, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,"* tells us that He will give the remission of sins to those who will believe in Jesus Christ in the future, tells us that the believer receives the Holy Spirit, and tells us that God the Father makes them His own people.

But people say that one receives the Holy Spirit by offering prayers of repentance or by praying on a mountain. The Holy Spirit does not come just because one cries out loudly or sheds tears. God does as He wills; He is not One who acts under the interference of man. "Whether a person shouts or not, I have saved through My Son. I had My Son receive baptism from John and so had all your sins transferred to Him; I had My Son die on the Cross and so had Him receive the judgment; I raised My Son again and so saved you from all sins; and I have set Him up as your Savior. If you believe in My Son, you receive the remission of sins, and to the one who believes I give the Holy Spirit. This is how I have planned it." God the Father only proceeds as He

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Himself has planned; it is not that a person does something and so exerts influence.

If one learns wrongly and knows wrongly, one has to build the house all over again, and once one gets it wrong, one has to keep going until it is right. In the human affairs of this world, if one gets something wrong, one can repeat it and do it again, but with this faith, once one holds a wrong faith, it is hard. When one comes to have faith, one must have a faith that believes the word rightly; if one holds a wrong faith, one goes to hell even after believing in Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus becomes a stumbling stone to those who do not obey the word. If one believes in Jesus without knowing Him rightly, one surely goes to hell even after believing in Jesus. Therefore, when believing in Jesus, one must know Him surely and exactly, and believe.

Thinking of Jesus again is the life of faith

Now let us think of Jesus. There are many times when our thoughts are on some task, on some event, or on people, but today I am saying that we should quietly think of Jesus. Then do we not obtain peace in our hearts and gain strength? What comes of working hard with all our might in this world? Truly, if it were not for Jesus, we would be nothing.

Because Jesus was God, and because He became a man like us, and because He received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, and because He died on the Cross and so received all the judgment for our sins, and because He rose again from death, and because He gave the Holy Spirit to those who believe in that Jesus, those who believe in that Jesus Christ and have received the Holy Spirit have become children of God. Those who have become children of God must think about this

once. It is that Jesus who helps you and me, holds us up, and blesses us.

Though it is something we always know, we think of it again; just as a cow chews the cud, so we saints ruminate on salvation. Let us too think of Jesus. I hope you will continue a life of faith that ruminates, thinking once more. This is exactly what the life of faith is. If we draw it out once more and think, "Jesus came to this earth and removed all sins; how truly thankful I am. And then He gave the Holy Spirit to those who believe like this," and empty our hearts and look at the Bible, I cannot tell you how exact it is. Dear fellow believers, how complicated and how many are the affairs of this world! How much are your thoughts turned toward other places! How much more are you bound and tied to the affairs of this world than to the fact that Jesus removed your sins! Though it is a world in which we cannot help living that way, I am saying that we should think of what Jesus has done for us, that He removed our sins. But if one has learned theology wrongly and looks at the Bible from the viewpoint that Jesus took away original sin and that actual sins are removed when one offers prayers of repentance, the Bible cannot be understood. That is why many people come out who deny the Bible. They deny both what John the Baptist did and what Jesus did. If you go before one who denies it and teach him, saying, "The word of the Bible is like this. Believe it," does it get through? No matter how great a scholar one may be, it does not work on a person who has decided not to believe and does not believe. There is no one who can overcome a person who has decided not to believe.

When your heart is troubled and weary, think of Jesus. The life of faith is thinking of Jesus. Because by thinking of Jesus we can live in Him, follow Him by faith, and receive and enjoy many blessings through Him, the life of faith is thinking of Jesus

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and believing in Jesus. I tell you that it is important to think of Jesus and the salvation He has given, ruminating on them often. I pray in the name of the Lord that you and I may always think of the remission of sins that our Lord accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and enjoy peace and blessing in that grace. Amen, hallelujah! ✉

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CHAPTER

4

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The demands of the tempter and the answers of Jesus

< Matthew 4:1–11 >

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."' Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God."' Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve."' Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him."

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The wilderness into which the Spirit led Him

Even on the way of following the will of God, we can meet temptation. Today's text first makes clear by whose guidance Jesus went and where He went. When we read what He went through in the wilderness, we must not look only at the hardship of the temptation but see whose will Jesus obeyed in the midst of it.

Let us read verse 1. *"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1)*. The Spirit led, and the devil tempted. We must distinguish the One who guides from the one who tempts. The fact that Jesus was in the wilderness cannot be regarded as evidence that He had been forsaken by the Father.

Just before this, the voice from heaven testified who Jesus is. It is the word of chapter 3, verse 17. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. The status of being the Son is not something to be obtained by carrying out the devil's proposal. It is a fact the Father had already made known.

The *"Then" (Matthew 4:1)* of verse 1 shows the order in which the temptation follows this testimony. Receiving the love of God and not meeting painful things do not mean the same thing. When difficulties arise, we are apt to doubt whether the word of God is still true. But the text does not let us judge Jesus' being the Son by the comfort of His circumstances.

Verse 2 does not hide the condition of Jesus. *"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry" (Matthew 4:2)*. The fact that He was hungry tells us what the demand for bread that follows is aimed at. The victory of Jesus is not recorded as a victory obtained because He did not feel hunger.

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You, too, can acknowledge the needs and difficulties of the body. There is no reason to be ashamed of them and hide them. However, you must not judge that you have to follow any demand whatsoever for the reason that your need is great. As we read the answers of Jesus, let us examine whose words the heart that tries to resolve its need makes us follow.

The demand to make stones into bread

Let us read verse 3. *"Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread'" (Matthew 4:3)*. The tempter, while making use of Jesus' hunger, demands that if He is the Son of God, He should try doing the act he has proposed. To the matter of obtaining what was needed, he attached the condition of proving that He is the Son.

Look carefully at this expression in the devil's words. In verse 3 he said, *"If You are the Son of God" (Matthew 4:3)*. It means that instead of accepting the Father's testimony as it is, he would confirm the power of the Son in the way he himself had decided. Jesus was under no obligation to accept that examination.

Also, the demand of verse 3 is *"command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3)*. The stones and the bread themselves are not the standard of judgment in the text. The problem is the demand to use His power according to the command of the tempter. Just because hunger is a real need, the words of the devil that exploit that need do not thereby become right.

When an urgent problem arises, we first weigh the possibility of solving it. But we must distinguish what we can do from what

we ought to do. Even if the thought comes that we could reduce our loss by telling a lie, the fact that we can gain a profit does not make the lie right. Even while looking at our need, we must first ask the will of God.

Jesus did not argue about whether stones could be changed into bread. Verse 4 begins, *"But He answered and said, 'It is written'" (Matthew 4:4)*. The answer of Jesus does not accept the standard the tempter set, but makes the written word the basis of judgment.

This order is necessary for our judgment as well. If we first decide on a method that will work out well and later look for Bible verses to support it, the attitude of listening to the word is turned upside down. The choices we must make at home or at work must also be examined by this standard. While we look at what is needed and what is possible, we must make clear before the word whether doing that thing is an act of obedience to God.

What man lives by

Let us read the answer of verse 4. *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)*. Jesus made clear the basis on which man lives. It means that the whole of a person's life cannot be explained by obtaining food alone.

Here He did not command us not to eat bread. In verse 4 He said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matthew 4:4)*. When bread becomes the only standard, the thought follows that one may do anything to obtain it. Jesus frees us from that limited judgment and makes us look to every word God has spoken.

In the same verse He said, *"By every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)*. It does not mean that we

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should pick out and believe only a few words that can be used to our advantage at the moment of need. It is an answer that we must acknowledge that God governs our life and live according to the will He has spoken.

In Jesus' answer, there is the faith that man lives as one who belongs to God. Even when He needed bread, He followed God's word. If we evaluate the value of obedience only by whether the immediate need was met, we miss the most important thing in the answer of Jesus.

Even while working and taking care of our livelihood, we can rely on the word. Laboring honestly, acknowledging our own limits, and seeking the help we need can go together with faith. However, we must not call right a choice that ignores the will of God for the reason that we have to maintain our livelihood.

If you have a need that is not yet resolved, bring that matter before God. At the same time, examine what demand you are about to accept because of that need. The scene in which Jesus answered with the written word keeps us from leaving an impatient heart to rule all our judgment.

The temptation that quotes the Bible

Verse 5 reports that the place changed. *"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple" (Matthew 4:5)*. The temptation that began in the wilderness continues on the pinnacle of the temple as well. The mere fact that one stands in a holy place does not make the demand heard there the will of God.

Let us read the first demand of verse 6. *"And said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down'" (Matthew 4:6)*.

The devil again makes being the Son the condition. This time he does not tell Him to resolve His hunger, but to bring about danger Himself and then confirm the protection of God.

The devil attached an expression from the Bible to that demand. In verse 6 he said, "'*He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone'" (Matthew 4:6)*. Even while speaking a sentence of the Bible, the devil himself decided the act he was trying to make Jesus do.

Here we learn that we cannot accept a claim merely because a Bible verse appears in it. We must examine what the person who quoted the word is actually demanding. We must discern whether it is an exhortation to rely on the protection of God or a demand to create danger deliberately in order to try to move God.

Distinguish the demand *"throw Yourself down" (Matthew 4:6)* of verse 6 from the word of promise. The person who believes the promise trusts the One who made the promise. Creating the conditions of a test with one's own hands and deciding that one will believe if God acts according to those conditions is a different order. If we do so, it is not the word of God that rules us, but we who try to judge the faithfulness of God.

Even when you hear some word within the church, examine, together with the verses quoted, the action to which that word leads. Do not stop judging merely because the Bible is used a great deal. Even at the moment the devil was quoting the word, Jesus clearly kept the will of the Father. Our standard, too, must be that will.

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The faith that does not tempt God

In verse 7 Jesus answers. *"Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God"'" (Matthew 4:7)*. The word about God's protection and the word not to tempt God do not contradict each other. The Son who trusts the Father has no need to throw Himself down in order to have the protection proved by force.

Pay attention to the word *"It is written again" (Matthew 4:7)* of verse 7. Jesus judged the devil's demand by another written word. We must not use one part of the word to suit our own purpose while turning away from the word that corrects that purpose. Believing the Bible is accompanied by the attitude of receiving its teaching as a whole.

The command in the same verse is clear. *"You shall not tempt the LORD your God" (Matthew 4:7)*. Jesus did not answer by throwing Himself down and then showing that He was unhurt. He refused the very act the tempter proposed. In this scene, refusing the word to throw Himself down was obedience.

There is no need to undertake dangerous things in order to show that one's faith is great. Nor is it always unbelief to be careful about what calls for care and to listen to the advice of others. If, while speaking of God's protection, we treat lightly the life and responsibility entrusted to us, we must reflect on whether that action is fitting to this command.

In prayer, too, we must throw away the attitude of trying to bind God to our own judgment. Do not set the condition that you will believe in God only if the result you want appears within a set time. We can bring our needs before God specifically, but the authority to govern the answer belongs to God. Acknowledging that authority is the attitude befitting trust.

Jesus' being the Son of God was not weakened by His refusing the devil's demand. Rather, in this answer we see the Son who obeys the Father. When you, too, are pressed to prove your faith, look first at the will God has already spoken rather than at the conditions the other party has set.

The deal that demanded worship

Let us read verses 8 and 9. *"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me'" (Matthew 4:8–9)*. After showing many things, the devil states the condition for obtaining them. The greater the glory set before our eyes, the more carefully we must listen to what is being demanded as the price.

The condition of verse 9 is *"if You will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9)*. Now the demand of the temptation is revealed as the question of before whom one will fall down. The devil was not asking Jesus for a small favor. He demanded that the worship that must be given to God be offered to himself.

In the same verse he promises, *"All these things I will give You" (Matthew 4:9)*. But we must not immediately acknowledge what the devil said he would give as his rightful possession. The text only reports the devil's proposal, and Jesus, rather than weighing the right and wrong of those words, first sets straight the object of worship.

The *"all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (Matthew 4:8)* of verse 8 is a great and splendid proposal. While calculating what profit we can gain, we can miss whose will we come to follow because of that profit. We must not accept a

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condition that goes against God for the reason that the outcome looks great and good. Even the purpose of doing great things in the name of faith cannot be a reason to change the object of worship.

In verse 10 Jesus commands the devil. *"Away with you, Satan!" (Matthew 4:10)*. He did not slightly modify the preceding proposal or demand better conditions. Because the worship to be given to God cannot be put up for a deal, He drove away the one making that demand.

Whatever it is you want to obtain, do not put it ahead of God. It is easy to think that after achieving something, you can go back to believing rightly. But whom you serve while doing that thing now is already the important question. A good plan for later does not make the wrong worship of the present right.

Serve God only

Let us read the written word of verse 10. *"You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew 4:10)*. There is a clear reason for Jesus' refusal. The One who is to receive worship and service is God. That object does not change according to who says he will give more.

In particular, the word *"Him only you shall serve" (Matthew 4:10)* does not permit the way of dividing one's heart and serving several masters. If we say we worship God while treating a demand contrary to His will as the final standard of our life, we must honestly ask whom we are actually obeying.

In the three temptations, the answers of Jesus are connected to one another. They are relying on the word of God, which makes man live, not tempting God, and worshiping God alone. We cannot pick one and ignore the rest. Jesus, who follows the

will of the Father, kept the same obedience in the face of the three demands.

The One who saved us is Jesus, who obeyed the Father in this way. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including our lifelong sins, transferred to Him once and for all, and bearing those sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place, and died, and He rose again from death. We receive the remission of sins not by our own experience of having won a victory but by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore, after reading this text, do not try first to prove your own strength. If you place the basis of being saved on how many times you have overcome temptation, that basis collapses every time you fail. Standing in faith in the Lord who saved us, we must listen to His answers and refuse a wrong demand when we recognize it.

If you have fallen, admit your wrong and return before the word. Do not interpret the Bible to suit your own convenience in order to hide your failure. The answers of Jesus expose the choices we were rationalizing and clearly teach what we must obey. We need to receive that teaching and correct today's actions.

After the tempter left

Verse 11 records the end of the event. *"Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him" (Matthew 4:11)*. The devil left, and angels came to Jesus. After reading the three demands, the devil may seem to hold great authority, but at the end of the text he is recorded as the one who leaves Jesus.

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In verse 6 the devil told Him to throw Himself down in order to confirm the protection of the angels. But what is recorded in verse 11 is *"angels came and ministered to Him" (Matthew 4:11)*. Jesus did not do the act the devil demanded. While obeying the Father, He did not rely on the devil's proposal.

The scene in which angels come after the devil has left clearly shows the end of the temptation. Jesus did not follow the devil's words to obtain protection, nor did He fall down before him to obtain glory. In the sight of the angels ministering to the Son of God, we see the honor of Jesus, who obeyed the Father.

Every day we hear different demands. If there is a demand to put the word aside in order to obtain what we need, a demand to tempt God in order to prove our faith, or a demand to change the object of worship for a great profit, we must judge it by the Lord's answers. Examine together the action being demanded and the reason for it.

Remember not only the fact that Jesus knows the word but the fact that He acted in accordance with that word. He did not follow the demand for bread, He did not throw Himself down from the temple, and He did not worship the devil. Our lips that quote the Bible and the actions we actually choose must not be at odds with each other either.

If you have been asking only whether a proposal puts you at an advantage, correct your judgment now. You must ask whose command it is and whom it makes you serve. The written word is the clear basis for that discernment. Following the obedience Jesus showed, choose what pleases God.

In the outcome *"Then the devil left Him" (Matthew 4:11)* of verse 11, we confirm the victory of Jesus. As the Father's beloved Son, He kept the will of the Father to the end. We who believe in Him are not bound by the tempter's evaluation, and we can hear and follow the word of the Lord who saved us.

The command that remains for us today is clear. As the word of verse 10 says, it is *"You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew 4:10)*. Even if there seems to be much to gain, do not change this command. The worship to be offered to God cannot be exchanged for any other profit. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The great light that shone on the people who sat in darkness

< Matthew 4:12–16 >

“Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.’”

The steps of Jesus that followed John’s arrest

In today’s text, the news that one man was arrested and the record that another Person moved His dwelling appear together. Jesus, who heard of John’s arrest, went to Galilee. It is easy to read this short record of a move and pass it by, but Matthew explains this event as one in which the word God had spoken before was fulfilled.

Let us read verse 12. *“Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee” (Matthew 4:12).*

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Jesus heard what had happened to John. And He departed to Galilee. Even at the time when hardship came upon John's work, the steps of Jesus were continuing.

The words *"John had been put in prison" (Matthew 4:12)* in verse 12 contain the hardship suffered by the one who was preaching the word of God. The fact that the man entrusted with God's work was seized does not mean that God's salvation was also seized by human hands. The deeds of Jesus that follow show that fact.

When a person we trusted can no longer work freely, we may feel that everything is over. But we must not regard the circumstances of the man entrusted with the word and the promise of God as the same thing. While not turning away from the suffering that has come upon a person, we must keep looking at the work God accomplishes.

The same verse records, *"He departed to Galilee" (Matthew 4:12)*. Matthew follows the movement of Jesus and tells what happened next. The meaning of these steps is made clear by the word of Isaiah that soon follows. To understand Jesus, we must read the event before our eyes together with the promise of the Bible.

This word makes us, who have heard difficult news, also set our eyes straight. We must not hastily decide a result we do not yet know, but remember the word God has already spoken. Let us look together at the order in the text, in which, after John's arrest is reported, the declaration that a great light has shone follows.

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Jesus, who went and dwelt in Capernaum

Let us read verse 13. *"And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali" (Matthew 4:13)*. Jesus left Nazareth and went to Capernaum. It is not a record that He looked at that place for a moment, but a record that He dwelt there. The Savior came to the place where people's lives were.

The words *"He came and dwelt in Capernaum" (Matthew 4:13)* in verse 13 connect the event of the light shining with an actual place. We cannot read this text as meaning that good thoughts came to people's minds. Jesus came to that land, and Matthew makes clear that His coming is the fulfillment of the promise.

Also, verse 13 says that Capernaum is a place *"by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali" (Matthew 4:13)*. The reason the place name is written in detail is that it is connected with the word that will be quoted next. Where Jesus dwelt and what kind of place God promised light to are meeting each other.

Do not regard the work of God saving people as only a far-off story. Jesus came to the land where people live and work. Faith does not stop at briefly getting away from the reality in which one lives and thinking of good words. It is hearing and believing who Jesus, who actually came, is.

If we look only at the fact that His dwelling changed, it looks like an ordinary move. But Matthew lets us see the faithfulness of God within that move. If we regard only the events that look big to the eye as the work of God, we may lightly pass over the concrete steps of Jesus, who fulfills the word.

Therefore, even when you read the place recorded in the text, look at Jesus, who came there. God sent the Savior He had promised to that land. The fact that Jesus dwelt in Capernaum is

connected with the news of the gospel that will now be heard. Through the work He does as He is among people, the will of God is revealed.

He fulfilled the word spoken through Isaiah

Verse 14 directly makes clear the meaning of this move. *"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying" (Matthew 4:14)*. The deeds of Jesus and the word of Isaiah are not apart from each other. The word God had spoken before was fulfilled by the coming of Jesus. This is the clear reason Matthew tells of this event.

The word *"that"* in verse 14 connects the event before it with the promise after it. We must not read His going to Galilee and dwelling in Capernaum separately, and read the word about light shining in darkness as a different story. The same coming of Jesus is shown from two sides, the event and the word.

In the word of Isaiah, the suffering that land went through and the work God would do are together. *"But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations –ASV" (Isaiah 9:1)*. It is a promise that God will make glorious the place that was formerly in distress. The present condition of the people does not determine God's final will.

Read the word that follows as well. *"The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined" (Isaiah 9:2)*. Darkness and the shadow of death are mentioned first, but the conclusion of the sentence is light. However deeply dark the

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situation the people are in may be, it cannot stop the work of God shining the light.

Matthew lets us know who the One who fulfills the promise is. The explanation in verse 14, *"It might be fulfilled" (Matthew 4:14)*, gathers our eyes to Jesus. The ground of the salvation that had been awaited lies not in the people's achievement of improving their own condition, but in Jesus, whom God sent.

It is for the same reason that we believe the promise of God. It is not that we say the promise is true because we have come to feel good. We believe the work God has actually accomplished through Jesus. Even when our present feelings rise and fall, we can settle our hearts on the ground of the salvation that has already been accomplished.

The grace He gave even to Galilee of the Gentiles

Let us read verse 15. *"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matthew 4:15)*. After several place names come the words Galilee of the Gentiles. The news of light that Matthew tells includes even the land that bears the name Gentile. Jesus fulfilled the word God had spoken toward that place.

Do not lightly pass over the call *"Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matthew 4:15)* in verse 15. It makes us look back on the heart that regards the grace of salvation as permitted only to those close to ourselves. God shone the light of salvation more widely than the range we regard as familiar.

The Gospel of John also testifies of Jesus as follows. *"That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (John 1:9)*. It does not limit the matter of receiving the light to the qualification of one's origin or family. Jesus, who

came into the world, is the true Light who gives light to every man. We, too, are people who need His grace.

The object God loved is the world. *"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)*. The love that gave the only begotten Son and the faith that believes in Him are connected. Boasting of what bloodline one belongs to cannot take the place of that faith. We must receive the Savior He sent.

Therefore, when we hear the gospel, we must throw away the thought that we are more deserving than others. The fact that we heard first is no reason to look down on those who heard later. We who read of the light that shone on Galilee of the Gentiles must rejoice in the will of God, who bestows grace.

We must remember this grace also when we think of the people to whom we will preach the gospel. Do not exclude people in advance for the reason that their culture is different from ours or that they knew nothing at all of the faith. Preaching the word so that people may know who Jesus is, is a matter of relying on the salvation God has given rather than on our ability to choose people.

The people who sat in darkness and the shadow of death

Let us read the first part of verse 16. *"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light" (Matthew 4:16)*. The Bible calls the former state of the people who saw the light darkness. What they needed was not to insist that they were not in the dark, but to see the light that shines.

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The expression that follows is even clearer. Verse 16 speaks of *"those who sat in the region and shadow of death" (Matthew 4:16)*. People have the problem of death. Because a person who is in sin cannot solve it by himself, a Savior is needed. The light the Lord shines is directed toward that desperate condition.

Do not use the word darkness to put other people down. We, too, were people who lived following our own judgment and greed without knowing the salvation of God. If, after coming to hear the gospel, we forget the past and ridicule others, we are not properly reckoning how great the grace bestowed on us is.

Also, being in the shadow of death cannot be reduced to merely meaning that one feels gloomy. Even on happy days, the problem of man's sin and death remains. If one thinks that a Savior is not needed for the reason that life has become comfortable, one is not looking at one's own condition as deeply as the Bible speaks of it.

The Gospel of John makes clear what is in Jesus. *"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4)*. The One who has life is the light of men. The more we know the reason the light is needed, the more we come to look at the life that is in Jesus rather than hide what we lack.

If you feel pain in your heart because of sin, do not lightly cover over that problem. Hearing the word of the Savior comes before dressing yourself up with the appearance of doing well. The promise that light has shone on the person who sat in the shadow of death gives hope to the one who admits his own condition of needing help.

The great light that shone first on the people

Let us read verse 16 again. *"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16)*. This sentence does not say that the people made light by their own strength. It declares that they saw the light and that the light shone. Because Jesus, whom God sent, came, new news was given to the people who were in darkness.

In verse 16, the *"great light" (Matthew 4:16)* is contrasted with the darkness of the people. The salvation God has given does not stop at a comfort that lets us forget sin for a while. It is a salvation that gives life to the person who is in sin and death. When we know what Jesus did, we come to know why that light is a great light.

Jesus, who came as the light to the people who sat in darkness, with the baptism He received from John had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. Bearing those sins that were passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place, died, and rose again from death. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who believe.

This salvation is not a reward for merit we piled up while enduring the darkness. It is the work Jesus accomplished for us. Even the person who knows his own wrongs and is afraid can hear and believe that gospel. Do not place the ground of your faith on the degree to which you have become clean, but on the salvation Jesus accomplished.

The word Jesus Himself spoke also makes this fact clear. *"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the*

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world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life'" (John 8:12). The light of life is in Jesus. To follow Him is to live, not holding on to the darkness of judging by one's own standards, but receiving the truth Jesus spoke.

The declaration in verse 16, *"Light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16)*, contains good news. Now the Savior can be known. Having heard of the One who accomplished salvation, do not conclude that there is no way at all for you. Do not make the darkness of your heart the final ground of your judgment, but believe the gospel that has been made known.

The faith that receives the One who came

We who have heard the fact that the light has shone must examine how we are treating Jesus. In the Gospel of John there is this record. *"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him" (John 1:10)*. The One who made the world was in the world, but people did not know Him. Being near and knowing rightly are distinguished from each other.

The word continues as follows. *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11)*. The relationship of being His own did not by itself produce receiving Him. Even if we have long heard words of faith and belong to a familiar gathering, we must believe in our hearts the salvation Jesus accomplished. We must not remain in familiarity.

The grace He gives to those who believe is clear. *"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)*. The right to become children of God is given to those who receive Jesus and believe in His name. Jesus, who saved us in

the gospel of the water and the Spirit made clear earlier, is the object of faith.

Do not stop at the fact that you know the name of Jesus. You must hear how He removed our sins, and receive that salvation as your own salvation. It is necessary to acknowledge that the power to save you, a sinner, is in Jesus, and to rely on that word.

The Gospel of John testifies of Jesus as the *"Light which gives light to every man" (John 1:9)*. When you hear the word, do not only watch other people's reactions, but look back on whether you yourself are receiving that word. The fact that your family believed first does not take the place of your own faith. You must receive in your heart the gospel that has come to you.

The record that Jesus came to Galilee sets up for us the ground of salvation rightly. It does not teach that a person can become light by himself, but makes us know the One who came as the light. What we have to boast of is not our ability to have gotten out of the darkness well, but the grace of Jesus, who came to find us.

Thanks given to God, who fulfilled the promise

Look at the place names of verse 15 and the people of verse 16 together. *"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali" (Matthew 4:15)*—to these specific names, the condition of the people who were sitting in darkness is connected. The salvation God promised did not remain a nameless idea but came upon actual people.

Among the promises of Isaiah, we can remember this expression. *"But in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations" (Isaiah 9:1)*. The past of the land that had suffered did not block

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the grace of God. We, too, have no reason to judge that we have been excluded from the salvation of Jesus because of our own past.

If the time before you knew Jesus was long, give thanks for the grace of having come to hear the gospel now. Rather than spending your heart on being ashamed in comparison with those who believed first, you must receive the word that has already been made known to you. Having seen the light God has shone, there is no need to keep dwelling on explaining only the darkness.

The person who believes the gospel does not carelessly give up even when he sees the dark condition of another person. It is not because of a confidence that he can change that person. It is because he knows who the Savior is. He can calmly preach the word that came to him, and set his heart on having the other person hear that gospel as well.

At this time, our words must not become words that boast of our own group. Just as Jesus, who came to Galilee, was more important than the name of Galilee, Jesus must also be clear in what is preached through us. We must make it known how He accomplished salvation, rather than who has believed longer.

The news with which today's text began was that John had been seized. But the word heard at the end is the declaration that the light has shone. Even in the midst of human hardship, God accomplished what He had promised. Do not judge the faithfulness of God by one piece of difficult news either.

The explanation in verse 14, *"It might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet" (Matthew 4:14)*, gives us certainty. God is not One who left only the word behind. He sent Jesus and fulfilled that word. We who believe in the salvation that has been accomplished can rely on Him even in today's circumstances.

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. On those who were in the shadow of death, light has shone. We give thanks to God, who has bestowed this grace. Holding on to that salvation which Jesus came and accomplished, let us walk looking not at the darkness but at the light. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Return, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand

< Matthew 4:17 >

“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

The word Jesus began to preach

When we hear words telling us to look back on our wrongs, we come to think of the past. But the repentance Jesus proclaimed also contains what God is doing now. Today’s one verse conveys together the command to repent and the news that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It tells us not only what we must leave but also to whom we must return.

Let us read verse 17. *“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 4:17)*. The One who speaks is Jesus. He did not gather people’s opinions and set the direction of faith. Jesus Himself proclaimed the news of the kingdom of heaven and demanded a response from those who heard.

The words *“From that time Jesus began to preach” (Matthew 4:17)* in verse 17 announce a new beginning in the work of Jesus. The preceding verses recorded His coming to Galilee, and here the text lets us hear the word He preaches. Those who have come to know of the coming of Jesus must now listen to His word.

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You too, do not separate hearing about Jesus from hearing the word Jesus speaks. You cannot say that you respect Him while regarding the repentance He commands as something that has nothing to do with you. Before we look far away for the people who need that command, the text calls us to respond ourselves.

Standing before the command to repent

In verse 17, Jesus says, *"Repent" (Matthew 4:17)*. It is a command that makes clear that people need to change direction. It is not right to keep following the way we have lived until now merely because it is familiar. We must admit the heart and the way that go against God's will and turn back.

When a wrong we have done comes to mind, a feeling of shame may arise. But harboring a distressed heart for a long time is not in itself the purpose of repentance. If we have admitted a wrong, we must turn away from the judgment that called that wrong right. We must abandon the attitude of hiding our own sins or shifting the blame to others, and receive the word of God.

Jesus made clear the purpose of His coming as follows. *"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32)*. The One who calls sinners to repent is Jesus. Therefore, there is no reason for a person who has realized his sin to stay hidden, avoiding Jesus. He must listen to the word of the One who calls him and return to Him.

Do not think of repentance as something needed only by other people. We may point out others' wrongs precisely while explaining our own wrongs only by saying that there were circumstances. But the command of Jesus has been given to us

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as well. We must not make admitting our own sins before God depend on others' reactions or on the size of the wrong.

The One to whom we must return is God

Repentance is not fully explained only by what we leave. Where we return to must be clear. If, after abandoning a wrong faith, we set up yet another standard of our own, we still end up making our own judgment the basis of salvation. Those who have heard the proclamation of Jesus must return to God and accept His will.

In the testimony of the apostles as well, the object of repentance appears together with faith. *"Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21)*. Both Jews and Greeks had to return to God. There was no different way of salvation depending on one's origin; faith in Jesus Christ was needed.

Examine honestly what you have been relying on. If you have regarded being recognized by people as if it were the basis for being counted righteous by God, you must turn back from that thought. If you have thought that the time or devotion you put into your faith removes your own sins, you must correct that judgment by the word of the One who saves.

To speak of returning to God is connected with speaking of accepting the will of God. It is to believe that Jesus, whom God sent, is our Savior, and to rely on the salvation He has accomplished. We cannot respond to the command of Jesus by saying that we have come near to God while insisting on our own will.

The reason: the kingdom of heaven is at hand

After the command, Jesus speaks of its reason. It is *"the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17)* in verse 17. The reason we must repent is that the kingdom God rules has come near. The Savior has come and is preaching this news; we cannot continue the rebellion we have kept up until now.

When you hear the news of the kingdom of heaven, do not think only about when your own life will become comfortable. If we speak of the kingdom of God yet leave every judgment to our own greed, it becomes unclear whose rule we are seeking. The kingdom Jesus proclaimed calls us to accept the will of God.

The proclamation of Jesus is recorded in the Gospel of Mark as well. *"And saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:15)*. Repentance and believing in the gospel are connected. We must not stay where we are, only checking our own feelings as to whether we have repented enough; we must turn our hearts to the gospel Jesus preaches.

The news that it is at hand makes us give the response we have been putting off. Do not put it off, saying that you will believe once your circumstances are better, even while hearing the word of God. The thought of going to the Savior only after first settling all of one's own problems is an attitude of putting off responding to the news of salvation that has already been given.

The gospel the one who repents is to believe

A sinner who has heard the command to return must know how Jesus saved him. Admitting one's own wrong and removing

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that sin are not the same. The basis of salvation on which the one who has admitted his wrong is to rely lies in the work Jesus accomplished rather than in the fact that his regret is deep.

Jesus, who proclaimed that we should repent, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Bearing that sin that was passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place and died, and rose again from death. We who have repented and returned believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins, and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

That is why the apostle preached that people should turn back and have their sins removed. *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19)*. Because the way to have the problem of sin solved is open, he urges them to return. What the one who admits his sin needs is not endless self-punishment but faith that believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished.

When you think of your sins, your heart may be heavy. At that time, do not judge that your own sins are greater than the salvation of Jesus. You must believe that your own sins are also included in all the sins of the world mentioned earlier. Respond to the command to return with faith that relies on the Savior.

Acting according to the word received in the heart

Even those who have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must live correcting their own judgment before the word of God. When you come to know that you were wrong, abandon the attitude of only making excuses and admit it. This

is not piling up works in order to obtain salvation; it is the response needed for a saved person to live according to the will of God.

If we come to know that we have told a lie to someone, we must admit the wrong and set it right according to the facts. If an attitude of despising others has been exposed, we must not put that person down further in order to protect our own position. That the direction of the heart is turned toward God shows itself in concrete relationships and words as well.

Even so, do not let your own change take the place of the basis of the remission of sins. On the day you have acted rightly, you must rely on the salvation of Jesus, and on the day your shortcomings have been exposed, you must admit your wrong before that gospel. Believing in grace and taking wrong lightly are different. Treasure the will of the One who saved you.

The One who gave the command in verse 17 is still identified by the word *"Jesus."* The final standard that sets our lives right is not an appearance that looks good to people. It is the word Jesus spoke. Rather than winning others' praise, we must act while examining whether it is in keeping with that word.

Respond now to the news you have heard

Today we have heard, in one verse, a command and its reason. Jesus told us to repent, and He proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Do not separate these two words. Because we have heard the gracious news of God, we have come to know where to return, and because that news is true, we cannot put off our response.

If you have still been holding on to your own righteousness, accept the salvation of Jesus. If you have admitted your wrong

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yet have not been able to come to the Savior, now believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If, in the familiarity of your life of faith, you have put your own will first, receive again the will God has spoken. The word you have heard today is the word that calls you.

Let us receive the proclamation of verse 17 in our hearts. *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17)*. Jesus came near and let us hear the news of salvation. Turn back the heart that insisted its own stubbornness was right, and return by faith to Jesus, who saved us. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who called them, makes them fishers of men

< Matthew 4:18–22 >

“And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”

He saw the brothers who were working

The lives of four people who were working by the Sea of Galilee were changed by the calling of Jesus. There is the word given to Simon and Andrew, and there is the action with which James and John responded. Jesus saw them and called them, and they followed Jesus. Today’s text shows this calling and response in two scenes.

Let us read verse 18. *“And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen” (Matthew 4:18)*. Simon and Andrew were casting a net. Jesus

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saw what work they were doing. To those who were in the midst of their daily toil, the word of Jesus was given.

Verse 18 introduces the two as *"two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother" (Matthew 4:18)*. The name and the relationship of each person are clear. The calling of Jesus was not a vague ideal but a word that people who were actually living their lives had to hear and respond to.

They were fishermen who cast a net into the sea. The explanation in verse 18, *"They were fishermen" (Matthew 4:18)*, makes us understand the promise He would make next. Speaking to them of the work familiar to them, Jesus lets them know for whom and what work they will now do.

In this scene, the One who acted first is Jesus. He walked along the shore, saw the people, and spoke. As you read of the calling, do not look only at the decision of the people as something great. At the starting point of their coming to follow, there is Jesus, who came to them and spoke.

We, too, must hear the word of Jesus before thinking only about what work we ourselves can accomplish. We cannot decide all of our future life by the work we presently do or the ability we have alone. When we know what the Lord wants, we can rightly judge where to use that ability and for whom to live.

The calling that says "Follow Me"

Let us read verse 19. *"Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men'" (Matthew 4:19)*. In this word, the command to follow and the promise that He will make them so are together. The two had to follow the One who gave this word. Following Jesus and becoming fishers of men are connected to each other.

The first word of verse 19 is *"Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19)*. The One to be followed is clear. The life of a disciple cannot be explained only by a resolution to do many good things. A disciple is a person who learns the will that Jesus teaches and acts according to that will.

If a person who has heard that word keeps insisting only on his own way, he goes against the direction of the calling. We cannot hope for Jesus to be present only as One who helps our own plans. Since the One who calls is Jesus, we must examine our plans, too, according to His will and change what needs to be changed.

Jesus later clearly told His disciples the attitude of following. Let us read chapter 16, verse 24. *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me'" (Matthew 16:24)*. Denying oneself is connected with laying down the judgment one has always insisted is right and following the word of Jesus.

Therefore, we must not, while saying that we follow the Lord, try to be with Him only when our own will is accepted. There are times when the direction of what we were going to do must be corrected, and times when we must take on labor we do not want to do. What is needed then is the judgment of whether it is fitting to the will of the Lord, rather than the judgment of whether it suits our mood.

If you already believe the gospel, keep listening to what you must learn from the Lord. The fact that you know salvation does not mean that all your judgments are already right. Realizing your own greed and correcting your choices according to the will the Bible makes clear also belongs to the life of following Jesus.

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I will make you

Look at the subject of the promise in verse 19. *"I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19)*. Jesus said that He would establish them that way. We do not have to accept becoming a disciple as a task that must be completed by our own talent alone. There is work that the One who called will do.

The words of verse 19, *"I will make you" (Matthew 4:19)*, connect the working of the Lord and the lives of the disciples together. It is not that the need to follow disappears because Jesus does it. The Lord uses those who respond to the command to follow. We must obey, relying on His promise.

When we know the fact that our own ability is lacking, it is easy to be discouraged. But do not calculate from the start, by your own ability alone, the work the Lord said He would do. We can follow the will of the Lord while learning what we must learn and fulfilling the work entrusted to us. The promise that Jesus establishes the disciples is the basis of that labor.

Jesus also said to His disciples as follows. *"Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5)*. The fruit of a disciple does not come about apart from the Lord. Rather than boasting of what we can do, we must examine on whom we rely while doing that work.

Following the Lord is not accomplished of itself merely by the name of having been entrusted with the work. The more familiar we become with the work we have taken on, the easier it is to push ahead according to our own thoughts. We must look again at the purpose of the gospel and the teaching of the Bible, and reflect on whether we are doing the work the Lord wants.

Also, do not be bound to comparing your own talent when you see others bearing fruit. The One who establishes us is the same Lord. Rather than envying the work of others and putting

off present obedience, what is needed is to follow the will of the Lord in the work entrusted to you.

A new mission for people

In the promise of verse 19, a new object appears. It is *"fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19)*. It means that He would establish those who had been catching fish as workers who preach the gospel to people. Their labor is now connected with other people hearing and believing the salvation of Jesus.

The expression of catching men is not a permission to make people one's own possession. The disciple whom Jesus called must lead people to Jesus. If he pours his interest into making people follow his own name or increasing his own influence, he loses the mission given by the One who called.

The apostle explained the person who preaches the gospel as follows. *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?" (1 Corinthians 3:5)*. Even the minister who causes people to believe serves as the Lord has given. The person who has come to believe through him does not make the minister his savior, but believes in Jesus, who is the Lord of the gospel he has received.

Jesus, who called the fishermen, 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, and bearing that sin that was passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place and died, and rose again from death. What we are to believe and preach is this gospel of the water and the Spirit. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

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Therefore, interest in people also carries with it the responsibility of what to preach. We must not look only at whether the listener likes us, but examine whether he has come to know properly the salvation Jesus accomplished. Along with a kind attitude, the accurate content of the gospel is needed. That is serving souls.

Even when others do not respond right away, do not press only for your own results. The apostle said, *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6)*. We rely on God while doing the labor of preaching and caring. We must faithfully preach the word, not trying to move people's hearts according to our own will.

The two brothers who immediately left their nets and followed

Let us read verse 20. *"They immediately left their nets and followed Him" (Matthew 4:20)*. At the calling of Jesus, the two brothers actually moved. They did not stop at hearing the word and judging it to be good words. They left their nets and followed Jesus.

The word *"immediately"* in verse 20 conveys that response briefly and clearly. What is recorded is the fact that they responded to the calling, rather than what calculations went back and forth in the hearts of the two. Seeing the action that obeyed the word of Jesus, we, too, can reflect on how we treat the word we have heard.

The same verse says, *"Left their nets" (Matthew 4:20)*. The nets were the tools of the work they had been using until a moment before. They put the calling of Jesus before continuing

the work familiar to them. The One who called now determined their steps.

When you read this scene, do not calculate only the size of what was left behind. The conclusion of verse 20 is *"followed Him" (Matthew 4:20)*. The purpose is not completed by the fact alone that they gave something up. The fact that the One they followed was Jesus reveals the meaning of that choice.

We, too, can remain in the boast that we have laid down some work. But if, while saying that we follow the Lord, we hold up our past renunciation and demand our own will, we put ourselves at the center again. What matters is whether we are even now hearing the word of Jesus and following His will.

If you have heard the word and come to know what must be changed, do not vaguely put it off until later. Even while doing the work entrusted to you faithfully, you can lay down what you have been holding on to for your own greed. As much as you have come to know the will of Jesus, it is necessary to clearly determine the obedience you will practice today.

He also called the brothers who were mending their nets

Let us read verse 21. *"Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them" (Matthew 4:21)*. After calling the first two brothers, Jesus also saw other brothers. James and John were mending their nets in the boat with their father. There, too, the calling of the same Lord came.

Verse 21 begins with *"Going on from there" (Matthew 4:21)*. Jesus kept walking and called others, too. The company of

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disciples is not made by the achievement of one person. Jesus calls each person and makes them follow together.

The first two were casting a net, and the latter two were mending their nets. The record in verse 21, *"Mending their nets. He called them" (Matthew 4:21)*, shows that difference as it is. Even at a moment when the work they did was different, Jesus saw and spoke. The One who called is the same.

The fact that the brothers were with their father is also recorded. It is the expression in verse 21, *"In the boat with Zebedee their father" (Matthew 4:21)*. These were not people who were alone in a place without relationships. People who were living within the relationships of family and work received the calling of the Lord.

To follow the calling is to put the word of Jesus first in life and relationships. Continuing to live in the same way with familiar people cannot be the only standard of judgment. When we come to know the will God wants, we must put our lives in order according to that will.

In the church, too, we must follow the Lord together while looking after the circumstances of each person. Rather than demanding that the way we ourselves responded must appear the same in everyone, we must make clear what the will of the Lord is that we must obey together. Ignoring the circumstances of others is not evidence of following the Lord well.

Leaving the boat and their father and following Jesus

Let us read verse 22. *"And immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him" (Matthew 4:22)*. James and John also responded to the calling. Before, it records that they left

their nets and followed; here, that they left the boat and their father and followed. At the end of both scenes there is the action of following Jesus.

The words of verse 22, *"Left the boat and their father" (Matthew 4:22)*, show that this calling demanded an actual choice. The boat was the place where they worked, and their father was the family member who did that work with them. The word of Jesus, who called them, demanded a response in this way in the midst of concrete daily life. The two brothers put the word of Jesus first and moved their steps.

We confirm the purpose of that choice again in verse 22. *"Followed Him" (Matthew 4:22)*. We must not lose the purpose of following Jesus and boast of the leaving itself. We, too, must make clear whom we are trying to follow when we make a decision. We cannot justify, in the name of the Lord, a choice to live as we please.

The forms of service entrusted to us today differ from one another. *"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function" (Romans 12:4)*. Even if we believe the same gospel, not everyone takes on the same work. There is no need to regard the work entrusted to oneself lightly, or to regard only the work of others as important.

Even within that difference, there is a reason we serve together. *"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Romans 12:5)*. We are not people who work in order to establish each our own name. Connected to one another in Christ, we serve. Following the will of the Lord requires an attitude of fulfilling the work we have taken on and cooperating with the labor of others.

Do not close your heart because you were not entrusted with the work you wanted. Learn what you can learn, and faithfully take part in the work to which you can add your strength. Also,

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speak honestly of your limits and look for a way to take it on together. When we keep together the purpose of following the Lord, we can value one another's labor.

Serving in reliance on the promise of the One who called

As we close the text, remember together the two words of verse 19. He said, *"Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19)*, and He said, *"I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19)*. We who hear the command must also rely on the promise. The life of following the Lord and serving people comes from His calling.

It is not that we are trying to buy salvation with the service we do. The Bible makes clear, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8)*. The person who believes the salvation received by grace lives according to the will of the One who bestowed that grace. We must not reverse the order of salvation and service.

The Bible also explains the life of a person saved by grace. *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10)*. God created us to walk in the work He wants. Rather than living without any purpose while keeping the grace of salvation only for ourselves, we must hear and do what the One who gave that grace wants.

As we serve people, there are times when there is no result immediately visible. At such times, do not decide whether or not to stop the labor by your own satisfaction alone. We must rely on the Lord while examining what content we are preaching and

with what attitude we are helping. The genuineness of the gospel is not determined by the speed of the response.

Also, when you have seen fruit, give thanks to the One who called. It is as the apostle's word says: *"So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7)*. There is no need to deny our own labor, but we cannot usurp the glory to be given to God, who works in people's hearts. The thanks that we have done the work entrusted to us must come before boasting.

The fact that all four followed Jesus also gives direction to us who serve together. Though the names and roles of each differ, the One to be followed is one. Reduce your insistence on your own way, and gather your strength around the will Jesus wants. When you do so, the purpose of the labor done together becomes clear.

Think today of the work entrusted to you and the people you meet. If you have an opportunity to explain the gospel, preach its content clearly, and if you can help someone's labor, help faithfully. There is no need to exaggerate your ability, nor to regard a small work as worthless. You have only to serve in obedience to the will of the Lord.

Jesus, who called the brothers in Galilee, clearly gave them the One to follow and the purpose of life. We who believe that calling, too, let us lay down the judgment that followed our own greed and serve according to the will of Jesus. The One who establishes us as workers who preach the gospel to people is Jesus, who saved us and called us. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who taught, preached, and healed

< Matthew 4:23–25 >

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.”

Going about all Galilee

Today’s passage conveys what Jesus did in Galilee with three verbs. He taught, He preached, and He healed. It then says that the fame of Jesus spread, that people brought the sick, and that great multitudes followed. Let us look together at what Jesus did and at the movement of the people who came to Him.

Let us read verse 23. *“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23)*. The subject of all these works is Jesus. Jesus went about, preached the word, and healed the weak. Matthew first shows the work of Jesus that

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people came to seek, rather than the phenomenon of people gathering.

The expression *"went about all Galilee" (Matthew 4:23)* in verse 23 tells us the scope of His work. Jesus went to many places and met people. He did not let only the people of one place hear the news; He went about so that the people of those places might hear the word concerning the kingdom of God.

In these steps there is concern for people. Jesus did not remain as One who only explained from afar the lives we are in. He went to where the people were and taught and healed. The fact that the Lord came near to those who needed help is contained in this short record.

The record of His work that appears later shows the same picture. Let us read chapter 9, verse 35. *"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matthew 9:35)*. The same teaching, proclaiming, and healing continue in many cities and villages. We can know what Jesus regarded as important as He worked among the people.

When we want to know Jesus, too, we must look at these three works together. Do not pick out only one conspicuous work and make an image of Jesus that you want. We must hear the word He teaches, receive the gospel He preaches, and see the mercy He showed to those who were suffering.

Our concern in serving people must also be concrete. We must not stop at vaguely having a heart that wants to be of help to many people; we must look into which person needs to hear the word now. The labor of drawing near and making time in order to know that person's questions and circumstances is needed.

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What we should look at first in today's passage is not the number of how many people followed. It is the fact of whom they came to. When we know what Jesus did, we can also rightly understand the reason great multitudes gathered. Therefore, let us first listen closely to the teaching of Jesus.

The word He taught in the synagogues

The first work to examine in verse 23 is *"teaching in their synagogues" (Matthew 4:23)*. In the work of Jesus there was teaching. He did not leave people to judge God and salvation by their own thoughts alone, but preached the word they needed to hear. For those who met the Lord, there was the word to learn.

A person who receives teaching must not listen only to confirm what he already knows. When something he has known wrongly is revealed, he must accept it and correct it. Even words of faith he has long been accustomed to thinking must be examined as to whether they agree with the meaning of the Bible. In hearing the word of Jesus, such an attitude of wanting to learn is needed.

In the passage, the word of Jesus and His healing of the sick cannot be separated. It is important that those who came out seeking help come to know the will of the One who teaches. We, too, must not look only at whether the problem we wanted solved has been solved; we must know who He is and what He tells us to believe.

The purpose for which the Bible recorded the deeds of Jesus is also clear. *"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)*. It is so that, through the things recorded, we may believe that Jesus is the Christ and have

life. Rather than the memory of having seen amazing things, we must go forward to the faith that knows the One who did those things.

We can apply the word *"teaching" (Matthew 4:23)* in verse 23 to our own attitude as well. Do not think, just because you have heard the gospel, that you have no need to listen to explanations. If there is a word you have not understood, you must ask, and you must learn by confirming according to the Bible even what you think you know.

Those who preach the gospel also have the responsibility of teaching. They must not end with expressing their own feelings of being moved; they must explain so that the hearer can understand the content. They must clearly preach what the remission of sins is and how Jesus accomplished it. An attitude of waiting so that the one who has heard can ask questions again is also needed.

Learning the word is not a matter of competing with others in knowledge. It is a matter of rightly knowing the Savior on whom one is to rely and living according to His will. If, with what one has learned, one only points out the shortcomings of others, one misses the purpose of receiving teaching. One must first believe and follow that word oneself.

Preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven

The work that follows in verse 23 is *"preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23)*. Jesus proclaimed the good news that God gives. He did not end His work with suffering people being comforted for a moment and dispersing. He let them hear the gospel concerning the kingdom of God.

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We can see this in connection with what He proclaimed just before. In verse 17 He said, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17)*. A person must turn from insisting on his own will and return to God. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven calls people to believe in the Savior and accept the will of God.

Jesus Himself also spoke of the reason He went to other cities. *"But He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent'" (Luke 4:43)*. Preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God is connected with the purpose for which He was sent. The gospel that people are to hear and believe is at the center of the work of Jesus.

We who have heard this gospel must know Jesus, who solved the problem of sin. Jesus, who preached the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, 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, and bearing that sin which had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place, and died, and He rose again from death. We believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

If you have come to seek the Lord because of the difficulties of life, take that opportunity to receive the word of salvation into your heart as well. You can tell Him what it is that is troubling you now. At the same time, you must hear and believe how the deeper problem of sin has been solved. Jesus has the clear gospel of salvation for us to believe.

The words *"the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23)* in verse 23 turn people toward God. We must not, while claiming to preach the gospel, raise only our own influence or the fame of

our gathering. The purpose is to make people know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe in Jesus. We must examine by this standard what we are preaching.

When the gospel is clear, we can preach to a person in suffering, too, something he can actually rely on. Instead of only repeating words telling him to take heart, we can explain that Jesus saved him, with even that person's sins included. Without rashly interpreting the difficulty he is in, we can still let him hear the sure news of salvation.

Healing all kinds of sickness and disease

Let us read the last work in verse 23. *"Healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people" (Matthew 4:23)*. Jesus looked after the suffering of the people. The sick and the weak were not pushed out of His work. To them the power and mercy of Jesus were revealed.

Verse 24 records their circumstances in more detail. They were those *"who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics" (Matthew 4:24)*. They were not people with only one kind of problem. People in different sufferings from one another were brought to Jesus.

Verse 24 clearly conveys what He did with them. *"He healed them" (Matthew 4:24)*. Jesus did not merely feel sorry in words when He saw the suffering; He actually healed them. This healing recorded in the passage is a work that reveals the power of Jesus.

Later, the Lord told those who asked about His work to tell it as follows. Let us read chapter 11, verses 4 and 5. *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which*

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you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them'" (Matthew 11:4–5). The healing of the sick and the preaching of the gospel are mentioned together. He let people know who Jesus is from the works He did.

Also, the heart with which Jesus looked at the multitudes is recorded. Let us read chapter 9, verse 36. *"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36)*. Jesus saw the people who were suffering hardship. The reason we must not be indifferent to the difficulties people go through when we deal with them can also be learned from this heart of the Lord.

When you read the expression *"all kinds of disease" (Matthew 4:23)* in verse 23, do not boast only of your own strength. The Lord saw the needs of the weak and healed them with His power. Drawing near to those whose weakness has been revealed and looking after their needs is fitting to the mercy the Lord showed.

The sicknesses and torments in the passage are sufferings that real people went through. If we read them all only by turning them into symbols of some defect of faith, we pass over the pain of the people Jesus healed. Believing in the Lord who actually healed, we today must also listen seriously to the suffering people go through.

At the same time, we have the responsibility to preach the gospel to those who are distressed because of sin. Remembering the event in which Jesus healed the sicknesses of the flesh, we help souls with the word of the remission of sins. If someone thinks he cannot be saved because of his sins, we must step by

step make known to him the gospel of the Savior who bore those sins as well.

The fame of Jesus that spread as far as Syria

Let us read the first part of verse 24. *"Then His fame went throughout all Syria" (Matthew 4:24)*. The news of what He did in Galilee spread to Syria as well. People came to hear the news about Jesus, and that news led to the action of bringing the suffering to Jesus.

"His fame" (Matthew 4:24) in verse 24 is the fame concerning Jesus. What draws attention is not someone's ability to spread words well, but what Jesus actually did. When we preach the gospel, too, we must not stop at the hearer remembering us but make him come to know Jesus.

The same verse says that this fame went *"throughout all Syria" (Matthew 4:24)*. The news reached even places that had not directly seen the works of Jesus. It is important to make it known so that others can hear. Instead of being satisfied with knowing that word by ourselves alone, we must think of those who have not yet heard.

However, what we preach must agree with what Jesus actually did. If we add things that did not happen in order to make people show interest, the hearers come to have wrong expectations. Simply by clearly preaching the salvation and the words of Jesus recorded in the Bible, we can preach the true good news.

The Gospel of John records that Jesus did many signs. *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book" (John 20:30)*. And it goes on to make clear that the purpose of the record is faith and life.

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When we speak of the works of Jesus, too, we must make it so that the hearers know and believe in the Christ.

If you have been given an opportunity to preach the gospel, explain it with the word you know for certain. Explain the expressions the other person does not understand, and confirm together from the Bible what you do not know. Rather than the labor of making words that sound amazing, the labor of clearly conveying truthful content is needed.

The people who brought the sick

Let us read verse 24. *"Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them" (Matthew 4:24)*. Here there are not only the sick but also the people who brought them. Those who heard the news about Jesus brought to Him those who needed help. They went forward from knowing the news to the action of actually helping.

When we look at the words *"they brought to Him all sick people" (Matthew 4:24)* in verse 24, we can see that this is not a scene in which only the sick moved by themselves. Someone knew another person's suffering and moved together with him. Here is the work of knowing what a person in difficulty needs and actually helping.

The word *"brought"* in the same verse shows the direction of that labor. The One who heals is Jesus, and the people brought them to Him. It is not that one can do the work of helping only if one solves every problem by one's own strength. The labor of going forward together so that someone can receive help is also important.

In another event, it is recorded that four men carried a paralytic and came to Jesus. *"Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men" (Mark 2:3)*. They took on together a task that was hard to do alone. When we think of the action of bringing, which today's passage conveyed briefly, we can understand more concretely the fact that people labor for people.

Today we, too, can help someone hear the gospel. We can let him know of opportunities to encounter the word, read it together with him, and help him at his side so that he can ask about the parts he has not understood. Do not think that you can begin only if you yourself can explain everything well. It is enough to faithfully add the help needed so that the other person may come to know Jesus.

At this time, we must not treat the other person as our own achievement. The suffering person has circumstances and questions. If we press only for the response we want without listening to those circumstances, we may miss the help that is actually needed. Remembering that the Lord regards that person as precious, be patient and serve him with the word.

At the end of verse 24 it says again, *"He healed them" (Matthew 4:24)*. The labor of the people was connected to coming to Jesus, and Jesus healed. We, too, must rejoice in the grace that someone has come to hear the word of the Lord rather than boasting that we helped him. Helping that person hear and believe the word of salvation is the purpose of our labor.

The multitudes that followed Jesus from many places

Let us read verse 25. *"Great multitudes followed Him—from*

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Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan" (Matthew 4:25). The names of many places appear in one sentence. People followed not only from nearby Galilee but also from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. Through the work of Jesus, people from different places gathered to Him.

The record *"Great multitudes followed Him" (Matthew 4:25)* in verse 25 shows a great response to His work. Even without listing all of who among these multitudes was in what circumstances, we can know the fact that various kinds of people sought Jesus. The One they all needed in common was Jesus.

Look at the range *"from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan" (Matthew 4:25)* that appears in verse 25. We must not think that only the people of the place we belong to are the objects of the Lord's concern. People who have lived in circumstances different from ours also need the gospel. Rather than what background a person has, we must first look at what he needs to hear.

Looking at the multitudes that gathered, we must also ask ourselves. Are gathering after hearing words about Jesus and believing in Him as the Savior taking place together within us? If we have been given the opportunity to hear the word, we must receive into our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit made clear earlier. The fact that one is among people does not take the place of one's own faith.

Remember to the end the subject *"Jesus"* in verse 23. The One who taught, preached, and healed is Jesus. Our interest in Him must not turn into admiration for human fame or scale. Both when we receive help and rejoice, and when many people gather and are amazed, we must keep listening to what word Jesus preaches.

Beside us, too, there may be someone who is struggling alone and not hearing the word. If you have thought of him, look into what would actually be of help. You can look back on whether you have been putting off listening on the grounds of being busy, or whether you have been missing opportunities to explain the gospel. Serving concretely, following the mercy the Lord has shown, is needed.

Jesus went about among the people, taught the word, preached the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and healed those who were suffering. We who believe in Him can clearly preach the word of salvation and add our hearts and labor for those who need help. Let us do the help we can so that that person may hear the gospel of Jesus today. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

We must live by faith

< Matthew 4:1–11 >

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: “He shall give His angels charge over you,” and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God.”’ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.”’ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”

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Jesus, who passed the three temptations

Our Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River and had all our sins transferred to Him, and then passed the three temptations of Satan the devil in order to do the work of salvation. And He bore those sins, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so accomplished our salvation. By receiving these three temptations from Satan the devil under the permission of God the Father and passing them, Jesus clearly told us saints and the servants of God who do His work how we must live after receiving salvation.

The first temptation Jesus received was the temptation of bread. The Bible says of Jesus, *"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry" (Matthew 4:2)*. Because He had fasted day and night, He was very hungry. Then Satan the devil appeared and tempted Him, saying, *"If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3)*. It was a temptation that said, since He was the Son of God, He could surely do so, and so He should do so.

The reason Jesus was tempted by Satan the devil was that He had a human body. Satan the devil knew that, because Jesus had fasted forty days and had a body, this part was His weak point, and so he tempted this part. As for what the greatest weak point was for Jesus, who had come to this earth clothed in the flesh and had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, it was precisely that He had a body. Because Jesus, too, was clothed in a human body, He felt hunger. So when He fasted, the hardest thing was hunger. The devil tempted Him by seizing precisely that opening. "Are You not the Son of God? I know it, too. If You are the Son of God, make these stones become bread and eat. If You are God, what could You not do? If You make bread and eat it, will You not live?"

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But our Lord resisted Satan the devil with the written word. *“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’” (Matthew 4:4)*. Speaking in this way, He drove Satan the devil away. Dear fellow believers, this means that you and I must live by faith in God. If we live without believing in God, this is the very first problem we run into. Just as Satan the devil knew this well, we born-again saints also have a weak point, and that is precisely the problem of food, clothing, and shelter. Because Satan the devil knows that weak point well, he comes challenging us at this point, and with this he tries to tear down our faith. “If only you have bread, won’t you live? Make bread and eat it. You’re hungry, aren’t you? Isn’t bread what you need right now? Bread alone is enough.” In this way Satan the devil leads us to go toward bread, toward material things, and to live trusting in material things.

In reality, what does Satan the devil tempt us with most in our lives? ‘Now that I have been saved, how shall I live from now on? If I go to church and listen to the word every day, come on the Lord’s Day and listen to the word, and attend even the weekday services and prayer meetings, I won’t be able to make a living this way. This is serious.’ Calculating like this, it seems that one must have money and earn material things in order to live. Satan the devil whispers, “You need money to live. You need material things to live. Can you live by leading your life of faith like that? Being saved is good, but can you make a living while gathering together like that every day? Think about it.”

If we think about it quietly, the words of Satan the devil seem to be right. ‘That’s right; I have been saved, but since I have a body, I have to earn money to live. How can I live without earning money?’ But who says not to earn money? In the word of God there is not a single word that says not to earn money.

Yet Satan the devil says that one must have material things to live. Dear fellow believers, we cannot live by material things alone. Our Lord said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

In other words, what our Lord's word means is that, although you must also have bread, if your life is to be sustained, if you are to receive blessings and have the problem of food, clothing, and shelter solved and have your soul live, if you are to eat well and live well, you must live by believing every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That is, it means that we must believe in God and believe all the written word of God in order to live. It means that only then does this body live and the soul also live in this world.

We live not by material things but by faith

Dear fellow believers, we must believe in order to live. We live only if we believe in God; without believing, we can never live. If we think in a fleshly way, people say that one can live in this world only if one has material things, and how can one live without material things? Of course, that is also true. But that is knowing only one thing and not knowing the other. Does a born-again person live only by eating what the body eats? People sometimes speak of a human being as divided into three—spirit, soul, and body—but if we group them strictly, they can be divided into two. When the body dies, the soul and the body die. And then there is the spirit. In Greek it is pneuma (πνεῦμα). The Holy Spirit is in our hearts, and when we hear the word of God, this spirit lives.

That is why Jesus said that man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. It means that although we must

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also have bread, we live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We live only if we have the word. Our Lord drove away Satan the devil with the word of truth. It means that we must have faith that believes in God in order to live. We must believe. Dear fellow believers, it is written, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*. Without believing, we cannot possibly live, nor can we lead a life of faith.

How does Satan the devil entice us? "You need material things; you have to work hard to earn material things to live—how else can you live? Think about it. If you lead your life of faith like that, when will you earn material things, and how will you live?" If we quietly listen to the words of Satan the devil, are they right or not? There is some sense in the words of Satan the devil, too. Satan the devil never says anything that makes no sense at all. But he does not say what is entirely right; he says what is only half right. That is why Jesus, too, said that although what he said was not entirely wrong, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. It means that we must have all of these, but when we have faith that believes all the written word of God, we obtain all those things from God and are filled by Him and live.

I, too, after receiving the remission of sins, once made plans to go into selling pots and then gave them up. When I was first born again, Satan the devil came and urged me, saying, "Now that you are born again, go and earn money." Since one needs capital to earn money, I was going to start with something small. Then I saw a man who had lined up handcarts in a long row and was selling pots; he had spread out big cooking pots, large and small pots, and everything from small spoons to large spoons on several tiers, and in three or four hours he sold all his goods and made a lot of money. Seeing that, I thought, 'That kind of work would suit me. It would be good to work an hour or two and also

do the Lord's work,' and I made up my mind to earn money. From the moment the desire to earn money arose, I was deceived by Satan the devil and nearly went off in the wrong direction.

Thinking that I had to earn money, I looked around here and there and agonized over it, but inside me the Holy Spirit said, "Preach the gospel." Whenever I met someone, my mouth itched, and I would start talking, saying, "Do you have sin, or not? Please sit down here for a moment." As we talked about this and that, the story of the gospel of the water and the Spirit would always come up, and the stories of the sacrifices of the Old Testament, of the baptism Jesus received from John, of the Jordan River, of the Cross, of the resurrection, even of the Millennial Kingdom—all of them came out. If I sat and talked like that for three or four hours, that person was born again, and if he was not born again, I talked for another three or four hours. I held on to him and preached the gospel until he was born again. Even so, Satan the devil kept telling me to earn money, and so much of my thought was taken up with earning money. Dear fellow believers, if we become bound by the thought that we need money to live, that we need material things to live—if such a thought enters our hearts and we believe it and end our thinking there—we die.

Dear fellow believers, do we really live if only we have money? We cannot live by money alone. If we could live if only we had money, why would we gather at church and listen to the word? As soon as we were saved, we should all go up to knead clay to build the Tower of Babel of this world—so why would we gather at church and preach and hear the word? Our Lord clearly went through these three temptations, and He drove away those three temptations with the written word of truth. It means that we must believe every word that proceeds from the mouth of God in order to live. It means that you live only if you believe

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all the written word of God. We must put the emphasis on this 'living.'

Whether we live or die depends on whether or not we believe the word of God. We live only if we believe. If we do not believe, we die. If we do not believe, we try this and that by human means and methods, but a solution never comes out. Dear fellow believers, we live only if we believe. We must not merely say that it is right, saying, 'That word is right; it is truly right.' We must believe. If we believe, we live; if we do not believe, we die. I hope that you will become believers. This is the truth.

The attack of Satan the devil

Jesus, too, was tempted. But Jesus drove it away with the word. Dear fellow believers, just because Satan the devil said so, did Jesus bring a stone and say, "You, become bread"? Did Jesus tell the stone to become bread, eat it, and recuperate after His fast? It means that He did not do so. The reason Jesus did not do so is that, in order to deliver us from the attacks and schemes of Satan the devil, who seeks to destroy us, He became our example and received the three temptations as our representative.

In the first temptation He received, our Lord drove away the temptation of Satan the devil with the written word that man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We live by believing the written word of God. We can live by faith, and we come to live that way. And we receive the blessings of God. By faith we receive blessings.

Dear fellow believers, we are very young and shortsighted, so whatever Satan the devil says, if there is some sense in it, we all nod our heads. But we must know how many principles there are in this world that seem to make sense yet drag people to hell.

In Proverbs there is this word: *"There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12)*. It means that even though it looks as if one is going the right way, in the end one goes to destruction. The servants of God as well, and all of us, if we have been saved, must believe all the written word. Believing all the written word, living by this word, means that we must believe all the words that God speaks through the church.

When you read the Bible on your own, you say, 'This word is right,' but the question is whether, as you actually live, in a given situation, you truly have faith like that of the many people who appear in the Bible. The question is whether you can live that way. Because this does not go well, God establishes His servants in the church and gives the word to those servants, and so that the saints can believe the word in due season, He has them give examples, tell jokes, lead, bear with them, and wait. It means that in order to give you faith, God has established the church and speaks to you and me through the church. Therefore, we must believe all the word that comes through the church and all the written word. We live only if we believe.

Dear fellow believers, do you believe that if you believe, you live? If you believe, you live. To say that you live if you believe means that if you do not believe, you die. It means that if you rely only on material things, you die. It is such simple knowledge, yet the problem is whether or not you believe it. Do not just pass over it in your head, saying, 'Ah, so that's how it is,' but believe this. Dear fellow believers, if you believe, that is your blessing, and that is how you live. In any situation whatsoever, you live. If you do not believe, in any situation whatsoever, you die. Do you know how many people die after being saved? How many children are born into this world and die! They die because they

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cannot get milk. Even though we have been born spiritually and received salvation, if we do not believe, we are dead.

Listen to the word the church preaches

Dear fellow believers, in the written word are recorded all the most blessed words—how much God loves us who have been saved, how much He protects us, and how much He blesses us. We must believe this word, and those who believe must also believe the word that the church preaches to the saints. The church speaks in order to benefit the saints. If we cannot believe what it says, we die. It is the same when we listen to a sermon. If a servant of God opens the word and speaks, he is surely speaking that word. Then how are we to believe that word? 'Surely the one who preaches the word is better than I, after all?' If so, we must first decide whether we will accept and believe the word of God that comes through the mouth of that servant of God, or not believe it.

If we merely read the word and realize it for ourselves, saying, 'Aha, so that's how it is,' that is only marking time every day, and it is nothing but knowledge in our heads. *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17)*. Therefore, when the word of God is expounded and spoken, the one who joins in agreement with the word of God that is expounded and preached, saying, "I believe," is the one who lives by faith.

Dear fellow believers, this is the first barrier we meet after being born again. When the word of God is opened and read together, we must look at it closely. After hearing a sermon, we must also believe, and after that, too, we must look closely at whether it is indeed so or not. But Satan the devil keeps talking

about intellectual things so as to keep us from believing. He makes us fit the word only to the level at which we ourselves see it and understand it.

Dear fellow believers, if the one who preaches the word is a servant of God, he does not say wrong things. If by chance he has said something wrong, God surely makes him correct it. He surely does so. The Lord said that He holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, and you must believe this written word. When God has set up a servant of God, whatever he may look like in human terms, God surely holds his soul, heart, and body. He holds him, so that if he does as he pleases, God surely sets him right again and makes him speak again. You must believe that. If he does as he pleases, God surely puts him back in his place later. Therefore, the Bible says that believing the word that a servant of God preaches is believing in God, and that believing in Jesus Christ is believing in God the Father.

Therefore, we must believe all the written word. Dear fellow believers, do you believe the saying that if you give a lot of tithes you will be blessed? Such a calculation cannot be called faith. We live only if we believe the word that man shall live by every written word of God. We must believe. Dear fellow believers, ministers and saints alike live only if they believe as they hear the word. We must not receive this merely as knowledge. We must hear the word, and it must become knowledge, and it must become faith. The conclusion is faith. It means that if we hear the word with our ears and it ends as knowledge, there is no benefit at all to ourselves, and so we must believe.

And power appears in those who believe the word of God. You believed the word of the person who preached the word of God to you, and by that faith you received salvation. It is the same with other words. If we believe the word that is preached

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to us, God works on that faith. It means that He gives strength and acts. Dear fellow believers, it is not we who do something. The greatest obstacle to our believing is the burden of thinking, 'If I believe that word, I will have to act this way and live this way.' Satan the devil gives that burden, but it is never so. If we believe the word of God, if we believe the word of God that is preached to us, the Holy Spirit who is in us says, 'Do you believe this word? Then I will do it for you. I will do it for you according to what you believe.' That is why power appears in those who believe, and the spread of the gospel and signs and wonders appear.

Therefore, all we have to do is believe. If we believe, saying, "God, I believe," God gives us strength and gives us power. That is why we must never try to do something ourselves. "God, I believe. But I have no power. God, help me. Bless me. I surely believe. I do believe, but I have no power." We must speak honestly in this way and ask God for help. Then God works on those who believe and those who pray, and He Himself fulfills it just as He promised in that word. So He accomplishes it all.

Receive the word not as knowledge but by faith

Not only I but all the servants of God who do His work must also go through these three temptations that Jesus received, and must pass all these temptations. Jesus, too, drove away Satan the devil with the written word and lived by the written word. If so, we also must live by believing the written word, and, like Jesus, drive away Satan the devil and gain the victory. Everyone goes through these three. There is no one who does not go through them.

Dear fellow believers, can we live without food, clothing, and shelter? We live only when the problem of food, clothing, and shelter is solved. Then do you believe that God will solve the problem of our food, clothing, and shelter? Do you believe that God will provide for us abundantly? Do you believe all the written word? Then God provides everything. And we come to live. We come to live all our lives. Even in the midst of lack, we live every day as if feasting, eating and drinking. What makes the word of God different from worldly knowledge is that faith is contained in it. Because truth and faith are contained in it, it is different from the common sense of the world. The word of God is truth and is true, and it means that if we believe the word of God, it comes to pass according to what we believed. This is the point that differs from the thoughts or common sense of the people of the world. So we must believe even if our knowledge is lacking. All we have to do is believe.

Faith is truly simple. There are many times when I preach the word, and when I preach the word, there are many who listen. But among the congregation that listens, there are those who receive the word that is preached by faith, and there are those who listen with knowledge rather than faith. They listen, thinking, 'Ah, so this is what it is. This word means this.' But when the sermon is over, there is a difference. There is a difference in power. To the one who has received the word of the sermon by faith, that faith is conveyed as if by the laying on of hands, and power appears. But to the one who does not believe, since it is merely theory and knowledge, no power appears in his life, and he has no strength.

When I preach the word, I tell people to listen by faith. The one who preaches must also preach by faith. One preaches because one has faith; without faith, one can never preach. I tell you that we can live by faith. A person who has just received the

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remission of sins and says, ‘I know nothing,’ is actually better off. If one says, ‘I know a little,’ that knowing is the problem. Was everything we knew before being born again faith? It was not faith. Therefore, it means that it is useless. It is dregs that were worse than nothing. The dregs must be wiped away clean.

Dear fellow believers, we must believe. If we believe, power appears. Jesus passed the temptations. If we believe, we too can pass these temptations. We can live by faith. We live only if we believe. After being saved, for how many long years we struggled, trying to fight alone! How we floundered, trying to live according to the will of God! ‘I will live it out. I will do it.’ Dear fellow believers, how hard we tried! Trying hard is admirable, too. But if there is something we must do before trying hard, it is to believe the written word of God. We must have faith. If we believe, then God gives us power and brings about His work. In due time He makes the flower bloom and makes it bear fruit. Therefore, I hope you will believe that what we need first is to believe the word of God.

I cannot tell you how many people have fallen away from the church after suffering terribly because they did not believe. The servants of God all know this. When they preach the word like this, they know whether people believe or not. Even so, they know but pretend not to know and keep still. They think, ‘If they do not believe when I preach the word this time, I will preach it again next time.’ And when the opportunity comes, they tell the same story with the same word. They repeat it and tell it again. Then the listeners think, ‘He is telling the same story this time that he told last time.’ If they still do not believe, they tell it again, and if they still do not believe, they tell it again. For we can live only if we believe, and only if we believe do we receive blessings and receive help from God. That is why they preach until the saints believe, until the servants of God believe.

Dear fellow believers, if we had believed all the word we have heard until now, that faith would be inexhaustible. The problem is that there are many who do not believe. Every time I hold a meeting, every time I preach the word, I speak very often about the baptism Jesus received from John. If we truly believe well this gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again—we gain new strength and make a new start.

Let us take stock of our life of faith once. Do we believe that God solves the problem of food, clothing, and shelter? Let us think once about whether we believed or did not believe that God gives us what to eat, drink, and wear. If we did not believe, let us believe and live from now on. Also, when we were anxious and worried, did we believe the fact that God would take care of it for us? The word says, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7)*. Did we believe this word? Let us think once about how much we lived without believing. And let us become believers. Let us try living by faith. If we believe one thing, we can believe the next, we can believe something greater, and then we can believe the next, even greater thing.

Also, although it is the written word, when we hear the word that comes from the mouths of the servants of God, faith springs up; when we believe, faith is conveyed; and when we believe, the power of God appears. I cannot tell you how good this is. The church is good, and we must hear the word. When we hear the word, faith springs up. So, if you can, keep coming to the meetings and listen to the word. Just as bean sprouts grow even though the water keeps draining away when you water a bean-sprout tray, we must keep hearing the word of God. Then faith grows. If we believed once, must we believe again? Faith is

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always necessary. Just as we always need oxygen, we also always need faith.

I hope you will start with faith from the beginning. And I hope you will live so as to reach the finish line by faith until the last day. Even when we believe we fall short, so how much more would we fall short if we lived without believing! Even when we believe we constantly stagger, so if we live without believing, we fall into filthy water and die. Dear fellow believers, we must believe. It is an age in which faith is needed. Now we live only if we believe. Even after being saved, we must believe.

"You shall not tempt the LORD your God"

Concerning this faith, our Lord received the second temptation. *"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone."'" (Matthew 4:5–6)*. Secondly, Satan the devil tempted Him with the written word. "Is it not written in the word of God? God said that even if You throw Yourself down, He will send angels and keep You from being hurt, that God will protect You. It is written in the word, so what is there to keep You from throwing Yourself down? Go ahead and throw Yourself down." Dear fellow believers, this second temptation is also a matter of faith. Our Lord drove away Satan the devil with the written word. How did He drive him away? *"Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God."'" (Matthew 4:7)*. The word of God is something to be believed. If we believe, it is done; if we do not believe, it will never be done, no matter what.

Dear fellow believers, He said not to tempt. The word of God is something to be believed; believing if it works when tested and not believing if it does not is not faith, and so we must believe from the very beginning. Satan the devil tempted Him, saying, "Throw Yourself down; is it not written that He will have the angels bear You up so that Your foot will not be hurt?" But our Lord said that it is written not to tempt God. It means that we are to believe in God—would it do to test Him?—so do not tempt Him.

After Jesus received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, our Lord received three temptations from Satan the devil. And He bore those sins, died on the Cross, and rose again. In the life of faith of us who have been saved, too, what Satan the devil puts to the test is faith. It is whether you believe or do not believe. Because we believe, Satan the devil cannot budge an inch. Because we believe the word of God, he cannot budge and retreats. If we do not believe, Satan the devil keeps on attacking. If the first attack works, he makes a second attack; if the second works, he makes a third; and after making every kind of attack, he handles us as he pleases.

We overcome when we believe all the word of God

Dear fellow believers, we must believe. How often Satan the devil assails our hearts! That we overcome all of it and live in God and receive blessings is because of your faith. It is faith that believes in God. Faith makes us live. That is why, even with faith as small as a mustard seed, we must believe every word when we do everything. Then we live. Satan the devil tempts us first with the problem of food, clothing, and shelter, and second with the word of God, that is, the written word. Even today there are

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many who expound the written word as they please and lead people astray. What overcomes this, what overcomes temptation, is faith.

Dear fellow believers, when we try to do the Lord's work, how many temptations come! When we first try to do the Lord's work, worry about the problem of food, clothing, and shelter comes, and next, worry that comes from not being able to believe the word of God fills our hearts. Satan the devil brought it. Therefore, we can overcome only if we believe the word; if we do not believe, even if we try to overcome by effort and will, it is all in vain. Dear fellow believers, we must break our will, too. How worthless our human will is! When we meet someone whose will is stronger than ours, our will is broken. Human will is nothing. Human will is like a stick of taffy. Will is something that snaps when someone strong comes and breaks it. Do you think your own will is as hard as iron? Your own will is something that snaps right off when someone stronger than you comes and breaks it.

Dear fellow believers, when we reach our limit while leading a life of faith by willpower, does the life of faith work? We say, 'Oh, I can't do it.' Why hold on to something we cannot do? Is it not better to lay down our will and believe in God? Believing is better. Faith that believes in God and the word of God, even faith as small as a mustard seed, is stronger than any will or strength like that of the mightiest man in the world. It will not do to believe the word if it pleases us and not believe it if it does not. Dear fellow believers, it is because we believed that we have lived until now. We lived because we believe now and have believed all along. If we had not believed, we would have fallen away from the church and all died already.

Even eating a meal is faith. We eat when we have the faith that we live by eating this. Without faith in everything, we die.

It is all faith. Only when we have the faith that if we wash the dishes clean, health will come to our home do we wash the dishes diligently. Tasting the side dishes as we make them, saying, 'That's fine,' and scooping some up to taste again—that is all faith, too. Think once about what there is in our lives that is not faith. In daily life, not falling into a ditch but jumping over it when we come to one is all because of faith, too. That we live only if we jump over it—when we look into it, it is all faith. I hope you will know and believe that we must believe the word of God, too, in order to live.

Now lay down your heart and live by faith. Only when we live by faith do worries, anxieties, and cares disappear. We must live by faith. No matter how many things we gather into our heads, memorize, and know, it is all empty and rubbish. We must clear it all away. Quickly throw away the dregs of thought, and at ease, just believe, saying, 'Ah, I must believe. I live only if I believe.' And set your heart, saying, "From now on I will live by faith. I will live by believing the word of God." "Lord, only speak the word. Your servant will believe." Then it is finished. Then we live well all our lives. We eat well and live well.

The temptations Jesus received in order to be our example

We must live worshiping God and serving God only. We must not surrender to the devil. Satan the devil tells us to surrender to him by means of our flesh. It is written, *"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me'" (Matthew 4:8–9)*. Our Lord said, *"Then Jesus said*

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to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve."'" (Matthew 4:10). It is as if to say, "You will give all this to Me? Is this yours? I made it all, and yet is it yours? In the future you will entice My people in this way. That is why I am receiving this temptation now. It is not because I have no power that I am being tempted."

It says that before Jesus fasted for forty days, He was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil, and some people wonder whether the devil is stronger than God. But Jesus, for our sake, received a temptation that was far too light for Jesus. He received it for us. When we see the faith with which He overcame such temptations after fasting forty days, Jesus is truly the Son of God and our Lord. He is our Captain. He is truly the Captain of our faith. It is certain.

If it were you or I, when we had gone hungry for forty days and someone set down just a bowl of food and said, "If you listen to me, I will give you this. Will you bow down to me? Will you do as I tell you?" we would have said, "Please don't do this. I must serve God only… but I'll go along with you a little," and then collapsed. Because Jesus is God, He overcame with ease. Our Lord taught us that the people of God and the servants of God must live by faith. It means that living by faith is right, that we are blessed by God through believing, and that living on this earth serving God only and worshiping God is the right life and the life of truth.

Dear fellow believers, the word of God is not difficult. All we have to do is believe. What is difficult about reading the Bible? All we have to do is just believe. If there is something difficult, we take it to the servants of God and ask what this word means, and we know right away. It is so easy. Those who are not

born again expound the word of God in a difficult and troublesome way and write it down.

I once saw a very thick thesis that someone had written about the baptism Jesus received from John. He had written about the baptism Jesus received and also about the baptism other people received, and he was very learned and had memorized a great deal. He went on at length, saying that about this part a certain scholar said this and another scholar said that, and that grammatically it was such and such and historically it was such and such, and in the end he concluded by saying only that, since there are various theories, one should always keep them in one's head and be broad-minded, saying "Yes" when someone says this and "Yes" when someone says that. With such an exposition, one cannot arrive at a clear faith. But the Bible clearly says that Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, bore that sin, died on the Cross, and rose again.

Dear fellow believers, once we receive the remission of sins, there is nothing difficult in the Bible. When our Lord teaches us, there is nothing difficult. Our Lord is God, who works in us and teaches us in our lives, actually within our life. Our Lord is the Lord of life. In our lives He speaks His own word, and with that word He leads our lives. Dear fellow believers, this is not logic. Nor is it knowledge. Still less is it doctrine. This is our life and our living. We must live this way, and believe this way.

If we keep hearing the word and believing, we bear fruit

If we follow the Lord by faith, it is truly comfortable; if we do not believe, it is wearisome. All we have to do is just believe.

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Even those who have received the remission of sins say, 'Oh dear, how shall I live? It's such a headache,' and rack their brains this way and that, and then say, 'Oh, I don't know.' Dear fellow believers, do not rack your brains. Just believe. It is faith that makes us live. It is written, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*. It means that we live by faith. The servants of God also live by faith. All born-again people, whether small or great, all live by faith. If we believe, we live; if we do not believe, we die. Believe. Believe the Church of God, and believe the written word of God. Believe the fact that God is in us.

The Holy Spirit is in born-again people. Is the Holy Spirit in your hearts? If so, you are remarkable people. You are the people of God and the servants of God who are qualified to have faith. Not just anyone can believe the word of God. Those who have the Holy Spirit within them can believe. Put your lives in order by faith, go forward to the Lord step by step by faith, and serve God by faith. I hope you will preach the gospel by faith. When we do not believe, it is painful. But if we believe, the work of God appears and the blessings of God appear. If we do not believe, we become the devil's prey. If we believe, we receive blessings from God and become servants of God. Dear fellow believers, believe.

Jesus drove away all three temptations and overcame them. We too must drive away the temptations of Satan the devil by faith and overcome them. Let us overcome, too. We can surely overcome. We cannot overcome by our own strength, but when our Lord speaks to us and we believe that word of truth, God gives us the strength and blessing to overcome. I hope you will become believers. I hope you will become believers and become people who please God.

Dear fellow believers, I hope that not even one of God's precious people will stumble or fall away for lack of faith. It is

written that *"in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (Romans 1:17)*. God says that if we believe, faith arises, and if we do not believe, we become people who have nothing to do with it. So all we have to do is believe. The written word is truth, so if we believe, faith comes into us and grows. It does not happen right away. Dear fellow believers, do not be too hasty, but believe and keep hearing the word, and wait until faith grows within you. Keep hearing the word. Then the word we have heard and the word we have believed blossom and bear fruit in us. It surely becomes so. Until then we must first believe, and then believe the next thing, and then the next. Do not be discouraged that the flower does not bloom and the fruit does not appear right away. Believe and wait until the fruit appears. Then faith appears as fruit. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who drove away the temptations of Satan

< Matthew 4:1–11 >

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."' Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God."' Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve."' Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him."

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A little while ago, as I was going home after finishing the evening service, a car behind us honked its horn very loudly, and I was startled and looked back. There was a big truck that had been following behind our car, and the driver must have dozed off, for the steering wheel had turned to the left, and the truck had crossed the center line and gone up onto the roadside on the opposite side. If he had not seen that we were stopped at the signal and had driven straight on while dozing and hit us, we would have lost our lives on the spot. I thought that if God had not protected us, something terrible would have happened. It was not only I who felt that way; everyone riding in the car with us felt it. The thought came to me that God had protected us so that we would do a little more work.

As for us, whenever God calls, we go. Is it not our life to go when God says go and to come when He says come? Going through that incident, I came to think, "So this is how God protects us. And in showing us this, He means to say something to us. The truck driver behind us was dozing, but God turned the steering wheel." So I thought a great deal that we should quickly finish the work He has entrusted to us.

The first temptation, the temptation of bread

Now I want to ask about and think over the temptations of Satan together with you. The Bible says, *"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry" (Matthew 4:1–2)*. Then Satan the devil, the tempter, came out and said to Jesus, *"If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3)*. Then Jesus answered, *"But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man*

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shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."'" (Matthew 4:4).

Why did Jesus say this when He was being tempted? The question is why He said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)*. We must know what the Lord is trying to say to us through this word. That word means that man cannot live with only the things that are on this earth. He was saying that we live only by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, by believing that word, and by being guided by the word of God.

How hungry Jesus must have been! That He fasted forty days and forty nights means that He ate no food at all. Having fasted forty days and forty nights, how much His body must have wanted to eat! He was in a state of being so hungry that He felt as if He would die and had to eat. At that moment, Satan the devil did not miss that and, seizing the opportunity, tempted Jesus. "If You are the Son of God, why not make these stones become bread and eat them? Is not God the Creator who created heaven and earth? Are You really the Son of God? Try it once. If You really made all things in this universe, there is nothing to keep You from doing something like this, is there?"

Jesus Christ made this whole universe. The Bible says, *"Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Genesis 1:3)*. But who was the God who spoke those words? It was Jesus Christ. He made all things in the universe of this world by His word. He came to this earth to save mankind from sin, and before beginning the work of His public ministry of saving people from sin, He made this preparation of faith.

Although Satan the devil said, "Make them and eat. What is there that You cannot eat? Eat," Jesus said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. "Although I am now in a state of dying at any moment,

eating bread is not what makes one live. Fundamentally, man does not live with only the things of the material world; he lives by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Man lives only when he believes the word that proceeds from the mouth of God and receives its guidance. He lives only when he eats the word of God. He eats bread too, but a man lives only when he also eats the word of God and receives guidance as well." This is what it means.

Man lives by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God

We live in this world. Man is born on this earth and lives. But does a man live if only he has material things? It seems that he would live if only he had material things. Because man was originally made of dust, he feels as though he could live if only he had dust. But the truth is that he cannot live by that alone. Only by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God, by the word God has spoken to us and by His blessing, and only when God helps us, guides us, protects us, and blesses us, can we live while eating the food of this earth. Jesus was saying that even while a man lives with the material things of this earth, he lives only by receiving God's help.

Dear fellow believers, in reality it seems that a man lives if only he has bread, but it is not so. I do not attach great significance to things like what happened that day. If God takes me, He takes me, so what problem would that be? If, in God's sight, I have finished my work, He will take me. But if God had not protected us and had left us alone, so that the truck hit us, our car would have been thrown off and crashed into a roadside tree or somewhere, and we would have suffered, and even if we

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had not died, some part of our bodies might have been injured, and we might have been left lying in a hospital, unable to speak and unable to do anything. Then what benefit would that have been? The point is, without God's help, if God does not intervene and protect us, how could we live?

Can a man live if only he has money and material things? No matter how much money one has, one lives only if one has peace, only if one has no sin, only if one's surroundings are good, only if there are no robbers or dangerous incidents, only if God protects that money, and only if God protects one's life, is that not so? Can a human being live by his own strength alone? He cannot. Dear fellow believers, do you believe that we live by God's guidance, by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God? Born-again saints must believe the word of God and receive its guidance. We must believe the word of God and follow it by faith. Only then do we live.

Dear fellow believers, the Lord said that man does not live by bread alone, but by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Here, living by bread alone means living by one's own strength alone. And living by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God means living by believing the word of God and receiving that word's guidance, being taught, being directed, and being helped. It means living not with material things alone, but by receiving God's help.

Dear fellow believers, no matter how smart a person is, no matter how much of an intellectual he is in this world, how cultured and refined, how strong, and how much power he has, there are times when, going through difficulties and having to decide some matter, he does not know how to decide and how to resolve it. When such a problem arises, if he asks money, does money guide him? If he piles up his money and asks, "Money, this problem has come up; can't you solve it for me?" then, if

money could speak, it would say this: "I am useful only for paying prices. The wisdom for living life, following God, standing against Satan the devil, or entering the way of receiving blessings before God—I do not know these either."

We cannot live trusting only money and having only money. We live only by receiving the Lord's guidance, only by believing the word, and only by being taught by the Lord. No matter how smart those who have received the remission of sins may be, can they live by their own strength alone? They cannot. They must rely on God. We must listen to what God has said and learn such things as, "At a time like this, how does God want to guide me? What does God say about this matter?" We must live learning the Lord's word, live receiving the Lord's guidance, and live by believing the word of God.

Dear fellow believers, it is said, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105)*. We live in this dark world. Living in such a world, how can we make our way ahead smooth, avoid dangers well, overcome Satan the devil, find and enter the blessed way that God has prepared, and live well? Only by receiving the guidance of the word of God can we live that way. Dear fellow believers, if one lives by one's own strength alone, it amounts to nothing.

There is a reason Jesus said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)*. The words recorded in the Bible were recorded for a reason. He was saying that no matter how smart you and I are, no matter how good, no matter how strong, and no matter how much money we have, we cannot live by those things alone. We must believe the word. And we must believe that we live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Since He has spoken this way about this matter and that way about that matter,

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we must live receiving the direction, guidance, and teaching of the word of God in every matter. That is a blessed life.

The second temptation, on the pinnacle of the temple

Let us look at the word of the second temptation. *"Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God."'" (Matthew 4:7)*. Why did Jesus say this? Here Satan the devil took Jesus into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and spoke as follows. *"And said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone."'" (Matthew 4:6)*. Then Jesus said that you shall not tempt the LORD your God. With that one word He drove away Satan the devil.

Why did Jesus Christ say not to tempt God? This means that we must live by believing every word that God has spoken. Dear fellow believers, the word of God is the truth and is true. But if we only know the word of God and do not believe it, will we not be tempted? That is why He said that you shall not tempt the LORD your God.

Dear fellow believers, why do people fall into difficulties? Because they are tempted. Because they do not believe, they fall into temptation, into difficulties. If we believe the word of God, we live by faith. As it is said, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*, if we believe we live, and if we do not believe we die.

The word that you shall not tempt the LORD your God was Jesus' resounding answer to Satan the devil, who had taken Jesus

to the high pinnacle and told Him to throw Himself down, saying that it is written in the Bible that He would be kept from harm. Dear fellow believers, we want to become high people in this world. We want to become respected people, recognized people. How does one become a person recognized before God, a person who also gains honor in this world, a person who benefits many people, a person who receives blessings in this world? That comes about by believing the word of God. A person who does not believe the word of God can never gain honor, nor live happily, nor become rich, nor benefit others. The one who does not believe the word of God does not become such a person, but the one who believes does. That is why He said that you shall not tempt the LORD your God.

We must drive away Satan by faith

Why would Satan have tempted Him? If Jesus had thrown Himself down from the pinnacle and, without His being hurt, an angel had borne Him up and set Him down safely on the ground, people would have looked up to Him. Would that not be gaining honor? It would be just as a climber who has climbed all the high mountains of the world is recognized as a great person in the world. Dear fellow believers, did Jesus not do so because He lacked the power to throw Himself down from a high place without being hurt? Or was He unable to throw Himself down because He could not believe the word of the Bible that God would protect Him? That is not the case.

God has said that He protects His children, His people. He has said that the Lord protects them when they are threatened and go through difficulties. Yet Satan the devil tempts us, saying, “Go ahead and throw yourself down.” What Jesus said is this:

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"Whether I throw Myself down or not, why do you tempt Me? Why do you tempt God? God surely does just as He has said. Why do you keep tempting?"

When a person has no strength, he is tempted a great deal. When he has no strength and no ability, he is tempted a great deal. What happens when a person is in a daze? His thoughts become empty, his heart becomes empty, his faith becomes empty, and his whole body and mind become empty, so that he has no strength. At such times he is tempted a great deal. This means that when one has nothing, one goes through many difficulties. That is because Satan the devil seizes the opportunity at such times.

At such times, the way to overcome Satan the devil is faith. It is faith that believes the word of God. Here Satan the devil tempted by citing the written word of God, and Jesus too drove away Satan the devil by citing the written word of God. The word Jesus Christ spoke here and the faith He showed are showing us that you and I too must drive away Satan with this kind of faith. We must believe that by believing the word of God we gain honor, obtain blessings, benefit many people, and become people respected even in this world, and we must know that not having that faith and doubting is tempting God.

The third temptation, all the kingdoms of the world and their glory

Let us read the third word. "*Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'''* *(Matthew 4:10)*. Why did Jesus tell Satan to go away? It is because of this: *"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain,*

and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me'" (Matthew 4:8–9). That is why Jesus told Satan to go away. Because it is fitting to worship God and serve God only, He told Satan the devil to go away.

Satan the devil showed Jesus this and that. Since Jesus had been fasting, He had no strength at all. So Satan the devil dragged Him away and showed Him things. When one fasts and prays for a long time, one sometimes sees hallucinations. There are even people who say that while fasting they saw a hallucination of hot food floating about on the ceiling, giving off steam. Satan the devil aimed at such a time when the body had grown weak. Since Jesus was weak, Satan the devil took Him and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. He showed Him all the dazzling kingdoms, riches, and jewels and said, "Bow down to me and worship me. Serve me. Then I will give all these things to You." Jesus refused with one word. "Away with you, Satan. It is fitting to worship God only and to serve God alone." That is what the Lord said.

Dear fellow believers, we go through such temptations a great deal while living on this earth. Why did Jesus say this? Satan the devil entices us, saying that if we serve him, he will make us rich, let us gain honor, make us honored people in this world, and make both our flesh and our souls prosper. He said this in the sense that at such times we should remember this word and shake off that enticement by faith. If we actually serve Satan, does he do so for us? He does not. Satan the devil deludes us in that way to make us submit to him, and once you submit, he then exploits you and uses you. Satan the devil never benefits a person.

The voice heard in the places where idols are served is also, in the end, a story of "Your devotion is lacking. Offer more

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devotion, offer more." Dear fellow believers, what happens after you have offered everything in that way? Satan the devil takes it all away clean. And then Satan the devil torments that person.

Worship God only, and serve Him

We who are born again also face such temptations. "After receiving the remission of sins, how am I to live? If I stay in the church, far from living, it seems I will die. I feel suffocated. Becoming rich is out of the question. Is there anyone in the church who is rich? Who is there that lives an enjoyable life? On Sunday I come to church and worship, then go and work again—oh, it is all hopeless." We face such temptations. "In this good time, in this golden time when I could rake in money, to come here and worship and idle away my time! Since I have no sin anyway, let me just live in the world. Only then can I doggedly earn money and become rich." We think this way. There are also people who think this way, are deluded in this way, go out, and live that way.

But do they become rich? They do not. Jesus refused with the one word telling Satan to go away. And He said that it is fitting to worship God and serve Him only. Why is that? Who gives all this wealth and glory, too? God gives them. Who gives all these things—making a person prosper, a person's being able to live well, being able to live happily, blessings, material things, glory, wealth, and happiness? God gives them. Satan the devil showed Him the things of the world and said he would give them if He worshiped him, but Jesus, knowing that, refused with the single word telling Satan to go away. Because God gives wealth, glory, and every blessing, and because He believed that, He drove away Satan.

We too, when we are tempted like this, must drive away Satan by faith. If you truly want to become happy and to live well, live by faith. If you want to live well in both soul and body in this world and before God, worship God only and serve only Him. When we serve God and worship God, God gives us every blessing. He gives blessings in due season and causes us to bear fruit according to the season. He sees our faith and helps us. God leads His children, His people, His own flock to green pastures and to restful waters, blesses them, protects them, and bestows grace on them. But Satan the devil hinders us. He says, "No, if you stay there, you will be ruined. Get out of there. If you stay there, don't they tell you to serve only the gospel? Don't serve only that; serve this too a little."

Dear fellow believers, a person cannot live one hundred percent fully by faith alone. That is because we also have a deficient flesh. So, although we cannot serve only God and worship God only one hundred percent, we believe it is right always to believe this way in the center of our hearts. Believing this way is right and fitting. Therefore, dear fellow believers, you must drive away Satan's delusion by faith. Jesus said this to tell us to drive away Satan like this and live by faith, and to worship God and serve God only.

Dear fellow believers, do you believe? In reality, is there happiness if we live apart from Jesus? There is no happiness. Even if there seems to be happiness, in a place apart from Jesus there is only a curse. Only in the Lord is there new life, and in the Lord is there happiness. When we serve God, we have happiness; when we worship God, we have blessings; when we serve God, we have every blessing; and when we worship God, we have grace in both soul and body.

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Living by faith is a blessing

When we face these three kinds of temptations, if we remain in the word and follow it with faith that believes the word, then even if we are lacking, we can drive away and overcome all those temptations, win the victory of faith, and receive grace and blessings from God. But if we are deluded by Satan the devil, abandon faith, and follow that way, there are only curses, desolation, ruin, hardship, and suffering there. That is certain.

Living a life of faith by faith is happy and good. We must drive away Satan by faith. If we do not drive away Satan, we die. Therefore, we must drive away Satan by faith. You must always live by faith in your daily lives. Because Jesus had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again, we have received the remission of sins through this gospel of the water and the Spirit and have no sin; but if we do not live by faith in our daily lives, it amounts to nothing. Even having been saved becomes as if it were nothing. Rather, having been saved itself becomes painful. Salvation becomes a pain, and we may even think, "It would have been better if I had not been saved." Because we do not live by faith, we do not receive blessings, and so life is miserable.

Dear fellow believers, only when we receive the remission of sins and live by faith do we enjoy every blessing along with the blessing of having been saved. It is a blessing only when we live following the word of God and driving away Satan the devil; if we do not live that way and become a lost sheep, something will come and bite us to death and devour us.

Dear fellow believers, we often see people who are not born again seeming to live well in this world and then one day suddenly falling into ruin. Why is that? Because they are not under the Lord's protection. Man is truly weak, and it is because

the Lord protects us that we live. Otherwise, we do not know when we may meet with what. Therefore, we must know and believe that always abiding in the Lord in a born-again state, and living serving and worshiping the Lord, is the way for us to live.

Jesus went through these temptations. Did He not say this so that we would think about these things and live this way? He is telling you and me to live this way. Because He showed that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and that we can live by believing and following every word of God, and also because He said that we must live that way, all we have to do is actually live this way. All we have to do is live by faith. All we have to do is not tempt God but believe the word of God. All we have to do is drive away Satan by faith.

If we drive away Satan the devil, who deludes us, and follow the word while living by faith, God becomes our shepherd. Just as Jesus, too, drove away temptation like this and lived by faith, as shown in the word, if we also live this way, God surely makes us prosper. Even though we are lacking, we live with this kind of faith. I hope that you and I will live with this kind of faith forever. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

A life lived as a true disciple of the Lord

< Matthew 4:18–22 >

“And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”

I give thanks to God for helping us. We have finished the work of the first half of the year and are beginning the work of the second half. God gave many blessings to the work of the first half as well. God has always worked, so that He enabled us to spread the gospel widely throughout the whole world, and many souls received salvation through the books. There were various happenings, but I am truly thankful that He kept us in the midst of them.

We have seen the word in which Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, called four men: Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, and James and John. They were all alike fishermen, and they left their nets, their boat, and their father and followed Jesus.

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That Jesus called the disciples and the disciples followed the Lord is the whole of this word, and I would like to consider together what this word says to us and share its grace.

The purpose for which He called the disciples is to make disciples

What did these disciples—Peter, James, Andrew, and John—do after following the Lord? They followed the Lord and heard the word from the Lord, and before He ascended into heaven, the Lord said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20)*. That is all. While Jesus lived His life of thirty-three years, He was with the disciples for three years, and the word He left behind is exactly that. It is to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and to make disciples of all the nations. What was the purpose for which Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, John, and the other disciples? To put it in a word, it is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. It means that He makes them disciples and accomplishes His own will through the disciples.

Then what is a disciple of Jesus Christ? A disciple is one who imitates exactly what Jesus did, takes up His purpose exactly as it is, and lives the life of his Teacher. Jesus Christ called the disciples, and what did those disciples live for? They lived for the spread of the gospel. As we see in the book of Acts, they spread the gospel and were persecuted because of the gospel, and those who heard the gospel from them in turn became their disciples and preached the gospel, and while being persecuted they were scattered over all the earth and preached the gospel.

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Toward what goal should we, who have received the remission of sins, run?

You and I believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that is, the gospel in which Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, rose again, and saved us—and so we have received the remission of sins and follow the Lord; then how should we live? What is the purpose for which we live? As we live a life of faith for a long time, toward what goal should we run? We must know that. Does the Lord want that, once we have been saved and much time has passed, we become very pious and ever more refined, so that we become people whom others respect when they look at us? Or does He want us, even if we look insignificant in appearance, to follow the will the Lord desires as the Lord's disciples in whom the Lord delights, serving the gospel and living with the gospel as our purpose? What the Lord wants is the life of a disciple. He said to make disciples of all the nations and to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He said to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit throughout all the earth and make all people disciples of Jesus Christ. The Lord's purpose is to make disciples. It is not merely to spread the gospel but to make disciples, and it means that He makes disciples in order to have them spread the gospel.

Making disciples is extremely important. That we receive the remission of sins and become disciples of Jesus is an extremely important thing. We have received the remission of sins, and the years of our faith keep increasing, but what has changed, and for what purpose are we living? What have we become now, and what will we become in the future? When we think about these things, we can see that what the Lord wants is indeed the life of

a disciple. What the Lord wants from us is faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the life of a disciple.

I met the Lord and have followed Him, and though lacking, I have lived until now. I often ask myself various questions, look back on myself, and also look at you. What kind of person should one really become after receiving the remission of sins? It seems that, after receiving the remission of sins, as the years pass one should become an excellent person, but it is not so; I see that human limitations are exposed, human strength all drains away, human rightness disappears, and only faith in the Lord remains. As time passes while I believe in and follow the Lord, I come to think about for what purpose I should live even this one day today. When I think about it, if I live doing the work in which the Lord delights and believing in and serving the work the Lord desires and the word the Lord has spoken, then even though it is hard, my heart is glad and it is good. But if I know the word of God and yet do not actually live a life of serving the gospel, when I look at myself I see dryness and dullness. I see that I am nothing. So I come to know that what the Lord wants is the life of a disciple, and not some sanctified life, nor becoming spiritual, nor having one's appearance shine and one's speech become soft and refined the longer one believes.

Because we believe in the Lord and live, we do the work in which the Lord delights. We do it today and do it tomorrow, and in the end we keep doing, by faith, the work in which the Lord delighted and the work the Lord did. Whether it be our saints or God's servants or workers, all their lives are the same. The life of a disciple of Jesus Christ is to keep doing the work in which our Teacher delights. There is nothing special. There is nothing but that. There is nothing else that concerns appearance. So in the end, believing in the Lord, we do the work the Lord planned and desired for this earth—that is, the work of spreading the

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gospel to all the sinners of the whole world and saving every soul from sin, the work of spreading and serving this very thing, that He has saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Those who are ahead serve more

The longer it has been since one received the remission of sins, the more one comes to serve. As the days go by, the work increases. What is the difference between those who are behind and those who are ahead? It can be defined as the difference that those who are ahead serve more and those who are behind serve as much as they know. This is entirely natural. Yet among the saints there are times when quarrels arise as they argue over who is senior and who is junior, saying, “I am the one who came first”; but is it not that the one who came first serves much because he knows much? Seeing that, he is respectable, and there is much to learn from him and much to follow; and the one who came later is the one who came later because he serves less and works less. So it is only natural to respect and follow the one who came first.

Our following the Lord is this: as our years increase and we grow closer to the Lord, we come to serve the Lord much. In the end, isn’t that how it turns out? When much time has passed and one has been in the church for a long time, the work entrusted to him increases and he comes to serve much. Then what is the difference between those who are ahead and those who are behind? It is that those who are ahead know the Lord’s will much and serve much; that is the difference. There is nothing special. If God were to measure with His measuring rod, it means that He looks at whether you are serving much, as much as you know and believe, or whether it is only theory and you do not serve,

and by that He judges who came first and who came later within the church. It makes no sense to argue about who is ahead and who is behind, or to say, "I am the senior," while neither serving the Lord nor working. Since what the Lord wants from us is the life of a disciple and doing the work in which the Lord delights, there is nothing to quarrel about between the saints or God's servants. The verdict has already been given. Those who are ahead serve the Lord until their strength is spent, and those who came later serve according to their own faith and follow along. Do you get rank insignia for being in the church a long time? In the world, when people get rank insignia, they swagger more and become more splendid, but is there such a thing in the Church of God?

If you are truly a person of faith before God, one who came first, and a person who follows the Lord well, I hope you will look at how much you believe in and serve the Lord, how much you do the work in which the Lord delights, and how much you are united in the work of spreading the gospel as you serve the Lord. Then you can know well whether you are living a life of faith well right now or not. A life of faith is not theory. As the years go by, the work increases. In the end, it means that there is much serving. It is not a lofty story; it means that serving increases. Do you only see that the one ahead of you is treated well—that people fetch water for him and bring him meals and that he is respected? Is that all you are going to do?

The one who is like a little child is the greatest

A dispute arose among the Lord's disciples about who was the greatest. The Lord said, "*Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"*

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(Matthew 18:4). Who is the one who is like a little child? Those whose hearts are pure and who believe and follow are those who are like little children. It says that the disciples left their boat and their father and everything and followed the Lord by faith, so what is there to say? Are you like that too? The life of a disciple is like that. Look at the twelve disciples of Jesus. They left everything and followed Him completely. Would leaving the boat, leaving the parents, and leaving everything be a good thing to do from the world's point of view? It is not a good thing to do; it could be a very foolish thing. Yet it means that if you want to live as a disciple of Jesus, you must give up everything. It is only natural. If you look at the word of God by the world's standards, there is not a single word that is right. It is said, *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28)*. In the end, if we are disciples of the Lord, we live a life of preaching the gospel to souls and serving the gospel. The Lord has told us this.

That is how I know it and how I see it. This is the life of a Christian, the life of the one who came first and the life of the one who came later. Have you and I become disciples of Jesus Christ? Are we now doing the work in which the Lord delights? Setting aside whether we are superior or inferior, are we living the life of a disciple in which the Lord delights? Whose disciples are we? Are we disciples of Jesus, or disciples of this world? I hope you will ask yourselves and answer for yourselves.

What a person who has served the Lord for a long time looks like

In the Church of God there is no discrimination, whether one is a person in a high position or a person who has nothing. Before

God we are equal. If we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and so believe that the Lord has removed all our sins, if we acknowledge it in our hearts and give thanks, then now we must become disciples. Becoming a disciple does not come about by theory; it must actually come about in the heart and also in action. We must live for this. We come to experience that, rather than talking a lot with our mouths, we come to serve much and work much. If we believe in the Lord and follow Him much, we see that we come to serve much. In whatever place and in whatever form one serves, there is nothing at all about who is high and who is low. Those who are young in faith look at people very much by their outward appearance. So they have the idea that a person of good faith also looks spiritual in appearance. But in fact, when you have grown properly and look, among those who are ahead in the church there are many whose bodies have greatly weakened. Look at those who have served the Lord much and served Him long. Their eyes do not see well, they cannot eat much, and their digestion is poor. So when we look at one another and someone is very worn out, it is something to hold precious, thinking, "He has served the Lord much; he has faithfully lived the life of a disciple of the Lord." It seems that if one lives a life of faith for a long time one should get better, but on the contrary the body breaks down. That is how it becomes when one lives the life of a disciple of the Lord for a long time. If you too live that way, your appearance is all ruined and your own rightness is all ruined too. There is nothing to be proud of.

When we sing praises, there is a response in our hearts. The Lord, who saved us with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection—yes, that is right; amen. Is there anyone who can be saved by keeping the whole law? Faith like that of the Pharisees must be rejected once and for all. That is hell right away. We come to know our sins through the

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law, go before the Lord, and receive salvation. How clear it is! What is there within the church to take offense at? What we are saying is, let us preach the word of God and serve the gospel. We cannot even do it all, so what else would we do? It means that we hold one another precious and that each of us is precious. We must become right disciples, but a person who, with the standards of the world, argues within the church about what is right and what is not and makes light of those who are ahead is a person without sense. People who do not serve the Lord judge all the time. People who live as disciples of the Lord have neither the time nor the ability to judge. Why is that? Because they cannot even finish their own work, and the other person rather looks precious to them. This is the life of a disciple of the Lord.

The purpose of the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to become a disciple

Today I have shared about the life of a disciple of Jesus. I have told you factual things. In whatever place you served, have you not served the Lord much? In the first half of the year we lived the life of disciples. There are things we did very well and things we did not do well, but there is nothing much to boast of. It means that, though lacking, we did the Lord's work. In the second half we will work in the same way. We will do the work in which the Lord delights without change. I hope that those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit will not give up the life of becoming disciples of the Lord. If we have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, now the purpose is to become disciples. We lived the life of disciples of the Lord in the first half, and I hope

we will live the life of disciples in the second half as well, and I desire that we go on living ceaselessly as disciples of the Lord and then meet the Lord. Then I believe we will not be ashamed. ✉

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CHAPTER

5

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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

Who are the people who have received the eight blessings?

< Matthew 5:1–16 >

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. (Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven – ASV). Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket,

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but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'"

In Matthew, it is recorded that Jesus spoke about the Beatitudes. Those who have received blessing are all recorded here. First, He said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. Those who have received the remission of sins were all saved because they were poor in heart.

He gave the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit

A person's heart is small, yet no matter what thing of this world is put into it, there is no satisfaction in the heart. That is why the Bible says, *"The earth was without form, and void" (Genesis 1:2)*. In the Bible, the earth refers to our hearts, and this word says that the heart is void, that it has no satisfaction, that it is poor. Because it is poor, there is no satisfaction, and so people try this and try that; they follow fashions, wondering whether following fashions might bring satisfaction to their hearts, and they also struggle, wanting to make their poor hearts rich. But there is no satisfaction in a person's heart. To those who cannot be satisfied with the things of the world, God gives the gospel of the truth and causes them to believe in Jesus Christ and receive the spiritual blessings of heaven. So this means that He causes them to receive the remission of sins before God, become children of God, make the kingdom of heaven their own, and enjoy satisfaction in their hearts.

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God gave the things of heaven, the kingdom of heaven, as a gift to the poor in spirit, that is, to those who cannot be satisfied with the things of this world. To those who cannot be satisfied with the things of the earth, God gave the blessing of becoming children of God. The poor in spirit are blessed. Were you poor in spirit? Before we who have become righteous believed in Jesus Christ, before we received the remission of sins, did we have satisfaction? Were we unable to obtain satisfaction from anything in the world? Were our hearts truly poor? All people are poor. In this world we were the poor in spirit, those who could not be satisfied with the things of the world. Now we the righteous must go to preach the gospel to those who have not heard the gospel. The poor in spirit are precisely such people.

Before I was born again, I drank, sang, and danced, and I sang every popular song there was. But at that time, no matter what I did, there was no satisfaction in my heart. My heart was full of nothing but sorrow. I drank, sang, danced, spent money, tried all sorts of things, followed fashions, did bad things and did good things, and even tried living a religious life, but there was no satisfaction in my heart. So later I even thought of turning my back on the world and giving myself over to religion. Still, that was all just a thought, and what always remained was nothing but the emptiness in my heart. For us, there was nothing in this world that could fill our hearts. So did we not fill them with alcohol? I did not serve the Lord in heaven, but always served the alcohol of the earth. I served it in the morning, served it in the evening, served it in the daytime, and served it always. But the alcohol of the earth could not give riches to my heart. Yet when I met the Lord in heaven, only then could my heart be satisfied.

This means that God gives the kingdom of heaven as a gift to those who cannot obtain satisfaction. To those who enjoy

satisfaction with the things on this earth, He does not give the kingdom of heaven as a gift. The first blessing God gives is that He gave the kingdom of heaven as a gift to the poor in spirit. To those who are poor in spirit and cannot obtain satisfaction from the things of the earth, God gave satisfaction with the things of heaven. Dear fellow believers, have you received this blessing? We the righteous have all received this blessing. No matter how a person tries living, there is no satisfaction in this world. In this world, no matter what one tries, there is no satisfaction. It is true. Dear fellow believers, do you believe the fact that there is no satisfaction in this world? Neither money, nor pleasure, nor honor, nor power, nor anything else can give satisfaction. In a person's heart there is always only sorrow. A person who truly knows how to reflect on his own soul knows that there is no satisfaction. So, because there is no satisfaction, people deliberately put on airs in order to enjoy satisfaction, and deliberately hang even more things all over their bodies. Still there is no satisfaction.

In John chapter 4, a Samaritan woman appears, and that Samaritan woman at the well, who came to draw water at midday, had no satisfaction. *"For you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly" (John 4:18)*. Even though she had five husbands, she had no satisfaction, and with the sixth, too, she had no satisfaction. She had lived with all kinds of people, but there was no satisfaction. Just as there was absolutely no satisfaction for this person's soul in the things of the world, our hearts before we were born again also could not obtain satisfaction. To those who know that fact, God gives the kingdom of heaven as a gift. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? That is why I received the remission of sins. Although I had not lived out my whole life, I came to know early on the fact that there was no satisfaction in

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my heart, the fact that I was a poor person. It is the same with you. You have not lived out all of this world, but a world without Jesus Christ is a shell without a kernel and a desert without an oasis. In a world without Jesus Christ there is no satisfaction. But when we accept in our hearts that Jesus Christ has accomplished the remission of sins for us, the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, comes into our hearts and establishes the kingdom of heaven in our hearts. And in the future we will go to that kingdom. God has given us human beings eight blessings. To what kind of people did He give them? He gave the blessing of the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit.

He gave comfort to those who mourn

Second, it says that He gave comfort to those who mourn. To mourn is to grieve. It means that He has comforted those who grieve. God is the One who brings comfort to those who grieve as they live on this earth. The second blessing God gives is this blessing of comfort. What kind of people grieve? Those who do not want to sin yet sin, who do not want to become slaves of evil yet become slaves, who do not want to live so badly yet find themselves living badly—when they look at themselves like this they lament, and when they look at themselves on their own they are sad and so they grieve; to such people God comes and gives comfort.

When is a person saddest? People are saddest when they look at themselves, truly wanting to live rightly yet unable to live rightly. They sigh. “Why am I like this? Why am I like this?” When they really look at themselves, they are so sad. Because they are so wretched and so sad—people often drink and cry, and they cry looking at themselves. Ordinarily they are fine. But

this sad heart piles up inside their hearts, and then when they drink it bursts out. It explodes. They grieve as they look at themselves—so insignificant, not wanting to live that way yet living that way, so wretched, so worthless, so self-contradictory, and so hopeless. They grieve because of the sins they have committed. They are so very sad.

All who have not met Jesus Christ and received the eternal remission of sins, white as snow, are sad. When a person lays his sad self before God and before people, knows his sad self, and truly goes to find the Comforter, God meets that person, removes that person's sins, lifts that person up from the dunghill, and makes the sad one a joyful one. That One is none other than Jesus Christ. *"Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4)*. The Lord comforts such a person, saying, "I have removed all your sins. I have borne all your weaknesses. I have raised up your low position." Dear fellow believers, have you received comfort? Before we the righteous met Jesus Christ, we were such hopeless beings. Our lives were worth nothing. We were beings who only made mistakes; we were feeble, lowly, servile, weak, and worthless beings. So, because we ourselves were so worthless, we grieved. So our Lord came to us who were grieving and comforted us. Those who have received the blessing of comfort have received the second blessing. Dear fellow believers, have you received the two blessings?

The meek inherit the earth

What is the third blessing? He said, *"Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)*. To be meek means to be warm, not cold. A meek person does not put himself

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forward but accepts the word of God. A meek person does not reject the word of God's truth but accepts it. To such people God gives the blessing of possessing the earth. God said that such people would inherit the earth, and on the last day He gives this earth of the Millennial Kingdom to such people. He gives it to the meek, to those who have received the remission of sins. In fact, those who have received the remission of sins have received all eight blessings. And what were those who received the remission of sins like? They were meek. This does not mean that their temperament was meek, but that they accepted the word of God. He said that the meek shall inherit the earth; have we the righteous inherited the earth, or have we not? We have. The kingdom of heaven is also a land, and this earth is also a land. God will cause us to go and live in the kingdom of heaven in the future, and when the Millennial Kingdom is established on this earth, He will cause us the righteous to live on this earth. God is speaking of this.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be filled

Among the eight blessings, the next is the word He spoke: *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6)*. This fourth blessing means that He clothes us with such grace—the blessing of being able to do righteousness to our heart's content. To hunger and thirst for righteousness means that, for those who have the desire in their hearts, "I really want to live rightly; I truly want to live rightly," as they look at themselves wanting to live rightly yet unable to live rightly, God gives them the opportunity so that they can truly live rightly and can work to their heart's content

for what is right all their lives, and He entrusts right works to them. So we the righteous who have received the remission of sins are now doing this right work. We preach the gospel to people, pray for souls, and do good deeds. This work of preaching the gospel is a good deed, and doing this is having received a blessing from God. It is having received the fourth blessing. We can do the work of God until we are filled. Those who now truly hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed.

Dear fellow believers, do you want to do righteousness? Do you want to live rightly and truly live good lives, doing those right works countless times and living beautifully all your life? God fulfills that desire. To hunger for righteousness means to want to live rightly. It means to want to live for what is right. It is not to live only eating and drinking and living only for the flesh, but truly to desire to preach the gospel of the remission of sins to people and save people's hearts from sin, and to see them receive the remission of sins and leap like a leaping deer, rejoice, and become happy. It is to desire to live such a life and to be used in preaching the gospel. Dear fellow believers, do you have such a heart? Those who hunger for righteousness are blessed people. Simply living as the world flows, as the clouds drift, as the water flows is not living righteously. When we are in a situation where we cannot live righteously, this kind of heart arises in us. Thinking, "I am righteous, and I want to live righteously for the gospel," and then finding ourselves in a situation where we cannot live that way, from then on we become those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. When we are in such circumstances, we want to do righteousness.

When we know the truth, we want to do righteousness. When we know well the situation of the people of this world and know that people live only for the flesh, a heart arises in us that wants to preach the truth to people. Then, according to that desire of

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the heart, God grants us all the conditions so that we can do right works to our heart's content, as much as we want, freely, and so that we can preach the gospel in that way. So we must become those who hunger for righteousness. Dear fellow believers, do you have a heart that wants to do what is right? You must have such a desire in your heart. If you have such a desire, God guides your way and grants your desire. Such people are blessed people.

The merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers

Next, He said, *"Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7)*. Dear fellow believers, are you merciful to people? Do you have pity on people? The word mercy means 'to have very great pity.' Do you have pity on yourself or on people? The merciful shall obtain mercy. This means that God gives the eight blessings to those who have these eight kinds of heart. And He said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8)*. God says that He will cause those whose hearts are clean to converse with God. They are people who have no dregs of the world. Here it says that the poor in spirit, that is, those whose hearts are always poor and who cannot be satisfied with the things of the world, are blessed; that those who know how to grieve over what is truly sad receive blessing; that the meek, that is, those who do not go against the word of God but accept it, receive blessing; that those who thirst, wanting to do what is right, receive blessing; that those who are merciful to people obtain mercy; and that those who are pure in heart and wholly clean receive blessing.

And the peacemakers receive blessing. He said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God"*

(Matthew 5:9). This means that those who preach the gospel that makes peace between God and people are called sons of God. People have sin. God has removed their sins. Do you, standing in between as an ambassador, give the gospel to those people and make peace between them and God? Then such people are called sons of God. All these eight blessings are received if only one has the heart set forth here.

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake

Next, He said, *"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10)*. Dear fellow believers, are you persecuted for righteousness? Are you persecuted for the Lord, for God? Are you persecuted not for yourselves but for the gospel? Are you persecuted for Jesus Christ, for the church? Such people are blessed. God repays them with many rewards on the last day. Not only does He give them a paradise on earth and the kingdom of heaven as many rewards, but God also repays them fully in one way or another even on this earth. God gives such compensation to those who are persecuted for righteousness. These are precisely the eight blessings. This blessing of being persecuted for righteousness was the kind of persecution that our prophets, those who went before us, received long ago. Long ago, the prophets were persecuted for preaching the word of God and persecuted for speaking what was right. We the righteous today are also persecuted for preaching this gospel of the truth. When you are persecuted, I hope you know that although it is you who are persecuted, in fact you are being persecuted for righteousness. God said that He would give rewards to those

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who are persecuted for righteousness. He gives many rewards. When we are persecuted, when we live sacrificing for the Lord, when we suffer, God grants us many blessings in both spirit and body.

I hope that we who have become righteous will be saints who, living on this earth, receive and enjoy these eight blessings, truly receiving and enjoying all the blessings God gives. As it turns out, those who receive these blessings are all the righteous. It means they have received the eight blessings from God. Concerning these Beatitudes, Jesus went up on a mountain, opened His mouth, and taught His disciples, saying, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. It means that people have these eight kinds of heart, and that those who have these eight kinds of heart receive the eight blessings. It means that God has given the eight blessings. Those who have received the remission of sins are blessed people. In particular, all the people of God who have received the remission of sins, are with God, are with the church, are persecuted for the gospel, and live for the gospel are blessed people.

The first gate is being poor in spirit

God wanted to give these eight blessings to us human beings. And you and I today have received these blessings and live enjoying them. We have received the eight blessings. The first gate is that one must be poor in spirit. When one is poor in spirit and passes through this gate, from then on the kingdom of heaven becomes one's own, and one comes to possess the earth, obtains fullness, obtains mercy, comes to see God, is called a son of God, and becomes a saint who receives a reward from

God. The word saints means ‘a holy company.’ One becomes one of the people of God who go to the kingdom of heaven together with the holy company. Those who believe in Jesus but have not received the remission of sins are not a holy company but a company of sinners. They are people wedged in among the crowd of sinners going along in a company. The holy, sinless people are going to the kingdom of heaven, and we have become people who are included among them, saints. The saints have received the eight blessings.

To receive these eight blessings, one must without fail pass through the first gate. One must be poor in heart. One’s spirit must not obtain satisfaction from the things of the earth. Even to a person who is rich with billions or hundreds of billions, if he cannot enjoy satisfaction with the things of the earth, God gives the kingdom of heaven. To those who enjoy satisfaction with the things of the earth, God does not give the kingdom of heaven. Even if God were to give such people the kingdom of heaven, such people cannot receive the kingdom of heaven. Those who pass through the first gate come to receive the eight blessings of the kingdom of heaven. To those who are poor in spirit and pass through that gate, and next to those who mourn over their own sins—those who grieve as they look at themselves, wanting to live according to the word of God truly without a single point of shame toward heaven or toward earth, yet unable to live that way, looking at themselves as sinners—our God comes and gives the blessing of the comfort of the remission of sins. And to such people He gives the blessings of causing them to possess the earth, to live a right life, to be able to have fellowship with God, to be called righteous before God, and of giving many rewards for every labor and persecution they undergo for the Lord. Every human being must pass through this first gate.

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Once one has passed through the first gate, the second gate is mourning over one's own sins. If one has sin, one must mourn. One must not live nonchalantly while having sin. If one has sin, one must become a person who knows how to grieve. Even if people do not recognize such people, God goes to them, causes them to hear the gospel of the remission of sins, and comforts them. "I died for you, and I had your sins transferred to Me through the baptism I received from John in the Jordan River. For you, I received the judgment on the Cross in your place and rose again. Do not grieve." This is how our Lord comforts us. Since He said, *"Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5),* He gives the blessings of the earth and the spiritual blessings of heaven to those who have received the remission of sins and follow purely by faith. Dear fellow believers, you must pass through these gates. Our God has already given the eight blessings to us the righteous. But if there is no such preparation on man's side, it is a problem. Every heart that is not pure is a problem. Dear beloved saints, God has given the eight blessings to us the righteous. Have you received all the eight blessings? They are received by faith. If only the heart is prepared, they are received. This is not works. I truly give thanks that God has given us these blessings through faith.

Those who are persecuted because of the gospel are blessed

Let us read verses 10 through 12 together. *"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your*

reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10–12). Amen. Dear fellow believers, are you persecuted for righteousness? Are you persecuted not because of what you do wrong, but for God, for the gospel of the truth of Jesus Christ? Do you suffer such persecution as being called a strange person or being quietly hated? You should rejoice. We the righteous do not much like being persecuted, as far as the flesh is concerned. But even if we are persecuted, it must be for the gospel and for the Lord; we must not be persecuted because of our own individual wrongdoing.

Let us read verse 10. Is it those who are being persecuted for righteousness, or those who have been persecuted? It is already in the past perfect tense. It is those who have already been persecuted. Have you ever been persecuted for righteousness? If you have, you are those who have a reward, and you have been persecuted for righteousness, which is the greatest blessing among these eight blessings. Those who have been persecuted for God come to receive a tremendously great blessing, a reward, that God gives. But those who have never yet been persecuted for righteousness, who, out of fear of being persecuted, have not been persecuted—I hope you will willingly receive persecution. There are eight blessings here, but it is only those who have been persecuted for righteousness who receive the blessing; it does not mean that one receives the blessing just by staying still as a righteous person. One must be persecuted for righteousness in order to receive the blessing. Those who have been persecuted for righteousness are blessed. Who would like being persecuted? Yet still God says that those who have been persecuted are blessed. For the sake of the gospel we hear words of rejection, we are called bad people, and because of the gospel we are driven out, rejected, and deprived of many things; if all this is because of the gospel—if you and I become those who have been

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persecuted not because of your own wrongdoing but because of the gospel—then we are blessed people. We are people who will receive a reward.

Have you ever been driven out? Have you ever been driven out of your home because of the gospel, being told, "You are no child of mine"? Some are driven out by their parents in the flesh. They may say, "If you go to that church, let us cut off our ties; I will strike your name from the family; I will not leave you a single thing as an inheritance." If you do not suffer such persecution in your family, you suffer persecution in the world because you are righteous, because you preach the gospel of righteousness, the gospel of the truth, the gospel of the remission of sins, and you suffer persecution as people say that you are a strange person. So if such things happen to you—suffering disadvantages, being driven out of your workplace, being hated and pointed at by people—you should give thanks to God. In fact, those who pursue righteousness are bound to suffer persecution. Long ago our predecessors, the prophets, were persecuted just as we are. We must not be afraid of being persecuted for righteousness. If we are persecuted, those who have been persecuted can simply gather together, worship, live a life of faith, live their social lives, believe in God, pray, and live. The world cannot do anything to us. God blesses us and guides us. What does the world do for us? The world cannot do anything for us. We are not afraid of being persecuted for the Lord. The more persecution we receive, the better. The more we do, the firmer our faith becomes, the more we become people of faith, and the more we also receive God's blessings along with it. Since He said, *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake" (Matthew 5:11),* we are blessed. Apart from being reviled because we have done wrong, if we are not reviled

because we believe in Jesus and because we attend the Church of God, that is abnormal. This means that our God has caused us to be hated by the people of the world in order to bless us and reward us. We praise and give thanks to our God.

Let us be saints who receive and enjoy the eight blessings

Think about it. God has given us all these eight blessings, but I hope you will think about which blessings we are now receiving and living in by faith, which blessings we have taken hold of, which blessings have become ours, and which blessings have not yet become ours. Among the eight blessings, which blessings have now become yours? The poor in spirit have received all these blessings. If you still love the world even after receiving the remission of sins, you are not poor in spirit. When we go out and live in the world, we come to know that it is nothing much, and we become poor in spirit. God surely makes us poor. God gives blessing to those who mourn, and He also gives blessing to the meek. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are also blessed people. Are you not yet hungering and thirsting for righteousness, but full of righteousness? Are you full because of the gospel, so full that you feel you might burst? We who have received the remission of sins are filled with the gospel.

But on the other hand, in the hearts of us the righteous, hungering for righteousness, there arises a heart that now wants to live toward the gospel. This means that a blessed heart arises. If this blessed heart arises and a heart that wants to live rightly and live for this gospel rises up within your heart—if, thankful as you are for having received the remission of sins, a heart that

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wants to live for the gospel rises up—then you are a person who has received blessing. I hope you will become such people. I hope you will become people who have pity on others and people who have fellowship with God. I hope you will become people who are pure in heart, and ambassadors who make peace between God and people, who preach the gospel and bring many people in as children of God, into the Church of God. Dear beloved saints, I hope you will receive these blessings and enjoy the blessings all your lives. ✉

Who are the people who have received the eight blessings?

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world

< Matthew 5:13–20 >

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

When we look at the Bible, what God did on the fourth day appears, and it says, “*Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.*

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He made the stars also" (Genesis 1:16). God made the sun and the moon rule this earth. So man is ruled by the grace of God and the law.

The greater light and the lesser light rule man

Whether one has received the remission of sins or not, a person is surely ruled by the greater light and the lesser light. The greater light is the salvation of the water and the Spirit, by which God has saved us, and the lesser light is the law of God. So the born-again are always under the rule of the greater light and the lesser light, and those who are not born again are also always ruled by the greater light and the lesser light.

God rules us the righteous, too, with the lesser light. Whenever the righteous do wrong, whenever they do not act rightly, He shines on and reveals what is wrong and what is sin, and makes them truly confess it with their mouths. He also makes us confess the salvation by which God has saved us. So no one can get out from under the rule and dominion of this greater light and lesser light before God. It means that no one whosoever can escape it.

Those who are not born again cannot get free from the rule of that lesser light. Whenever they do something wrong and there is sin in their hearts, the law rules their hearts, so that they cannot get out of it, and it surely teaches them that they are sinners. So sinners try to cover their sins with their own deeds. But even if they make clothes out of fig leaves and try to cover themselves, they cannot. The reason they cannot cover their sins even though they try to cover them with their own good deeds is that they are ruled by the law, the lesser light. The lesser light at all times reveals all the sins, even those that are in the heart.

Unless a person receives the remission of sins, he can only admit until he dies that he is a sinner, and no matter what he says doctrinally, if there is sin in his heart, he is a sinner. If one has sin before God, the one who has sin goes to hell, according to the power of the law, which is the law of God, that is, the word that says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*. One cannot deny that if one has sin, one is destroyed. That is why the person who is ruled by the lesser light must return to the greater light. By believing in the greater light, one comes under both of these rules, acknowledges them, and receives the remission of sins completely.

Those ruled by the lesser light must return to the greater light

Anyone who does not acknowledge the word of God that he cannot but go to hell because of sin cannot return to the greater light. We must not merely know sin as sin, but must know that the wages of sin is death. The price of sin is surely destruction. For sin, the price must surely be paid, one must die, and one must surely go to hell, and a sinner must acknowledge this. Only when one acknowledges that one is a person who cannot but go to hell, that one cannot but go to hell because of one's own sins, does one need the Lord and need the Savior, and so go to that greater light, bask in the greater light, and obtain salvation. So salvation in Christianity is not of one's own will but of another's. One says, "It is not that I believed and so it came about; it is God who saved me." Therefore, everyone must acknowledge that even with the slightest sin one cannot but go to hell, and must receive the remission of sins by believing that the Lord has saved you and me with the water and the Spirit.

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On man's part, there is no other way than to acknowledge both of these. Everyone must acknowledge that he is ruled by the greater light and the lesser light, and must acknowledge that he is saved by this rule. Through the lesser light, one must know and acknowledge that one cannot but sin until one dies, and must also acknowledge that one cannot but go to hell because of sin; and through the greater light, one must know and believe that God has saved us, that is, that He had pity on us and sent Jesus Christ, and that with that love and mercy Jesus had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us. Only then does salvation come about.

The righteous, too, are ruled by the two lights

Even after receiving this salvation, are we not ruled by the greater light and the lesser light? Of course we are. Speaking overall, it is true that we have been moved out of the rule of the lesser light by believing in the greater light, but we the righteous, too, are under not only the rule of the greater light but also the rule of the lesser light. We the righteous, too, are pricked when we do wrong. When we the righteous, living on this earth, do wrong in deed or in heart, the law shines on us and rules us, showing what is truly wrong and that it is sin.

The Lord said that He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. The Lord said that He did not come to do away with the law itself, but that He fulfilled the law and saved those who had become sinners by the law, those who were lacking. Therefore, the Lord did not come to do away with this law itself. Even after receiving the remission of sins, we are still ruled by the greater light and the lesser light, that is, by the grace of God and the law.

Only then, as we live, do we know what is wrong in our hearts and acknowledge it again, know what makes God uncomfortable, go before God and receive the grace God has given, the greater light, and become children of God completely, and in it we come to run and play freely by faith.

It is a mistaken idea that after we have received salvation, the law itself is no longer needed. We must surely know this. If we claimed that the law itself is of no use to us, claiming the uselessness of the law, your life and mine would become a mess. We would become the most fearless and frightening people in the world. Look at some people today. They say that even though they commit sin, it is all right because they have been saved. But sin is lawlessness, and lawlessness is wrong. It is right to acknowledge sin as sin. It is not that, because one has been saved, committing sin is not wrong. It is not "I have no sin, so it is all right even though I sinned"; rather, one acknowledges that the wrong one has committed is sin and comes to realize once again that one is a person who commits sin. So it is that the greater light and the lesser light rule us, the born-again. Though we have been saved, we realize our wrongs by the law. Being ruled by the greater light and the lesser light means that when you and I do wrong, we do not just pass it over, but through the law we realize and acknowledge it before God and before people, and ruminate on salvation. That is why on the fourth day God made the greater light rule the day and the lesser light rule the night.

The law is the lesser light, and the lesser light rules sinners at all times. And to the righteous, whenever they do wrong, the lesser light shines its light and points out, "You have done that wrong." That is how it rules. Therefore, you and I must acknowledge the fact that two lights always shine on us. The law of God's salvation and the law God has given us, the strict law of God, make known what sin is and what light is, and clearly

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shine on what good and evil are. The light of that law clearly shines on it. Therefore, you and I must surely have the light of the greater light and the lesser light shine in our hearts, acknowledge at all times that what is wrong is wrong, be renewed again in the greater light by believing in it, and live before the Lord completely by faith.

For the salt to lose its flavor is to cast away one of the two lights

The word says, *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13)*. We are the salt of the earth. It means that if the salt loses its flavor, it is thrown away. The salt that has lost its flavor is salt, but it cannot serve as salt and is trampled underfoot by men. One must acknowledge that what is wrong is wrong and turn back, but if one becomes lenient toward sin, saying, "This sin, too, has already been removed," one loses one's character as a human being and is trampled underfoot by people. So at every moment we must acknowledge and confess our wrongs, faults, and sins. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)*. If we speak of this word on the basis of the word in the preceding verse, it says that if a person who has sin says he has no sin, it is a lie, but you and I, who have received the remission of sins, must acknowledge what is wrong as we live our lives. If we are to confess our sins, must we not acknowledge what is wrong in order to confess it? If we acknowledge what is wrong and say that it is wrong, the Lord will cleanse us from all that unrighteousness. This is because the Lord has already

removed all our sins. Because the Lord removed them all through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, because by that merit, by that grace, He has already removed our sins, we receive salvation. It means that the righteous come to live in the light again.

We the righteous are salt, so how can we lose our flavor? We can lose our flavor when we are ruled only by the greater light and not ruled at all by the lesser light. Also, if we lose the greater light and lean only toward the lesser light, we can go back to legalism and lose our flavor. Therefore, we must be ruled by the lesser light and also ruled by the greater light. Through the lesser light we must realize and acknowledge what sin is, and we must go back to the greater light again, be shone on by it, and receive salvation by faith.

Then do we receive salvation every day? No, that is not it; the salvation we received once is eternal salvation, and we ruminate on it again in our hearts. It means that the darkness in our hearts is shone on like this and made new. It means that we find the perfect light again. Therefore, your very life, saints, and mine must be ruled by those two. Only then do we lead a proper life of faith. Those who believe in Jesus lead a right life of faith only when they are ruled by those two lights; otherwise they become people who lose their flavor. Therefore, you and I must clearly know that we are salt, and every day we must know our shortcomings, acknowledge them before God, turn back, and ruminate on God's merit. First we must know that we are the righteous, we must know that we are beings surely needed in the world, and we must know that you and I are surely needed in saving the people who are in this world. And we must believe that if this salt is not to lose its flavor, it must surely be ruled by the two lights.

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Fig leaves cannot cover shame

Dear fellow believers, even after receiving the remission of sins, there is the possibility of going wrong. Even though we have received the remission of sins, we still have many shortcomings. We must not know this merely theoretically. We must truly acknowledge it in our hearts and believe it in our hearts, and so reach righteousness. We must acknowledge in our hearts as follows: "The wages of sin is death. If I have sin, I go to hell. I have sin, even if only the slightest. I am one who is to go to hell. I am one who is to be destroyed and go into the fire that is never quenched." Who is it that saves us here? It is Jesus Christ. By receiving baptism from John on this earth, He clothed us not with fig leaves but with God's garment of skin, the garment of righteousness. Since He had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, rose again, and saved us, we must have the faith that believes that He saved us through that mercy and love, through the love by which He bore all our sins and judgment and died for us. Seen through the law, what we ourselves always look like is one who is to go to hell, one who is to be destroyed, but seen through the Lord's love of salvation, we have been saved, become children of God, and become those who are to go to the kingdom of heaven. That is why we must always be shone on by the two lights.

By what do we realize our wrongs? We realize them through the word of the law. Your wrong thoughts and mine, our wrong deeds—we realize these through the word of the law, and yet it is through believing this word of the salvation of the water and the Spirit that we have been made perfect. Through these two lights we come to realize and are made perfect. When you examine yourself, you cannot know what is wrong with you

unless it is by the word of the law. The law says, *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*. But how is it with us? Is there not something at every moment that captures our hearts more than God does, so that we commit such sin every day? We have already served other gods. So what then? Through the law we come to know that this is wrong, entrust our shortcomings to God, and believe in and follow God.

Dear fellow believers, are we covered just because we cover ourselves with fig leaves? However big a fig leaf may be, can we cover the front and cover the back with that one leaf and cover all our shame? We have covered it temporarily, but what happens after a little while? It dries up and falls off, and the shame is exposed again. Fig leaves wither. Even flowers in an arrangement all wither after a week passes. At first they wither a little, after a while they wither more, and after about a week they dry up completely and simply crumble. What will you do once the fig leaves have fallen off?

Fig leaves are the human heart, good deeds. With these it does not work. Then with what does it work? There must be Jesus, who fundamentally took away all our sins, had our sins all transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died in our place, and gave His own life to us. It means that there must be a Savior who will give us a garment that never dries up and shrivels. Only when the Savior Jesus gives up His life and accomplishes that work can we become children of God by believing that fact. By believing in the Lord's salvation, we can become those who have no sin.

Therefore, we must be ruled by these two lights. We must think for ourselves. We must think, "What is wrong with me?" When we do so, we can live in the perfectly bright light at all times. If we have gone wrong, we realize it, acknowledge it, pass it on by faith, and receive salvation. But what if we had not

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believed? If one has not believed this gospel from the beginning, or has believed without knowing sin, one is not saved; so one must know what a lump of sin one is, acknowledge, "Ah, I am a sinner. I am one who cannot but go to hell," and ask, "Then what should I do, since I am going to hell?" and seek, hear, see, and believe in the salvation of the water and the Spirit of Jesus, and so receive salvation. What happens when one realizes one's sins and believes this gospel? One receives the remission of sins and is made perfect. And after that, if we go wrong again, what happens when we realize the wrong, acknowledge the part that is wrong, saying, "Ah, I have really gone wrong in this part. I have done wrong," and go before the Lord? We meet the salvation by which the Lord bore all this sin for us. What happens when we meet and believe in that salvation, by which the Lord had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and saved us? Our hearts become bright again. Therefore, we become those who always live in the light. As the word says that you are the salt of the earth and you are the light of the world, the born-again live in the light, and the very life of those who live in the light is salt and light. This word means that the born-again are those who have not even a bit of darkness, those who have no sin.

Only when we are ruled by both lights can we live as light today also. Otherwise we cannot live as light. This is because the Holy Spirit is made uncomfortable when we do not know and do not acknowledge our wrongs. The Holy Spirit who is in our hearts is made uncomfortable when we do wrong. What happens when we acknowledge by the law the sin we have committed, what we have done wrong? The Holy Spirit rejoices in our hearts. Therefore, God has ruled us with these two. Two lights have shone on this earth. When day comes the sun shines, and when night comes the moon shines. He made the moon shine so that it

would still rule at night. The moon rules the night and the sun rules the day. So the law of God, the commands of God, and the salvation of the water and the Spirit that God has given us are all necessary for you and me.

The born-again cannot hide the light

This is how a life of faith must be lived. Continuing, when we look from verse 14, it says, *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14–16).* Just as a city set on a hill cannot hide its light, we who are born again also cannot hide ourselves from the people of our households or from anyone. And He said that we must shine the light to people. He said to let God the Father be glorified through this light that we preach.

We cannot hide ourselves. That is why we are preaching the gospel to the whole world. We the righteous cannot hide ourselves. You, too, cannot hide yourselves. As to how it is that we cannot hide, if there is someone in a household who has received the remission of sins and become righteous, it cannot be concealed. One wants to stay in the household just as if one had not received the remission of sins, and wants to stay that way for the sake of harmony in the household, but it does not work. One cannot keep still when seeing what is wrong, one must speak clearly, one must say that what is wrong is wrong, and because one discerns, one comes to say before God that this is right and this is not right. That light cannot be hidden. Just as a city on a hill cannot be hidden, just as a lamp on a lampstand

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cannot be concealed, so it is with you and me. In this world you and I are also such beings.

Since He said, *"You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)*, we are light. Because we are the righteous, those who have no sin, those who have the truth, and this gospel we preach is the truth, we who preach it are the light of the world. We are a light that is absolutely necessary. We teach people what sin is. God's people are stars, and stars rule both the day and the night. We are light. To sinners we preach the gospel, and with the righteous we unite and manifest this gospel to the whole world. We are the light of the world. This gospel we preach is light to the people around you, to the people in this country, and to the members of your household. Through us these people receive salvation and give glory to God. He said to let them see your good works and glorify God the Father, and He said to let your light shine before men. It means that He has made us shine the light.

Good works are shining the light of salvation

To shine the light refers to good works, but it is not a matter of telling us to live virtuously. Good works themselves refer to shining the light of salvation before people. People of the world do many useless things, and seeing such things, saying that they are wrong and saying what is truly right is living rightly and is good works. Our shining the light means telling people what it is to live happily.

In fact, what do we see when we look at people who are not born again? They have a great attachment to needless things for no reason and are bound to them. They put on a lot of airs and are obsessed with making their names known. They have no

firewood in their own house, yet they go to a house holding a feast and give a gift of money. They borrow money to give such gifts. First of all, if you have nothing, must you not live first? Even if you do not give a gift, you must live first; even if you cannot go and cannot fully do your duty as a human being, must you not live? Even if in others' eyes one does one's duty as a human being, one only saddles one's family with a pile of debt, so what kind of good work is that? If you and I are truly human beings, we must know what we are now before God and what it is to live rightly, do first the duty we must do before God and then do the duty we must do before people, and first think about such things as what the range of what we can do is and whether God would be pleased or not if we did this, and then act.

Before others, we must shine the light of the gospel first, rather than fleshly bluster or showing off. It is right to live thinking of that first. It means that we must think about what it truly is for us to live a right life, and how we must live for it to be a right life before God. What matters is not how it looks when some person sees it; if it is right before God, it is right before people also. It is right for a person, having been born on this earth, to fear God, to offer worship and praise, to believe in the word of God, to receive the remission of sins in his heart by believing that word, and to preach this gospel to others who are suffering because of sin. But if a person does not do such things, does not believe in God, and goes only before people and lives virtuously, gives a lot of charity, and pretends to be good, that person is a hypocrite and one who deceives before God.

I am not a person who says, "Do this, do not do that." But when I look at some people, they do not believe in Jesus, yet they perform ancestral rites very well. While their parents are alive they treat them carelessly, but once their parents have passed away, they set out the table for the ancestral rite as if they

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were serving God. Rather than taking on debt after their parents have passed away to set out a table so laden that its legs bend, is it not better to buy their parents delicious things to eat in ordinary times? They buy what their parents could not eat while they were alive, set it on the rite table, bow a few times, and then the family sits around in a circle and eats it. That is not a good work. If they set it out like that, do the dead parents come and eat it and go? They are only putting on empty formalities, and only they themselves get full. That is not shining the light. It is not doing right conduct. It is better to do well by one's living parents, do well by one's living children, and do well by living people; after they die, it is enough to make one grave for them. This is how people who do not believe in Jesus are. People who believe in Jesus are not like that.

Are you perhaps like that? After being born again, do you stake your life on your ancestors' graves? For example, some person says to cut down all the big trees planted in front of the grave. So I asked, "Why cut down the trees?" and the reason was that, viewed from the grave, the trees blocked the view in front. So I said, "If you cut down all those trees, when it rains a lot the hillside will collapse and the grave will be ruined as well." When the rainy season comes one day and it rains a lot, the grave is safe only if the trees are there; but they say to cut them all down, without thinking that if they cut them all, the grave will be washed away. Why is that? It is because it feels stifling and nothing can be seen, and that is not right. They mean to do so because they think of the dead person as if he were a living person. What need does a dead person have for a good gravesite? In fact, they look for a good site so that they themselves will prosper. They do so because they say that if the grave is well placed, the descendants prosper, so that they themselves may prosper in the flesh; in fact, it is not done for the dead person.

We were made by God, came to realize sin by God, and received salvation through Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus came to this earth and showed mercy and love, and we have been saved from all sins by believing in the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. We must give thanks through believing this, and must preach this to our own families as well. This is precisely what shining the light is. It is shining the light of salvation, the light of life, and the light of blessing. This is what is right.

The Lord told us, too, to do this. And He said that those who have received the remission of sins will not be able to hide the light. We absolutely cannot hide it. I, too, cannot hide myself within my own household. It is the same with you. You absolutely cannot hide within your household that you believe in Jesus. To hide it is exactly like lighting a lamp and covering it with a cotton quilt. If you cover it too deeply with the cotton quilt, the lamp goes out, but if you cover it lightly, the quilt burns up entirely. That is a disaster. It absolutely cannot be concealed. Rather than trying to conceal it, you must shine the light, truly preach the gospel, pray for them, and show that you believe in God.

The truth cannot be concealed

We are now preaching the gospel to the whole world. Because we have the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we cannot conceal it. As we translated our books into the language of a country that serves another god and looked into it, we found that there were as many as several dozen countries in the world that serve that god. Because they believe in their own god, they collide with those who believe in the LORD God. It is because

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it cannot be concealed. Yet in some Bible translations, the name of God was rendered with the name of the god that the people of that country serve. So they think that their god made this world. Dear fellow believers, is it right that a created being God made created this world? Who made the sun? God made it. How can one believe that what God made created this world? So it must be corrected.

We will preach this gospel to the people of that country as well. The god they serve did not come to this earth for the people of the world, did not receive baptism and bear their sins, and was not nailed to a cross and shed blood for them. But Jesus, the Son of the LORD God, came to this earth, received from John the baptism by which our sins were transferred to Him in order to save us, bore the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross and died for us, rose again, and saved us. So we cannot regard their god as the same as God. He is not similar to God but entirely different. It absolutely cannot be concealed. The truth cannot be concealed. Even if our lives were hanging by a thread, it would not change. We will put the truth we believe, which cannot be concealed, all up on the Internet and make it into booklets and deliver it. Because it is light, it cannot be concealed, so much so that people are astonished, saying, "Where on earth is there anyone so bold?" Are we the light of the world or not?

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). God created the heavens and the earth. From the beginning, God created all things in this world and the universe. No other god created them. Man did not create this world. People say, "These things evolved, and that is why there are so many kinds," but that is not so. God made man, and God made all living things, each according to its kind. This is what is right. We acknowledge and embrace people's weaknesses, but we must clearly tell them by the law whether something is wrong or

right. We must have pity on the weak and show mercy, but we must say that what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong. In so doing we must give glory to God. We must shine this light so that the whole world may come to know the LORD God, Jesus. We must spread the gospel of the water and the Spirit by which Jesus saved us, that love and mercy, so that all may know it.

We must acknowledge both the word of the law and the salvation of the water and the Spirit

Our Lord says as follows. "*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17–20).*

The Lord did not come to destroy the law or the prophets. He did not come to destroy but to fulfill. Through the law we must realize sin at all times, realize whether something is wrong or right, and receive salvation completely by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, of that love and mercy, which God has given us. It means that God gave the law in order to make us completely righteous, and sent His own Son to this earth and saved us. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Heaven and earth will pass away, but the law, the commands of God, the

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word God has spoken, will never pass away, not even one jot or one tittle.

In the word of God, He said that whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches people so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, and whoever does and teaches them shall be called great. Is there anything special about people? People are all the same. The only thing that matters is whether one acknowledges one's sinful self or not; there is nothing else. It is not something that changes because you and I make a resolution or do not make one. When we acknowledge the word of God, acknowledge the law, and acknowledge the salvation God has given us, we become perfect people before God and become great before God. Some people say that they seem to be living well according to the word. Not at all. Such a thing is nonsense. The person who acknowledges in his heart is the great person, and the one who does not acknowledge is the small person. We must acknowledge the word of God, the law, and the love and mercy and the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has given us. Do you acknowledge them? That is why the Lord said that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

How much human righteousness the scribes and Pharisees had! They would walk along with dignity, their robes fluttering, and when they met a somewhat dirty person, they would say, "Unclean!" and gather up their robes and pass around him—I cannot tell you how much they pretended to be holy. As for how far they washed when eating, we usually wash up to the wrist, but they had to wash up to the forearm. They also had to wash their feet clean. Dear fellow believers, is there anyone who washes his hands and feet and even up to the forearms every time before eating? Among those who do hard work, there are some

who, having worked outside, get their hands and feet so dirty that they wash their feet and hands before eating. But do we, whose hands are perfectly fine every day, need to do so? How troublesome it is! Nevertheless, those people lived that perfectly in terms of deeds.

But they did not acknowledge the word of God. The law said that if one had even the slightest sin, one would go to hell, yet while always committing sin and always practicing hypocrisy in their hearts, they did not acknowledge it. And they did not acknowledge that Jesus was their Savior. But the Lord says to you and me that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, we cannot go to the kingdom of heaven. He is saying that you and I cannot live that way. Can you live that way? Since you cannot, what then? When we look at ourselves before the law of God, are we sinners or not? Seen by the law, we are sinners. Then who is there who can hide before it? All can only go to hell. Is there anyone among you who has never once committed sin? Is there anyone who has never once committed it in his heart? Is there anyone who will not commit it in the future? According to the law of God that the wages of sin is death, the price for sin is hell and death; destruction means hell. So what then? “We who have sin shall obtain salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we believe in Jesus Christ, we obtain salvation.” Only by acknowledging both of these do we obtain salvation.

It does not work by believing only one. We must acknowledge the law of God, acknowledge His commands, and also acknowledge the mercy and love and the salvation of the water and the Spirit that God has given us. Acknowledge them. Only then is the heart at peace and does it become light. It is light at all times. You and I must live truly rightly before God. Even though our deeds are lacking, we must be those who

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acknowledge these two in our hearts. We must acknowledge these two: the word of God's commands and the word of the law, and the word of love and salvation that God has given us. When we acknowledge them, we become the salt of the earth and the light. Do you believe? There is nothing else. If we do not acknowledge even one of these, we become salt that is salt yet has lost its flavor. What is salt that has lost its flavor? It means that it is good for nothing.

It is a fearful word that we, who are the salt of the earth, might lose our flavor. Therefore, we must acknowledge in our hearts both the word of the law and the word of salvation. This word says that if we do not acknowledge both of these, we lose our flavor outside the rule of the two lights. We must acknowledge the two lights in our hearts. Saying once more that I hope you will acknowledge them and live, I will wrap up the message. Dear fellow believers, can we live perfectly well in everything? We cannot. So what then? We need the Savior. Also, can we live perfectly well in our deeds? We cannot. Therefore, we must believe in both lights. We must acknowledge the greater light and also acknowledge the lesser light. Our God has saved us in one stroke with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. With the truth of love and salvation, He has saved you and me, who could only go to hell because of our own sins. I give thanks before God. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

We must believe in the perfect law that God has given

< Matthew 5:17–32 >

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your

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gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

Today's word in Matthew chapter 5, verses 17 through 32, speaks of the law of God and grace. He said, *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).*

The Lord came to fulfill the law and the prophets

It means that the Lord did not come to destroy the law or the prophets but came to fulfill them. That is right. This law that the

Lord spoke to us, mankind, is the command of God. The Lord did not come to destroy the command of God; rather, He gave us the law of God and came to this earth to save us from all sins—us who had become sinners because we could not keep that law, us who had fallen into destruction—and He gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit and so perfectly accomplished salvation. Also, our Lord said that He did not come to destroy the prophets. It means that Jesus, who is God, who spoke through the prophets to the people of Israel, to the born-again, to the Gentiles, and to all mankind, came to fulfill everything those prophets said and all that they promised. So we can sum it up by saying that our Lord did not come to destroy the law or the prophets but rather came to make them perfect, to fulfill them completely.

In fact, except only for such promises as the Millennial Kingdom, the rapture of the saints, martyrdom, the resurrection, and the new heaven and new earth, as for that salvation by which He said He would save us, our Lord has already come to this earth, had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so He has saved us from all sins. He has made it perfect. Our Lord's saving us from all sins has been completed, and on our side only believing remains. What now remains is the prophecy He promised to mankind through the servants of God. A few things of that prophecy remain: only the promise remains that the saints will be martyred at the end, that after the martyrdom there will be the resurrection and the rapture, and that He will let us take part in the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven, let us reign in the Millennial Kingdom, and let us live happily forever in the new heaven and new earth. Our Lord will fulfill all these promises in the days to come. He will fulfill these promises and give us perfect blessing.

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"For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:18–19). This speaks of the law and commandments of God, of the word of God. He said that not one jot or one tittle of the law would pass away but that all would surely be fulfilled. It means that God fulfills that command He spoke to mankind and the promises of all His word. And then there is the matter of who is great before God; the commandments of God are, besides this law, all the words God has spoken about the ethical life of the saints, telling them to do this and not to do that in daily life. He said that the one who keeps this word and teaches it, the one who does it and teaches it, is a great person, and that those who do not are small people. We do not live just a day or two; we must live until the day the Lord comes, and at times we fall short. Nevertheless, it is right to believe and follow all these words that God has spoken. Though there are indeed shortcomings in how we are, it is still right. I hope that we will know this and believe the word of God and strive to live according to this word.

Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven

"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). Here the Lord spoke about the law of God and salvation. It means that unless,

in the deeds of keeping the law of God, one is truly better than the scribes and Pharisees, one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. In human terms, the Lord spoke in a very ingenious way. The Pharisees and scribes were people who thought that they followed the word remarkably well, hypocritically, in the parts visible to the eye. Yet the Lord said to the disciples that unless their righteousness exceeded that of these people, they could not enter the kingdom of heaven.

In fact, how well the scribes and Pharisees followed and kept the law! When the Sabbath came, they did not sew their clothes even if they were torn, they did not walk more than the prescribed number of steps, and if they had an ox or a horse or a sheep at home, they never made it work on that day but protected it. They also prepared things like food all in advance, and on that day they did not even light a fire. How thorough they were! Even so, it means that by doing things legalistically one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. It means that even if one keeps it that well and keeps the word of God perfectly, it is not enough. It is not enough to enter the kingdom of heaven, and Jesus spoke this word to the disciples. What the Lord said, He said to all, both the disciples and the multitudes. From here on, our Lord speaks about the law of God and grace.

Whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the

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council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:21–22). Here, what was said to those of old means that the law of God gave its commands to those who are not born again. It said not to murder, and that whoever murdered would be judged. But our Lord said further about this part that whoever is angry with his brother will be judged, that whoever calls his brother Raca will be brought before the council, and that whoever calls him a fool will go into hell fire. He was saying that what God requires is this strict. A person who gets angry with a brother who has received the same salvation will be judged, and whoever calls his brother Raca will be brought before the council; this *"Raca"* is recorded as being a Hebrew term of abuse. Among the Hebrews it is said to be a serious insult. If one is brought before the council, one is tried by the elders of the synagogue of Israel and punished. It is a punishment by which, if things go wrong, one could even be stoned to death. Since He said that whoever calls his brother a fool will go into hell fire, we see how strict the Lord is.

Dear fellow believers, do we or do we not call one another a fool among ourselves? We do. There are so many times when we say, "You did this so foolishly." We also say many things far worse than this. He says that if brothers and sisters really curse one another, calling each other a fool, they will go into hell fire; God is this strict a God; so if there were no salvation by which the Lord came to this earth, had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so saved us, where would you and I have gone? We would go to hell. This is not something said out of idleness. The Lord is telling us how strict He is. Long ago our Lord spoke to the people of Israel with that law and those commandments. He spoke the words they had to keep in their lives and the commands they had to keep before God and before

people. But it means that our Lord deals with it even more strictly than the law. The law said that if one murdered, one would be judged, but the Lord says that a person who hates in his heart, or curses, or calls someone a fool goes into hell fire. I know that this is a word only God can speak and a word God has spoken to us. I know that it is a word He let us hear by way of contrast: how strict God is, and also how merciful He has been to save us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Since God is this strict, if we went by the law, doing the works of the law, what would become of you and me? Would we enter the kingdom of heaven, or not? We would not. Speaking in terms of the law, are we great or small? We are people who would go to hell. Speaking in terms of the law, we deserve to be judged every day. We are people who can only go to hell. But our Lord has saved us. What we must clearly know is that He has saved us and that the word God has spoken is this strict a word.

"First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23–24). This word means that whereas the law judged by outward appearance, by what a person had done, God judges by looking at the center of the heart. If, while bringing your gift to the altar, you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, first go and be reconciled, and then come and offer your gift—it means

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to first be reconciled in your heart and then offer worship in that way. For that reason, it means that the heart must be right more than any outward appearance.

It means that although we are all lacking and weak, we must look at whether we are right or not right before God, and if something is wrong, if there is something to forgive one another, we must forgive, and if there is something to be reconciled over, we must be reconciled and bring it to an end. It is not that it works if, instead of doing so, we harbor malice in our hearts and offer worship outwardly; rather, it means that first, if there is something in our spirit that is a hindrance before God, we must resolve it by believing the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, clear up any misunderstanding, forgive if there is something to forgive, and receive forgiveness if there is something to be forgiven for. It is telling us to be reconciled, and then to offer worship before God. We can see that our God always speaks to the center of our hearts. We must know that our Lord looks more closely at the center of our hearts than at our outward appearance and regards it as more important.

"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny" (Matthew 5:25–26). It means that when we are on the way with our adversary, that is, the one who accuses us, we should quickly apologize and be reconciled. Otherwise, it means, the accuser will bring charges, the judge will try the case, and we will be put in prison. It is a word telling us that while we live on this earth, we should clearly discern, before the word and commands of God, everything in our lives that is wrong and everything that is right, have every problem resolved through the gospel our Lord has given, and come before

the Lord. We must always examine our hearts well, and if there is something wrong, resolve it quickly. We should not put it off; it is always so. It is a word telling us that even though we live on this earth as people who are all lacking, if there is something wrong when seen before God—even if we cannot live perfectly in the days ahead—if there is something wrong in our hearts, we should not let the day pass but quickly settle all the accounts and put everything in order before God.

And He says to those who live a legalistic life before God while they live on this earth: if there is even the tiniest sin, they should quickly resolve this problem, this problem of receiving the remission of sins, by seeking the gospel and believing that gospel, and resolve it quickly before they stand before the Lord, and then stand. Otherwise, it means that if someone, like the legalists, claims to offer prayers of repentance every day, thinks seriously about sins that appear outwardly but lives putting things off without resolving the thoughts harbored in the heart, the wrongs of the heart, and the things that make people suffer, and dies while offering prayers of repentance only as a formality, that person will by no means get out of hell. The law of God told people to do this and not to do that outwardly, so one passed if one did not do what it said not to do and did what it said to do; but what the Lord really said was stricter than that. What that strictness means is that what is wrong even in the heart is wrong. So it means that legalistically no one, no one, can go to the kingdom of heaven. It means that by legalistic faith, without believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit our Lord has given, no one at all can enter the kingdom of heaven.

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Without believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, no one can enter the kingdom of heaven

If a person believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit—even if he himself is caught by all the words above, even if he is one who is caught by all those statutes and cannot possibly stand before God—if he admits that sin and believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which our Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again and so saved us, then it means that to the person who relies on and believes in the mercy of God and that salvation God has given, God has bestowed grace abundantly so that he can enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore we receive the remission of sins by faith and enter the kingdom of heaven. That faith comes about by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. So it is all too self-evident that religious people who do not have the Holy Spirit in their hearts, people who call themselves Christians yet do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and only work diligently and zealously, cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

As for how ordinary believers in Jesus resolve sin, they say they resolve it as follows. They say that before believing in Jesus they lived as they did, and then, by believing in Jesus, coming to know the law, confessing their sins, and accepting Jesus as the Savior, they are saved first of all. Then they say that as for all the sins they commit after being saved, they admit what they did wrong as sin and confess it, and when they confess, they acknowledge that the Lord has washed away even their past, present, and future sins by His precious blood, and by believing in their hearts that all their sins have been remitted, they receive the remission of sins. That makes sense religiously, but in fact it does not make sense. Dear fellow believers, if there were no fact

that the Lord had all the sins of a lifetime transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, then however much one believes in Jesus and admits, confesses, and acknowledges before Jesus that one has sinned, and however much one believes in one's heart that all one's past, present, and future sins have been remitted by believing in the precious blood of the Lord, even the tiniest sin still remains in one's heart.

That is why, saying that one will by no means get out of there until one has paid in full even the tiniest sin without anything remaining, our Lord nailed down that by the law, by faith based on works, by religious faith, it is utterly impossible. No one—not even a person the world calls a saint, however perfectly he has lived, however flawlessly he has made confession, however much he has lived a monastic life day and night—is without the tiniest sin; it is still there. Living day by day, one sins day by day, and it is there day by day. It means that until all those sins, even the tiniest sin, are resolved by faith, one can never enter the kingdom of heaven and will surely enter hell. That is why we must clearly know how strict the word our Lord spoke is.

The religions of this world all have commandments and laws too. Do not be at odds with your neighbor, do not make enemies, love your neighbor as yourself, help others, do good—all such sayings are there. And they tell people to obey their gods absolutely. Every religion has them. There are commandments for relationships with people, and all the laws are there. But all those laws deal only with outward things. Only when one has failed to live that way has one done wrong, and if one lives that way, one has done well. But it means that before God, it is not so. Before God, even if one has done perfectly in deeds, if one has not been so in heart, it is a wrong and a sin. And because, as for all those sins, there is nothing even a person can do about them, He said that we can surely reach salvation by believing in

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the gospel of the salvation of the water and the Spirit that our Lord has given—by believing in that salvation by which the Lord had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross and received all the judgment for all our sins, and rose again, and so saved us.

When the law accuses us, we resolve it with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

That is why the Lord said that one will not get out of there until one has paid everything, even the last penny, without anything remaining. Is there perhaps something wrong in your spirit, or is there anyone who perhaps has sin in his heart? If there is sin, the law will surely accuse you. It will bring charges against you. You have such a sin, you are a sinner, you have sinned—the law will first testify and point it out. Second, Satan the devil will needle you, saying, "You have sin." At such a time, what should we do about that problem? By believing in the baptism our Lord received from John when He came to this earth and in the blood of the Cross—our Lord who came to us by the water and the Spirit and saved us—by believing in that salvation, we can perfectly resolve our sins, as many as the mist, our sins as black as ink and as many, by that faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Do you believe? Therefore, it means that we receive remission of all our sins, even the tiniest sin, without anything remaining; through the law we come to realize and admit our sins; when our Lord, through the word of God's command, which is stronger than the law, speaks in our spirit about what is wrong, we admit it; and by believing in the salvation our Lord has given, we receive remission of all our sins,

even the tiniest sin, and become perfect people who are completely without sin.

That is why our Lord said at the beginning that He did not come to destroy the law or the prophets but came to fulfill them. Dear fellow believers, do you understand what is being said? In fact, if someone claims to believe in God yet does not believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart, he does not believe in God. Jesus, who is God, did not come to this earth only to point out sin; our Lord came not only to point out our sins but also to resolve all our sins; and so, by believing in that Savior—the Lord who had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross and resolved all our sins, rose again from death in three days, and has now gone up to the right hand of the throne of God and lives, and so has become our true living God and our true Savior—you and I are saved. The faith that believes this is the faith that truly believes in God.

In fact, even one who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit—if he does not realize, through the command of God, how much God has spoken to us and required of us, and his own shortcomings and what is wrong before God—it is not enough merely to believe this; he must realize his own shortcomings and sins. By becoming aware of and admitting how much of a lump of sin he is before God and that he is one who sins in many areas throughout his life, and by admitting even the sins he has not yet committed, saying, “Because I am lacking, I am one who sins every day, just as I have lived until now,” and by the faith that believes that, though we were people who could only go to hell, our Lord came to this earth and saved us—by this our faith becomes perfect. We become perfect and become perfectly righteous people. That is why our Lord spoke as follows.

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Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27–28). The law said not to commit adultery, and as long as one does not commit adultery in deed, it is all right under the law. But Jesus is God. As God He came to this earth and spoke that way to all people. Therefore, the seriousness of sin that God has actually spoken to us about—the sin God pointed out—is sharper, broader, and deeper. Speaking legalistically, if one does not commit adultery in deed, one has not committed it. What about the laws of this world? However much one stares at a woman and whatever one sets one's heart on inwardly, as long as one does not put it into action, it does not violate the laws of this world. This law is the same. The law of old was not violated either unless one actually did it. The laws of the world are like that, and before God, the conscience of those who believe in God testifies and the law testifies, so that one is exposed as a sinner before God; but what our Lord says is that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery. It means that God spoke of what is deeper, of the seriousness of sin and of how far something counts as sin. He said that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery, and if a woman looks at a man to lust for him, that too is adultery. Then can one be saved before God by the law? Can one be saved by works? No, one cannot.

Dear fellow believers, can you and I, with our flesh, with this heart and these thoughts, keep this law perfectly before God and go to the kingdom of heaven? We cannot. It is utterly impossible. Although it is impossible, many Christians in this world think it

is possible and are still attempting it even now. So some people think it is enough to come to church only in outward form and just greet people nicely, just not curse visibly and just not do bad deeds visibly, and that it does not matter whether in their hearts they hate or not, kill or not. That is because those people are spiritually blind. But God looks at the center of the heart. He said, *"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7)*. Because He looks at the center of the heart, when we hold this heart up to the law of God and hold it up before the word the Lord has required, you and I come to know that by the law we cannot possibly stand before God, and we come to believe and know that we can only be saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has given. Isn't that so?

So our Lord told us not to be hypocritical. With a hypocritical religion one can never escape hell. There are many religions in this world now, and Satan the devil is at work in such religions too. The religious leaders of the world join hands with one another and advocate religious harmony. Is that right before God? It is not right. Do they have the gospel of the water and the Spirit? They do not. They recite set prayers, say that sins are remitted by making confession, and tell people that once they have made confession, they must do good deeds in return. That is the kind of religion it is. Dear fellow believers, it is an empty shell. Our Lord said that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery, but they speak only a little about wrongs that have come to light, and even that is finished with just one confession. Jesus has already remitted all those people's sins, yet the priest says, "Your sins have been remitted." That is not right. So a religion without the gospel of the water and the Spirit easily makes people slaves of the devil.

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The reason they become slaves of the devil is that in every religion the scope of hypocrisy is extremely wide. The religions of the world put honorable poverty and self-denial first of all. They live all their lives in honorable poverty with one ragged garment, one pair of shoes, and one staff, having nothing and not even marrying, and people see that and greatly respect them outwardly. But in reality it is not that they have nothing; inside them there is everything. Yet only the outward appearance is like that; it is not that the inside is clean as well. If we look at history, there were cases where they seized people for being different from themselves, killed them without hesitation, and confiscated their property. But seen from the outside, they are extremely beautiful and good. The Bible describes such people as those who *"come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15)*. That is so not only of any one religion but of all religions. Do we not also see in the world people who recite pious words outwardly but inwardly fight over positions and power? Religion may polish the outward appearance well, but it cannot make a person's inside clean.

But because we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, because we have received the remission of all those sins by believing in the gospel of the salvation of the water and the Spirit that our Lord has given, we have no reason to do so. Because our Lord has borne all our own shortcomings and has also borne all the shortcomings of others, we have no reason to do so. Therefore, by religious acts alone one can never be saved. He said that one will by no means get out of there—if there is even the tiniest sin, one will by no means get out of there. Whoever does not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, whoever does not accept it, even if he is a Christian, even if he receives the title of saint, that person goes to hell. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? In fact, when we think about it

before God, there are many shortcomings, and there are many shortcomings in the life we live every day. So what do we do? We quickly settle such problems by faith, and what do we do so that our lives do not go wrong, so that we do not give our lives over to sin? Every day we seek out righteous things, right things, and do them. Every day we live by faith and, though we are lacking, we do that work for the sake of what is right. That is why He said, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).*

By the law no one can get out of hell

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29–30). Can we live this way? We cannot. As for why the Lord spoke that way, it means that it is better to lose one part of the body and live than to go to hell with a body that has sinned. Then, if we were to do as this word says—cutting off the hand every time it sins, cutting off the other hand too, plucking out the eyes if they sin, cutting off the legs if they have gone where they should not go, and dying if the body sins again—would we be alive? We would be dead. He is saying that legalistically it is utterly impossible. He said that by the law one cannot get out of hell and will surely enter hell.

That is why our Lord has been speaking about the law from verse 17 on, and we must know how stern what God has commanded us is. It means that He did not speak by the standard

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of some person; rather, God, who is absolutely good, spoke a perfect good, a perfect command. Therefore, He was saying that no human being can possibly follow the command of the perfect God. So He was saying that anyone who is a human being, a sinner, one who cannot keep the command of God, is saved by believing in the mercy of salvation God has given, by being clothed with that mercy. Look, for instance, at a person who gambles a lot. If you cut off the hand he gambles with, he does it with his toes, and if you cut off his toes, he does it even with his mouth. How can a person keep all of God's stern commands? One who attempts it, claiming he can keep those stern commands, is a fool. He is so dull that he thinks, from his own point of view, that it is enough to do what He told us to do and not to do what He told us not to do. But can he do what He told us to do? Can he refrain from doing what He told us not to do? It means he is a fool who cannot reckon this.

One who says that sins committed before God are remitted by doing this or that is ignorant. Does it make sense to kill a person and then say, "Please forgive me"? If one has killed a person, one must pay the price. Since if we paid it we would have to die, what did our Lord do when He came to this earth? He paid the price of our sins, which is death, the wages of sin. He received baptism from John, died on the Cross and paid the price of sin, and rose again, and so He saved us. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Where is there a god who forgives just because someone sins and then asks to be forgiven? Such a god is a liar. God is a righteous God and a faithful One, and He can never deceive or lie. He is perfect. The price must surely be paid. If one has done wrong, one must surely pay the price. Who came to pay that price? Our Lord Himself came to this earth as the Savior of mankind, had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was

nailed to the Cross, and so paid that price—death, which is the wages of sin. He rose again from death and saved us. Is that right or not? It is right.

But the religions of the world say that sins are forgiven if one chants incantations, offers prayers of repentance asking for forgiveness, makes confession, or burns paper. Does doing a lot of that work? Dear fellow believers, there is clearly a distinction between what is public and what is private. That if one has sinned, one must surely pay the price—this is righteousness and this is the truth. Is that so or not? But because our Lord came to this earth and remitted the sins we had committed, and because we believed it, we have been saved; and even after being saved, if we have done wrong, we must admit the wrong before God; and what happens after we admit it? By acknowledging and taking hold of that gospel, by confessing and admitting before God and taking hold of that gospel, we are set free from it, we are given the opportunity to live a righteous life, a right life, we come to have the qualification to live a right life, and we come to be able to live such a life. I believe that God saved us so that we would live a right life, that He saved us from death, destruction, and sin and placed us on this earth so that we would live a right life. That is why, when people who are not born again come to know about this law—if the right eye sins, they pluck out the right eye, and if the arm sins, they cut off the arm—then, if the whole body were cut up like a fish chopped into pieces, would there be any part left intact? Even the last remaining part would sin. Then that too would all have to be cut off. Then is anything left, or not? Nothing is left. We must believe that, by looking accurately at ourselves before God and fully believing in the command of God the Lord has given and the law of salvation God has given through the water and the Spirit, we are perfectly saved.

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God has given two things: the law and the law of salvation

"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 5:31–32). The law said that whoever divorces his wife should give her a certificate of divorce. If a man divorced his wife, all he had to do was write her a certificate of divorce and say that he had divorced her. But what did our Lord say? He said that whoever divorces his wife when his wife has not committed sexual immorality causes her to sin, because he causes her to commit adultery, and that whoever marries a divorced woman also commits adultery. It means that if we are dealt with by the law of God, no one can stand before God. No one at all can fully escape before the law, nor can anyone stand. Is that so or not? That is why our Lord gave two things. God gave us, mankind, the law and that law by which God saved us. Through the law we know that we are those who sin and realize our sins, and in our hearts, through the law of salvation God has given, we obtain salvation by believing in this salvation, that He has remitted all our sins through the water and the Spirit. We must know how stern the law God has spoken to us is.

God is extremely strict and so very exact. Both the born-again and those who are not born again can all do wrong. What is it that ultimately obtains salvation? By believing in the Lord, by believing in that baptism the Lord has given and the blood of the Cross, by believing in that merit—that is, by believing in this merit, that our Lord was born on this earth to save us, received baptism from John, bore the sin of the world and died on the

Cross, and rose again from death, and so saved us—you and I obtain salvation. After we have obtained salvation, God speaks this law to us again. He speaks the commandments. He tells us to live this way and to live that way. And He says that the person who lives holding on to these commandments, keeping and following them, is great, but that the person who lives disregarding and simply casting away even the least commandment is small; that is what our Lord says.

We cannot be perfect in the life we live every day. Some days we are perfect, and some days we are not. Why did our Lord leave us on this earth after saving us? I know that He placed you and me on this earth so that we would live a righteous life, a right life, a life that saves the souls of others, a life that pleases God, and do the work of saving lives. Therefore, after you and I have received the remission of sins, we must not put forward the righteousness of the flesh but hold on to the righteousness of God, praise the righteousness of God, exalt the righteousness of God, and spread the righteousness of God. By doing so, we can live a righteous life every day. And we must never be bound; we must not be bound even to ourselves, and we must not be bound to one another. Whether things have gone well or wrong before God, we must put everything in order before God and always follow the Lord with strength. Is that so or not?

What happens if, while following Him like that, we just sit down and stay there because we are tired? Do we do absurd things, or not? We do. If we do not serve God, we do absurd things. So in fact, even though you and I are lacking, because our Lord has saved us completely, because we believe it, and because our Lord has borne all the curses, we must entrust everything to Him by faith, no longer be bound by those things, and boldly, by faith, set the goal of our lives toward the Lord, for a righteous life, and live. I want Christ to be honored in my

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body for the rest of my life. I truly want God to receive glory. Dear fellow believers, when we look at our day-to-day life, our month's life, we come to know the fact that everything we did not live by faith is sin, and everything we did not live for the Lord, for what is right, is sin. And I believe that we are able to do what is right because the Lord has saved us perfectly, and that because we believe it, we do what is right every day. I believe that because of that righteous power of God, because of the perfection of the gospel that made us perfect, because of that faith, we do what is right every day. Today's word, verses 17 through 32, speaks of that part.

Now is the time to preach the gospel

Dear fellow believers, the world is now drawing to its close. This world that is drawing to its close is extremely pressing. One day now is more precious than ten years in the past. If we try not to work, we can go on not working endlessly, but if we try to serve the Lord, even our sleeping hours are not enough now. It is only for lack of energy that we fail to work; if our mind is truly sound, our body healthy, and our eyes not dim, we must do a lot of work. We are now facing such an age. Is there perhaps anyone among the saints who says, "I have hardly anything to do; I am bored to death"? I ask you to look around you and look at the church. Watching television is fine. But even while watching television, I ask you to look also for such things as whether or not there are souls you should pray for and whether or not there are people to whom you should preach the gospel. Using the computer is also fine, but I hope that you will go on the Internet, extract truly useful information, and use it in preaching the

gospel to people. There is no end to pointless things. We live only for a short while and then go.

We now have nothing to do with judgment. We have become people who have received nothing other than complete salvation. We have become perfectly righteous people. We have become people who can do perfectly righteous things. For this work we must run forward. The time that has passed is enough, so we must run forward. We must work. Since He said that whether we eat or drink, we should do everything for the glory of God, in fact, whether we eat or drink, we must do all things for the glory of God. This is not the law. Because the Lord has made us perfect, we must set our hearts on that and follow by faith. So those who, after being born again, do not follow the Lord with faith are the most wicked people, and on the last day the Lord will single such people out and throw them away. These are not my words. Look at the Gospel of Matthew. Among the parables of the kingdom of heaven, the Lord said, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away" (Matthew 13:47–48)*. It means that the person who, after being born again, says, "Now that I have no sin, all I need is to satisfy the life of my flesh; I will go after the happiness of my flesh," and goes after that alone, will be completely ruined both physically and spiritually, and because before God he is salt that is salt but has lost its flavor, he will be trampled underfoot by the people of the world, and God will leave him abandoned under a curse. That is why you and I must believe that He has given us the law and given us this salvation, and think about how you and I should live.

Dear fellow believers, without faith we cannot serve the Lord. That is why we must often hear the word of God. We must know

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it. In fact, without faith, without knowing the truth, can we preach the gospel to the world? We will only waste our strength in vain and then give up. Can we work on a worldwide scale? Can we present what we have said? We may present it to our own family, but we cannot present it before famous people. If we presented it, we would be put to shame overnight. However loudly one talks, if one is told to present exactly what one has said, the moment one presents it, one is branded as a strange person. One is immediately exposed as a deceiver. God has remitted all our sins and made us perfect so that you and I would live a righteous life. You and I can do what is right. Can we or can we not? We can. God said, *"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48)*. I know that God has let you know certain things and granted you the grace, the body, the ability, and the circumstances to work. I ask you to use all of them for the Lord.

Let us live that way. Let us live by faith; since the whole world now stands on the threshold of the age of Revelation, now is the most important time. It is a time of quiet for a short while, and it is the time that will reach the end. If we cannot work now, we cannot have great expectations for the days ahead. Where we live, we will go on living and preaching the gospel, but preaching the gospel in other countries will become difficult. Dear fellow believers, if war breaks out, can we preach the gospel? We cannot. Even a farmer must diligently plow the ground while things are still fine and store water in advance, knowing that a drought will come; a person who does not even do that but sits idle and then just looks up at the sky, saying, "It isn't raining," is a fool. We must really be thorough. Whatever enterprise we undertake, we must be thorough, prepare, and work.

Telling you that this word of the law the Lord spoke was in fact spoken more sternly than the word of the Old Testament of old, and that the Lord has truly saved us perfectly, I give thanks together with you for the grace of God. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

A complete sinner and a completely righteous person

< Matthew 5:21–48 >

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members

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perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax

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collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

At the end of Matthew chapter 5, it says, "*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)*. When we look at ourselves in the light of this word in which God told us to be perfect, we can see that we are so very lacking. Yet this Scripture speaks to us by contrasting darkness and light, the imperfect and the perfect.

The law and the words of Jesus are on a different level

In verse 21, we see that God said to those of old, that is, through the law in the Old Testament, that they shall not murder, and that whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:21–22)*. Dear fellow believers, what was said to those of old, that they shall not murder, is what the law says. "You shall not murder" is the sixth of the Ten Commandments. God said through the law that we shall not murder, and that whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But our Lord said that whoever is merely angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment, that whoever says to his brother, "Raca," is in danger of the council, and that whoever says, "You fool,"

goes into hell fire. Are the law and the words of Jesus on the same level, or are they not? The law speaks as if it were enough just not to commit sin, just not to commit murder. But our Lord said that whoever is angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment, and that whoever says, "You fool," goes into hell fire. Then do we sin and go to hell even by our hearts alone, without doing anything by our deeds, or do we not? We do. If we go by what the Lord said, we are more than deserving of hell. Therefore, we must know how lacking we are before the Lord. When we cannot even keep what the law says, can we keep what the Lord requires? We are people who cannot keep it. That is why what we were before believing in the Lord and being born again was a complete sinner.

If we had to act according to this word, there would be no one who could do so, and so everyone must know that they are completely sinners before God. How can we lacking human beings go forward keeping and doing all of this word of God's truth? We cannot go forward. If we look at ourselves in the light of the word of God, we are far, far too lacking. That is why people say that they are lacking. Why? They say they are lacking because they cannot live according to the word of the Bible. Dear fellow believers, are you and I lacking, or are we not? We are lacking. Are we a little lacking, or completely lacking? We are completely lacking. Can we live according to the word of God, or can we not? We cannot.

We are people who do what we are told not to do, and as for how many things there are that we are told not to do, it says, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27–28)*. We have already forfeited our qualification before God. It is impossible for us human beings,

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in ourselves, to stand before God. In the law we heard the word not to commit adultery, but our Lord said that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery. Therefore, it is impossible for us to go before God as we are. It is impossible for people born imperfect before God to be approved before God in the flesh. How can you and I be approved before God? Apart from faith, we cannot be approved. By our deeds, by ourselves as human beings, we cannot be approved by God.

We are not a little lacking but completely lacking

People who are not born again, looking at this word, say that they are lacking. But if you ask them, "How lacking are you?" they say that they fail to keep this or that and are lacking in some respect. That is not so. We are completely lacking. It is not that we are a little lacking and so violate the law a little; it is that we cannot do even a single one of the things in the law. You and I are people who cannot do even 0.1 percent by the standard our Lord requires. We, mankind, are people who are lacking before God. Acknowledge that the measure of how lacking we are is "the whole lot, through and through," and realize that we cannot do even a speck of righteousness. Therefore, since you, I, and all mankind cannot do even 0.1 percent of the word of God, we can know that we are complete sinners and people who can only go to hell completely.

Dear fellow believers, is that so, or is it not? We are people who can only go to hell completely. Apart from the grace of the Lord, apart from faith in the Lord, apart from that perfection of the Lord, our fate is that we can only go to hell completely. When it comes to being lacking, where is there such a thing as

being a little lacking? We are completely lacking. We do know that we ourselves are lacking, but to the question, "How much are we lacking?" we must know that we are completely lacking. We are not a little lacking; we are people who are altogether completely unable to do it, people who can do nothing, people who can only go to hell completely. We must know that what we ourselves are is people who can do nothing before God, who can only go to hell entirely. We must know about ourselves. Dear fellow believers, do you know it this way? Or do you know yourself as being a little lacking? Do you know, "I am a person who will go to hell"? Or do you think, "I am a little lacking, but still there are some useful things in me"? Are you lacking in this area but somewhat all right in that area? Or do you think that you are completely, 100 percent lacking on this side, and 100 percent lacking when you look at that side too, so that you are a person who can only go to hell?

We grade ourselves far too generously

You and I are people who cannot do the law in the least. We are people who, in human terms, cannot do good in the least, people who will go to hell completely. If we do not know that, we are overestimating ourselves far too much. We are grading ourselves far too generously. Is there any part of ourselves from which we can expect something? There is none, and yet we think, "If I just fix this one thing, the rest is all right; if I just repair and fix these one or two parts well, I am a fairly decent person too; it is only that this part breaks down often." But our Lord is saying, "You are completely corrupt, and there is nothing useful in you. Even if you merely look at a woman to lust for her, you have already committed adultery. You are human beings who

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commit adultery, human beings who murder, human beings who steal, useless human beings who are going to hell." Yet we are grading ourselves excessively. God says that our old self is that worthless, yet we grade our old self far too excessively, far too generously, saying, "If I just fix this part a little, I am a decent person."

Dear fellow believers, that may be all right in the eyes of men, but before God there is nothing useful in it. Do you believe that your life is useless scrap? What happens when people who say they have received the remission of sins, people who say they believe in our Lord, think that since they are only a little lacking, that lack might be filled if they believe in the Lord, and try to go to the Lord after filling up just a little? A person who tries to go before the Lord after fixing just a little regards himself as only a little bit of a sinner, and so he is neither grateful nor thankful for the Lord's love, and next he puts forward human righteousness.

Dear fellow believers, we must know that we are completely corrupt human beings, completely useless human beings, and lives headed for hell. Do you and I know it this way? How much do you know about yourself? Do you know and believe, "I am truly a useless person"? Or do you think, "Still, I am somewhat all right"? Dear fellow believers, you are 100 percent useless people. Our Lord has saved human beings who are useless and headed for hell. That is why we have nothing to expect from ourselves. Our Lord has saved useless human beings who are 100 percent headed for hell. This is salvation. Do you say that there is something, even a little, that is superior in you, something you do well? There is no such thing.

If we go by the law, nothing will be left

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29–30). Dear fellow believers, if we go by this word, if our right eye causes us to sin, we must pluck it out and cast it away. Dear fellow believers, do we not sin with our eyes? He said that if this eye sins, we are to pluck it out and cast it away; but we have only two eyes, and if we pluck them out, we could pluck out both eyes in a single day. If we did as the word of God says, we would be unable to see within a day, and within two days we would have lost our hands and legs and more. He said that if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it away; but does the right hand not commit many sins? It does. Then we must cut off the whole right hand. Then does the left hand not sin? Then we must cut off the left hand as well; and then do we have hands, or do we not? We do not. If the right hand sins we cut it off, if the left hand sins we cut it off, and if we cut everything off, where is there anything left? Therefore, if we go by the word of God, we can only go to hell 100 percent. It is utterly impossible. Our Lord is telling us that man is a being who deserves to go to hell.

"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 5:31–32). And then He said, *"Again you have heard that it was said to*

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those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:33–37). What is here called "those of old" is said with reference to our flesh. It is all correct, isn't it? If people went by this word, there would be no one who is perfect. He said not to swear falsely. Dear fellow believers, where is there a person who does not swear? We always swear. We always swear, but do we always keep our oaths? We cannot keep them. It means that there is nothing perfect in human beings. Our Lord is saying to us ourselves that, as for people, there is nothing perfect in themselves. It means that there is nothing perfect in mankind. Yet people think that if they just fix themselves up a little and use themselves, they are perfect. But there is nothing perfect. There is nothing to pin our hopes on. We are lives fit to go to hell, lives fit exactly to be cursed. Without our Lord, that is what our lives are.

"Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also"

He said, *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also" (Matthew 5:38–40)*. The words of the Lord are all correct. But we cannot live this way. He tells us not

to resist an evil person, to turn the other cheek also if someone slaps us on our right cheek, and, if someone takes us to court to take away our tunic, to give him even our cloak. Dear fellow believers, can we all do that? We cannot. If there were a person who could do this perfectly, there would be no need for Jesus. It is possible only through faith in the Lord. Human beings in themselves cannot do it. It is impossible. Yet there are people who imitate this. Some people, when they are slapped on the cheek, smile and say, "Hit this side too." Trying to keep it, they put on a pretense that they can keep it. So even when someone slaps them on the cheek, saying he is testing whether they have faith or not, they never get angry but smile and endure it. But there is no one in this world who does this sincerely. Only a hypocrite can do it. This is hypocrisy; how can a person offer the left cheek when someone strikes the right cheek? Only Jesus could do such a thing; people cannot.

Jesus gave up everything of His own to save us, but we human beings are not like that. Because Jesus, who is God, is perfect in both character and nature, He can do so, and because He is alive, He did so in order to save sinners; but we are lumps of sin, human beings who know nothing but ourselves, who do not even know our own children, who know nothing at all—so how can we do that? It makes no sense. It means that we human beings are lacking. When we look at the Bible, what is our Lord saying here? What was said to those of old is said to us ourselves. The law points out our own sins. It points out that we are lumps of sin. That is why we must know what we ourselves are.

"And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" (Matthew 5:41–42). Dear fellow believers, when someone asks you to go one mile with him, is there anyone who will go two miles with him? What the Lord

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says can be done only by One who is perfect, like the Lord. The Lord's word is not something that is fulfilled by doing it only once; this flesh must do it this way without change forever, until we die, until we go before our Lord. We can do what the Lord says once or twice. But we get caught on the point that we must do it without change until we die. We might manage once or twice, but we cannot do it without changing even once. Sometimes we get irritated, sometimes we get angry, sometimes we do not get angry, sometimes we are kind—but it must not be that way.

If we really tried to live according to this word, we who have flesh would have to be perfect without a single failure. Only then would the Lord look at us and say, "Yes, you are perfect. That will do." We can do this once in a while. "Can you go one mile with me?" "Since you ask me like that, I will go even two miles with you," and we can go with him. We probably have such experiences too. If it is a friend's request, we do it once. But if the next day he asks us again to go one mile with him, we say, "All right, just one mile." But the day after that he again asks us to go one mile. "Again? I'm tired today, sorry." This is what human beings are like. What our Lord is telling us is about being 100 percent perfect. It must not be that we do it only once and then do not do it afterward. We must keep doing it this way. Only then are we approved before God. When we look at such things, we are imperfect people who are not approved.

We become perfect people by faith

It says, "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate*

you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43–44). Dear fellow believers, in the flesh, in human terms, we cannot possibly do this. But what does our Lord say? He said, *"And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:47–48)*. Dear fellow believers, we cannot become perfect in the flesh, in human terms. Then how can we become perfect? It is impossible in the flesh, but it is possible by faith. In the flesh, we are people who can only go to hell. But if we believe in Jesus Christ, who removed all our sins, we become perfect people. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had the sins of you and me completely transferred to Him and completely removed them all. So by believing in Jesus Christ, all our sins have been passed on to Jesus Christ, and we have become perfect people. We have become people without sin. And we have become people who can do righteousness. Have you become perfect people? Dear fellow believers, though we are lacking, did our Lord have all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, or did He not? He had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism. If He had your sins and my sins transferred to Him, do we have sin, or do we not? We do not. Then we are perfect.

As our Lord spoke of this part all the way through, at the end He said, *"You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."* Dear fellow believers, we become perfect by faith. By faith we have become people without sin. By faith we are righteous. Therefore, by faith we can do perfect works. We must know that we have become perfect people by faith. We must know that, although we are imperfect in the flesh, we have become perfect people by believing in the Lord. Dear fellow believers, if it goes by the flesh, I cannot become perfect. I am

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an imperfect person. But if it goes by faith, I am a perfect person. I have no sin at all. I am a righteous person. And by believing in the Lord, I do this and I do that. I do righteousness; I truly love my neighbor as myself; I go two miles with the one who wants me to go one mile with him; I give even my cloak to the one who wants to take what is mine; and I give truly precious things. This is possible because you and I are perfect, because we believe in the Lord. By that faith which believes in the Lord, we can do righteousness.

A complete sinner becomes a completely righteous person

But the problem is that people do not know that they themselves are perfect. Knowing that we are imperfect in the flesh, we must believe, through faith in the Lord, that although we ourselves were people who had nothing perfect at all and were to go to hell, Jesus Christ had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. “When Jesus Christ received baptism from John, all my sins were passed on to Him. Jesus Christ took away all my sins, died on the Cross, rose again, and ascended to heaven. He is alive. And I believe in that Lord. Therefore I have no sin.” By believing in the Lord like this, we have become perfect people. And we must have faith in the fact that we have become people who can do perfect works. We must know that we are perfect. Dear fellow believers, there are two things. It is that a completely useless and completely imperfect person has become a perfect person by believing in the Lord. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? It is that we have become complete sinners and have become completely righteous people. Our becoming righteous is possible when we

become complete sinners. Only when we become complete sinners can we completely pass all our sins on to Jesus Christ by completely believing in Him and become righteous. And when we believe in Jesus Christ and have become perfect people, we can do perfect works.

If we do not have perfect faith, we cannot do perfect works. Your faith must become perfect faith. “The Lord is my Savior; Jesus Christ has saved me. I have been saved not by looking at myself but by looking to the Lord. Let us look to Jesus Christ, who has made us perfect.” Did our Lord save us perfectly, or did He not? He did. Because our Lord has made us perfect, we can do the Lord’s work perfectly through believing in the Lord perfectly. Therefore, we must not look at what we ourselves are. We must not look at our own deeds. We must look to the Lord. Have we passed our sins on to the Lord, or have we not? And do we believe it, or do we not? If we have passed our sins on to the Lord and believe in the Lord, we are perfect people. No matter how lacking our deeds may be, we are perfect people. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

Only with perfect faith can we do perfect works

Dear fellow believers, can we become perfect in human terms, in terms of deeds? Can we become perfect for even one day? We cannot become perfect for even a single day. That is why we must live with perfect faith. Even during the holiday season we must have perfect faith. When we meet our families and relatives, we must treat them with perfect faith. When they seize on our lacking deeds and will not let go, we can answer by faith. “How can you say you are a righteous person? You are wrong. Isn’t your church a strange place?” When they do this,

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we can say that we are perfect through believing in the Lord, and, with the faith that we ourselves are perfect, we can say that our sins have been passed on to Jesus Christ. We ourselves must first have such faith: "Jesus Christ had all my sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. Therefore I am perfect." Then, when we speak to the other person, we can boldly tell him this truth. Otherwise, if we are looking at what is human and fleshly, and someone says, "How are you a righteous person?" we have nothing to say. If he says, "Looking at you in the flesh, you seem more lacking than anyone," we have nothing to say. Dear fellow believers, we are perfect through believing in Jesus Christ. When we have perfect faith, we can live as perfect righteous people.

It is written, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*. Through faith in God we preach the gospel, and through faith in our Lord we can live boldly and powerfully in this world. Through faith we drive off all our enemies and adversaries, through faith we do good, and through faith we ourselves are protected. Without faith, we die. "I am a perfect person. The Lord is my Savior. God, keep me. Lord, protect me." Where does the faith that can pray like this in time of danger come from? It is possible through believing the fact, "I am a perfect person; I am a person without a single sin." Because we believe, we can pray and be protected before God. If we ourselves do not have perfect faith, we are imperfect. Only when faith is perfect can we do perfect works. If our faith is imperfect, we can only live imperfectly; and if our faith is perfect, if we have become perfect through believing in our Lord, we can do perfect works.

When we meet people or our families during the holidays, this talk of faith is sure to come up. The word "righteous" is sure to come up. As this word says, in human terms we cannot become righteous, but by faith we can. Our Lord is perfect. The

Lord has saved us perfectly. He had the sins of you and me, the sins of everyone in this world, perfectly transferred to Him. Jesus Christ received all our sins through the baptism He received from John in the Jordan River. And He received the judgment on the Cross for you and me. The Lord rose again on the third day after He died and is alive at the right hand of the throne of God. In this way He has removed what was imperfect in us. Thus the Lord caused us to be born again through believing in Him. We have become perfect people through believing in the Lord. Because we became complete sinners before the Lord, we were called by the Lord and have become people without sin. Through believing in the Lord we have become perfect people, come to speak perfect words, come to have perfect faith, and become people who live doing perfect works. Our Lord has made us perfect. Dear fellow believers, isn't that so? Therefore, we must live with faith. In the flesh it is utterly impossible. In the flesh it cannot be done. Some people who are not born again say, "I am a little lacking," but the truth is, "There is nothing perfect in me at all. In the flesh it is utterly impossible. But I am perfect through believing in the Lord." We have obtained this faith through Jesus Christ. So whenever we are imperfect, we must always look to the Lord, who has made us perfect. By looking to the Lord, we can enjoy perfection. By faith we can receive the love and grace of our Lord in every area.

Dear fellow believers, do you have perfect faith? In faith, it is important to have perfect faith. Dear fellow believers, are you perfect by faith? Do you have no sin at all? Do you believe that all your sins have been passed on to Jesus Christ? All our sins, every single one, have been passed on. Do you believe the fact that all the sins we commit throughout our lives have been passed on to Jesus Christ? Then do we have sin, or do we not? We do not. Then are we perfect people, or are we not? We are

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perfect people. You and I were complete sinners, but we have become perfect people through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must believe. When we do, we can pray, do righteousness, live by faith, and also be united with the church. And through believing in the Lord, we can do this and that and everything. I hope that you will have perfect faith. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The heart that receives the blessings Jesus promised

< Matthew 5:1–12 >

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. (Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven – ASV). Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Jesus, who teaches the blessings

When Jesus sat down on the mountain, His disciples came to Him. Let us read verse 1. *"And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came*

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to Him" (Matthew 5:1). Before the disciples who learn the word, Jesus makes clear who is a blessed person.

Verse 2 says, *"He opened His mouth and taught them, saying" (Matthew 5:2)*. The blessings that follow are not words gathered from people's hopes. They are promises that Jesus Himself teaches.

Therefore, when we read this word, we must not merely count up our present circumstances but look at what Jesus, who speaks this word, gives and to whom He gives it.

Poverty and mourning, hunger and persecution do not look like circumstances a person can boast of. Yet Jesus speaks of blessing even to such people. The basis for judging blessedness is changed. What one receives from God determines that person's true circumstances. Even if one looks lacking in people's eyes, if the Lord gives the kingdom of heaven, that person is blessed.

In this word, the heart of the person who receives the blessing and the gift God gives are together. If we speak only of poverty of heart and forget the kingdom of heaven, we end up praising poverty itself. If we forget the One who promises comfort and hold on only to mourning, we end up remaining in sorrow. Jesus speaks before us as the One who knows what is needed and gives it.

You do not need to adorn yourselves before this word. You need only lay down the heart that tried to appear well-off even without God, and listen while acknowledging your own sins and shortcomings. The person who learns the word stops endlessly defending his own self-assessment and accepts the judgment of Jesus.

The kingdom of heaven given to the poor in spirit

Let us read verse 3. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. Jesus did not make this promise by counting how much or how little one possesses. What He spoke of is poverty of spirit. Verses 3 and 10 both end alike with the words *"theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"* and verses 4 through 9 in between speak of what will be received in the future, such as *"they shall be comforted"* and *"they shall see God."* The kingdom of heaven is placed at the beginning and the end of the eight blessings.

"The poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3) are those who need what God will give. Those who think they can stand before God holding what they have achieved do not seek the word of salvation. The person who knows that he cannot remove the sin of his heart by his own strength longs for the righteousness God gives.

Jesus said to them, *"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. This is greater than a promise to make up for what a person has lost in the world with something of the same kind. It means that He gives the kingdom of God to them as their own. The true rest the soul longs for is in a relationship with God. The person who believes in Jesus, who gives the kingdom of heaven, does not evaluate himself by possessions alone.

The object of the faith that receives the kingdom of heaven is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of your whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, and bearing that sin that was passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and thereby received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. To those who

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believe this gospel, God gives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes them His own children.

Even after being saved, the heart needs the word of God. We cannot live as though God's care were no longer needed on the grounds that we already know the gospel. The person who remembers the grace he has received honestly tells God what he lacks and is taught by the word.

The person who passes through mourning and receives comfort

Let us read verse 4. *"Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4)*. A heart that knows sin and yet thinks nothing of it and a heart that aches because of sin are different. When we look back before God on how we have lived according to our own will, sorrow arises. Jesus does not turn away from that sorrow, and He promises comfort to those who mourn.

The word *"those who mourn" (Matthew 5:4)* makes us think of the person who looks at himself honestly. He knows that there is a difference between the image he has shown to others and his actual state before God. The heart that acknowledges that fact turns from the attitude that held on to its own righteousness and comes to look to the salvation the Lord has granted.

The basis of comfort does not lie in the size of one's sorrow. It lies in Jesus, who made the promise, *"They shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4)*. A record of having shed many tears cannot become the merit that washes away sin. When we believe the gospel of Jesus, who solved the problem of sin, the conscience obtains rest. Believing what God has accomplished is the way to receive true comfort.

The person who has received comfort escapes from a life in which he feels at ease only when he hides his faults. Instead of the heart that feared being driven out of grace if it admitted sin, he has the assurance that the Savior bore all his sins. That assurance does not become an excuse that makes wrongdoing light. It becomes the strength to look back honestly and correct wrong behavior.

When we encounter another person's mourning as well, it is not something we should hastily press them about, telling them merely to change their outward appearance. The person who is in anguish because of sin needs the word of the Savior, who washed away that sin. It is fitting to help that person with the truth so that he may believe in the salvation of Jesus and obtain peace in his heart.

The meekness that accepts the word

Let us read verse 5. *"Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)*. A meek heart is a heart that does not insist only on its own thoughts when God speaks. It does not exalt its own judgment above the word of God but accepts the teaching. Because it trusts God, it humbles itself, and that trust leads to action that follows the word.

"The meek" (Matthew 5:5) have an attitude of acceptance. If they pick out and take only the words that are pleasant for them to hear, they cannot fully follow God's rule. They receive the word of comfort and also receive the word of rebuke. When something in their own thinking that needs correcting is revealed, they correct it according to the word.

Jesus promised, *"They shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)*. An inheritance is something God gives. The heart that trusts the

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One who gives must come before the heart that tries to seize what belongs to God by its own schemes. From this promise we learn that there is a blessing God entrusts to those who believe and follow the word and lets them enjoy.

When we go against the word in order to accomplish our own plans, our hearts become impatient. When plans proceed differently from our own will, we sometimes resent people. The meek person first looks at what God teaches. After learning what is right, he decides according to that word. Even if yielding his own thoughts looks like a loss, he acts by the faith that entrusts things to God.

If the teaching you need has become clear, there is no reason to make excuses for long before it. The blessing God has given is enjoyed not when we stop at commenting that the word is right but when we live according to that word. Keeping a learning heart today gives precious benefit to tomorrow's life as well.

The filling given to the heart that longs for righteousness

Let us read verse 6. *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6)*. The expression of hungering and thirsting contains an urgent need. It goes beyond the degree of watching what is right from a distance and thinking it good; it is longing to live oneself in accordance with the will of God. Jesus sees such a heart and promises that it will be filled.

"Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6) are people who are clear about what they want to obtain. They want what God says is right rather than people's praise. Those who have become righteous through the gospel of the

water and the Spirit know the grace that gave them the remission of sins, and so they long for a life befitting that grace. The joy of being saved leads to the heart that wants to know and do the will of God.

That promise is *"they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6)*. God does not leave in vain the heart that longs for what is right. He gives opportunities to learn the truth, to care for other souls, and to serve so that the work of the gospel may continue. The believer uses the time and strength he has received from God for such work.

If we say we long for righteous work yet always put off the service actually given to us, we must examine that heart. It is not only great and conspicuous work that is valuable. We can also give our hearts to faithfully fulfilling the responsibilities given to us and caring for fellow believers. The heart that wants what is right makes us recognize and respond to the needs close at hand.

What is needed is the faith that asks the Lord to help rather than the confidence that we will handle everything by ourselves. The person who hungers for righteousness asks for the strength to do rightly the work given to him rather than hoping to have no work to do. Because there is the promise that Jesus will fill him, he does not close his heart looking only at his own small ability.

The fruit of mercy, purity, and peace

Let us read verse 7. *"Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7)*. Mercy is keeping another person's distress in one's heart. The person who valued only his own needs learns the fact that other souls are also precious

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before God. The person who has received pity from God turns from the attitude of coldly judging others' difficulties and comes to think of helping.

"The merciful" (Matthew 5:7) also pity those who are bound in sin. They know that, though the word of salvation was heard by them, there are people who do not yet know that truth. They do not close their hearts seeing only the shortcomings revealed in that person's words and actions. They pray, hoping that he will come to know the gospel, and try to give the help needed for him to hear the truth.

Jesus said, *"They shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7)*. The person who has received the care God grants knows that his own life, too, is a life in need of mercy. While helping others, he does not become higher than God. Relying on God, he seeks grace together. This faith also takes away pride from the heart of the one who helps.

Let us read verse 8. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8)*. Having a clean heart before God is an urgent matter for a person. Merely dressing up one's behavior to look good does not remove the sin of the conscience. When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we looked at earlier, we obtain the assurance of the remission of sins and go to God without any hindrance.

The joy of *"the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8)* lies in having fellowship with God. The person who used to wear out his heart hiding and making excuses now hears the word and seeks His will. Because he believes the salvation God has accomplished, he also tells God his weaknesses and asks for help. A pure heart enjoys the boldness to draw near to God.

The promise *"they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8)* makes us look to the blessing of knowing God and being with Him. It makes us set our hearts on what God does in our lives. The gaze

that used to chase only the gain before our eyes changes, and we value God's will and care revealed in the word. The remission of sins opens up the joy of such fellowship.

Let us read verse 9. *"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9)*. The peacemaker preaches to people the salvation God has accomplished. It is making known how the problem of sin between God and man has been solved. By pretending not to know sin and passing it by, a soul cannot be at ease before God.

In the promise *"they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9)*, work that resembles the Father is revealed. Because God delights in giving life to sinners, His children, too, treat souls according to that will. Rather than having their hearts taken up with increasing their own side, they want that person to know God and obtain life. Service done with that heart bears the fruit of peace.

The promise that is not withdrawn even in persecution

Let us read verse 10. *"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10)*. Even if we long for righteous work and serve peace, we may meet persecution. People's responses do not always come back as thanks and welcome. Jesus, though He knows this, proclaims blessing. People's opposition cannot take away the kingdom of heaven received from God.

The word *"for righteousness' sake" (Matthew 5:10)* makes us examine the reason for our suffering. We must distinguish between quarrels that arose from our own stubbornness and the opposition we receive while following the truth of Jesus. If we

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change the reason He spoke of blessing to our own advantage, we cannot hear the word rightly. On the way for righteousness we must be bold, yet we must honestly admit our own faults.

Jesus again said, *"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10)*. Even at the moment of being rejected by people, the fact of belonging to the kingdom of God is precious. We must not regard even the grace we have received as worthless because of the feeling of not having been recognized. The promise Jesus gives is greater than the evaluation the world gives.

In verse 11, He makes the reason even clearer, saying, *"For My sake" (Matthew 5:11)*. The disciples belong to Jesus. Because they believe and preach His truth, they meet opposition. If we remember this relationship, we can keep our hearts from being scattered in persecution. When it is clear whom we are following, people's evil words cannot determine the direction of our lives.

He also said, *"Say all kinds of evil against you falsely" (Matthew 5:11)*. The wound received from a lie is heavy. It is even more so in a situation where we cannot explain ourselves. But Jesus distinguishes between falsehood and truth. We must believe the fact that God knows, and guard our hearts so that even our own words do not become evil while responding to falsehood.

The judgment of Jesus is *"Blessed are you" (Matthew 5:11)*. In it is the comfort that tells us not to think that blessing has disappeared merely because we are hearing criticism. We do not have to be ashamed of having lived according to righteousness. Giving thanks for the fact that we are people who belong to the Lord, we can hold on to the word of God and continue the work entrusted to us.

The joy of looking to the reward in heaven

Let us read verse 12. *"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:12)*. With the word to rejoice, the reason is given together. It is because Jesus promised the reward in heaven.

We do not need to hear the word *"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad" (Matthew 5:12)* only as a burden telling us to forcibly change our feelings. Jesus has given us grounds to rejoice. When we think of that promise and believe it, we have hope even in the midst of an aching heart. Because the Savior, who knows sorrow, spoke of blessing, our present distress does not become all there is for us.

The promise *"great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12)* gives us the assurance that God knows of the recognition we did not receive from people. If we strive too hard to prove ourselves to people, our hearts easily grow weary. The person who has entrusted himself to God believes that even unseen labor is not in vain. So even if there is little praise, he sincerely fulfills the work entrusted to him.

Jesus said, *"So they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:12)*. He connects the suffering of the disciples with the lives of those who preached the word of God. When we think that we alone are going through something strange, our hearts easily become discouraged. The fact that those who followed the word also went through such opposition makes the believer firm.

The reason He spoke of the prophets is not to make persecution itself something to boast of. It is to make known the meaning of the way of following the word of God.

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We do not need to evaluate one another by how many painful things we have gone through. We must value the heart that holds on to the truth and is faithful to the Lord, and care together for those who are in the midst of suffering.

In this passage, Jesus saw the poor heart and spoke of the kingdom of heaven, saw mourning and spoke of comfort, and saw the heart that longs for righteousness and spoke of being filled. The person who knows what he now lacks can hear this promise. Faith is paying attention to what the Lord gives rather than spending our strength hiding that lack.

When we live according to the blessing we have received, our attitude toward people also changes. We come to care for those who need mercy, go to God honestly, and serve the truth of peace. That is not a performance to prove that we are people worthy of being blessed. It is living according to His will because the grace we have received from Jesus is precious.

Look again at your present circumstances under the word of Jesus. God knows the heart that has nothing to set before God, the heart that ached because of its own sins, and the desire to do what is right. Jesus is the One who gives the blessings that are needed. There is hope for the person who opens his heart to Him and receives His teaching.

We must not decide in advance that today's suffering will be tomorrow's despair. Jesus promised the reward in heaven in the very place where He spoke of persecution. The person who believes what God will give does not avoid the labor to be borne today. Remembering the comfort and the promise he has received, he keeps the faith of that day.

Let us not try to confirm the life of a blessed person by the praise of the world. The kingdom of heaven, the comfort, and the reward that Jesus spoke of are our hope. Let us humble our hearts and receive that word, keep the heart that longs for

righteousness, and trust God's promise even in the midst of difficulties. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The glory that goes to the Father through our conduct

< Matthew 5:13–16 >

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

The name by which Jesus calls His disciples

Jesus tells His disciples that they are the salt and the light of the world. He does not first ask how much they have done to be worthy of being salt and light. He makes clear what kind of people He has established His disciples to be. A person who knows this calling does not judge the work entrusted to him by the size of his own ability alone.

Let us read verse 13. *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men"*

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(Matthew 5:13). This word makes us think of the name "salt" and the role of salt together. In the grace given to the disciples, there is work to be carried out in the world. So that they will not forget this fact, Jesus gives a warning along with it as well.

In the word *"You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13)*, we see the object of the calling. The disciples who follow Jesus hear that word. We, who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit today, must also receive this calling as precious. If, because of our own weakness, we regard even the work God has entrusted to us as trivial, we fail to rightly appreciate the grace we have received.

Even when the world judges that it does not need us, the word of salvation is needed by the world. God has established people who believe that word and preach it. The worth of a disciple does not lie in a reputation he has made for himself. The word of life that God has entrusted, and the service of sharing that word, are what make that life precious.

The call *"You"* refers to the disciples together. There is no need to be bound by the burden of having to accomplish everything alone. We carry out the work He has given together with those who believe the same gospel. The relationship in which we fill up one another's lack and serve together must also be regarded as precious within this calling.

The flavor of salt that the world needs

Jesus warns of salt losing its flavor. The word *"if the salt loses its flavor" (Matthew 5:13)* shows the danger of only the name remaining. Saying that we know the gospel and living according to that gospel must go together. If we do not treasure

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the truth we have received, we also forget the role entrusted to us.

The question *"how shall it be seasoned?" (Matthew 5:13)* makes us think of the original work of salt. Even if a person says many things that people like to hear, if the truth that washes away sin is missing, he cannot give the help a soul needs. The gospel of salvation that Jesus has entrusted to us must be clear in our words and in our service.

The gospel we are to preach is the salvation Jesus accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including even the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all; He bore the sins thus passed on to Him and, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

A person who believes this truth has something to preach. He does not need to use up all his words explaining his own goodness. He can clearly tell a person who is suffering because of sin what he must believe in order to obtain the remission of sins. Jesus, who accomplished salvation, is the center of our faith and of our testimony.

In the expression "keeping the flavor," there is faithfulness to the truth. If we leave out or change the content of salvation in order to win people's favor, those who listen do not hear the word they need. When we teach, we must accurately preach how Jesus washed away sin, and we must not pretend to know what we do not know.

Concerning salt that has lost its flavor, the text says, *"It is then good for nothing" (Matthew 5:13)*. An attitude that takes lightly the work Jesus has given is a fearful thing. The truth God

has given us was not given for us merely to keep like an ornament. He entrusted it to us to be used so that other souls may come to know that truth.

When we hear the warning *"but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13)*, we come to look back on our own role. If we apply the warning only to others, we ourselves can go on without doing anything. We must examine whether we are treasuring the gospel we have received now, and whether we are spending our heart and our time in keeping with that gospel.

If this warning has awakened our hearts, we need only take up again the work entrusted to us. Honestly acknowledge the word the Lord has spoken, and ask for help. Learn in the areas where your ability to serve is lacking, and correct what you have done wrong. Being faithful to the work Jesus has entrusted is more important than saving your own face.

"The salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13) is not a role that stays with oneself alone. Even while those who already know the truth are content among themselves, there are people in the world who have not heard that truth. We must widen our hearts so that the joy shared among us may also reach the souls outside. That is the calling He has given us toward the world.

The *"flavor" (Matthew 5:13)* of salt cannot be replaced by anything else. In the service of the gospel, too, we must not mistake busyness itself for fruit. It is important to examine whether, amid many activities, the word of salvation is actually being preached clearly. We must put at the center the work of Jesus, who solved the problem of man's sin.

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The light that cannot be hidden

Let us read verse 14. *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14)*. In the name Jesus gave His disciples, there is a direction toward the world. Light shines so that others can see it. The life of a disciple, too, does not stop at keeping the word of salvation he has received for himself alone, but reveals it to others.

The declaration *"You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)* gives a great responsibility. It is the responsibility to preach the truth so that those who do not know the gospel may come to know God. The fact that God has saved us is a joy, but we must also remember that there are souls who do not know this fact. The work of making the grace we have received known to others as well is the service of light.

Jesus says, *"A city that is set on a hill" (Matthew 5:14)*. This image given in the text clearly shows hiding and revealing. The truth God has given must appear in actual life. What we believe in our hearts, what we say with our mouths, and the service we carry out must be connected to one another.

The word "*cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14)* makes us look back on a heart that is ashamed of the truth and tries to hide it. If we speak vaguely about the content of our faith because of people's evaluation, that person also loses the opportunity to know the truth. While respecting the other person, we must be able to make clear the gospel we believe.

Shining light is different from making oneself look great. When asked a question about salvation, there is no need to begin by speaking at length about one's own career. One need only answer clearly what one believed in order to receive the remission of sins. What matters is that, through that answer, the listener comes to know Jesus.

If your words preach the truth, your life must also be tended so that it is worthy of those words. When a fault has been exposed, if you stubbornly insist that you are right, people easily misunderstand even the gospel. The attitude of admitting a fault and correcting it is the attitude of treasuring the grace received. In sincere service, the word of salvation is brightly revealed.

Before the word *"the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)*, we also come to look back on a heart that picks its audience. It is not only people like us who need the truth. People whose living circumstances and thoughts differ from ours also need the same salvation. It is fitting not to judge people in advance but to treat them as souls who will hear the word.

Light is revealed like *"a city that is set on a hill" (Matthew 5:14)*. Therefore, even promises made before people cannot be taken lightly. The work we said we would take on, we must carry out faithfully, and if it has become hard to carry out, we must honestly let it be known. Trust among those who serve the gospel is also kept through such small responsibilities.

The purpose of placing a lamp

Let us read verse 15. *"Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house" (Matthew 5:15)*. Jesus speaks of where the one who has lit a lamp places it. The purpose of lighting it is to shine light within the house. If one lights it and then covers it, it cannot be used according to that purpose. The grace we have received, too, must be used according to the purpose for which it was given.

In the words *"Nor do they light a lamp" (Matthew 5:15)*, we see what has been provided beforehand. A light to shine on the

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darkness has been prepared. The disciples, too, have the truth they received from Jesus. When we help others, we are not creating a salvation that we do not have. Because it is making known a salvation already accomplished, we can serve by faith.

Jesus said, *"Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket" (Matthew 5:15)*. The act of covering it keeps the light from reaching people. If, out of fear or a heart absorbed only in one's own affairs, one keeps avoiding opportunities to speak of the gospel, the service given to oneself comes to a stop. We need to look back on what is hindering us from sharing that word.

Next He speaks the words *"but on a lampstand" (Matthew 5:15)*. A lamp is placed so that it can shine light. We, too, must actually use our hearts and our labor so that the truth we have received may reach others. Learning the gospel and preparing to explain it accurately, and listening attentively to the questions of those who hear, also belong to that service.

If we insist only on the way that is convenient for ourselves, we may miss people who need help. We must look at what it is that the other person does not know and is struggling with. Understanding does not arise from repeating the same words in a loud voice. We need the patience to confirm the word together and make its meaning known step by step.

The word *"and it gives light to all who are in the house" (Matthew 5:15)* shows the people who receive the light. We do not shine while calculating who among them will be grateful first. The truth God has given is a word that all people must hear. Even if the response of someone close to us is slow, we must not withdraw even our heart that thinks of that soul.

The words *"all who are in the house" (Matthew 5:15)* show that the benefit of the light is shared together. Just because someone understood the gospel first, he must not look down on a person who is slow to learn. We need the attitude of helping

that person with the word we know and waiting until he understands. Look toward the joy of knowing the truth together.

In the word *"gives light"* there is a result. As soon as the lamp is placed in its proper place, people receive the light. We, too, must examine whether our service is actually giving help. If, rather than thinking only of the fact that we have labored, we check whether the other person has understood the word, we come to discover the further explanation and help that are needed.

Good works that shine before men

Let us read verse 16. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16)*. Jesus connects the life that shines light with good works. Actually serving so that the word of the gospel reaches people involves the labor of hands and feet. We must not leave it only as a thought in our hearts, but carry out the responsibility entrusted to us.

In the word *"Let your light so shine before men" (Matthew 5:16)*, the response of the disciple is required. We cannot just wait for someone else to do the work that has been given. We must examine what part we are to carry out, and join hearts with those who serve together with us. The work of preaching the truth needs the faithful help of one another.

Some explain the word directly, and some help from alongside so that the work can continue. The value of service does not disappear because the degree to which it is seen differs. God knows the labor carried out with the souls who hear the gospel in mind. Rather than comparing the work entrusted to each and quarreling, it is fitting to help one another.

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The word *"that they may see your good works" (Matthew 5:16)* makes clear what people will see. We must let them see the disciple serving for the sake of life rather than making his own name known. When the purpose of making Jesus known is clear, gratitude comes before boasting even when we explain our labor.

If through good works a person hears the word of salvation, he gains a truly precious benefit. For the soul comes to know the problem of his own sin and to believe in the salvation of Jesus. Therefore, we must not judge the value of the work of serving the gospel only by its visible scale. Even one person hearing the truth rightly is precious.

Just because there is a lack in our service does not mean that the truth is lacking. What is lacking we must supplement, and we must keep learning. While believing in the perfection of the salvation God has already accomplished, faithfully examine your own explanation and attitude in preaching that salvation. Conviction about the gospel and the humility to learn can go together.

"Good works" (Matthew 5:16) do not become a right to control others. Just because we have given help, we must not try to move even that soul's heart as we please. The purpose for which we serve is to help that person believe in God and follow the word. Along with the gratitude we receive, we must also guard against the heart that wants to possess people.

The word *"see"* reminds us that our service is carried out before people's eyes. If we strive only at visible work and neglect unseen responsibilities, our service is uneven. Rather than changing our attitude according to who is watching, we must carry it out faithfully because of the fact that it is work entrusted to us by the Father.

The Father in heaven, who receives the glory

The final purpose of the text is *"glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16)*. It does not end with people seeing us and admiring us. The purpose is that they come to know God, who loved them and saved them, and give thanks to Him. The direction of service is toward the Father to the very end.

Jesus said the words *"your Father" (Matthew 5:16)*. The disciples have God, who cares for them. When we serve the gospel, we must not think like a person who bears every burden alone. We can do the work entrusted to us while asking God, who saved us, for the wisdom and strength we need.

If your ability seems insufficient, remember the grace He first gave. God has made you know the truth of salvation and has also given you the opportunity to serve. It is not work that can begin only once you have become a great person on your own. You need only understand rightly the word you have now received and faithfully begin with the service you are able to carry out.

Even when things go well, we must keep the direction. When many people begin to recognize us, a desire arises to speak more grandly of our own labor. Even then we must remember the fact that the One who accomplished salvation is God. Examine your words and attitude so that gratitude does not linger long on yourself but turns toward God.

Even when we hear no word of thanks from people, we can rejoice if glory goes to the Father. Even if our names are not remembered, if one soul has come to know the Savior, the service is not in vain. A heart that loves the work God has entrusted keeps us from being bound only by people's reactions.

The Father *"in heaven" (Matthew 5:16)* is the One who knows our limits. When the work entrusted to us feels heavy, we

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can ask for help and find a way to carry it out together. Enduring every responsibility by one's own strength alone is not faith. Receiving the help of the fellow workers He has given, while asking God for wisdom, is also faith.

The purpose *"glorify your Father" (Matthew 5:16)* also makes us examine our heart after the work is finished. If we cling to the result as our own merit and keep demanding to be recognized, our heart is easily hurt. Give thanks for the work God has helped with, and look toward the service that is needed next. Gratitude sets the heart in order and enables us to carry out new labor.

When you are discouraged because people do not recognize you, you need only confirm again the purpose of your labor. If it is work you began in order to preach the word God has entrusted, hold on to that purpose. Do not judge your own faithfulness only by how much or how little praise you receive, but examine whether you have been honest in the responsibility entrusted to you today, and ask God for strength.

Today's service carried out with the light we have received

The flavor of salt and the light of a lamp each make us think of the role given to them. After giving His disciples a new name, Jesus told them to live in keeping with that name. It is a life of treasuring and keeping the gospel we have received, and of serving so that the truth may reach other souls. It is a life that leaves behind showing off oneself and makes the Savior known.

Look around to see who needs the truth today. There are people who hold questions but cannot ask them, people whose hearts are heavy with the problem of sin, and people who have

heard the gospel but do not clearly know its meaning. Rather than judging the other person lightly, have the heart to confirm the word together. Sharing the truth requires such care and patience.

Treasure also the labor of those who serve together with you. In places you have not seen, others are carrying out the work that is needed. Do not take that labor for granted, but encourage and help one another. When we remember the common purpose toward the gospel, there is less reason to quarrel in our hearts over the roles that are visible.

Reveal the light you have received from the Lord through today's service. Preach the truth rightly, do not avoid the labor that is needed, and when fruit comes, give thanks to the Father. That people come to know the Savior through us and give glory to the Father in heaven is the purpose of the life Jesus has entrusted to us. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The word He fulfills and the faith that does and teaches

< Matthew 5:17–20 >

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The purpose of His coming that Jesus made clear

Jesus Himself tells us how He treats the law and the prophets. Let us read verse 17. *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17)*. We must not think of the fact that Jesus came and the word of God that had already been given as separate

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from each other. Jesus came as the One who fulfills the word God has spoken.

The word *"I"* contains the declaration of the One who came Himself. People may judge Jesus by all sorts of thoughts, but the work of Jesus must be known by the intent that Jesus Himself made clear. Believing in the Savior is not a matter of making up the form of salvation one wants and then fitting Jesus to it.

Jesus spoke the words *"the Law or the Prophets" (Matthew 5:17)*. The word God commanded and the promise He conveyed through the prophets are there together. We cannot divide them, saying that only the word that exposes sin is important and the promise is unnecessary, or that we may receive only the promise of comfort and treat the command lightly. We must listen to the words God has spoken, taking them together.

The word *"Do not think that I came to destroy" (Matthew 5:17)* first corrects our thinking. If, on the grounds that we believe in Jesus, we regard the word of God as unnecessary, we misunderstand the purpose of His coming. Even a person who has been saved must examine himself before the word. The fact that we know grace does not become a right to erase the word.

Jesus did not save us in a way that nullified the word already given. The word of God is true, and its judgment on sin is also true. Therefore, if we want to know how salvation was accomplished, we must receive into our hearts the fact that He did not do away with the word but fulfilled that word.

The Savior who fulfills

The word *"but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17)* makes the work of Jesus clear. It is that He actually accomplishes what God promised. If we think of the work of Jesus as merely adding a

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little to one's own righteousness, which man ultimately failed to achieve, we come to misunderstand salvation as something made by mixing the merit of man and the merit of God.

The word *"fulfill"* reminds us of the word Jesus spoke in chapter 3 while receiving baptism from John. *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Jesus came to fulfill in person the righteousness that the law and the prophets demanded and promised. That righteousness is not something completed by adding the works of man.

Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of your entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. Jesus bore those sins that had been passed on to Him and, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the complete remission of sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

Jesus made clear again the purpose of His coming, saying, *"I did not come to destroy" (Matthew 5:17)*. He did not save us by withdrawing the judgment on sin but saved us by bearing sin. Therefore, a person who believes in grace has no need to insist that his wrongs are not sin. He can honestly acknowledge sin and yet be sure of the salvation that has been accomplished.

This assurance makes us love the word. In a heart that wants to be approved by God by dressing itself up, there arises a desire to avoid rebuke. But a person who believes in salvation learns through rebuke what he must correct. He does not treat the exactness of the word as a fearful enemy, but accepts it as the will of God that teaches him to live rightly.

A person who knows that the One who fulfills is Jesus does not bring the responsibility for salvation back onto himself. The

remission of sins is based on the merit of Jesus. We, who have become righteous by that grace, live according to the word we have received. When we rightly distinguish between the basis of salvation and the responsibility that a saved person must carry out, our faith is not shaken.

The certainty of the word that does not pass away

Let us read verse 18. *"For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18)*. Jesus lets us know how certain the word of God is. It is not that the word loses its power just because people forget it or treat it lightly. Jesus declares that the word God has spoken will be fulfilled.

We must not pass lightly over the word *"For assuredly, I say to you" (Matthew 5:18)*. The disciples must believe the declaration of Jesus rather than their own conjecture. Even when understanding the word, we need the attitude of first accepting its certainty. We must not arbitrarily cut down the word God has spoken to fit our own circumstances.

Before the expression *"till heaven and earth pass away" (Matthew 5:18)*, we come to look back on our own shortsighted judgment. The situation presently before our eyes always changes. But we cannot believe the word of God and then doubt it according to changes in our situation. The faithfulness of the One who spoke is the basis of faith.

Jesus spoke the words *"one jot or one tittle" (Matthew 5:18)*. Even the parts we regard as small are in the word of God. The attitude of keeping only the main lines that are convenient for oneself and discarding the inconvenient parts does not accord

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with this word. A person who learns the word needs the honesty to listen attentively.

The promise *"will by no means pass from the law" (Matthew 5:18)* shows the firmness of the word of God. Even if it is erased from people's memory, the will of God does not disappear. A word that we did not regard as important may expose today's wrong. At that time, the right response is to correct our own judgment rather than to blame the word.

The word *"till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18)* makes us trust the work God has begun. God is not One who only speaks the word and then leaves it for people to finish by their own strength. A person who believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished also believes the promises He will fulfill in the future. By that faith, he does not let his heart be captured by his immediate circumstances.

The certainty of the word governs impatience. When the result we want does not appear right away, it is easy to think as if the word of God were wrong. But what we need is not to change the word but to trust the One who spoke it. We must entrust things to God and carry out what we are to obey today.

A heart that does not discard the small commandments

Let us read the first part of verse 19. *"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19)*. Jesus connects the certainty of the word with the attitude of the disciples. If the word is certain, the one who hears it must also treat it faithfully.

The connective *"therefore"* takes up the promise of the preceding verse. Because God fulfills all His word, we must not lightly discard the commandments. If we say we believe in the faithfulness of God yet treat His commands lightly, our faith and our attitude are at odds. Faith makes us treasure the word.

The word *"Whoever"* does not let us set ourselves apart as an exception. We cannot ignore a small commandment on the grounds that we have believed for a long time or that we do a lot of work. Before the word of God, everyone must receive instruction. The more familiar a person is, the more he must watch that he does not stop listening because he thinks he already knows.

Jesus spoke the words *"one of the least of these commandments" (Matthew 5:19)*. A person may try to be faithful only in things that stand out. But God also knows the words and attitudes that are not seen. Rather than picking out and carrying out only the responsibilities that look important to others, we must not lightly divide the work God has entrusted to us according to whether it is big or small.

The word *"breaks" (Matthew 5:19)* shows an attitude that goes beyond simply not knowing and pushes the word away. If, when we realize a wrong, we insist that the command is unnecessary rather than correcting it, the problem grows bigger. Acknowledging our own lack and regarding the commandment of God as void are clearly different.

If weakness has been revealed, we can ask God for help. If we know what is wrong and still discard the word, we close the way to learn. What a person who has received grace needs is not the attitude of pretending to be perfect but a heart that honestly receives instruction. The effort to actually correct the wrong we have acknowledged must follow.

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The attitude of treasuring the word appears even when we are alone. Faith is revealed also in keeping a promise that no one else checks, in correcting anything we have told others wrongly, and in faithfully finishing the work we have been given. While we carry out small responsibilities, the heart that follows the will of God takes root in our actual life.

The responsibility that accompanies teaching

Jesus speaks the words *"and teaches men so" (Matthew 5:19)*. Discarding the commandments may not stay within oneself alone. If we teach that our own lax attitude is right, others also come to treat the word lightly. A person who teaches with words must think about whose life his words influence.

If we leave out an uncomfortable word out of a desire to be approved by people, the conversation may become easier for the moment. But the one who is learning does not fully hear the will of God. In teaching with love, there is the responsibility of honestly preaching the word that is needed. We must not give up that responsibility because of people's reactions.

The word *"shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19)* makes us think of God's evaluation. Teaching does not become right because many people like it. What matters is how God sees it. A person who teaches must examine whether what he preaches accords with the word, rather than boasting of his influence.

The one who learns also has a responsibility. Do not follow something only because it is comfortable to hear, but check it together with the written word. Examine whether a person's words make light of God's commands, and whether they clearly

reveal the salvation Jesus accomplished. Faith takes care to understand the teaching of the Bible rightly.

If a part we do not know is revealed in our teaching, we must learn more. Meaning does not become clear merely by repeating familiar expressions. We must read what comes before and after that word together and examine what is actually being commanded. The attitude of standing before God as a hearer ourselves keeps teaching right.

The words *"of these commandments" (Matthew 5:19)* lead us not to take God's teaching selectively. Making much of one command does not mean we may discard another. The confession of faith and the responsibilities of actual relationships, gratitude toward God and honesty toward people, must go together.

The person who does and teaches

Let us read the latter part of verse 19. *"Whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19)*. Jesus connects doing and teaching. The word we require of others we ourselves must also receive. The fact that we are in a teaching position does not take the place of the responsibility to follow the word.

In the word *"does" (Matthew 5:19)*, we see the importance of actual life. If, after explaining that God's commands are right, we actually ignore them in our own conduct, the teaching becomes weak. We ourselves must live under that word, learning and correcting. When we teach in that way, the attitude of respecting the word is conveyed along with it.

The one who *"teaches them" (Matthew 5:19)* also needs patience. People do not do everything rightly just because we

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have explained once. Remembering that we ourselves are also people still learning, we must give the help that is needed. What is important is a heart that clearly points out wrongs yet does not treat the other person as someone lower than oneself.

The evaluation *"great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19)* cannot be placed directly on the same level as a person's status. The person God regards as precious is the one who does the word and preaches it. Even if we have not been given a role seen by many people, we can faithfully follow the word we have received from God. That faithfulness must be regarded as precious.

Jesus spoke the words *"he shall be called" (Matthew 5:19)*. We need the faith that entrusts the final evaluation to God. There is no reason to put ourselves forward as great. It is enough to follow the word today and carry out our responsibility, and to keep our hearts with the fact that God knows. Competition to be recognized makes serving together difficult.

When we connect doing with teaching, we first come to look back on our own close relationships. We must examine whether, while teaching honesty with our words, we easily change the promises we have made, and whether, while speaking of love, we treat people harshly. The word is not only the content of teaching but also the will of God that we ourselves must obey.

The righteousness for entering the kingdom of heaven

Let us read verse 20. *"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20)*. Jesus now goes beyond the evaluation in the

kingdom of heaven and speaks of the righteousness for entering the kingdom of heaven. One cannot enter the kingdom of heaven merely by the office of teaching the word or by a reputation for appearing more pious than others. The righteousness that is fitting before God is needed.

The word *"For I say to you" (Matthew 5:20)* again reveals the authority of Jesus. People's religious reputation is not the final standard. The One who reveals the way to enter the kingdom of heaven is Jesus. The disciples must not judge their own faith by looking only at the appearance of people who are already respected.

The words *"your righteousness"* appear again in the first verse of the next chapter. *"Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them –ASV" (Matthew 6:1)*. Jesus goes on to speak of the hypocrites who do their charity, prayer, and fasting to be seen by men. Matthew itself shows what kind of righteousness the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was.

Therefore, we cannot read the word *"unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 5:20)* as meaning that we should pile up more righteousness seen by people than they did. Righteousness directed toward the eyes of people is the same kind of righteousness no matter how much is piled up. The righteousness that is better before God is that righteousness which Jesus, in chapter 3, verse 15, said He would fulfill.

The warning *"you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20)* is solemn. We cannot leave the matter of salvation to vague expectation. We must lay down the thought that found reassurance in the comparison that we are better than others, and come to know the gospel God has given. We need a sure faith that knows and believes how sin was washed away.

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The gospel of the water and the Spirit made clear earlier preaches the righteousness Jesus accomplished. A believer did not become righteous by adding his own works. He received the remission of sins by believing in that salvation. When this fact is clear, we can be freed from dressing up a pious appearance to win the approval of others.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, the weakness of body and mind is revealed. At that time, we must not think that, because of our own lack, even the righteousness the Savior accomplished is imperfect. We need only believe in the salvation we have received and correct our wrong conduct. The assurance of salvation cannot become an excuse to give up actual obedience.

The faith that receives the whole word as precious

After Jesus made clear the purpose of His coming and the certainty of the word, He taught the attitude of the disciples toward that word. Then He made them look back on what the righteousness for entering the kingdom of heaven is. If we keep this order in mind, we can rightly understand the meaning of each without grace and obedience pushing each other out.

Because we believe in the One who came to *"fulfill" (Matthew 5:17)*, we are sure of salvation. Because we believe the word *"till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18)*, we wait for the promise. The faith that trusts what God has done and what He will do also enables us to carry out today's responsibility. It is a life of relying on the salvation of Jesus while faithfully listening to the word of God.

The words *"does and teaches them" (Matthew 5:19)* make us look back on our conduct today. If there is a word you are to

preach to others, first receive that word yourself as well. If it is revealed that you have acted differently from what you taught, honestly correct it. In that attitude, a heart that respects the word of God appears.

Examine what responsibility you have put off because you considered it small. Seek the help needed to carry out that responsibility, and actually do it. Rather than discarding small commands while waiting for a big task, it is fitting to live according to the word already given. Treasure today's obedience that God has entrusted to you.

A heart that seeks to exalt its own righteousness ends up chasing people's gaze. A person who believes in the righteousness received from Jesus turns his heart toward God. He gives thanks to the Savior, learns from the word, and serves so that others too may know that truth. Faith that relies on grace and the attitude of respecting the word grow together.

Firmly believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished, and receive the word of God in full. Do not keep only the parts convenient for you, but treasure the commandments with a heart that is willing to be taught. I hope that you will give thanks to Jesus, who saved us, and live a life in which doing and teaching go together. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The responsibility of reconciliation to be carried out before the gift

< Matthew 5:21–26 >

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.”

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Jesus, who examines the heart with which we treat our brothers

A wrong that has arisen in one's relationship with a brother cannot be covered over with religious acts. Jesus begins with the word about murder, exposes anger and insult toward a brother, and then tells the person offering a gift to go first and be reconciled. This text leads a person who stands before God to look back honestly on his relationships with people as well.

Let us read verse 21. *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment'" (Matthew 5:21)*. Murder is a sin that is to be judged. It is only natural to regard an act that harms a person's life as a grave matter. But the word of Jesus does not let us confirm only the great deeds that are visible to the eye and pass over our own hearts.

After the word *"You have heard" (Matthew 5:21)*, the teaching of Jesus follows. We must not confine the commandment we have already heard within limits that are convenient for ourselves. We cannot say that we have treated a brother rightly merely because of the fact that we have never taken another person's life. Jesus examines the heart and the words directed toward that brother.

Let us read the first part of verse 22. *"But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:22)*. This word does not let us regard anger as merely a light movement of the heart. God knows the heart that wants to harm a person and the heart that wants to belittle the other. There is no heart hidden before God.

When Jesus says, *"I say to you" (Matthew 5:22)*, we must receive His judgment before our own justification. The wickedness of the heart does not become right of itself just

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because we explain many reasons why we had cause to be angry. We need to examine honestly, before the word, what is in us right now.

When anger grows, it is easy to look only at one action of the other person and despise that whole person. While we think our own heart is right, our words also become rough. The word of Jesus stops that progression and makes us look at ourselves. The matter of weighing the other person's fault and the matter of admitting our own wickedness must be examined separately.

The weight of the sin committed with words

Jesus said, *"Whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council" (Matthew 5:22)*. God does not lightly pass over an insult hurled at a brother. The responsibility for words does not disappear for the reason that one did not harm him with one's hands. Words that came out of the mouth are also something a person has done to another person.

He also said, *"Whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:22)*. In the face of this severity, we must look back on our own habits of speech. When words that belittle the other person become habitual, we ourselves think we said them without thinking, but the one who hears them is deeply wounded. God judges those words.

The word *"his brother" (Matthew 5:22)* makes the responsibility toward those close to us clearer. It is not that one may speak carelessly for the reason that one knows the other person well. The closer the relationship, the easier it is to demand that the other person accept rudeness as a matter of course. But we must not forget the fact that Jesus spoke so that we would regard a brother as precious.

Words that correct a person's fault and words that insult that person are different. If, instead of specifically letting him know what was wrong, one despises his whole person, even the content that must be corrected becomes blurred. When we speak the truth, we must examine even the purpose and the attitude with which we speak. What matters is how we are treating the other person before God.

The word *"shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:22)* awakens us from our self-assurance. We easily attach reasons to our own anger and are strict toward the anger of others. But the standard by which God judges does not change to favor our own side. We must place our words and our hearts before that standard.

Verse 22 speaks in turn of anger and *"Raca"* and *"You fool,"* and after them it places in turn the judgment, the council, and hell fire. It is a flow in which the anger of the heart becomes the words of the mouth, and the words lead to a heavier judgment. That is why, in the next verse, Jesus speaks of reconciliation as the way to stop that flow.

Jesus, who first reconciled us with God, through the baptism He received from John had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all; He bore those sins passed on to Him and, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place. Jesus rose again from death, and He has given perfect remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. A person who has received that grace must turn from the heart that calculated only the faults of others and rightly carry out his own responsibility.

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What came to mind while offering the gift

Let us read verse 23. *"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you" (Matthew 5:23)*. Jesus continues His word with the scene of offering a gift at the altar. In the midst of an act offered to God, one's relationship with a brother comes to mind. Worship toward God and what one has done to people are not divided into two unrelated lives.

The word *"Therefore"* connects the preceding warning with this scene. Because anger and insult toward a brother matter before God, He is telling us not to put off reconciliation. Finishing the outward order of worship well does not mean that even the wrong of the heart has been set in order. Jesus commands us to set the actual relationship right.

In the word *"if you bring your gift to the altar" (Matthew 5:23)*, there is a moment when one must stop what one was doing. One may feel that since one has already prepared and begun, one should finish it as it is. But if there is a wrong that God has made us realize, we must receive it as important. The responsibility toward a brother must not be pushed back.

The word *"there"* links the moment of remembering with the action in that place. It is not a matter to think about sometime after worship is over, but a responsibility that has come to mind right now. If we want to live honestly before God, we must examine the habit of continually putting off what we have realized. A realization is also an opportunity to respond.

Jesus said, *"Your brother has something against you" (Matthew 5:23)*. He does not tell us to look first for what our brother has done wrong to us. He makes us examine what we have done to him. While we are counting only our own wounds,

we may miss the situation of the person who suffered because of us.

When we hear the word *"remember" (Matthew 5:23)*, we learn that we need an attitude that does not push away the memory. If something that pricks the heart comes to mind but we cover it over for the reason that we are busy, the relationship remains as it is. It is fitting to acknowledge that matter honestly before God and to examine how it should be set right.

When we look back on the words we have spoken, even expressions we regarded as trivial may look different. Examine whether, when the other person said he was distressed, you merely dismissed him as oversensitive. Reconciliation is not accomplished only by explaining one's own intentions at length. One must honestly acknowledge what one actually did and the effect it had on the other person.

The order of going first and being reconciled

Let us read verse 24. *"Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:24)*. Jesus gives a specific order. It is to leave the gift, go first, be reconciled to one's brother, and then return and offer it. He lets us know the responsibility that does not end with thinking in our hearts that it is important, but requires us actually to move.

The word *"leave your gift there before the altar" (Matthew 5:24)* corrects the heart that regards a brother as of less account than the gift. We cannot say that because we have offered something to God, the wrong done to a person may be passed over. The act of offering does not take the place of the

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responsibility to set the relationship right. Jesus makes us carry out that responsibility first.

The command *"go your way. First be reconciled to your brother" (Matthew 5:24)* makes us put reconciliation ahead of our own face. It is easy to spend time waiting for the other person to come to us first. But if something our brother has against us has come to mind, there is a part on which we ourselves must take action. Knowing one's own responsibility and yet waiting only for the other person's first move does not fit this order.

The purpose *"be reconciled to your brother" (Matthew 5:24)* goes beyond who wins the argument. The purpose is not to find more faults in the other person and so make our own fault smaller. The purpose is to set the relationship right in truth. When that purpose is clear, what we are to say when we meet also changes.

When you apologize, you must state your own fault clearly. If you leave the wrong act vague and only say that you are sorry if the other person felt bad, the responsibility is not conveyed. State honestly what you did wrong and what you will correct. The heart that does not dress itself up before God is needed before people as well.

We also need the composure to listen to the other person. If we want to finish our explanation quickly and have it confirmed that the relationship has been mended, we may pass over the other person's pain once again. A person who desires reconciliation listens. Even words uncomfortable to us, if they are true, we accept, and where there is misunderstanding, we calmly clear it up.

If the damage caused by the wrong can be set right, it must actually be set right. Even after acknowledging it in words, there may be responsibility left to carry out. Faithfully doing what we

can is the attitude of treasuring the relationship. Our conduct must also be corrected so that we do not repeat the same wrong.

The word *"then come" (Matthew 5:24)* connects on to the worship we offer when we return to God. The command to be reconciled to one's brother does not mean to abandon what is offered to God. It means to set one's heart in order honestly before God and then offer. It is returning to the place of worship while carrying out one's responsibility toward people.

The word *"offer your gift" (Matthew 5:24)* must also be heard together. Jesus placed reconciliation and worship within one order. We must not regard setting a relationship right as a matter outside of faith, but receive it as a responsibility of the life we offer to God. Draw near to God with a heart that honestly cares for relationships.

The opportunity given while on the way

Let us read the first part of verse 25. *"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him" (Matthew 5:25)*. Jesus shows the danger of putting off a resolution through yet another scene. He tells us to seize the opportunity to be reconciled before the problem reaches a more serious outcome.

"Your adversary" (Matthew 5:25) is the person who raises a problem against us. If we ignore everything a person says just because he says things unfavorable to us, we cannot see our own responsibility. We must first examine what wrong caused the problem to arise. Honesty is needed even in listening to an uncomfortable charge.

In the word *"while you are on the way with him" (Matthew 5:25)* is contained the fact that there is still time to resolve it. Before the matter goes further, we must carry out the

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responsibility we are to carry out. If we think the problem will go away of itself while we put it off, we miss a precious opportunity. We must treasure the reconciliation that is possible now.

The command *"Agree with your adversary quickly" (Matthew 5:25)* is an exhortation not to drag out the time for long. If, even after the anger has subsided, we avoid contact to save face, or if we look only for a convenient excuse when our own fault is clear, the relationship hardens further. Responding promptly to the responsibility we have realized is wisdom.

Telling us to resolve it quickly does not mean to cover over the facts and get by carelessly. It means not to delay the work of dealing honestly with the wrong. We must confirm what the facts are, acknowledge our own part, and specifically decide what is to be set right. Merely hurrying to create the appearance that the relationship has been mended is not enough.

When a conflict arises, a desire arises to gather the people around us onto our side. But our problem with a brother is not resolved just because many people have taken our side. If we keep carrying to other people what should be said to the person concerned, the relationship may only become more difficult. We must examine to whom we speak, in keeping with the purpose of reconciliation.

Moving toward reconciliation requires humbling oneself. It may feel as though we will be diminished if we admit our fault first. But what matters before God is not how much face we keep but the truth. We must not be ashamed to carry out our responsibility according to the word of Jesus.

The result that a postponed responsibility brings

Let us read the latter part of verse 25. *"Lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison" (Matthew 5:25)*. Jesus speaks even of the outcome in which the problem is no longer resolved as one wishes. The responsibility one at first thought one could avoid may come back heavier.

The word *"deliver you to the judge" (Matthew 5:25)* shows the situation of coming under another person's judgment. Even if we insist that only our own thinking is right, the responsibility remains. We must cast off the heart that takes lightly a problem in a relationship, and deal with the wrong rightly at the time we come to know of it. The stubbornness that tries to avoid responsibility makes the resolution more difficult.

The warning *"you be thrown into prison" (Matthew 5:25)* makes us think of the result in advance. In the moment of conflict, because of the desire to win over the other person, it is easy to miss what will come afterward. But Jesus makes us examine where our present action leads. Rather than being led by anger, we must judge according to the word.

Let us read verse 26. *"Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny" (Matthew 5:26)*. This is a word that shatters the thought that responsibility can be lightly erased. It makes us look back on the heart that had been reducing its responsibility by calculating with a standard convenient for itself.

The word *"the last penny" (Matthew 5:26)* does not let us regard the remaining responsibility as trivial. It is easy to think that since we have settled the greater part, the rest may be ignored. But we need to look back on what among our own

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wrongs has not yet been resolved. Honesty does not stop at the point that is favorable to oneself.

The word *"till you have paid" (Matthew 5:26)* reveals the weight of responsibility. If with our mouths we say it is serious but in fact correct nothing, we have not carried out our responsibility. We must make clear and put into practice the words of apology we must speak, the things we must return, and the explanations we must set right.

In the face of the warning *"you will by no means get out of there" (Matthew 5:26)*, we must cast off complacency. Just because there is still time does not mean it can be easily resolved at any time. Do not hold on for long to a wrong that can be turned around now. Today, when you have heard the word, is the time to respond honestly.

The reconciliation that a person who has received grace must carry out

God did not regard our sins lightly, and He gave us the salvation Jesus accomplished. A person who believes in that grace has no reason to use faith to cover over a wrong done to another. Remembering the peace received before God, we must live honestly before people as well.

To be reconciled with a brother, we must remember that the other person is also a weak human being like ourselves. If we seek grace for our own faults while endlessly holding on to the faults of others, our hearts harden. It is fitting to treat the other person according to the grace of having received the remission of sins, and to seek a way to walk rightly together.

Receive the word *"First"* into your relationships today. Look back on whether there has been a matter in which you have

always waited only for the other person to change first. If you clearly have a responsibility, you can carry out that responsibility first. Even if you cannot change all of another person's conduct, you must respond with regard to your own words and actions.

The word "*quickly*" must also be engraved on our hearts. If we keep putting off the matter of acknowledging responsibility, only excuses become familiar. Honestly convey the words that are needed, and begin acting to correct the wrong. Taking one step of obedience to the word is more important than explaining old feelings over and over.

If, while preparing for worship, a wrong you did to a brother comes to mind, do not push that thought away. Carry out the responsibility for reconciliation in the order Jesus taught. We must be honest before the word so that the heart we offer to God and the attitude we show toward people do not become separated from each other.

The end of this text leaves a solemn warning to the person who has put off his responsibility. Having heard that warning, we cannot live in the same way. We must stop the words of anger, admit our own faults, and seize the opportunity to be reconciled. This is our response to the word of Jesus, who examines how we treat our brothers.

If there is a brother who comes to your mind today, put reconciliation before your own face. Do not put off the apology you must speak and the action you must set right. Relying on the grace received from God, go first and be reconciled to your brother. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The truthfulness He requires in our hearts, relationships, and words

< Matthew 5:27–37 >

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let

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your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

God, who sees what is held in the heart

Keeping only the conduct seen by people proper does not mean that the heart is also honest before God. While speaking of adultery, Jesus exposes the lust of the heart, and then examines in turn the responsibility of marriage and the words of oaths. He makes us know that our gaze, our relationships, and our words are all before God.

Let us read verse 27. *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery'" (Matthew 5:27)*. A person who has heard the commandment not to commit adultery looks back on his actual conduct. Jesus speaks more deeply to the person who has heard that commandment. He does not let him judge himself to be clean by outwardly revealed deeds alone.

Let us read verse 28. *"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28)*. Jesus clearly says that the lust harbored in the heart is sin. The responsibility for sin does not disappear just because one was not found out by others. People see the results revealed outwardly, but God knows that heart.

In the word *"whoever looks at a woman to lust for her" (Matthew 5:28)*, the act of looking and the heart that harbors lust are connected. We must examine the heart that treats a person as the object of one's own desire. Jesus exposes the attitude that forgets the fact that the other person is a person responsible before God and puts forward only one's own greed.

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The word *"has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28)* does not let us take the beginning of sin lightly. We cannot leave the heart unattended, saying it is all right because we have not carried it out in actual conduct. Instead of hiding sin and letting it grow, we must acknowledge it before God and cut off the conduct that follows that desire.

What Jesus deals with in this passage is the appearance of the outside and the inside being split apart. It is harboring lust in the heart while being proper in conduct, ending the responsibility of a relationship with a single certificate, and inflating one's words by adding oaths. All three lead to the demand that the outside and the inside be the same before God.

Life, which is more precious than the body

Let us read verse 29. *"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29)*. Jesus speaks of how grave the consequence of sin is. Even something precious to oneself cannot be put ahead of eternal life. Hearing this word, we must throw away the complacency that it is all right to keep holding on to sin.

The expression *"If your right eye causes you to sin" (Matthew 5:29)* makes us look back on our own gaze. We cannot say that we will keep only our thoughts clean while continuing to look at what makes the desires of the heart grow. We must honestly examine what we are keeping close to us, and stop the choices that make sin grow.

The grave word *"pluck it out and cast it from you" (Matthew 5:29)* awakens the heart that is reluctant to give up sin and wants

to keep it near. Jesus gives as examples the right eye and the right hand, that is, what people treasure most. It means that even if a loss follows from cutting off sin, we must not leave sin behind because we begrudge that loss.

Jesus speaks the comparison *"that one of your members perish" (Matthew 5:29)*. He makes us think about the weight of a part of the body that people hold dear and the weight of eternal life. We must not take a greater judgment lightly in trying to protect a small satisfaction. When we choose what looks good now, we must examine even its consequence.

In the word *"it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29)* there is the true profit that the Lord teaches. If we regard satisfying immediate desires as profit, we miss the matter of the soul. We must learn before God what makes a person live. We need judgment that holds life precious.

Let us read verse 30. *"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:30)*. Following the eye, He speaks of the hand. We must not look lightly on the sin harbored in the heart being carried over into actual conduct. What we do with our hands is also before God. The attitude of continuing to move toward sin while saying that one knows grace must be set right.

The word *"if your right hand causes you to sin" (Matthew 5:30)* makes us examine the choices we actually make. We must not end with a resolution in our thoughts alone but correct the conduct we repeat. If we keep as they are the relationships and habits that help us hide sin, only our words change. We must change our concrete conduct according to the word.

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This word must not be read as a command to harm the body. Sin that began in the heart does not disappear by removing one part of the body. The reason Jesus spoke of the eye and the hand was to let us know the weight of the attitude with which we deal with sin. Actually cutting off the choices by which we hid sin and let it grow is the response to this word.

The faith that honestly acknowledges sin

The lust of verse 28 is a sin that can be harbored without anyone knowing. But Jesus knew that heart and saved us. When you discover your own sin, rather than spending your strength on covering it, believe the word of the salvation He has already accomplished and come honestly before God.

Jesus, who knows even the sin harbored in the heart, through the baptism He received from John had all the sins of the world, including the sins of your whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all. Bearing the sins that were thus passed on to Him, He received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rose again from death. To those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, God gives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

A person who believes in the remission of sins has no reason to hide the evil of his heart in order to be acknowledged as having no sin. The basis of salvation is not one's own clean conduct but the merit of Jesus. Because he believes in that merit, he can acknowledge his own wrongs right away as well. Relying on the grace already received, he turns back from the wrong way.

The word *"already"* puts a stop to excuses. We must throw away the thought that there is no problem until it is revealed in conduct. Examine what you delight in harboring in your heart.

Do not make the fact that no one knows a reason to keep harboring sin, but be honest before God.

The word *"profitable"* must be received in our present choices. There may be conveniences we must lay down in order to leave sin. Do not look only at losing them as a big thing, but hold precious the profit of tending your heart and life according to the word. Truthfulness toward God is shown in actual choices.

Do not use this word only to find out the hidden faults of other people. First you must lay your own heart before God. Even if the words condemning the sins of others become many, your own heart may remain as it is. What comes first is for you who heard the word to examine what you must acknowledge and change.

The responsibility to be fulfilled in the marriage relationship

Let us read verse 31. *"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce'" (Matthew 5:31).* After bringing up the word about the certificate of divorce, Jesus does not let people consider that they have fulfilled their responsibility before God merely by whether or not there is a certificate. Even after the procedure that ends a relationship, there is something that God judges.

In the word *"Whoever divorces his wife" (Matthew 5:31)* there is a person who is actually pushed out of the relationship. The responsibility for what one has brought upon the other person does not disappear because one made a decision convenient for oneself. Jesus examines what consequences the conduct of a person who deals with marriage brings to the life of another person.

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If we hold on only to the words *"let him give her a certificate of divorce" (Matthew 5:31)*, it is easy to think that all responsibility has ended with a single piece of paper. But Jesus speaks more deeply than that. The rightness of a relationship cannot be judged only by an external procedure that is advantageous to oneself. We must look back before God on the reason for and the consequence of that conduct.

Let us read verse 32. *"But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 5:32)*. Jesus treats divorcing one's wife for any reason except sexual immorality as sin. One cannot abandon a relationship at will and consider that one has no responsibility. How one treats one's spouse is not something that can be decided by one's own satisfaction alone.

The word *"for any reason except sexual immorality" (Matthew 5:32)* is a distinction that Jesus actually made clear. We must not justify our own decisions by making at will exceptions that are not in the text. We must hear exactly what Jesus said, and must not narrow or widen the meaning of the word to fit our own greed.

The word *"causes her to commit adultery" (Matthew 5:32)* reveals the responsibility that one's own decision has for the life of the other person. We must not look only at whether we got what we wanted. We must consider what hardship the person who shared the responsibility within the relationship is placed in. Love does not treat the other person as an object to be discarded according to one's own convenience.

Jesus said, *"Whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 5:32)*. The person who newly enters the relationship also has responsibility. One cannot consider that every problem before God has disappeared merely

by the words that the previous relationship has ended. We must not treat the matter of marriage lightly with our own desires and people's explanations alone.

Hearing this word, we must look back with care on the relationships we are now entrusted with. Examine whether you have shifted onto the other person alone the responsibility you bear together, or whether you have put only your own satisfaction first. Keeping a marriage involves words, attitude, and actual care. The more familiar a relationship is, the more we must not forget the responsibility we must fulfill before God.

The heart that tries to make itself look great through oaths

Let us read verse 33. *"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord'" (Matthew 5:33)*. Jesus, who has examined the desires of the heart and the responsibility of marriage, now deals with our words. Not all words become truthful just because they are spoken while calling on God. What matters more than the size of the oath is the truthfulness of the one who speaks.

The word *"You shall not swear falsely" (Matthew 5:33)* makes us think of the responsibility for false words. If, in order to gain people's trust, we say things we have no intention of keeping, the other person believes those words and acts on them. Words affect the judgment and the life of other people. We must throw away the attitude of using words to achieve our own ends.

In the words *"but shall perform your oaths to the Lord" (Matthew 5:33)* there is responsibility before God. Words spoken by putting God forward are not a light ornament. If we

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bring in the name of God to make our own faithfulness look greater than it really is, we are using God for our own ends. We must examine our words with a fearful heart.

Let us read verse 34. *"But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne" (Matthew 5:34)*. Jesus puts the brakes on the attitude of adding oaths to make people believe one's words. We must not think that words become true when something greater is attached to them. Truthful words must be confirmed by their actual content and by actions.

Before the command *"do not swear at all" (Matthew 5:34)*, we must lay down the habit of trying to gain trust with strong words. Rather than pressing with a greater oath the more the other person doubts, state the facts honestly. Acknowledge what you do not know, and do not promise with words of certainty what you cannot fulfill.

Jesus immediately explains the reason He said *"neither by heaven" (Matthew 5:34)*. Heaven is *"God's throne" (Matthew 5:34)*. What belongs to God cannot be used at will to raise the authority of one's own words. The one who speaks must remember that he is a created being under God.

Do not rashly swear by what belongs to God

Let us read verse 35. *"Nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:35)*. Not only heaven but also the earth and Jerusalem belong to God. They are not objects to be brought up in an oath, thinking of them as if they were one's own possession. Jesus lets us know the limits of the authority we try to seize with words.

When we hear the word *"nor by the earth" (Matthew 5:35)*, we come to know that even the earth we live on is not our own

absolute possession. If we speak as if everything were in our own hands, we become proud. When we remember the fact that we are people who live entrusted with what we have received, we do not rashly make assertions about things we cannot guarantee.

Jesus said that the earth is *"His footstool" (Matthew 5:35)*. We live under what God rules. We cannot speak of our own plans as if they were settled as the will of God. A person who acknowledges God's rule speaks honestly, distinguishing his own hopes from the word of God.

He also said, *"Nor by Jerusalem" (Matthew 5:35)*. Attaching a name regarded as holy does not make an individual's words any more truthful. If we use many expressions related to faith while speaking in a way that blurs the actual facts, those who listen are thrown into confusion. A heart that fears God must be shown in accurate and faithful words.

The reason *"it is the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:35)* makes us see God, who is above the one who speaks. There is One who is higher than our own will. Rather than pressing down other people with words and forcing certainty on them, we must be humble before the facts that God knows. That attitude rightly keeps the weight of our words.

Let us read verse 36. *"Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black" (Matthew 5:36)*. He speaks of the limits of human beings, who cannot govern as they wish even matters concerning their own bodies. To swear while thinking as if even one's own life were entirely in one's own hands is pride. We must speak as befits people who live depending on God.

The word *"Nor shall you swear by your head" (Matthew 5:36)* puts a stop to the attitude of exaggerating certainty by staking oneself. Big expressions do not take the place of

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responsible action. What we must do so that the other person can trust us is to inform him of the facts accurately and keep our promises faithfully. What is needed is a truthful attitude rather than strong words.

The word *"you cannot make one hair white or black" (Matthew 5:36)* makes us acknowledge our own limits. Distinguish between what you can do and what you cannot guarantee by your own will. Words that acknowledge a lack do not break down trust. Rather, an honest acknowledgment of limits helps people rightly, more than exaggerated certainty does.

A life that clearly says what is right and what is wrong

Let us read verse 37. *"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37)*. Jesus gives the direction of our words concisely. We must say that what is right is right and that what is not is not. Rather than making our words big with more expressions, we must examine whether their content matches the facts.

The word *"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes'" (Matthew 5:37)* reaches our everyday words. It is not that we must be honest only when making special promises. Even in trivial reports and explanations we must state the facts rightly. The habit of altering small facts to make ourselves look good weakens the trust in all our words.

In the word *"let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'" (Matthew 5:37)* there is clarity. We must not speak of the same fact differently depending on whether it is to our own advantage. Acknowledge what you have done wrong, make promises you

can be responsible for, and say that you do not know what you do not know. Honest words rightly build up relationships.

Jesus warns, *"For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37)*. When we inflate our words beyond the facts, the greed of the heart is revealed. We must not exaggerate certainty out of a desire to move the other person. Lay down the impatience to prove yourself and speak truthfully before God.

To correct our words, we must also look back on our hearts. If the desire to be recognized is great, we come to say that we did more than we actually did. If the desire to avoid responsibility is great, we describe what we did as smaller than it was. When we stand before the heart that Jesus examines and acknowledge that greed, our words also become honest.

A person who stands before the word with nothing hidden

Jesus examined everything from the desires harbored in the heart to the actual responsibility of marriage and the words spoken with the mouth. None of these can be judged only by the appearance shown to other people. We must live honestly before God. We must not use our hearts, our relationships, and our words to get what we want.

A person who believes in grace has a reason to lay down a life of concealment. Because the remission of sins that Jesus has given is certain, he can honestly acknowledge his own sins. Relying on that grace, he must cut off wrong choices, hold precious the relationships entrusted to him, and go forward into a life that states the facts rightly.

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Remember today that what you harbor in your heart and what you speak with your mouth are before God. Stop the choices that make sin grow, and faithfully fulfill the responsibility you bear toward the people you live with. I hope that you will become people who hold truthfulness more precious than the size of their words, people who live with nothing hidden before the word of Jesus. ✉

Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

The freedom to lay down retaliation and choose good

< Matthew 5:38–42 >

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

The heart that wants to pay back as it has received

When we suffer an unjust thing from another person, a desire arises to give back the same pain. We think that the other person, too, must know how wronged we were. Jesus speaks to us who have such a heart. He teaches us not to give ourselves over so that the evil we have received determines our own actions as it is, but to respond according to the word of the Lord.

Let us read verse 38. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’” (Matthew 5:38)*. A situation is presented in which actual harm has been suffered, enough for an eye and a tooth to be mentioned. The teaching of Jesus is not etiquette that applies only in relationships without any difficulty. It is a word that asks what attitude to take at the

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time when we have suffered loss from a person and our heart is hurting.

A person who has heard the saying *"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Matthew 5:38)* easily comes to think about what to give back to the other person. Paying back as much as one has been hurt occupies the heart. But Jesus immediately commands His disciples a different response. He leads them not to spend their lives repeating the evil of people as it is.

After the words *"You have heard" (Matthew 5:38)* there is the word of Jesus that the disciples must hear. The way of responding that we have thought of as familiar is not everything. A person who follows Jesus must learn from Him even when he goes through an unjust thing. We cannot push the word aside for a while on the grounds that our heart has become heated.

The fact that the other person did wrong and the claim that we may respond with evil are different from each other. Another person's sin does not make our sin righteous. Even while clearly knowing the injustice, we must examine our own words and actions before God. This is the first attitude of not having our heart taken captive by retaliation.

If we keep ruminating on the loss we have received, it easily comes to rule all our judgments. Not only when we meet that person but also when we deal with other people, wariness and anger come first. Jesus does not leave us in such a heart as we are. He teaches us the way to choose good, as befits people who have received the grace of God.

A response that does not follow after evil

Let us read the first part of verse 39. *"But I tell you not to resist an evil person" (Matthew 5:39)*. Jesus does not permit a

disciple to act following his own anger. Even a person who has received evil must take responsibility for his own actions before God. We must hold the command of Jesus higher than the actions of the other person.

In the word *"I tell you" (Matthew 5:39)* there is the authority of the One who called the disciples. The stronger our emotions become, the more only our own judgment seems certain. At that time, listen again to what Jesus is saying. If we keep a heart that learns from the Lord, we can avoid following as it is what anger tells us to do.

The expression *"an evil person" (Matthew 5:39)* clearly reveals the evil that has been done. It is not that Jesus called that action good. He is teaching how a disciple is to respond to that evil. We must learn the way of discerning evil rightly while not giving ourselves over to the heart that wants to take revenge.

When we hear the command *"not to resist" (Matthew 5:39)*, we come to examine the direction of our own heart. The heart that will not be at ease unless it brings down the other person makes us keep thinking of evil. Instead of being bound to that thought, we must tell God our distress and ask for right judgment. For a person who believes in the Lord, there is One to whom he can entrust his anger.

We must also honestly fulfill the responsibility of protecting ourselves and others and seeking help. We cannot use this word to demand that another person keep suffering harm. What we must lay down is the heart that wants to repay by harming a person. The work of stopping evil, too, must not have retaliation out of hatred as its purpose.

There is no one who can be confident that he can always be generous by his own strength. The mind of the flesh remembers for a long time what it has suffered and clings to its own interests. That is why we need the grace we have received from Jesus and

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the help of the Holy Spirit. Instead of boasting of the strength of our own character, we must ask God to govern our hearts.

Jesus, who taught us to lay down the heart that retaliates, had all the sins of the world, including even the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. He bore those sins that had been passed on to Him and, by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death. A person who has believed in this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift can rely on the grace that saved him and turn from the heart that wants to pay back evil.

The word spoken to the one who has been struck on the cheek

Let us read the latter part of verse 39. *"Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matthew 5:39)*. Jesus speaks of a concrete scene of suffering insult and pain. Even at that time, a disciple must get out of the heart that gives back as it has received. Showing off strength and subduing the other person cannot be the purpose of a disciple.

The word *"whoever"* makes us look back on the heart that picks out whom to treat well. It is easy to become generous only to the people we like. We must follow the will of the Lord even when faced with a person who makes us uncomfortable. More important than what kind of person we have met is whose word we follow.

The scene *"slaps you on your right cheek" (Matthew 5:39)* speaks of something that has come directly upon oneself. Easily telling someone to endure when seeing another person's

injustice and entrusting one's own affair to God are different. This word is directed first at the heart of the one who hears it. Before demanding sacrifice of others, we must receive the word we ourselves have received.

In the command *"turn the other to him also" (Matthew 5:39)* is revealed the resolve not to follow the direction of retaliation. It is laying down the heart that wants to win by giving a greater wound to the person who gave the wound. Instead of adding evil words and actions in order to restore one's own honor, we must keep a good attitude while believing in God.

When we are insulted, it is easy to speak violently in order to prove our own worth. But the worth of having become a child of God does not arise and disappear according to the words of the other person. Remember the grace of salvation that Jesus has given. If we have that assurance, we will not entrust all our judgments to the person who insulted us.

When anger rules the heart, we must examine the impulse to immediately give back harsher words. Instead of searching for expressions that will hurt the other person, tell God your heart. It is necessary to speak the facts honestly but not to add words meant to harm. Even in a single word we can keep the direction of following the Lord.

When we think of the grace we have received from Jesus, we come to see that the other person, too, is someone who needs salvation. Rather than following his evil actions as they are, we come to hope that he will turn and come to know the truth. The direction of the heart changes from revenge to mercy. The Holy Spirit causes believers to have such a heart within them.

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Disputes over possessions

Let us read verse 40. *"If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also" (Matthew 5:40)*. Jesus now speaks of a situation in which someone tries to take away one's possessions. When we suffer injustice, the heart that wants to protect what we have rises up strongly. We must receive the teaching of the Lord so that that heart does not go so far as to hate and harm a person.

The word *"sue you" (Matthew 5:40)* shows a situation in which a dispute has arisen. The relationship becomes difficult, and the feeling that we must assert our own rights grows. Even at that time, we must examine for what purpose we speak and act. Distinguish between the purpose of handling the problem rightly and the purpose of making the other person suffer.

The expression *"take away your tunic" (Matthew 5:40)* makes us think of a person who can suffer actual loss. We must not apply the word of Jesus to another person and make light of that person's loss. Looking back on what we hold on to in the face of the loss we ourselves suffer comes first.

The command *"let him have your cloak also" (Matthew 5:40)* goes beyond the heart that clutches possessions to the very end. If the heart that will not suffer even the slightest loss governs the whole relationship, the dispute always grows. Jesus teaches the disciple to have a heart that can give while relying on God.

Giving involves real cost. Saying with words that one is generous and choosing good while bearing loss are different. We must be able to use all that we have received from God not for our own rights alone but willingly for the will of the Lord. Faith also appears in the way we handle possessions.

When what we have becomes everything to our heart, even a small loss is hard to endure. But the faith that God takes care

of us keeps us from regarding possessions as absolute. The heart that asks how to act toward God can come before the fear of what we might lose. The grace we have received changes the center of our judgment.

We have no right to force on others the good deed of voluntarily giving. We must think of the portion we are to bear according to grace. Carry out your own portion of service while also faithfully keeping the responsibilities and promises concerning what is held in common. Generosity is not an attitude that decides another person's sacrifice in his place.

The choice on a road begun by compulsion

Let us read verse 41. *"And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two" (Matthew 5:41)*. Jesus speaks of a situation in which labor is demanded of us contrary to our own will. Just because its beginning was compulsion, our response does not have to remain only as resentment to the end. Even in that situation a disciple can choose according to the word of the Lord.

The expression *"And whoever compels you" (Matthew 5:41)* makes clear that there was compulsion from the other person. When someone demands labor without asking about our circumstances, our heart is uncomfortable. Jesus is not One who speaks without knowing such a reality. He teaches with what heart a disciple is to move in that situation.

In the word *"to go one mile" (Matthew 5:41)* there is a distance and a labor that have been imposed. A person can do just barely as much as was demanded while resenting the other person inwardly. Jesus makes us examine the direction of our

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heart beyond an obedience that merely fills the number. We must not confine ourselves to an attitude of doing things grudgingly.

The words *"with him" (Matthew 5:41)* show that the person who made the uncomfortable demand is still before us. Choosing good is not a matter of hating him in our hearts while merely adding labor. It is remembering that he, too, is a soul before God and treating him according to the will of the Lord.

The command *"go with him two" (Matthew 5:41)* shows a response of voluntarily bearing more. It is choosing good without letting the other person's compulsion rule our heart to the end. When we willingly accept the labor to be borne while thinking of the grace God has given, we can walk in a direction different from resentment.

If we receive this word as a rule that merely increases the amount of labor, it is easy to show ourselves off while leaving our heart as it is. What matters is why, and with what heart, we bear it. The faith that wants to follow Jesus must come before the purpose of gaining recognition from people as being generous. God knows that heart.

While we resent the person we have to walk with, even a small thing feels heavier. If we listen to his circumstances, find out what he needs, and look for what we can do to help, our heart can change. The mercy the Lord has given turns the gaze that saw only our own discomfort toward other people.

The heart that gives to the one who asks

Let us read verse 42. *"Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" (Matthew 5:42)*. Earlier, a person who harms us or demands labor of us appeared; here, a person who asks for help appears. The teaching

of Jesus does not stop at ceasing from retaliation but goes on toward doing good.

The word *"him who asks you" (Matthew 5:42)* makes us think of the moment we hear a request for help. If we first push the person away with a heart that finds him bothersome, we cannot recognize his need. We must listen to what he asks and examine the help entrusted to us. Keeping a person's hardship in our heart is the beginning of mercy.

The word *"Give"* shows that the sympathy of the heart must lead to actual action. We must not consider that we have done what we should just because we felt sorry for someone. Think about what you can share in the circumstances you have been given. It is a life of giving what we have received from God to those who need it.

The one who gives must not belittle the other person. If, on the grounds of having given help, we try to control all that person's decisions, the meaning of love becomes blurred. Treat him with the heart of sharing the grace we have received from God. When we remember that the other person, too, is precious before God, our words and attitude in helping also change.

In the word *"him who wants to borrow from you" (Matthew 5:42)* a relationship of getting back what was entrusted is also included. It is a matter of dealing with real people and real needs. Instead of vaguely saying that we are generous, we must listen honestly to the other person's request and faithfully carry out the help we can give. Carry out responsibly what you have promised.

The command *"do not turn away" (Matthew 5:42)* makes us guard against a closed heart that wants to keep only what is its own. If we always regard another person's need entering our life only as a burden, it is hard to share the grace we have received. We must open our hearts so as not to avoid the help the Lord has entrusted to us.

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Sharing material things requires faithfulness. If we make the other person expect something with a promise we cannot keep and then neglect him, we can rather add to his difficulties. Honestly make clear what you can actually give, and faithfully do it. More important than the words that one has a good heart is responsibly carrying out the help that was promised.

The word *"you"* turns us back from the heart that merely watches the good deeds that other people should do. A request has now come to us, and there is a person to whom we must respond. Rather than avoiding responsibility by comparing with the circumstances of others, look back on what you have received from God. Ask God for a heart that will willingly bear the help you have been given to do.

Even if the person who received help does not change as much as expected, we must not immediately turn our good deed into resentment. If we helped from the beginning in order to move the other person as we pleased, we must correct that heart. It is important to entrust it to God, to convey the necessary words truthfully, and to keep mercy toward the other person.

The freedom to choose good according to grace

These words are not meant to give us an opportunity to boast of a good character. They teach a life of believing in Jesus and following His will. When we acknowledge that there are anger and greed in the mind of the flesh and follow the heart the Holy Spirit gives, we can get out of the attitude of paying back as we have received.

Even at the moment we suffer an unjust thing, God does not abandon us. Tell Him your grievance and ask for wisdom. Receive also the help of caring for the wounds of your heart, and

deal with the facts honestly. At the same time, hold on to the word so that a plan to give the other person pain does not rule your life.

The word *"the other to him also"* and the word *"your cloak also"* widen the heart that deals with others only by calculation. We must not make it the purpose of life only to suffer no loss at all. There is good labor that we willingly bear because of the grace we have received from God. We can choose that labor by faith.

The word *"go with him"* and the word *"Give"* teach active good. Rather than being satisfied with not having paid back evil, look around for people you can help. A life that opens the heart and shares what is needed is the way of following the Lord. The grace we have received from Jesus becomes the strength to bear that way.

Do not treat the person you meet today only by the wound you received yesterday. Remember God, who has helped you, and seek the right response. Choosing good is not something that can be done only after waiting for the other person to become a good person first. It is responding yourself today according to the heart God has given.

In the life Jesus taught there is the labor of bearing loss. But through that labor we get out of the heart bound to revenge and come to rely on God. To a person who held on only to his own rights, a way to care for other souls opens. By faith in the Lord we can carry out good deeds.

Do not spend all your heart on returning the evil you have received. Remember the grace of God that He has bestowed on you, and look for the good you can give today. Entrust to the Lord the heart that used to move as anger commanded, and enjoy the freedom of treating people according to His word. ✉

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Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

The heart of the Father contained in prayer for our enemies

< Matthew 5:43–48 >

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The standard by which we divide whom to love

Jesus asks to whom the love of His disciples is directed. He examines whether they stop at loving the people who like them and help them, or whether they also place before God the people who oppose them and cause them difficulty and treat them accordingly. This text teaches us to treat people according to the

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character of our heavenly Father rather than according to the other person's response.

Let us read verse 43. *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'" (Matthew 5:43).* He says that they have heard a word that divides neighbors from enemies and assigns love and hatred to the places thus divided. But Jesus does not tell them to follow that familiar division as it is. He goes on to say whom His disciples must imitate in their lives.

The words *"You shall love your neighbor" (Matthew 5:43)* make us think of our heart toward those close to us. It is precious to look after the joys and sorrows of the people with whom we have a relationship. But the fact that we love those close to us does not become a right to hate other people. We must not confine the range of our love within our own side.

If we follow the words *"hate your enemy" (Matthew 5:43),* our actions are decided by who the other person is. If someone treats us well, we love him, and if he goes against us, we hate him. Jesus commands His disciples to go beyond this division and follow the will of the Father. Our master is not the other person's attitude but God.

The words *"You have heard" (Matthew 5:43)* make us examine again a way of thinking that is already familiar. Something does not become the will of God just because it has long been regarded that way. When people close to one another share the same thinking, even a wrong attitude comes to feel natural. A disciple must correct that thinking before the word of Jesus.

To a heart that hates its enemy, the conviction that one is right easily attaches itself. If we explain that it is because the other person did wrong, even hatred seems justified. But apart from the other person's wrong, Jesus has a word to say to us. He

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makes us learn with what heart a child of God is to treat that person.

Prayer for our enemies

Let us read verse 44. *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44)*. Jesus tells us to go further than not retaliating against our enemies, and to love them and pray for them. He requires a heart that thinks about what is good for that person. Love does not stop at keeping up outward courtesy while leaving the hostility in one's heart as it is.

When we hear the words *"But I say to you" (Matthew 5:44)*, we must exalt the will of Jesus above our own thoughts. If we only calculate whether the command to love our enemies is possible with our own character, we soon meet our limits. We must learn from Jesus, who saved us, and follow the heart the Holy Spirit gives.

The command *"love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44)* makes clear that the object of love is not someone who is already showing goodwill. We must lay down the condition that we will consider that person only if he first takes on a good attitude. According to the grace God has bestowed on us, treat that person, too, as a soul who needs salvation.

Love is not an attitude that calls evil good. It is a heart that discerns the other person's wrong as it really is, yet does not wish for him to perish. It is treating him with the hope that he will turn from his wrong, come to know the truth, and come to God. The Holy Spirit gives this mercy to those who believe.

Jesus said the words *"for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44)*. It is not enough to say vaguely in our hearts that we love everyone. The very person who is making things hard for us right now is also included among those we are to pray for. A person who used to tell God only his own distress comes to think of the needs of that soul as well.

The command *"pray" (Matthew 5:44)* makes us place our enemy before God. Rather than exerting ourselves to change him in some way, we ask God to awaken him. We pray that he will know his own sins and believe the truth of salvation. While we pray, our own hatred is also laid bare before God.

The pain in our heart does not disappear at once just because we begin to pray. There is no need to hide the pain and pretend to love. While telling God that heart honestly, ask Him to help you so that the other person's evil does not rule your life. God knows our weakness and leads us by His word.

When we examine the content of our prayer, what our heart wants is also revealed. Look back on whether you wish only to see the other person put to shame, or whether you wish for him to turn and obtain life. The prayer Jesus commanded comes from love toward that person. We must ask God for that love and set our hearts right.

The character that appears in the children of the Father

Let us read the first part of verse 45. *"That you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:45)*. Our attitude toward our enemies is connected with a life that resembles the Father. The children of God treat people according to the grace they

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have received from the Father. They do not decide their love by people's responses alone.

In the title *"your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:45)*, there is a relationship that has been received. We became His children by believing in the grace of salvation that God has bestowed. We do not pay the price of the remission of sins by how long we have loved our enemies. We are learning in what kind of life the life received from the Father is to appear.

Jesus, whom the Father sent, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. He bore the sins thus passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, received the judgment for sin in the place of us who had been enemies of God, and then rose again from death. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and calls God Father.

When we remember this grace, the basis for living as His children becomes clear. We were first loved by God. As people who have come to know that love, we show mercy to others as well. Rather than waiting for a generous heart to arise by itself within us, we must believe the word and follow the heart the Holy Spirit gives.

The words *"you may be sons" (Matthew 5:45)* reveal what a person who belongs to God looks like. When we get out of the attitude of loving only our own side and follow the will of the Father, the appearance befitting His children shows itself. The likeness of the Father must be revealed not only in the words with which we explain our faith to others but also in the heart with which we treat those who oppose us.

The name of child does not become a reason to exalt ourselves. Just as the Father has cared for us, we too must look

after the souls who need help. The assurance of being loved by God is different from a sense of superiority that looks down on others. Because of the grace we have received, it leads to a heart that treats people as precious.

The sun He makes rise even on the evil

Let us read the reason given in verse 45. *"For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good" (Matthew 5:45)*. Jesus shows us what the Father does. The grace God bestows is not given to one side only, according to whether a person has first done well toward Him.

The words *"for He" (Matthew 5:45)* make us place the basis of the command in God. If we look for the reason to love our enemies only in the other person's good points, we easily give up. Jesus tells us to look at how God acts. The grace of the Father must lead the attitude of His children.

Jesus said, *"His sun" (Matthew 5:45)*. The sun is under the rule of God. People can live receiving its benefit and yet forget the One who bestows it. God bestows grace even on such people. We, too, must not take the everyday grace we receive for granted.

The distinction *"on the evil and on the good" (Matthew 5:45)* shows that God is not One who does not know evil and good. God discerns, and yet He bestows grace. We, too, even when we know the other person's wrong, must remember that he is a soul who needs the care of God. We must have discernment and mercy together.

The words *"makes His sun rise" (Matthew 5:45)* show an act of actually bestowing. He did not merely keep a good intention in His heart. When we speak of love, too, we must think about what help the other person needs. Actual deeds

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follow: helping him to hear the truth and looking after what he needs.

If we first calculate whether the other person will be grateful, our heart closes. Even the grace we have received from God was not given because we had been sufficiently thankful. Thinking of God, who has bestowed grace, do the good that you can do. We need the faith that leaves to God the response that comes after we do good.

The rain He sends on the just and on the unjust

Let us read the latter part of verse 45. *"And sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45)*. Following the sun, Jesus speaks of the rain. He shows that God bestows what is needed for life widely. His children, too, must get out of a heart that looks after only the people who are useful to them.

The words *"on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45)* make us look back on whom we want to help. We notice even a small need of a person we like, but it is easy to turn away from the difficulty of a person we feel uncomfortable with. Thinking of the grace of the Father, we must also see that person's hardship as it really is.

The expression *"sends rain" (Matthew 5:45)* conveys with certainty what God does. The goodness of God is not something we have drawn up in our imagination. It is the Father's way of acting, which Jesus makes known to us directly. His children learn a life of believing in that Father and growing to resemble Him.

When we deal with our enemies, too, we can look at what need that person is in right now. Instead of looking for a way to repay him with evil words, think of an opportunity to let him

know the truth. Instead of mocking his weak points, have pity on him. This is accepting the heart God has given into our actual relationships.

The responsibility for evil deeds does not disappear because of the word that He gives the sun and the rain. God discerns evil and judges it. What we must learn is to get out of the attitude of withholding good because of hatred. We must keep the heart that hopes for the other person's restoration while also dealing honestly with the facts.

A person who remembers the grace of the Father also looks honestly at his own past. He, too, did not know the Savior and lived following his own will. Yet God caused him to hear the word of salvation. When we think of that grace, we cannot regard even a person who still goes against the truth merely as someone to hate to the end.

A heart that waits only for love in return

Let us read verse 46. *"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:46)*. Jesus makes us look back on a life of loving only those who love us. If we stay only with a love that we give because there is love to be received in return, we fail to fully reveal the grace of the Father.

The words *"if you love those who love you" (Matthew 5:46)* make us examine the direction of our relationships. See whether you have the habit of opening your heart only when there is goodwill received first. If you stop helping only because someone does not recognize you, your love is bound to your own being acknowledged.

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Jesus asks, *"What reward have you?" (Matthew 5:46)*. We cannot consider that we have done all of love merely by the calculation of giving back as much as we have received. We must remember how the Father has bestowed His grace. A person who believes in that grace has reason to do good even where no reward is in sight.

The question *"Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:46)* humbles a heart that regards itself as especially righteous. We cannot boast that we have fully done the will of God merely by the fact that we do well by our own side. Jesus does not let us hold on to the actions we already do as a standard for receiving praise.

There is no need to discard the very act of returning love to those who love us. That relationship, too, must be cared for as precious. Only, that relationship must not become the end of love. Look back on a heart that stays only within relationships that are already comfortable and turns away from other souls.

A heart that expects a return also shows itself after a good deed. Examine whether you keep feeling hurt because there was little thanks for the help you gave, or whether you regret having helped because someone does not go along with your wishes. When we remember the grace we have received from the Father, we can lay down the heart that tries to turn what we have given into our own right.

Children who widen the range of their greetings

Let us read verse 47. *"And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?" (Matthew 5:47)*. Jesus brings love close to us, into the everyday greeting. Before speaking of great sacrifice, He makes

us see whom we open our hearts to and treat. Our narrow hearts are revealed even in small, ordinary encounters.

What is important in the words *"if you greet your brethren only" (Matthew 5:47)* is the range of the heart. Examine whether you are warm only to familiar people and cold to those who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable. If we divide people in advance into our own side and the other side, even the act of offering a word changes.

The question *"what do you do more than others?" (Matthew 5:47)* makes us think about what it is to live as children of God. If our words of faith are special but in actual relationships we always look after only our own side, there is something to look back on. We must show the grace we have received from the Father, beginning with the actions close at hand.

The words *"Do not even the tax collectors do so?" (Matthew 5:47)* are not a word to be used for boasting that puts others down. It is a question that makes the disciples examine how they themselves live. We must honestly look back on what difference there is in the attitude with which we treat people, while we say that we know God.

A greeting is an act of acknowledging the other person as a person and opening one's heart. If we treat the existence of an uncomfortable person as though it were nothing, hatred hardens. While discerning the facts rightly, we must not discard our respect toward him. Remember the fact that God regards that soul, too, as precious.

A single greeting does not solve all the difficulties of a relationship. But according to the word of Jesus, we can change the attitude that is ours to take on. We can begin not adding evil words, not joining in mockery, and praying for the other person. Even a small response comes from faith.

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A life that looks to the perfection of the Father

Let us read verse 48. *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)*. Jesus places the final standard with the heavenly Father. We cannot be satisfied with a comparison that we are a little better than people like ourselves. Looking to the love God bestows, we must live a life befitting His children.

The word *"Therefore"* takes up the preceding teaching. The life of praying for our enemies, remembering the grace of the Father, and widening the range in which we used to love only our own side must continue on. The word to be perfect is not an abstract compliment detached from the preceding relationships. It is the conclusion that we are to treat people according to the character of the Father.

Before the words *"just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)*, we cannot boast of our own strength. We are weak, but God is perfect. We must believe in the salvation we have received from Him and depend on the Holy Spirit. Acknowledging the fact that we are lacking, we must follow the will of the Father.

Do not turn the command *"you shall be perfect" (Matthew 5:48)* into a matter of merely producing a pious appearance to show people. Bring the hatred in your heart honestly before God, pray for the salvation of that person, and do the good that you can do. Faith that believes in the Father must appear in the actual attitude with which we treat people.

Even after we have begun to pray, hurt feelings can rise up again. At that time there is no need to give up praying because our heart did not immediately become at ease. Tell the Father your weakness and ask again according to the word. Even if the other person's change is slow, turning away from the heart that

wished evil toward him is the portion that is ours to take on today. The Father hears our prayer and teaches His children by His word the way they are to walk.

Look back on whether there is someone you want to push out of your prayer today. Ask that he may turn, know the truth, and receive the grace of God. Tell the Father your own pain as well, and learn mercy toward that soul. In prayer for our enemies, the heart of a child who resembles the Father grows. ✉

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CHAPTER

6

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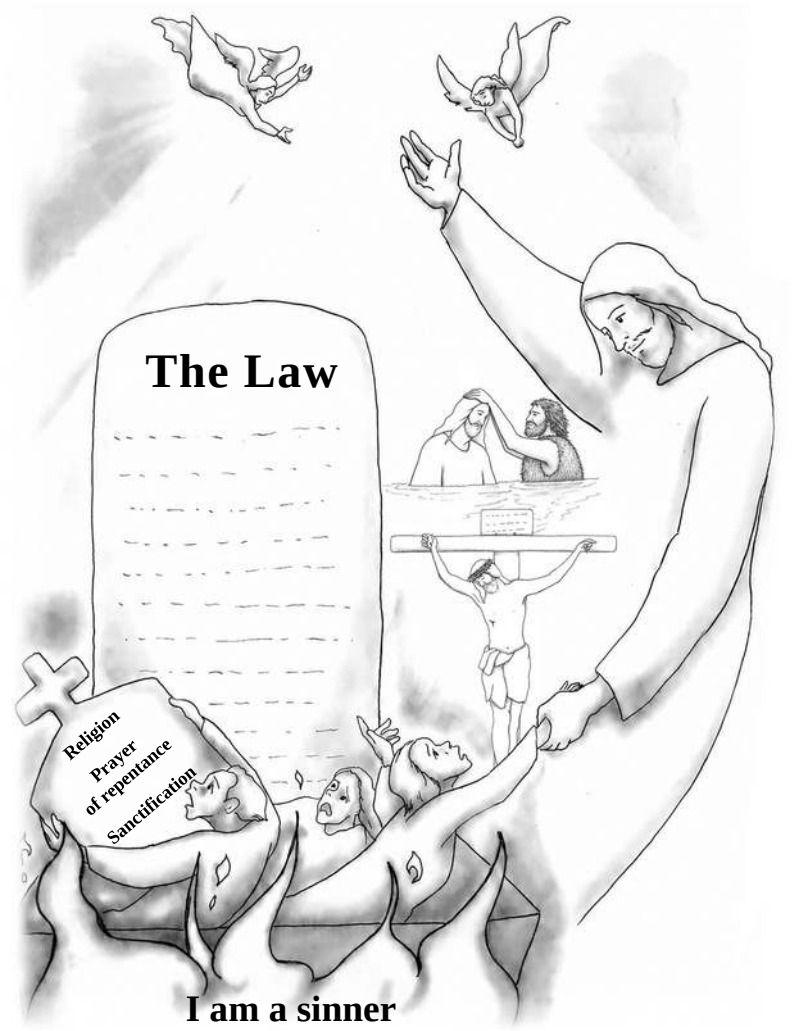

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Father who sees charity done in secret

< Matthew 6:1–4 >

“(Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven –ASV). Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

The purpose we must examine when doing good

In the act of helping another person, there is the need of the person who receives the help. But while we are helping, the desire for our own name to become known can come first. Jesus does not tell us to stop the good work of charity; He makes us examine before whom and for what purpose we do that work. Along with the outward appearance of a good deed, we must look back on the heart contained within it.

Let us read verse 1. *“Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 6:1).*

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Jesus demands caution of those who practice righteousness. This is because we cannot conclude that the heart is also right merely from the fact that someone is doing a good thing. If the purpose of gaining people's praise is mixed in, what should be done before God is put forward before the eyes of people.

The words *"to be seen of them" (Matthew 6:1)* reveal the purpose of the action. The fact itself that someone saw our labor is not the whole of the problem. The problem is the heart that hopes to be seen and acts because of that. Look back on whether zeal arises only when people's eyes are on you, and whether you willingly take on help that goes unnoticed as well.

The words *"before men" (Matthew 6:1)* ask whose evaluation we are conscious of. If our heart is more on the people watching beside us than on the person receiving the help, we must examine our purpose again. This is because we may think more about how we looked than about whether we sufficiently delivered what was needed. The word of Jesus sets our scattered attention right.

The warning *"Take heed that ye do not your righteousness" (Matthew 6:1)* is a word telling us to examine ourselves even in the midst of good actions. Even if we started because we wanted to help at first, after hearing praise, praise sometimes becomes the purpose. We cannot finish with checking the direction of our heart just once. We must keep remembering the fact that we act before God.

Think about the service you are now carrying out. Examine whether the reason that work is needed is clear even if it is not made known. If someone can have his difficulty lightened and learn the truth, you should be able to rejoice in that. The heart that loves the work God has entrusted moves apart from how much one's own name is made known.

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The person who remembers the reward to be received from the Father

Jesus continues His warning with the word *"else" (Matthew 6:1)*. If we do not examine our motives and are absorbed in what is seen by people, there is something we lose. We cannot regard everything as having gone well because we have gained praise right away. We must think about what that labor is like before God.

The result is *"ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1)*. We cannot place the recognition gained from people and the reward received from the Father on the same level. Even if many people applaud, whether we acted with a heart that pleases God must be examined separately. Jesus warns us so that we do not forget the more precious evaluation.

From the words *"with your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1)* we come to know before whom a believer lives. We have a heavenly Father. Because there is the grace we have received from Him, we do not need to try to fill our own worth only with people's recognition. With the faith that the Father knows, we can also take on responsibilities that go unnoticed.

There is something we received first, before we give charity. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, and bearing that sin that was passed on to Him, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so received the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death. To the person who believes this gospel, God gives the remission of all sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him His own child.

It is the person who has received this salvation who gives charity. It is not buying the remission of sins by piling up good

deeds. It is sharing the grace received by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished. Therefore, we do not have to try to prove that we are righteous by the number of times we have helped. We need only take on what is actually needed from a heart that believes in grace.

When we hear the word *"ye have no reward" (Matthew 6:1)*, it becomes clear what we hold precious. We come to look back on whether we will cling to immediate praise or act with a heart that will please the Father. Before comparing the amount of your charity with others, remember God, who receives that labor. That remembrance guards the purpose of good deeds.

Hypocrisy that enters the place of charity

Let us read verse 2. *"Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward" (Matthew 6:2).*

Jesus deals concretely with the act of giving charity. Even if we actually gave something out, if we sought glory from men, we must acknowledge that heart. The fact that we gave help does not cover over every wrong purpose.

The words *"Therefore, when you do a charitable deed" (Matthew 6:2)* connect the preceding warning to actual action. We can talk loudly about practicing righteousness, but when we face the hardship of someone close to us, that heart is revealed. Even when we look into who needs what and share, we must be under the word of God. Even at the moment of helping, we must receive instruction.

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Jesus said the words *"the hypocrites" (Matthew 6:2)*. Hypocrisy lies in the actual heart and the visible appearance being at odds. There may be the appearance of caring for a person who needs help, but inwardly one may want one's own glory. We must not use this word only to find out others' hypocrisy; we must honestly examine our own purpose.

In the words *"that they may have glory from men" (Matthew 6:2)*, the purpose of hypocrisy is clear. It is doing good in order to be remembered by people as a good person. Then the difficulty of the person receiving the help turns into an opportunity to exalt one's own name. Jesus makes us turn from the attitude of making good deeds a tool for our own glory.

The expression *"in the synagogues and in the streets" (Matthew 6:2)* shows the places that people's eyes reach. If we labor only where we are seen and close our hearts where no one pays attention, we must look back on the reason. Purpose is more important than place, but the purpose is sometimes revealed in the attitude with which we choose the place. God knows even that choice.

Hypocrisy is not a problem that arises only when we do outwardly bad actions. It can also enter actions that people praise. Therefore, we must not think that we do not need to listen to the word because we do many good things. Even the person who labors also continually needs the grace and instruction that set the heart right.

Service that does not put one's own name first

Jesus says, *"Do not sound a trumpet before you" (Matthew 6:2)*. What the text forbids is the attitude of seeking glory by loudly making one's charity known to people. We can spend

more of our heart on making it known than on what we actually gave. We must not lose sight of the purpose: whom the work was meant to help.

The words *"before you" (Matthew 6:2)* make us think about who occupies the front place in a good deed. If the person who should receive the help is pushed back and one's own name comes first, the direction has gone wrong. Put first the heart that seeks to lighten the other person's difficulty through sharing. Any explanation about one's own labor must serve that purpose.

We must receive the command *"do not sound a trumpet" (Matthew 6:2)* in our words today as well. When you talk about having helped another person, examine whether there is a heart that seeks to exalt yourself. An explanation that seeks needed cooperation or makes a responsibility known and an explanation for the sake of boasting differ in purpose. Before bringing up a word, we must first look honestly at the reason we need to say it.

The person who receives help also has a dignity that must be protected. If we look like good people only when we make that person's difficulty known in detail, we must think about what kind of burden our boasting becomes to him. Having been the one who gave help does not give us the right to expose the other person's circumstances as we please. Love treats that person's situation as precious.

If we have been entrusted with the work of sharing together, we must faithfully inform those who entrusted it of the necessary facts. We cannot use the word telling us to be secret as an excuse to avoid responsibility. We must honestly disclose how much was received and how it was used, yet not seek our own glory through that work. Humility of heart and faithfulness in the work can go together.

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If we do not put our own name first, we can pay more attention to the person who needs help. We listen to what he wants, look into what is actually needed, and honestly deliver the help we can manage. Hold the benefit the other person gains more precious than visible results. Such concern keeps the needed care going even after a single delivery.

Do not remain in the reward already received

Jesus declares, *"Assuredly, I say to you" (Matthew 6:2)*. The evaluation of the hypocrite's actions does not end with people's applause. Jesus reveals the actual purpose of those actions. A disciple must examine again, before this word, even the things that many people say are good.

The word *"they have their reward" (Matthew 6:2)* is weighty. They gained the glory from people that they wanted, but that cannot be confused with the reward the Father will give. Having gained what one wanted does not mean that one was also right before God. What one wanted as one acted is what matters.

Think about the expression *"their reward" (Matthew 6:2)*. If we aim only at people's recognition, the heart also ends at the place where recognition has come back. After that, we come to look for things that will bring greater praise. But the person who believes in the Father takes on the next responsibility according to the will God holds precious rather than the reaction that is showing now.

The word *"have their reward" (Matthew 6:2)* awakens the heart that was at ease with the applause it received. After hearing praise, we may come to dislike asking about our own motives. Since good results are visible, we think that even our heart is right. But Jesus examines the purpose along with the result. The

praise we have received must not block the work of looking back on our heart.

If you feel excessively resentful when no one recognizes your labor, that too is an opportunity to examine yourself. Look back on whether you did it from the beginning in order to receive recognition, and whether you are demanding words of thanks as if they were your right. Rather than hiding your disappointment, you must tell God honestly and set the purpose of your service right. The Father knows our weakness.

Even when we see another person being praised, we can examine our own heart. If we cannot rejoice because we ourselves were not noticed, even though his labor is precious, we are bound to recognition. Hold precious the work God has entrusted to each person. There is no need to make the person who does good together with us into a competitor.

Not letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing

Let us read verse 3. *"But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:3)*. Jesus makes us look back not only on the heart that shows itself to others but also on the attitude of continually counting and exalting one's own labor. Even after giving charity, where we place our heart matters. We need the posture of sharing the grace we have received and entrusting that work to God.

The words *"when you do a charitable deed" (Matthew 6:3)* demand a response from each person. Before talking at length about how others are being hypocritical, we must think about how we ourselves will act. There is no need to stop even the help

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entrusted to us on the grounds that what we see around us is uncomfortable. Take on your own share truthfully before God.

In the words *"what your right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:3)* there is work actually done. We cannot retreat into a life of doing nothing while emphasizing secrecy. Charity is the act of giving out what is needed. We must look back on what we have received from God, decide on the help we can share now, and do it faithfully.

The words *"do not let your left hand know" (Matthew 6:3)* humble the heart that is greatly conscious of its own good deeds and clings to them. We must not keep calculating how much we have done and expect special treatment. If the charity we have done becomes a qualification we put forward when dealing with people, it burdens that relationship. Do not turn what you shared by grace into your own right.

A person who has received our help may hold a different opinion. If at that time we recall what we did for him and demand that he follow our word, service turns into a desire to dominate. We must keep together the fact that we gave help and the attitude of respecting the other person's judgment. The memory that we shared what we received from the Father keeps pride away.

There is no need to take the word telling us to forget our good deeds as meaning that we should forget our responsibility as well. If help we promised remains, we must take it on to the end. However, we must not store up in our hearts the labor we have completed and demand recompense from people. We need an attitude that is faithful in the work entrusted to us and not bound to our own merit.

The Father who sees in secret

Let us read verse 4. *"That your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly" (Matthew 6:4)*. A thing not revealed to people is not thereby unknown to God as well. Jesus says that the Father sees. Because there is this promise, a disciple does not regard labor that no one recognizes as a vain thing.

To follow the word *"that your charitable deed may be in secret" (Matthew 6:4)*, we need the faith that the Father knows. We must lay down the heart that feels as if the meaning will disappear if we do not make it known to people. If there is actually a person who received the help and God sees, we have done a good thing. Our name does not need to be widely known.

The Father *"who sees in secret" (Matthew 6:4)* is not One who counts only the size of an action. He knows with what heart we shared. He knows also the labor we did not tell others about and the desire we laid down in order to give. If we believe in that Father, we can be freed from the impatience to account for our every labor without omission.

Jesus said the words *"your Father" (Matthew 6:4)*. God is not a stranger who only evaluates from afar. He is the Father who gives the grace of salvation and cares for His children. We act according to the love we have received from Him. This relationship with the Father is the ground of faith on which we can continue secret good deeds.

The promise *"will Himself reward you openly" (Matthew 6:4)* enables us to entrust things to God. We must not make it a transaction in which we decide in advance and demand what and how much we will get back. The Father is good and faithful. Trusting His judgment and taking on the labor entrusted to us today is the attitude of a child.

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When we remember the word *"your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly" (Matthew 6:4)*, even the time that goes unseen becomes precious. The needs we look into alone, the help we quietly give, and the promises we keep to the end are before God. Rather than looking for who will praise you, look after the person the Father has entrusted to you.

Today's help shared before the Father

This word does not end with learning a few methods of charity. It sets right whose glory the person who does good is looking to. It makes us lay down the heart that seeks recognition from people and share the grace received from the Father. When the purpose changes in that way, we also come to treat the person who receives the help more preciously.

Accept the warning *"Take heed" (Matthew 6:1)* into today's plans. When preparing help, look first at the other person's need rather than the recognition you will gain. Promise what you can actually manage and deliver it faithfully. Helping honestly to the end matters more than speaking grandly.

After giving charity, look back on your own heart as well. Examine whether you resent the other person because his thanks fell short, and whether you want to tell others about that work over and over. If such a heart is revealed, acknowledge it before God and think again about the grace you have received. The word also cares for the heart of the one who serves and leads him on the right path.

Hold precious the quiet labor of those who help together with you. There are people who take on what is actually needed even without taking a visible role. The more the desire to exalt one's own name decreases, the better that labor is seen. Rather than

comparing ourselves with one another, we must look together at the needs given to us and continue doing good.

The faith that God sees cannot become a word that covers laziness. The more a place is one that no one knows, the more faithfully you must take on the responsibility entrusted to you. Before the Father who sees in secret, even a small promise is precious. A life that acts honestly where people's eyes do not reach is the actual form of faith.

Look around today for someone you can quietly help. Even if your own name is not made known, share with him what he needs and give thanks to the Father. Let us not wear out our hearts clinging to people's praise, but entrust our labor to the Father who sees in secret and act joyfully. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The faith that can call God Father

< Matthew 6:9 >

“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”

The Lord commanded, *“In this manner, therefore, pray” (Matthew 6:9)*. In the prayer the Lord taught us, several prayer topics appear, and the first prayer topic is *“Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”* This word means that we should first pray so that we may have the faith that can call God Father.

What does it mean to pray to God? It means to go toward God, to draw near to Him, and to tell Him one’s wishes. And it tells us what the topic of the prayer we offer toward God should be. In the first prayer topic of the prayer the Lord gave, there is the meaning that we should pray so that we may have the faith that causes the name of our Father in heaven to be hallowed. When God told us to pray, He meant that we should ask Him to remove the obstacles that block the way, so that we may go toward God. Prayer is drawing near to God, and drawing near to God and asking for something. Its purpose is to obtain the faith that qualifies us to call our Father in heaven God the Father. That is why He tells us to ask God in prayer. And He told us to pray that we may live a holy life before God, and to pray with the desire to live a very holy and fitting life as His children, pleasing

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to the heart of God the Father. This is the first prayer topic the Lord gave to us.

When we go toward God, what must we ask for first of all? We must pray that He give us the faith that can call God our own Father. When we go to pray toward God, what should we desire as we pray? We must pray that He give us the faith that can call God Father.

Then how can we obtain such faith? To have such faith, we must receive the remission of all our sins. In other words, it means that we must first receive the remission of all our sins from God and become the children of God. This is the prayer topic that God wants from us. When we go before God, the prayer topic that God wants from us is that He let us have the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord's telling us to pray in this manner is a request that "you must have this kind of faith."

God wants all people to go toward Him. And He wants them to draw near to Him, call Him Father, and come into His bosom and live there. God wants all people to become His children in that way, enjoy the privilege of God's children, and live giving glory before God the Father, but those who live like this are not many. Everyone asks, "How can one live such a life?" Everyone wants to draw near before God, but not everyone meets God and lives. Why? Because they have sin. People want to go before God, but because they have sin they cannot draw near, and so they must first believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord gave and have their sins washed away. People can have a heart toward God, but in reality they cannot meet God because of sin. That is why the Lord said, *"In this manner, therefore, pray."*

How did the Lord tell us to pray? As we can see even from this prayer, which begins with *"Our Father in heaven"*

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(Matthew 6:9), the Lord wanted us to truly have the faith that can call God Father. We must earnestly ask God in prayer to let us have the faith by which our sins are washed away. He told us to ask in prayer that we may thereby become very close and intimate with God.

I said that everyone wants to draw near before God, but cannot draw near because of sin. Then what must we do? In the prayer the Lord taught us, what is the prayer topic He truly wants from us? It is to ask for the faith that can call God Father, that is, the faith that receives the remission of sins.

By having the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can receive the remission of sins and become the children of God. Only then can we live hallowing the Father's name according to the Father's will. That is why the remission of sins that we come to receive by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is so very important to us. So the Lord, telling us to pray in this manner as the first prayer topic, told us to receive the washing of sins that enables us to call God Father, and to pray earnestly so that we may live a life in which our sins have been washed away.

Worship that God does not accept

When we look at the Bible, the people of Israel came before God, offered sheep and oxen, offered many worship services, burned incense, and prayed. But there was a time when God said that He would rather they had not come. That was because they refused to have the faith that God wanted. Even now God wants all people to come to have the faith that believes in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But they put such faith on the back burner and were diligent only in offering worship. That

is why God hated their coming before Him and offering worship. Because they came and offered worship to God in their own way, the way they wanted, God hated them.

What faith of ours does God hate? There is the truth by which God loved us, removed our sins, and made us His children, and that is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God hates those who refuse the faith that believes in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God wants to treat us as those close to Him, wants to give us all the things we ask of Him, and wants to receive glory from us. The Lord wants us to live before God, giving back to Him a glorious life of faith by believing in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. What God wants from people is like that, yet there have been more people who, on the contrary, offer wrong worship and wrong prayers. Such people brush aside the faith and the demand that God wants and offer their own kind of worship. God rejects the worship offered by those who make up their own salvation and believe in it, who think that God will be pleased if only they devote much sincerity, and who, while liking to follow their own thoughts, still claim to believe in God. God hates wrong faith and wrong worship so very much.

So the faith that God wants is that faith which has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that has removed all our sins. The Lord's telling us to pray in this manner means that, since God the Father loved us all so much and removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we should know that and come to God by faith. I believe that if we follow God's will and receive the remission of all our sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and from then on live by faith, we receive and enjoy many blessings. This is because God delights in the born-again coming before Him by faith and offering worship, thanksgiving, praise,

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and adoration, and so He will gladly send down His overflowing love. Since what God wants from us is that we live a life of faith by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which God removed our sins, you and I must be saved from sin, receive the blessing of becoming God's children, become those who live by faith, and give glory before God the Father. God wants that kind of faith from us.

God wants from us the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but is there perhaps anyone who pays no heed to such a thing? Such a person makes up his own gospel of salvation from sin and believes in it, and believes in his own way even the faith of being blessed by God. What God hates most is the person who does not believe as God has given but believes and acts according to his own thoughts. It means that God hates most of all when someone believes in a salvation he has made up as he pleases and brings that faith before God to offer worship and pray.

The first condition of true faith is to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and obtain the faith that can call our Father in heaven without any hesitation. How did God perfectly remove our sins and make us sinless people? How did God make us His children? God is the God who receives the worship of those who first know this, hold it firmly in their hearts, and believe it. God becomes the God of those who believe just as He has given, and He receives glory through the life of faith of such people. God receives the prayers of those who give glory to Him with the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, we must throw away the faith we have made up on our own. We must have the faith that believes that God loved us and removed our sins.

Israel, which asked for a human king

The people of Israel in the Bible did not believe according to the law of sacrifice for the remission of sins that God gave, but set up idols, and so they were ruined in the end. God brought down on them a wrath like a volcano. Why did such wrath of God arise? The people of Israel provoked the wrath of God. They did not have the faith that God wanted. Although they were physically the descendants of Abraham and a people who believed in God, the wrath of God came upon them. Because they did not believe in the love, salvation, and truth that God gave them, but made up a separate salvation of their own, they ended up growing far from God. The people of Israel made up a separate salvation, made up a separate method of salvation, made up a separate faith, and made up a separate way of life. The people of Israel were the people of God, but because of that one reason they were so hated before God.

In early Israel, the law, the Tabernacle, and various laws were established by the word of God. And what happened a little later? The hearts of people who did not want to be ruled by God began to rise up. They did not want to entrust themselves before God. It means that people arose who did not want to believe and follow as God commanded and live under God's rule and guidance. They said to God, "Set up a king for us. Set up a king for us, too," and so a king came to be set up. The person set up in that way was none other than Saul. Until then, God had raised up His servants to speak the word to the people of Israel, and He had led them and ruled over them. That was the theocracy in which God ruled and governed.

But the people of Israel began to insist on their own thinking, saying to God, "Now we are sick of it. Instead of this, we too must have a king like the people of the world. Set up a king for

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us, too." And so Saul, who was very tall and of mighty build, became king. In the eyes of the people of Israel, the thought arose, "Ah, if that man becomes our king, it will be fine; he has a good physique and he is tall, so it seems he will be able to do something well." He did not please God's heart, but because the people of Israel spoke so forcefully, God said nothing further. Saul was not a man of faith, nor was he a man who believed in and followed God. Because Saul was not a man of faith who believed and followed according to the word of God, God disliked him, but because the people of Israel stubbornly pestered Him to do so, He did so for them. "You do not want to be under My rule. Then the one who will rule over you is a man. If you want it so much, be ruled by a man. Experience what it is like to be ruled by a man. When men rule over you, they will lay heavy labor upon you and make you do hard service. They will take away what you have and trample you down. Is that still all right with you?" "It is still all right." "Then do so." God does not force any further. The people of Israel, not even knowing how great a mistake they were making, gladly set up Saul as king. The king set up in that way was King Saul.

Even so, because God loved the people of Israel, He later raised up David. This was because with King Saul they could not defeat the enemy, and under King Saul's rule they would all be killed or have everything they had completely taken away. God, who could not but know this, could not look on any longer, and so God again raised up David as king. And so He saved the people of Israel.

From that time on, the sin of following human thoughts out of a dislike of being ruled by God began to appear. A man appeared who did not believe according to the love of God that God spoke of, the salvation God gave, and the law of salvation,

and that man is Jeroboam, whom we know well. From then on, all the people of Israel fell into the sin of Jeroboam.

"The sin of Jeroboam"

At first, Israel was a unified nation. Then it was divided into south and north. The people of Israel of the ten northern tribes, excluding Judah and Benjamin, followed the sin of Jeroboam. They worshiped at the high places. Inside those high places they brought and set up golden calves and believed they were gods. And they even changed the Feast of Tabernacles, which was kept on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the year, to the fifteenth day of the eighth month and offered sacrifices. On days they themselves had set, they offered sacrifices to God according to their own thinking, and as if that were not enough, they made anyone who merely wanted it a priest, and they let people who did not believe the word of God as it is offer sacrifices as they pleased. Because of this, the people of Israel, south and north alike, were all ruined. Their faith was all corrupted, and so they were all ruined.

The reason the people of Israel were dragged away by the hand of the enemy and came to die was that they did not follow God's will but followed human thoughts. The tribe of Judah in the south also imitated the sin of Jeroboam in the north and all followed the sin of Jeroboam. "What a bother. Offering sacrifices is troublesome. It is tiresome to have to slaughter oxen and sheep and lay hands on them every day. Oh, looking at how the people in the north offer their sacrifices, how convenient that must be. Let us, too, offer them any old way." In that way they made light of offering sacrifices, and they brought blind animals or lame animals that they could neither eat at home nor sell, left

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them with the priest, and offered sacrifices carelessly. God said that if it were such a sacrifice, it would be better not to offer it at all, saying, *"Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain?" (Malachi 1:10)*. God hated the sin of Jeroboam so very much.

Throughout the Old Testament age, the people of Israel received curses in many respects. Nevertheless, the people of Israel did not turn their hearts, and even when the Messiah came later, they did not believe. In the Old Testament age, God had His servants prophesy and promise concerning the Messiah, and in the end, as He had promised, He caused the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to come. Jesus Christ came to this earth, had the sin of mankind transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, bore the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross, and rose again from death, and so became the Savior of mankind. The people of Israel should have believed in Jesus, who became the Savior of mankind, but they did not believe; rather, they rejected the Messiah and killed Him.

King Herod built a temple for the people of Israel. That temple was built by digging the site, laying foundation stones and great rocks on it, and raising pillars on top of that, but God pulled up and scattered even that site and the foundation stones.

Why did the wrath of God come upon them? Why were they so hated even though they were God's people? God made them, and when they fell into sin He removed their sins with the wisdom of the water and the Spirit and became their Father, and He kept giving them blessings and promised to keep giving blessings, but they did not believe all that truth. Without believing, they arbitrarily set up some law of their own, corrupting God's law and corrupting the law of salvation, and tried to receive the remission of sins in that way. Not only in the remission of sins but also in living by faith, they did not believe

as God had said. Rather than following the word of God by faith, they made up some law of the life of faith of their own and followed it. That is why they came to be hated by God and to receive His wrath.

That is why the Lord gave this word when He came to this earth. It was the word *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9)*. "Do you want to draw near to God? Do you want to turn toward God? If you want to draw near to God and deal with Him, and want to live by faith toward God, then first receive the remission of sins by which I have removed your sins. Receive it by faith. Receive the clean remission of all your sins through the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and then live a life that gives glory before Me." The Lord spoke with this meaning.

To call God Father, we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Whoever wants to draw near to God and live toward God must believe in the word of God. Anyone who is called a Christian wants to live close to God, but the faith that lives so that the name of our Father in heaven may be hallowed is so rare, and so it means that we must first receive the remission of sins and live this life of faith. If we want to live this life of faith, we must believe in the truth that God the Father gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, and saved us. God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth and had your sins and mine transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. Jesus Christ, who received baptism and had all our sins transferred to Him, bore the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, and rose again from death. In this way, according to

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the will of God, Jesus Christ removed all our sins, made us sinless people and made us the children of God, and enabled us to give true glory to God with the faith that believes in this truth and to live a holy life of faith; we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the truth of God that has done this. What the Lord wanted from us was that we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

We often see people who, while believing in Christianity, show zeal before God on their own. There are many things such as lifting their faces and hands toward God and crying out "Lord" as they pray and offer prayers of repentance, and trying not to sin in order to live holy lives, and all those things are admirable, too, but that was not the faith God wanted. The faith God wanted was not such man-made faith, but believing exactly as He said: "I made you, and when you fell into weakness and fell into sin, I passed your sins onto the head of My Son through the baptism My Son received from John, and I had My Son receive the judgment for your sins and judged My Son, and I raised My Son again so that you may be saved if you believe in My Son. I have arranged it so that you can have the true faith that believes with the heart, and now, when you believe with your heart and have that faith, I make you My children." This was none other than the will of God the Father.

Where must we begin the start of the true faith of the remission of sins? According to this prayer the Lord taught us, we must turn toward God in the faith that has received the remission of sins and can call God Father, the faith that believes in the truth of salvation that removed our sins, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It means that we must rightly start our relationship with God again from the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. True faith starts from the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even

if people call on Jesus, pray, offer prayers of repentance, preach the gospel, do mission work, give many offerings, volunteer, serve, and even die as martyrs without knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of that is the faith God wants. God wants to give to us first, and then wants us to receive in our hearts what God has given. This is the heart of God.

Today many Christians know wrongly and believe wrongly. Without even knowing the Father's will, they want to have the faith that can call out, *"Our Father in heaven."* So, not knowing God's will, rather than having the faith God wants, they are making up their own washing of sins. God is holy. He is majestic, fearsome, and holy. God has no sin at all. Yet countless Christians do not believe that God removed their sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and they call Him "God the Father" while still having sin. If someone calls God Father while still having sin, draws near before God, and lifts his face toward God, God turns His head away. That is because it goes against the faith God told us to have, that is, the word *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9)*. That is precisely not believing according to the Father's will.

Because God the Father is holy, He hates most of all for a sinner to call Him "God the Father," and He cannot but bring down His wrath on such a person. If, just as God brought His wrath down on the people of Israel, everything you do fails, you are hated, and you are scattered, you must look carefully into why such things keep happening. We must look for the reason in history, and we must look for it in our own lives as well.

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The faith that denies one's own thoughts

Unless we truly have the faith that believes, "The gospel of the water and the Spirit is salvation; this alone is the absolute truth," neither an individual nor a group will ever be acknowledged by God. So we must think, "Why has everything we did in our lives gone wrong? Why could we not have true faith?" "Why did the people of Israel suffer in this history? Why was it so painful before we believed in Jesus? How is it that people who could do nothing but always fight and part ways live so well in harmony like this after believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? How did that person change like that? How was it possible to bear the real fruit of righteousness?" We must think about these things. We must think deeply and realize that we must truly place the gospel of the water and the Spirit as the foundation on the ground of our faith, and put down strong roots of faith in our hearts.

Only then can we call God Father, and when we call, "God the Father," God can answer, "Yes." Only when God answers can we make requests of faith. It means that when we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Father hears everything we pray for according to the Father's will. That is why, at the very beginning of the prayer He taught, the Lord told us to pray that the Father's name may be hallowed, that He give us the faith by which we can live such a life of faith. God, who wanted us to live by faith, gave us the prayer topic in that way.

God gave you and me the prayer topic, "Hallowed be the Father's name." Therefore, you and I must think. It means we must think, "Is the gospel of the water and the Spirit really the only truth? Is it only by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we can live a life in which the name of our Father in heaven can be hallowed? Can we live a life that gives holiness

to the name of our Father in heaven without believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" Even if we have not been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can outwardly imitate being born again. But we must know that though we can imitate it, there is no true peace of heart, and the Lord cannot dwell in that heart. The Lord acknowledges us when we acknowledge the word of the truth of the water and the Spirit. When we acknowledge the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord gave, the Lord acknowledges that heart through the Holy Spirit. When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Lord acknowledges that we are right.

Therefore, whoever wants to follow the Lord must deny his own thoughts and believe according to the word of God. We must deny our own thoughts, and we must deny the standards we have made for ourselves and what we know in our own way. And then we must believe just as it is what the Bible says and what the gospel of the water and the Spirit says. Such a person is truly the one who is wise and has right faith.

We must know well why the Lord told us to pray in this manner. And we must not simply memorize this prayer, nor merely imitate it. If we want to be able to call our Father in heaven Abba, Father, we must think about the reason why He says we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, look into it ourselves, and believe it with our own hearts. It is not that we believe unconditionally because someone tells us to believe; we must know the reason, because unless we believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we truly cannot call Him Father. Apart from Jesus Christ, who came by the water and the Spirit, there is no way to have our sins washed away by faith, and there is no way whatsoever to become the children of God. That is why we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Unless we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit,

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there is no way to wash away our sins. This is because we cannot pass our sins on to Jesus Christ. Dear fellow believers, how can one wash away sin apart from the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Therefore, those who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have sin right now.

Our sins were passed on through the baptism Jesus received

Any human life, even one born from the mother's womb who lives only a day and departs, has sin. Because a person has inherited sin from his physical parents from the time he was conceived in his mother's womb, even if he is born into this world and lives only a day, he is still one who commits sin. All our lives we are *"A brood of evildoers" (Isaiah 1:4)*. Because we were born as such a brood that cannot but do evil, we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ gave. Only when we have passed our sins on to Jesus Christ by faith can we tear down the wall of sin that separated God and us, and become sinless people who can call God Father by believing that our sins were passed on through the baptism Jesus Christ received from John. We become the sinless children of God only through the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Because we cannot truly become the children of God without the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must really think a great deal. We must examine once again: "Is what I believe really the truth? Can I become a sinless person even if I do not believe this way?" Do you perhaps actually have sin in your heart and yet try to wash it away with prayers of repentance? Are you not now captured by Satan the devil? Are

you not, without even knowing it, deceived by the devil, colluding and uniting with him? Are you truly united with God in holiness?

If you have even a mustard seed's worth of the heart that says, "I am lacking, so I cannot live this well, but even so I want to live united with God," God knows your heart and will give you the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But a person who only knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit, or who only knows the fact that the faith that believes in it gives the remission of sins but does not hold it by faith, is colluding with the devil. Even if we have only true faith the size of a mustard seed, we can have the faith that is united with God.

But countless people do not have right thoughts and a right heart. That is why they cannot readily believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is because they are not poor in spirit. "Though I am lacking before God, I want to live as God wants; if God wants it, I want it too, and if God dislikes it, I dislike it too." Even if we do not have that heart 100 percent, if we at least have that heart sincerely, even a mustard seed's worth, God sees that heart and has mercy, and says to us, "I have removed your sins with the truth of the water and the Spirit. Do you believe? Since I have removed your sins, you have no sin." Therefore, we are saved by faith. By faith we become the children of God who have no sin before God.

All mankind who say they believe in Jesus and say they believe in God must first have the faith that can truly call God Abba, Father. Those who say they believe in God must not just believe in God blindly, but must first have the faith that can really call God Father, saying, *"Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9)*. Without this faith, no one can live a life of faith that gives glory to the Father's name. Do you think so, too? — Yes— Because it is only the gospel of the water and the Spirit

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that removes our sins, we must believe with our hearts in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which gives us the faith that can call God Father. To believe this, we must acknowledge that whatever is not the gospel of the water and the Spirit, whether of the past or of the future, is all wrong. He said that if you build a house on a wrongly laid foundation, it collapses when the typhoon blows, the wind blows, and the waves beat on it. So we must not allow even a speck of any other faith in the foundational place where only true faith should be. The faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the foundation of true faith, is the most important faith of the remission of sins in the world.

God removed all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He sent His own Son to this earth and passed all our sins on to that Son through the baptism the Son received from John. In that way He washed all our sins away clean, judged the Son in our place and let Him die, and then made Him rise again, and so accomplished the salvation that removed our sins. So the point was that if only we believe this work, God the Father would make us His children. And in fact He gave the right to become children of God to those who believe in this truth. Since God sealed that person's heart with the Holy Spirit, whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit has become a child of God.

The peace in the heart of the born-again

Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit become the children of God and have peace in their hearts. In the heart of a born-again person there is true peace. Even though there are many waves of sin, the heart is always at peace. That

is why we joke a lot, laugh and chatter even when a single fallen leaf rolls by, and tease one another in jest and laugh together. It is because our hearts are at peace.

One evangelist said that in the past, before he was born again, he had never once laughed out loud, "Ha ha ha ha." As for why, he said it was because he had sin in his heart and was afraid of being judged before God. So he said he had never once truly laughed with an easy heart. But he says that after he was born again, laughter really comes from deep within his heart, and a "ha ha ha" laugh comes out from behind his molars. He said that only now can he laugh such a laugh.

It is not only that evangelist; everyone is like that. A person who has received the remission of sins is at peace in his heart even if he suffers many hardships of life and has many problems, and his heart is always joyful and calm, so laughter comes easily. But a person who has not received the remission of sins in his heart, and a person who has not believed that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth, has no peace in his heart because he has not received the remission of sins, and so he always suffers. They always suffer because of their own sins. Suffering comes to them ceaselessly, failure and despair come to them, and a curse awaits them.

Jesus called God, *"O My Father" (Matthew 26:39)*. We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also call God "God the Father," just like Jesus. When we pray, we call Him Father, and there is not the slightest hesitation in our conscience. And we really have no sin. "What? You are so lacking, and yet you say you have no sin?" We really have no sin. It is because we actually believe. It is not that we believe only now; because we already believed long ago, we only confirm it every day. You and I, who have already been born again of water and the Spirit, truly have no sin. And we have peace in our hearts.

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Dear fellow believers, a person who, according to the will of God the Father and following the will in which God delights, believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, spreads the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and lives keeping the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a person set apart. He is not in the least the same as the people of this world. A person is a person, but he is not the same kind of person. He has been set apart as a person of faith.

We live a life of faith that can receive blessings from God. Our flesh is lacking, but as we live a life of spreading the gospel by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we labor, giving our time, giving our hearts, and giving our material possessions for the gospel. Such a life is a blessed life and, at the same time, a life that hallows the Father's name. Just as there is nothing so reassuring and good as a child who trusts and follows his father to the end, when God's children keep the gift of salvation the Father gave and live by faith without their faith being corrupted, the Father is very much pleased. Just keeping that faith is admirable enough, but if, on top of that, they live spreading that faith, how proud He must be! When the Father sees us living a life of spreading to the whole world that God the Father has saved all mankind in this way and loved them, spreading that God loved us so much that He gave even His own Son and saved us, the Father receives even greater glory.

Dear fellow believers, we are now preaching the gospel to the whole world in order to give glory to God. A brother overseas received our books, read them, and received the remission of sins. He was so glad that he said he wanted to translate our books himself. This couple were both people who had studied theology, and as the husband translated and the wife polished it, both of them received the remission of sins. And they preached this gospel of the water and the Spirit to their children

as well, and their children are now believing in this gospel, too. Dear fellow believers, it does not end with only us knowing; in this way we are seeking out all the lost children of God scattered throughout the whole world. Therefore, our preaching the gospel to the whole world is a life of faith in which God delights and which He commends. Having faith like this, keeping the faith, and spreading the truth of this gospel is the faith that hallows the Father's name, and it is the true life of faith.

The prayer of those who are not born again

How many there are who have sin while believing in Jesus, who, while believing in Jesus, do not believe that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth but believe that other things are the truth as well, and who, though they say they live by faith, live their own kind of life of faith, showing zeal all on their own with no relation to the Father's will, not really knowing the Father's heart and the Father's commands! That is a very wrong faith.

First of all, we must throw away our own thoughts, throw away our own stubbornness, and throw away our own wrong faith. And then we must have the faith that God has given. We must have the faith that believes in the word of truth by which God removed our sins with the water and the Spirit. When we do, we become the children of God and live a life of faith, calling God Father. With the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as the foundation, we must live a life of keeping this faith and spreading the faith.

This was none other than the faith that God demanded first of all. "In this manner pray. Draw near before Me. Turn toward Me. What is your wish? Do you not truly want to believe in the

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gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins, and call God Father? Yes, believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become people without a single sin, and by believing in this gospel that has left you without a single sin, keep this faith and live such a blessed life of spreading it to the whole world." God commanded in that way. God told us to pray such a prayer.

But what kind of prayers do people who claim to believe in Jesus pray? "Make our family prosper. Make our parents and children healthy, make us earn a lot of money, and make everything go well. Let our cow give birth to a calf safely. Let our child get into a good university. Just make me prosper, give me health, and make me rich. I am going abroad to study, so let me get high grades and go on a scholarship. Since I believe in Jesus, let me become an elder of this church. Let me become a pillar of this church. Let me rise to the highest position in this church." People in the world who are not born again mainly pray such prayers. But the children of God who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are truly born again do not pray such prayers first. They seek spiritual things first and set their hearts first on living by faith, and they do not live a life of seeking their own things for personal advancement.

The Lord gave us the prayer topic, "Hallowed be the Father's name." Because those who are not born again cannot pray rightly, God even tells us how to pray. Yet now all those who are not born again, not knowing such a heart of God, are only reciting the Lord's Prayer. They think that if they rattle off the Lord's Prayer like an incantation, they have prayed rightly. But they have not prayed rightly. Also, though they believe in Jesus, they do not act according to the Father's will, and they live thinking that they please the Father if they do mission work, preach the gospel, and serve, even without receiving the remission of sins

by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But those who are not born again must first be born again before they can pray prayers the Lord hears and live a life that gives glory to the Lord. Know the fact that those who have not been born again of water and the Spirit have nothing to do with the Lord.

In the Book of Isaiah, God goes so far as to say the harsh word, *"Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me" (Isaiah 1:13)*. It means that coming without believing in the truth of the water and the Spirit and without receiving the remission of sins, and saying, "God the Father," and, "I pray that the Father's will may be done," is, in God's sight, the same as praising an idol. The heart of God is this grieved and sorrowful.

Truly, they are committing a great sin. We must have a firmly fixed faith on the point that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, this alone lets us receive the remission of sins, and this alone is the way for us to become the children of God by faith. Only by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can we become sinless people and live according to God's will. If one does not believe that keeping only this gospel and living only for this gospel is living to give glory to the name of God the Father, but calls on Jesus and claims to believe in Jesus while believing only in the blood of the Cross and showing zeal, that is precisely the sin of serving an idol. Therefore, we must not only think deeply about the prayer the Lord taught us; those who know and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also have the faith that can discern that everything other than this is fake. God the Father wants us to believe in that way. When you believe in that way, you can live according to the Father's will and receive blessings before God.

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Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth

Why would I speak of the gospel of the water and the Spirit every day and speak countless times of the prayer the Lord taught us? If everyone believed like this, would there be any need to preach it like this every day? No matter how much we cry out to people, those who have stopped up their ears and turned their backs close their hearts and do not believe, and so we keep on preaching. It is so regrettable to see people believing that things other than the gospel of the water and the Spirit are also the truth, mixing them with the things of the devil, when only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth.

God is pleased when we believe that only the word He Himself has spoken is the truth. If we believe that what God has said is the truth, that our own thoughts are also the truth, and that what the devil says is also the truth, then in the end other things get mixed into the truth, the truth is obscured and blurred, and we lose it. When that happens, even if we believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit at first, in the end we are robbed of it. If a person tolerates even what is not the truth and volunteers to defile himself, God, too, cannot help but leave him alone. If God simply leaves that person to be swallowed up by Satan the devil, that person is cursed in the end. Before God there are only two things. There are only two things, whether one will be blessed or whether one will be cursed, and there is no middle ground. One must not say he did not know, and one who knows yet does not believe is cursed all the more surely. Only those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus gave through the prayer, and believe just as He said to become holy, are loved before God even though their flesh is lacking.

So we must know that our Lord taught us the prayer, and we must believe it with our hearts. Apart from the faith that believes that we can never please God without the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is no faith that can protect us and let us be loved by God. Dear fellow believers, do you believe that apart from this faith that spreads the gospel of the water and the Spirit and this life of faith, there is absolutely no way to give glory before God? Only when there is in your heart a faith that knows the truth exactly can you discern false things and ward them off; if you say anything is fine as long as the name of Jesus is tacked onto it, you cannot keep the faith to the end. We must not take up what God does not want, and we must surely believe this truth that gives holiness to God. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? —Yes—

Only the prayer the Lord taught is the truth. The Lord's Prayer does not say that God accepts us no matter how carelessly we believe. He firmly allows only those who can call Him Father to pray, and He tells us, when we pray, to pray a prayer that gives holiness by making the name of God shine, not by making our own glory shine. Did He say it is fine to believe this way and fine to believe that way? If we are thinking, "Whether we believe this way or that way, all we have to do is somehow believe," we must turn back from that, realizing how wrong it is. If that were not so, why would the Lord have told us to pray in this manner? We must be able to call Him our Father in heaven, and so this word tells us to first be qualified to call Him God the Father. That is, it tells us to pray to God that we may have such faith, but have you really prayed? Have you prayed such a prayer, asking Him to let you have right faith?

Did you not have a wrong faith? When we first came into Christianity and believed in Jesus, did we not in fact have a wrong faith that fundamentally had nothing to do with the gospel

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of the water and the Spirit? In fact, that was so. But all of that was entirely false and fake. Anything other than the gospel of the water and the Spirit was a 100 percent fake that was not even slightly similar. Is that so, or is it not? Because it is all completely fake, we must firmly make up our minds, "It is fake; it is a fake to be 100 percent thrown away," and drive it out completely, not leaving even a little of it in our hearts. And in our own hearts we must believe, "Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit could remove all my sins, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit removed all my sins and enabled me to call God Abba, Father. Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit has enabled me to live according to the Father's will." That is how we must believe.

We must believe that way. We must believe in our hearts the fact that only believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth and that anything not believed this way is entirely untruth. We do not merely accept it as knowledge and only think about it; we believe from the center of our hearts. What about you? Are you also of the same thinking and the same heart as I am? —Yes— In fact, since the word says so and the Holy Spirit says it is so, we cannot but say that what is right is right.

You may ask, since it is a matter of course that each person's faith changes, outward appearance changes, heart changes, and thoughts change, how one can be single-mindedly constant. Faith can be like that. Because the truth is that which does not change even as time passes, the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is unchanging and always constant. Because this faith is the truth, once this faith has come, we believe single-mindedly. Because there is nothing else besides this, I can tell you the correct answer with certainty, too. I can tell each and every one of you that this alone is the truth. And nothing whatsoever can compare with this, and nothing

surpasses it. Why? Because the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a work God did Himself. You, too, know that well.

The gospel spreading to the whole world

We must always think about the prayer the Lord taught us. This faith has enabled us to call God Father. We truly give thanks. We truly give thanks that God washed away our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we give thanks that He enabled us to live according to the Father's will, and we give thanks that He enabled us to live a life that causes the Father's name to be hallowed. We give thanks that the Lord enabled us to live by faith. We give thanks that He gave us all of this through the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. You are thankful, too, aren't you? —Yes—

Dear fellow believers, there are very many people throughout the whole world who have received the remission of sins through this gospel we have preached and are preaching it to their own peoples. The brother I mentioned earlier has already been invited to many churches and has preached many sermons, they say. What he preached was the same gospel of the water and the Spirit as ours, and those who heard it accept it and believe, they say. Until then, in that place, there was no one to teach it, so they did not know, and because they did not know, they could not believe. Even in a place where it is not easy to preach the gospel, when a person of that country reads our books, receives the remission of sins, translates them again into his own language, and distributes them to the people of his country, there is no way to stop it. We have already preached the gospel to the people there in that way, and everyone who hears it begins to believe with the heart and receive the remission of sins, they say.

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When I look with the eyes of faith, I believe that more people will receive the remission of sins and that the gospel will be spread even to the surrounding countries. The sparks of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is the truth, fly, and the flames of the gospel spread of their own accord.

We live such a very blessed life. I believe that countless people, thousands of times more than the news that comes to us, are preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit. And I believe that countless people are believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We are looking forward in faith to the day before long when Jews themselves will send in their testimonies of salvation, saying, "I am a Jew. I did not believe in Jesus, but through this book I came to know the fact that Jesus became our Savior in this way. It is so amazing." I believe that if we pray and do so, all this work of God will be accomplished smoothly. I believe that many souls in every corner of the world will read the books, receive the remission of sins, and preach the gospel of their own accord to the people of their own countries.

Let us have the same faith. The Bible says, *"One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5)*. Is that so, dear fellow believers? —Yes— Is faith one? —Yes— Do you believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? —Yes— Is baptism one, too? —Yes— In the baptism Jesus received from John, there is His having our sins transferred to Him, there is His dying in our place, there is His being judged, and there is His rising again. It is all contained in the baptism Jesus received, in the work of Jesus. That is why it says one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

What we should know from the prayer the Lord taught us is that we must have the faith the Lord demands of us, and that it is none other than the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord told us in the first prayer topic that we must have that faith. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

A life that hallows the Father's name

< Matthew 6:9–13 >

"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

It is truly comfortable to be with fellow workers who have received the remission of sins. Because within one another there is faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the Holy Spirit is present, our hearts are in accord even when we show our shortcomings to one another without reserve, and even though each of us makes a different sound, we achieve harmony within the Church of God. We must work in unity, each in our own place, and enjoy rest and peace of heart. If we give ourselves wholeheartedly to the Lord's work, God works in all things, and so our labor is not in vain. I believe that God, who preaches the gospel to the whole world, will cause us to do even more work in the future and will give us even greater peace.

Now I would like to share faith together with you, centering on the word in the prayer the Lord taught us, *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9)*. What must we

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do for the name of God our Father to be hallowed? God does not want anything else; He simply told us to pray and to live by faith.

Here He says, *"Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9)*, and the Lord told those who have received the remission of sins to pray in this way.

God is the Creator who created us. He is also the God of salvation who saved us from all sins. He caused us to be born again of water and the Spirit and made us children of God. That is why God is our Father. He is the God who made us, caused us to be born again, made us the Lord's people, and also made us soldiers of Christ. That is why that God is our Father. Only those who have received the remission of sins according to the Father's will and pray can call God Father.

Then how can we the righteous, who have become children of God, cause the name of our God the Father to be hallowed? That is possible only by faith. It is done only by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. As we live on this earth, serving the gospel and also getting caught up in various affairs, we have shortcomings and weaknesses, and so there are times when we fall into weakness and fail to give holiness to the name of God. When we gather up such a sunken heart by faith, and when we maintain our holiness well by faith and are holy, the name of God the Father is hallowed.

Although we have received the remission of sins and are holy, as we live on this earth, if we get caught up in work and caught up in the flesh, we can fall into weakness. Though we have no sin, if we are bound by some weakness and do not live in the bright light, the Father's name is not hallowed. That is why, I know, God gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that we would believe it and receive the remission of sins, and gave us the baptism Jesus received so that, as we live in this way, we would live by faith every day.

Holiness obtained by washing with the water of the laver

In the court of the Tabernacle in the Old Testament there was a laver. God said, *"You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it" (Exodus 30:18)*, and said, *"When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die" (Exodus 30:20)*. And He said, *"And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations" (Exodus 30:21)*.

Before the laver, there is the altar of burnt offering. The altar of burnt offering is the place where sinners brought a sacrificial lamb, laid their hands on its head, and then burned the offering with fire before God. The place we meet after passing through this altar of burnt offering is the laver. After passing through the laver, there is the holy place, and past the holy place, we come to the place where the Ark was kept. That place is the Most Holy Place. To enter the Most Holy Place, there must not be even the slightest uncleanness. In other words, it means that only when we are holy, just as God is holy, can we enter the presence of God.

Although we have received the remission of sins, we are sometimes swept along by the waters of the world, so how can we maintain holiness? Just as a maggot living in filth cannot help getting dirty no matter how hard it tries not to, our flesh is fundamentally lacking and cannot help but sin, and the question is how you and I, being in a world where sin abounds, can preserve a heart without sin. Yes, it is so. It was possible to become holy through the water in the laver. We who have

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received the remission of sins, too, wash away our uncleanness every day with the water of the laver and become holy. It means that we receive the remission of sins by faith in the baptism our Lord received when He came to this earth, and that even after receiving the remission of sins, we become holy by ruminating on the baptism. The Lord received baptism from John, took away the sin of the world, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and so saved us; and it means that even after we have received the remission of sins, we must ruminate every day on that baptism the Lord received. It means that whenever we ourselves become dirty on this earth, we must wash away clean, with that water of the baptism Jesus received, the sins we commit while living. It means that although we have already cleanly received the remission of sins, we must wash away with the water of the laver all the uncleanness that belongs to all our actual sins. Only then can we go before God, and only then can we cause the Father's name to be hallowed before God the Father.

What would happen if the children of God who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, saying that they have received the remission of sins, did not bring out again their faith in the baptism and confirm it? As we live on this earth, wrapped in weakness, we would fall again into the sin of the world, and so, although we have received the remission of sins, our conscience would become bound by sin. If one who has received the remission of sins is bound by something uneasy in that way, the Father's name cannot receive glory. That is why the Lord, at the very beginning of the prayer He taught, told us to pray that the name of God the Father be hallowed.

If there had been no water of the laver in the court of the Tabernacle, the priests of the Old Testament, no matter how much they had received the remission of sins, could not have

gone before God. In order to approach the mercy seat upon that Ark, where the presence of God appeared, they had to wash their uncleanness in the water held in the laver. Otherwise, no matter how much they had received the remission of sins, they could not go before the holy God. Because they became dirty again even though they had received the remission of sins, unless they washed it away, they could never go before the presence of the holy God. While doing God's work, we may fight; when we meet people who are insolent and look down on everyone, evil can rise up in our hearts; and also the dirty dregs of our own character or of our own hearts can rise up and defile our own hearts, thoughts, or bodies. That is why, in the Old Testament as well, when the high priest was to go before the presence of God, he passed the altar of burnt offering and, without fail, drew the water of the laver, washed his whole body clean, and then put on clean garments and went in. Likewise, when we go out to pray before God, and also when we call on God, praise Him, worship Him, and serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit, only when we first wash and then go does it become causing God's name to be hallowed before the holy God.

When we go before God, how can we go? To this, too, I answer that we can go by faith in the baptism the Lord received. When we cleanse ourselves with the baptism Jesus received, which is the water of the laver, and go, we can cause the name of God the Father to be hallowed. By faith, we can live causing God's name to be hallowed before the people of the world and even before Satan the devil. In the end, it means that it is by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we give holiness and glory to the Father's name.

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The Lord, who paid the price of life

In Exodus chapter 25, the ark of the law and the mercy seat appear. God told them to make the ark of the law. He said to put the two stone tablets of the law inside that ark and to cover it with the mercy seat on top. Inside it, later, the pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded were also placed. Because the two stone tablets of the law were inside it, it was called the ark of the law, and through the ark of the law God told us that in the kingdom of God there truly is the righteousness of God and there is the love of God. He also told us that there is the price of life.

If people want to be saved from sin, they must once stand before the holy God and the law He gave, and come to know, "Truly, Jesus Christ came to this earth and died in our place, when we should have died." When we stood before the righteous law of God, we had to die because of our sins, but in our place Jesus Christ had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died in our place, and rose again from death. Since the Lord saved us with His own life, by our believing that, we came to be able to go before God by the price of life that the Lord paid. It was possible because the Lord saved us through the water and the Spirit so that we could receive salvation.

Our receiving the remission of sins was not something we just happened to receive. It was possible because our Lord gave up His own life in order to save our lives. Jesus Himself put on human flesh, came to this earth, and laid down His own life for us. The Lord received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and by giving His own life as the price of our life, He made us live. That is why we were able to obtain holiness. We have been clothed in holiness by faith. That is why God has become our Father.

In order to make the children of God live, the Lord Himself paid the price of life. Do you believe? God sent His own Son to this earth, passed sin on to His body through the baptism, and had Him pay the price of life. The Lord received baptism and died on the Cross, paying the price of life, and in that way the Lord saved us. That is why we were able to become children of God the Father, and when we call on God the Father, we have come to call God "Abba, Father" with a conscience without any uncleanness at all. Therefore, we have come to cause the Father's name to be hallowed.

People who have not received the remission of sins, when they say the Lord's Prayer, just recite it as if chanting a spell. Also, some set the Lord's Prayer to music and sing it as a hymn of praise, but if they do not truly know its meaning, this too easily ends up as a mere formality. The Lord did not give us this prayer for us to memorize it. He gave it in the sense that, if we truly want to call God Father, we must receive the remission of sins. It means that we are to receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, who paid the price of our life through the salvation of the water and the Spirit, removed our sins, and gave us new life, and so call God "Abba, Father." And He tells us, while calling God Father, not to bring reproach on the Father's name. He says we must not become such people. We must become people who give glory to God's name and cause it to be hallowed. Since God is holy, it is fitting that we give holy glory to the holy God. In order to give Him holy glory, one must first pray in order to receive the remission of sins oneself, and the actual sins one commits after believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receiving the remission of sins must be washed away every day with the water of the laver. We must remember the baptism Jesus received and wash our conscience clean. It means that we must wash away the sins of our

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conscience every day and hallow the name of God the Father. The Lord taught us this prayer so that we would do so.

For people who have not received the remission of sins, this is what is right: “Those who have not received the remission of sins, receive the remission of sins.” They must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And only after believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can they take part in the work of establishing the kingdom of God, as He said, *“Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10)*.

In fact, Christians on this earth say the Lord’s Prayer the most. Many churches close their worship services or meetings with the Lord’s Prayer. Usually they open the worship service with the Apostles’ Creed and put the final period with the Lord’s Prayer.

But the Lord did not give us the Lord’s Prayer so that we would do that. If one recites the Lord’s Prayer as a sign of believing in Jesus, does that become a sign of believing well? It does not. “If you are a person who truly believes in God, you must become this kind of person. Pray in order to become this kind of person. And after you have become one, live for the building of the kingdom of God. And after that, pray for your daily bread, pray about your livelihood, and live an ethical life.” It is with this meaning that the Lord spoke.

We who are born again have the responsibility to cause the Father’s name to be hallowed. To do so, we must wash away every day every uneasiness in our conscience. We must draw the water of the laver and wash every day.

We realize sin through the law and wash it away through the baptism

In Exodus chapter 20, the LORD God, who had delivered the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, gives commandments to the people of Israel. The first commandment is *"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)*. The second commandment is not to make idols and not to bow down to them or serve them; the third commandment is not to take the name of God in vain; and the fourth commandment is to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Then, from the fifth commandment to the tenth, which are commandments concerning people, He commanded them to honor their parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, and not to covet what belongs to their neighbor. These are the Ten Commandments.

These Ten Commandments are the skeleton of God's law and its most central pillar. And we must know that they were spoken not only to people who have not received the remission of sins but also to people who have received the remission of sins. Although the righteous have believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, as they live on this earth afterward, they do not always live only in holiness. When they do the work of the gospel, they still do holy work, but when they do the work of the flesh, they return to the old self and still live committing sins.

Even though we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it is not that it is not sin even if we sin; if we sin, it is sin. Then how can we know that it is sin? Is it sin because we think we did something wrong and seem to have lived wrongly somehow? That is not it. God said to us, *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house*

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of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:2–3). God is speaking to the people of Israel, who are the people of God, that is, in today's terms, to people who have been born again of water and the Spirit. Though He told us to have no other gods before Him, it is we who make god-like beings that we cherish, love, and are attached to more than God. Because He told us to have no other gods before Him, we come to know the fact that things such as material possessions chosen in place of God are sin. The word of God's law makes a person, whether born again or not born again, know alike that the sin he has committed is sin. Apart from this law, there is nothing that makes us realize and know sin. It is not sin just because we think something seems wrong; it is sin if we have gone against the Ten Commandments, that is, the law, which God laid down as law in this way and spoke. We must know that.

We must acknowledge that what is wrong before the law of God is sin and that we have gone wrong according to that law, admit what we have done wrong, go before the Lord, draw the water of the laver, and wash. We wash away sin by believing that Jesus had all those sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. By believing in the Lord's having our sins transferred to Him, we can wash our conscience clean. In that way we can maintain holiness. And so we can give glory to the Father's name.

That is why, at the very beginning of the prayer He taught, the Lord said, *"Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9)*, and said *"Our."* "Our" means us, the saints. He does not include sinners in *"Our."* Because Jesus taught the prayer to His disciples, this is spoken to those who have received the remission of sins. So the Lord teaches the disciples the prayer that maintains holiness, and speaks to them of faith once again. The Bible says, *"Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16)*. It means that although we cannot

become holy by works, we can become holy by faith, and we can wash away all the sins of our conscience, all the sins of our soul, and the sins of our body by believing in the salvation of the water and the Spirit. That is why we, who have become children of God, are holy every day and do not bring reproach on the Father's name.

Truly, we must actually live a life of faith that is worthy of the name of God. That is possible not through some ethical act of ours, but when we live a life based on faith. It means that we can live a holy life only by faith.

And the Lord has made it so that we can actually live this way. How did He do so? It is because of the baptism He received when He came to this earth. The Bible says, *"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)*. So that our conscience could go out clean when it goes toward God, our Lord came to this earth and had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. It means that the Lord has already washed us clean through the baptism. That is why we can truly live, by faith, a life worthy of this prayer. We can live a life of faith fully worthy of this prayer the Lord taught, and so we can give glory to the Father's name. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? —Yes— It is not accomplished by our living well in the flesh; it is possible only by faith. The Bible says, *"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6)*.

How can your hearts and mine be made clean? How can your bodies and mine be made clean? We make our conscience clean with the word the Lord has given. By believing in the word of the truth of salvation given by the Lord, who made all the sins of our body clean, our spirit and body can become clean. That is

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why we can serve the Lord without change, can call God "Abba, Father," can become soldiers of Christ and live the life of a soldier, and can go boldly before God every day. God has given you and me faith and a life of faith so that we can live boldly, doing righteous works at all times.

It is not because we do not sin that we have become righteous

Some people say that they do not sin. Indeed, we sometimes meet people who say that they themselves do not sin. Dear fellow believers, where in this world is there a person who does not sin? The Bible says, *"For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20)*. Then how can anyone say that he does not sin? That in itself is a great sin of lying and deceiving.

Is a person righteous because he does not sin? No. Although we always sin, we have become righteous by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our conscience has become clean through the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord gave. The Lord had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, took away the sin of the world, received the judgment for sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, rose again from death, and became our perfect Savior. Because the Lord became our perfect Savior, we have become righteous by believing in that Jesus Christ. So how can we say that we have become righteous because we do not sin?

Even after receiving the remission of sins, it is not because we do not sin that we live the life of the righteous. Some people say that a person who has once become righteous never sins, and say things like, "We are perfect." How defiant and haughty a

statement that is before God! Although we are always unstable and imperfect, we are perfect by faith because the Lord has made us perfect. The Lord said, *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)*. Because the Lord has made us holy, we are holy by faith. Regardless of the flesh, we have actually become holy by faith.

Dear fellow believers, there are times when we do not know well how we should live after receiving the remission of sins. "Since I have received the remission of sins, it is fine to live this way. Given my circumstances, I have no choice but to live this way. Still, I have received the remission of sins, so I have no sin." A person says so, but his heart is getting dirtier and dirtier. Sometimes, not knowing how we should live, there are times when dust gathers and hair grows on our conscience. The hair must be plucked out, and the dust must be washed off. By faith, that is. Only when we go before the law of God, realize our sins by holding them up to that law, and acknowledge the law of God ourselves can we know sin rightly, and by believing in the baptism the Lord received and the blood of the Cross, we can wash away all those sins completely and become holy.

And now, having received the remission of sins, we come to think about how we should live for it to be a right life. We come to know that we can truly live a right life when we live as soldiers of Christ. "I have received the remission of sins, but where is the way? I have received the remission of sins, but where is the way I should go?" There may occasionally be some who do not know this. "I just come to church because when I do not come to church my heart feels somewhat uneasy, and also it is a bit boring and not much fun." Occasionally there may be such people too. But the Lord clearly told us to pray, *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9–10)*. A person

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who has received the remission of sins must maintain his faith well, and must live always washing clean by faith that faith, his own conscience, and his own flesh and body so that they are truly holy. You and I must draw the water of the laver and make ourselves clean. With the word of the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross, we wash away our dirty sins. We must realize the sins we have committed through the law, know and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and so wash ourselves clean and become holy people, just as the Lord is holy. When we have become holy by faith in this way, we can call God Father and do God's work. God has said that we must set such a life as our goal and live.

The status of being a child of God

A person who has received the remission of sins must not fail to know who he is, his own status. If we are those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God who is in heaven is our Father. Those who can pray, *"Our Father in heaven,"* are we who have been born again of water and the Spirit. In this world, people who can believe in God as their own Father and call Him so are not common. Not just anyone becomes a child of God. It is not done with money, nor done ethically, nor done by living a clean monastic life. This is truly a precious blessing that only those who have received the special grace God gives possess. Only those who have received the spiritual blessing of heaven can call God "Abba, Father." Those who can call God "Abba, Father" are only the children of God who have been born again of water and the Spirit.

That is why you and I must know well our own status as born-again people. Even though we live on this earth, we must

be well aware of our own status. You and I are children of God. And each of us must know and acknowledge for ourselves, "I am a child of God. I am a soldier of Christ. And I have been set apart from those who are not born again. My status is different. My standing has been raised," and must live by faith a life befitting that status.

What if a person who has received the remission of sins lives with the same ethics and morals as a person who has not received the remission of sins? He was told to live praying that the name of our Father in heaven be hallowed, yet he has become one who falls far short of this. If one has become a child of God, at the very least one must not bring reproach on the Father's name, yet if one keeps company with worthless friends and lives a life unbefitting one's status, one is bound to bring reproach on the Father. Even in the world, when we see a person who behaves like a ruffian, we bring up his parents, saying, "Whose child is that? Tsk, tsk, tsk." When we see people whose upbringing at home is terrible, we are bound immediately to speak ill of their parents. Therefore, we must know well that we must not forget the fact that the Father of the born-again is God, and must live in a way befitting the status of a child of God born again of water and the Spirit, and that if, on the contrary, we behave like a ruffian, we immediately smear God's name.

For us who have received the remission of sins to live on this earth in a way unbefitting our status means to be assimilated to the ethical and moral standards of values of those who are not born again and to live like sinners. Why? Because we are clearly children of God, we must be those who live taking the law of God as our standard of values. But if a born-again person belongs to the world and lives exactly like sinners, they say, "That person said he believes in God, but he is no different from us. It seems even God cannot do much," and he ends up bringing

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reproach on God. Not only does he himself become ridiculous, but he ends up making God out to be a powerless, incapable One. It ends up that way because the righteous person does not live a life befitting his status.

The righteous must live together with the righteous. The righteous must keep company with the righteous. Even when telling silly jokes, we must tell them among the righteous and keep company with them. That does not mean, however, that we should not deal with those who are not born again. It means that we do deal with them, but our faith must be different and our life of faith must be different. Although our conduct is not perfect, at least our hearts must be different. Since the faith in the hearts of sinners and the righteous is clearly different, we must always keep in mind the fact that we are different from sinners, always ruminate on our faith, and live purely.

As we live in this world, there are places where each of us belongs, wherever in the world they may be. Each has a workplace, each has a family, and each has friends. Although we belong to such places and live there, our hearts must be different from theirs. It is not that we are different because we must be different; rather, we have actually become different people, so we are to be aware of it. As soon as we were born again of water and the Spirit, we became citizens belonging to heaven. That is why we are fundamentally different from those who belong to the world. Because we have become different people, the faith and thoughts in our hearts must be different.

We are soldiers of Christ who preach the gospel

No matter how lacking we the righteous may be, we are different from sinners. Do you understand? Sinners are those

who must hear the gospel, and we are soldiers of Christ who are to preach the gospel to them. We soldiers of Christ must fight sinners and win. Preaching the gospel to sinners so that they receive the remission of sins is winning. We must make the truth of the water and the Spirit known to sinners as well, so that they too come into Christ. They are pitiful souls who have not yet received the remission of sins. They are those who must be rescued from sin. To be assimilated to such people is in itself a shameful thing before God, and an act of unfilial conduct that puts God to shame. We must know our own status exactly, make clear where we belong, clearly distinguish where our faith belongs, and clearly draw the line in our hearts. If the line of faith has become clear and we have come to know that the place we belong to is precisely the kingdom of God, then, when we have such faith, we must have mercy and compassion on them and lead them, so that they too receive the remission of sins and their bodies live and their souls live as well.

Otherwise, if we live mingled vaguely with them without distinguishing whether they are enemy or ally, we can never preach the gospel. When we speak of the gospel to sinners, they are suddenly puzzled. "Hey, you were getting along just like me, so why are you suddenly talking as if you were a different person? The way you were until just now suits you. Don't imitate someone else. Let's just play the way we used to." Would spiritual talk reach their ears? Among us the righteous, we can at times be fleshly and then immediately become spiritual, but it is not so with sinners. They try to see only with fleshly eyes, and they say to just remain in a fleshly relationship. Among us the righteous, since we know that we are all, in any case, *"A brood of evildoers" (Isaiah 1:4)*, as long as our faith is the same, other fleshly and lacking things are no problem. So the righteous must

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keep company with the righteous, and sinners we may treat as precious souls to whom we are to preach the gospel.

What did the Lord say today? He told us to live by faith so that the Father's name may be hallowed. I say again that, in order to live this way, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the foundation.

Truly, our lives were ones that could not do without the Lord. If the Lord had not come to this earth, received baptism from John, had all our sins transferred to Him, taken away the sin of the world, been nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, and risen again in three days after dying, we could not have been born again. Because the Lord made us know it and believe it so that we could know and believe it, we were able to be born again. And if we had not believed, how could we live such a life of a higher dimension, and how could we call God in heaven Father? How could a maggot living on the ground become one that flies about a flower garden instead of a filth bucket? That was truly the power of God. Since He rescued our maggot-like lives, which should have spent their whole life wallowing in filth, out of filth-like sin, we now live in a spiritual life of a higher dimension. Now that we have been born again of water and the Spirit, call God Father, and have come to take part in the work of causing the name of God the Father to be hallowed, how amazing this is! No matter how lacking we may be, we are not like maggots.

Man was made to resemble the image of God. When God made us, He made us fundamentally different from other created beings. Man is a being who can become a child of God. There are all the things God made, but there is something different between these things and created beings and us human beings: no matter how much they crawl, fly, or leap, they cannot become children of God, and only man can become a child of God by

believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is a tremendous difference. And since the person who believes in this gospel has become a child of God, the highest among people, where do we go when we live on this earth and then depart? We enter the bosom of God the Father. Where is the Father's bosom? It is the kingdom of heaven.

The shadow of the kingdom of heaven

Dear fellow believers, have you been to the kingdom of heaven? Sometimes, even in this world, I have thoughts like, "Would this be like the kingdom of heaven?" When our life on this earth ends, we go to the Millennial Kingdom and also to the eternal kingdom of God, where only born-again people go. The Millennial Kingdom is the place where God establishes the kingdom of God on this earth in order to reward the righteous, and lets them reign as kings for a thousand years. We have not yet been to that place. But we can think of that place and also picture it in our hearts. Because it is a place God has promised, we can experience in our hearts and thoughts, by faith, that it will come to pass according to this word. The pleasant, comfortable, cozy, and beautiful things we see, feel, and enjoy in this world are the shadow of the kingdom of heaven, so when we see those good things, we come to know that something more beautiful than this awaits us in the future. Because the place you long for and hope for is precisely the shadow of the Millennial Kingdom, we can imagine the Millennial Kingdom and the kingdom of heaven and picture them in our hearts.

On journeys, I have gone looking for rest areas or restaurants. It is our hearts' desire to go, if possible, to a place that is clean, inexpensive, tasty, and has a good view. Once, passing along a

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seaside road, I stopped at a beautifully built rest area in a scenic spot. At the entrance to the restroom there was a landscaped grove with a small water mill and a waterfall; inside, the restaurant was as cozy as any fine restaurant; and outside the window the wide sea stretched out. Since then, whenever I pass along that road, I cannot think of any other rest area. Even when I do not eat, whenever I want to feel the sea up close, I go to that rest area. When I see that beautiful scene, I think that the kingdom of heaven must be more beautiful than this.

It is human nature to want to go, for the same price, to a place where the atmosphere inside is also good. A person wants to enter a dignified place, a place where, when we enter the building, our prestige is upheld, people seem to recognize us, we seem to have gained something when we come out, and our character or honor seems to have been raised a little, so that we feel good. Among countless rest areas, would you not go into the best rest area? Whichever highway you take, would you not want to go into the best rest area and also eat in the most dignified way when you eat? People want to go to a place that is tasty, cheap, good, and dignified for a small amount of money, with magnificent natural scenery as well. Do you know why people want to go to such places? Because the kingdom of heaven is such a place. It is human nature to want to go to a good place where, just by sitting there, one's character seems elevated and one's feelings are refined, so that one can even imagine, "I seem to have become quite a decent person." Dear fellow believers, do you know that the Millennial Kingdom is a perfect place that fully satisfies everything you desire?

I do not know where you have gone and how good it was, but have you ever been to a place where, in the best surroundings, you were treated as an honored guest and served as a person of high standing? The place that entertains you far more lavishly

and preciously than that is precisely the paradise on earth. The Millennial Kingdom is the place where the righteous reign as kings for a thousand years, and the kingdom of God, which is even better than the Millennial Kingdom, has nothing inconvenient and only good things, because God Himself rules there directly. That place, so very, very good to live in, is precisely the Millennial Kingdom and the eternal kingdom of God. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? That is why I go to the kingdom of heaven in my heart every day. Whenever I go to that rest area, I think, "The kingdom of heaven must be even better than this."

If we are children of God, we must not bring reproach on the name of God the Father. Also, we must have faith. We must have hope. And we must live by faith. If you live by faith, God actually gives you many blessings. It is right for the righteous to lead their lives within the culture of the righteous. Through this prayer the Lord spoke of such things. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? —Yes—

We can give glory to the Father's name only by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we live by faith, the Father's name is hallowed and we can live giving glory to God. Through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you and I have become children of God and have come to live a life that gives the Father's name the glory worthy of it. God has truly made us live this kind of life and has given us this kind of faith.

Since He has given it in this way, do not refuse to receive it, saying, "I can't. By birth I was never cut out for it." Look at me, and look at the righteous around you. Who among us serves the Lord and lives because he is perfect in the flesh? All were people who did not fit well with church, but because they believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and were born again, they live this way in the Lord. They have truly changed a lot. Before

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I was born again, I wished I could make one big building my own and live in it, but now I no longer envy any building. This is because there are churches everywhere, so I have many homes. Wherever I go in the whole world, it is all my home; where I sleep is my home, and where I live is my hometown.

I believe that you are my real brothers and sisters. Not in the flesh, but spiritually, I believe that you are my family in the kingdom of God. How about you? Do you believe so of one another? —Yes—

Once the sisters and the brothers played soccer, and the brothers' team lost badly. At first we could not hide our indignation, but when I thought about it, it seemed to me that in the kingdom of God we ought to treat well those who should be treated well, regard the honorable as honorable, hold our fellow workers and brothers and sisters precious, and also yield to one another and let one another win. Isn't that what a family is?

We have received the remission of sins. A person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit has received the remission of sins and has no sin. Dear fellow believers, do you have sin? —No— Yes, you have no sin. Your conscience is clean. Then God has become our Father, and we have become children of God. The children of God must have the faith that causes the name of God the Father to be hallowed. And we must believe that God has given us blessings. And when we live such a life of faith by faith, God receives glory and we come to live a life that becomes many blessings for us. God has given us this life, and God has taught us the truth so that we may live this life. I give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Prayer offered to the Father, who knows our needs

< Matthew 6:5–15 >

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

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To whom is the prayer offered

Jesus first has the disciples who are learning to pray examine to whom they are praying. One may pray with the desire to appear pious to people, or one may think that one must say many words to obtain an answer. After correcting such thoughts, Jesus teaches what to ask of the Father.

Let us read verse 5. *"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward" (Matthew 6:5).*

A hypocrite stands in the place of prayer but is conscious of people's eyes. The words spoken to God become a means of showing himself off. We cannot conclude that, just because there is the act of praying, the heart too has turned toward God.

The word *"you shall not be like the hypocrites" (Matthew 6:5)* is a warning given to us who pray. If we only stay at evaluating how others pray, we ourselves miss the teaching. We must examine who it is we want to recognize the words we speak. Be careful that boasting directed toward people does not creep into the prayer you offer to the Father.

The purpose *"that they may be seen by men" (Matthew 6:5)* scatters the heart of prayer. If we speak with devotion before people but have no heart to speak to God when we are alone, we must reflect on that difference. Even when we pray together, the One who actually hears is God. The praise of other people must not become the reason for prayer.

The word *"they have their reward" (Matthew 6:5)* shows the result that follows from the purpose. Even if one has been recognized by people as pious, it does not mean that the prayer offered to God was done rightly. We must turn our hearts away

from people's evaluation and go to the Father. We must honestly present to Him the actual needs we want to tell Him.

To the Father who is in the secret place

Let us read verse 6. *"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:6)*. Jesus leads us to leave the attitude that seeks people's gaze and to pray to the Father. Going into the inner room and shutting the door carries the meaning of making clear to whom the prayer is directed. Even if there is no one to watch, we can pray because the Father is there.

When we hear the word *"go into your room, and when you have shut your door" (Matthew 6:6)*, we come to examine what our hearts are busy with. We may be so occupied thinking about who will evaluate us and how that we fail to actually speak to God. We must get away from preparing words to show to people and open our hearts before God. Go to Him honestly, with no need to hide anything from Him.

In the command *"pray to your Father who is in the secret place" (Matthew 6:6)* there is a relationship of faith. We are not people who persuade a stranger in order to gain his attention. We are people who ask for help from the Father, who knows His children. Even if we are not skilled with words, we can tell the Father what is actually in our hearts. Believing in that relationship is the power of prayer.

The promise *"your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:6)* makes the prayer that is not seen precious. Even if other people do not know of that time, the

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Father knows. It does not become a meaningless time just because no one saw it. Do not evaluate the work of giving your heart to God and seeking His will according to people's gaze.

We must not turn the teaching of the inner room into a rule that prevents praying together. This passage corrects the purpose of being seen by people and directs us toward the Father. Even when we are gathered together, we can ask the same Father for our actual needs. Whether alone or together, the center of prayer must be on God, who hears and answers.

There are times when, after telling God in words, we keep trying to obtain a definite answer only from people. We may ask for the help we need, but the final reliance of our hearts must be placed on the Father. Believe that God gives wisdom and leads the way. That faith gives calmness and honesty even to the actions that follow prayer.

The Father who knows before we ask

Let us read verse 7. *"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Matthew 6:7)*. Jesus corrects the thought that regards the length of prayer and the quantity of words as power. If we think that we can move God with many words instead of telling Him what our hearts need, prayer becomes a burdensome calculation.

The word *"do not use vain repetitions" (Matthew 6:7)* cannot be narrowed down to mean that we must not tell Him the same need again. Right after this, Jesus points out the thought that God hears only if one says many words. We must not hold on to the number and length of our prayers as our own merit.

What is important is to know what we are actually asking for and to tell Him in faith.

The explanation *"they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Matthew 6:7)* reveals the form of a wrong faith. Tell Him clearly the needs of your heart and trust the goodness of the Father.

Let us read verse 8. *"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8)*. God already knows our needs. Do not go from this to the conclusion that prayer may therefore be omitted. In the very next verse, Jesus teaches what to pray. It is because the Father knows that we can ask in faith.

The word *"before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8)* shows that the Father's concern comes before our words. He is not One who looks after His children only once we have explained things well. If we believe this fact, we can honestly tell Him even our own weakness when we pray. There is no need to wear out our hearts fearing that the Father might not know.

Hold on to the promise *"your Father knows the things you have need of" (Matthew 6:8)*. What we want and what we actually need are not always the same. While telling the Father our wishes, we must also learn His wise will. Prayer goes beyond a time of insisting on our own plans and becomes a time of depending on God.

The Father's name, kingdom, and will

Let us read verse 9. *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9)*. Jesus first has us call on the Father. In this prayer, after calling on the Father, three petitions concerning the Father (His name,

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His kingdom, His will) come first, and three petitions concerning us (bread, sins, temptation) follow. It is an order in which we first ask for what concerns God and tell Him our needs after that.

Jesus, who taught this prayer, had all the sins of the world, including even the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Jesus, who bore that sin which was passed on to Him, received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rose again from death. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. For the person who offers the petition of verse 12, *"Forgive us our debts,"* too, this salvation becomes the ground on which to rely.

In the address *"Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9)*, the heart that thought only of ourselves is widened. We go to the Father together with those who have received the same grace. Rather than the attitude that it is enough if only our own circumstances improve, we come to look after the needs of fellow believers and the souls that need the word of salvation. Prayer must also contain love toward other people.

The petition *"Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9)* teaches whose glory we are to seek. The purpose is not for us to be recognized as special people through answers to prayer. We ask that people may know God rightly and give thanks to Him. We must also ask for help so that our own words and lives may reveal the Father's name as precious.

Let us read verse 10. *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)*. God's kingdom and will are in the front place of the prayer. It makes us look back at the heart that first set up its own wishes and only asked God to fulfill them. We must ask for faith and strength so that we may know what God wants and take part in His will.

The petition *"Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10)* makes us long for God's rule. We can pray for the gospel of salvation to be spread and for people to believe in Jesus and become God's people. Ask that souls who do not yet know the truth may hear the word. We must also carry out the service given to us in a way worthy of that prayer.

Our obedience is also connected to the prayer *"Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)*. If we ask for God's will to be done while insisting only on our own will, prayer and life are split apart. Accept the responsibility He has made you realize through the word, correct the thoughts that must be changed, and do the work entrusted to you by faith.

The faith that asks for the bread needed today

Let us read verse 11. *"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11)*. Within the prayer that asks for God's name and kingdom, there is also today's bread. Telling the Father the needs of actual life befits faith. The Father knows our bodies and our lives. We must not think that only great and special matters are worth praying about.

The expression *"Give us this day" (Matthew 6:11)* makes us look after the people living together with us now. We cannot just check whether we ourselves have enough and stop there. Think about whether there is anyone within the same faith who is in difficulty because he cannot obtain what he needs. The heart that asks for bread together leads to the attitude of sharing what we have received and caring for one another.

The petition *"our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11)* reminds us that even a single day's life is a gift. Even if we have something we prepared ourselves, we must not forget the faith that God

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takes care of us. Give thanks for the bread you have received, do the work entrusted to you faithfully, and ask for what you need. Prayer and actual responsibility go together.

While asking for the bread of the body, we must also long for the word that our hearts need. If we do not know what we should live for, our hearts are scattered even in comfortable circumstances. Learn God's will, and ask for strength to carry out the good work entrusted to you. In a life of serving the gospel, there is the joy and satisfaction gained by following the word.

The prayer that asks for bread also makes us look back at the heart that will feel at ease only if it possesses more. We must do the work entrusted to us today while depending on the Father, who fills our needs. If we try to solve in advance, by our own strength, every problem of days that have not yet come, even our heart to pray grows weary. Entrust the needs of each day to the Father.

Do not stop praying even when you have received something. A relationship of always giving thanks and depending on Him is more fitting than a relationship of seeking Him only when in want. Ask for wisdom on how to use what the Father has given, and look also for the portion with which you can help other people. Let the joy of having received bread be passed on to the people who live with you.

The prayer that acknowledges sin and cares for relationships

Let us read verse 12. *"And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12)*. Jesus connects the heart that confesses sin to the Father with the heart that deals with other people. We must look back at the attitude of asking grace

for ourselves while endlessly holding on to the faults of others. The prayer offered before God is not separated from actual relationships.

We must receive the petition *"forgive us our debts" (Matthew 6:12)* with our hearts. We cannot pray while treating sin lightly or hiding our own faults. We must honestly acknowledge what is wrong and believe in the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished. The grace of salvation, by which He has already borne all sins, is the ground on which we rely.

Do not think that every time you offer this prayer you must pass your sins on to Jesus anew. The salvation the Savior accomplished is complete. We believe in that grace, acknowledge our own sins, and turn from wrong conduct. The assurance of the remission of sins is different from the attitude that it does not matter if we repeat sin. Because of the grace we have received, we set our lives right.

The words *"As we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12)* make us examine our hearts toward people. If we do wrong because of our own weakness and yet do not allow other people a single mistake, we are forgetting grace. We must discern the other person's fault, but we must not harden our hearts with hatred toward him.

Covering over another person's fault is not a matter of changing the facts into a lie. We must speak honestly about the fault and also carry out the responsibility of correcting it. At the same time, we must turn from the desire to punish that person endlessly. Hoping to go the right way together and giving the help that is needed is the attitude of a person who has received grace.

If your own fault has come to mind, after praying, look at what you must actually do about it. You must apologize to the person you hurt with words, make right the promise you failed

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to keep, and correct the behavior that keeps repeating. The heart that speaks honestly to God leads to honesty before people. Prayer must not become an excuse for avoiding responsibility in relationships.

Asking to be kept from temptation and evil

Let us read verse 13. *"And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:13).*

Jesus has us ask the Father for protection rather than being confident that we are safe on our own. Even if we want to live according to God's will, we may go down the wrong path because of greed and fear. Because we know our own weakness, we ask for the grace that keeps us.

There is humility in the prayer *"do not lead us into temptation" (Matthew 6:13)*. We must lay down the conceit that we will not be shaken in any situation. Examine what greed is capturing your heart, and ask God for wisdom and help so that you do not enter the wrong path. Even a person who prays must look after his own choices according to the word.

The petition *"But deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13)* makes us ask, along with the wish not to suffer evil, that we may not become people who do evil. When we suffer something unjust, we want to repay it with the same evil. At that time, ask God to keep your heart. The hurt we have received does not make our own evil actions right.

If even after praying we keep holding on to words that feed anger, our hearts become more troubled. We must make today's choices in line with the direction we asked God for. Deal with the facts rightly, but stop the words of mockery and retaliation.

Receive the help you need, and keep close to the word so that your heart is not bound to evil.

The confession *"Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" (Matthew 6:13)* turns the end of the prayer to the Father. We are not the ones who rule over everything in the world. We believe that the power belongs to the Father and entrust things to Him. Even if we do not fully know in what way the things we asked for will be fulfilled, we can trust the goodness of God.

In the response *"Amen"* there is a heart that receives in faith. It must not stop at being a sign that we have finished the prayer with our lips. We must go forward into a life that holds the Father's name precious, seeks His will, and relies on the help we need. Receive what you have prayed into today's heart and actions.

The responsibility of grace that continues even after prayer

Let us read verse 14. *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14)*. Jesus speaks again about the matter of dealing with people's trespasses. He does not let us pass over the responsibility in relationships that was contained in the prayer. The attitude that, however we treat others, we ourselves need only ask the Father for grace must be corrected.

The word *"if you forgive men their trespasses" (Matthew 6:14)* makes us think of a specific person. Look back at what you are holding on to toward the person who has wronged you. If, while knowing the grace you have received, you keep digging up that person's fault and try to dominate him, prayer and life

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are at odds. We must look at that relationship again with the mercy we have received from the Father.

Let us also read verse 15. *"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15)*. We must not pass over this warning lightly. We cannot make stubborn hatred right by saying that we believe in the grace of salvation that Jesus accomplished. A person who goes to the Father must have a heart worthy of that grace toward other people as well.

In the word *"neither will your Father" (Matthew 6:15)* we see the gravity of the relationship. Jesus speaks of this responsibility within the relationship between the person who prays and the Father. It is not that He is setting up human good deeds as the price of salvation; rather, He does not let the child who asks the Father for grace remain in a heart that goes against that grace.

When another person's wrong hurts so much that you cannot easily let go of it in your heart, tell the Father about that weakness too. There is no need to pretend that there is no pain. Only, do not insist that the desire to harm that person is right. Ask the Father for mercy and wisdom, and faithfully carry out first the responsibility of reconciliation that is yours to bear.

The prayer we have learned from Jesus turns our hearts toward the Father. It is a prayer that seeks the Father's glory, tells Him today's needs, acknowledges sin, and asks to be kept from evil. You, too, receive this word into your hearts and actually pray it. The Father, who knows our needs, hears the prayers of His children. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

A heart that goes beyond the appearance of fasting and turns toward the Father

< Matthew 6:16–18 >

“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Jesus, who examines the meaning of fasting

Jesus examines both the face and the heart of the person who fasts. The act of not having eaten food alone cannot be said to make the purpose of prayer right. We must look back on whom we are trying to show our labor to, and whose help we are looking to. Today’s passage teaches us to get out of the heart that boasts of the pain of fasting and to concentrate on the Father.

Let us read verse 16. *“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward” (Matthew 6:16)*. Jesus

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points out the hypocrisy that can arise in the act of fasting. A thing that looks devout can become a means of seeking the glory of men. The Lord, who knows that danger, tells His disciples first to set right the direction of their hearts.

The words *"when you fast" (Matthew 6:16)* are a teaching given to the person who actually fasts. Here Jesus does not make people compete over the length of the period or the number of times. He examines whom we set our hearts toward when we fast. What we must learn first from the passage is the problem of purpose, which the Lord Himself pointed out.

The call *"you"* sets the disciples before the word. We cannot regard this warning as only someone else's business on the grounds that religious acts are familiar to us. Even we who say we believe in God can want to make ourselves look big. The very person who hears the word must receive the teaching.

The expression *"like the hypocrites" (Matthew 6:16)* shows us the appearance we must not follow. Even an act that people recognize as devout cannot be an example to learn from if its purpose was not directed toward God. Treasure the judgment of Jesus more than the reputation of those around you. We must hear exactly what the Lord is warning against.

When the need for prayer is desperate, a person comes to know that his own strength is insufficient. He comes to gather his heart, asking God for help. Fasting, too, can be done in that earnestness.

But if we hold on to that act itself as if it were our own ability, the object we rely on changes. Our hope must be in the Father who hears rather than in ourselves who have fasted.

The command not to have a sad countenance

Jesus says, *"Do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance" (Matthew 6:16)*. In the explanation that follows, He makes clear the purpose of trying to show one's fasting to men. Therefore we must not change this word into the meaning that a person who has real sorrow must hide his expression. He is correcting the attitude of displaying one's devout labor so that it may be recognized.

It is precious for a person in hard circumstances to speak of his distress and receive help. But the heart that makes its distressed appearance look bigger in order to gain recognition from others as devout must be examined. Jesus does not merely make us correct the outward expression; He examines what we are trying to gain through that expression. Before God, even our purpose cannot be hidden.

The words *"to be fasting" (Matthew 6:16)* tell us what people try to display. The fact that we are fasting is placed ahead of the need we bring before the Father. It is wanting the person who prays to receive attention rather than the One to whom he prays. We must guard our hearts so that earnestness does not turn into self-introduction.

When we hear the purpose *"that they may appear to men" (Matthew 6:16)*, we can ask ourselves. Examine whether you have the heart to ask the Father even if no one knows of this time. If the heart that hopes for God's help is clear, the degree to which it becomes known to people cannot be the most important matter. Treasure the supplication directed toward the Father.

The word *"they disfigure their faces" (Matthew 6:16)* connects the appearance made on the outside with the purpose inside. The hypocrite draws people's attention in a way that displays his own hardship even more. Jesus keeps His disciples

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from relying on such a method. There is no need to add to the prayer we bring before God a device for gaining people's admiration.

This word must not be used as grounds for concluding what is in someone's heart by looking only at his face. If we judge everyone who looks outwardly distressed to be a hypocrite, we miss his real difficulty. The teaching of Jesus makes us examine our own purpose first. Toward others, the attention and help they need are fitting, rather than words of rash judgment.

The reward already received from men

Jesus says, *"Assuredly, I say to you" (Matthew 6:16)*. People can see someone's suffering appearance and rate his faith highly. But Jesus knows the purpose behind the visible appearance. A disciple must trust the word of the Lord more than the praise of men and examine his own heart.

The warning *"they have their reward" (Matthew 6:16)* reveals that even the pain of fasting can be used for one's own glory. The hypocrite obtains the attention he hoped for. But that does not make what he did right before the Father. We must distinguish getting the response we wanted from being in keeping with the will of God.

The words *"their reward" (Matthew 6:16)* make us look back on what we set as our goal. If we set being recognized by men as our goal, our hearts are greatly hurt when people's response is small. We think that we have not received sufficient treatment compared with the labor we put in. When such a heart is revealed, we must place the purpose of prayer before God again.

The declaration *"have their reward" (Matthew 6:16)* awakens the heart that was satisfied with what it obtained from men. Even if others have told you that you are great, look back on what you actually asked of the Father. One can keep up the form for a long time without a heart that relies on God. Jesus turns the heart that stayed on the outward appearance back toward the Father.

After being praised by people, we can feel as if we were more special people. Then it is easy to demand that others also prove their devoutness in the same way. But we have no right to lower someone else's faith by comparing it with our own fasting. Each person must pray honestly before the Father and respond to the word.

A person who relies on God does not put forward his own labor as a qualification. Nor does he think, "I have done this much, so there is no need to listen to what others say." Rather, because he knows his own weakness, he receives teaching. The humility learned in the time of prayer must also appear in our attitude as we live together with people.

Anoint your head and wash your face

Let us read verse 17. *"But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face" (Matthew 6:17)*. Jesus commands His disciples to take a concrete action. He tells them not to try to emphasize to men their appearance of fasting, but to look after their usual appearance. He keeps the work of gathering one's heart toward the Father from turning into an outward display to draw people's eyes.

The words *"But you"* make clear what each person is to respond to. Whatever others may do, there is a part that we must

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do before God. Rather than learning the method of being recognized by people, we must receive the attitude that Jesus teaches. A person who follows the word sets his own actions in order honestly first.

The words *"when you fast" (Matthew 6:17)* show that even in a time of especially gathering one's heart, everyday truthfulness is needed. We must not think that because we are doing something important, we may treat the responsibilities around us carelessly. As befits a person who asks God, we must also faithfully look after our words and promises in dealing with people.

The command *"anoint your head" (Matthew 6:17)* corrects the thought that deliberately equated devoutness with a shabby appearance. If we follow the purpose Jesus taught, there is no need to make our outward hardship look bigger. Do not make up a form of fasting that is not in the passage and evaluate one another by it. We must take seriously the heart that the Lord sees.

The word *"wash your face" (Matthew 6:17)* is a small and concrete obedience. While saying that we ask God for great help, it is easy to ignore the small teaching He has clearly given. But a person who prays is also a person who receives the word. We must follow the attitude the Lord has made known to us rather than earnestness in our own way.

Following the word *"anoint your head and wash your face" (Matthew 6:17)* does not make the problem of the heart disappear of its own accord. One can tidy up only one's appearance and then keep hoping inwardly that people will recognize one. We must also receive the purpose that Jesus makes clear in the next verse. The change in action must be connected with the direction of the heart.

Even while dealing with people as usual and carrying out the responsibilities that are needed, prayer can continue. The fact

that we are praying does not have to be confirmed by everyone. Keep in your heart the need you have entrusted to God and seek His will. Even in a quiet attitude, the earnestness of relying on the Father can be clear.

The heart that wants to be seen only by the Father

Let us read the first part of verse 18. *"So that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place" (Matthew 6:18)*. Jesus Himself tells us the reason He commanded the preceding action. It means that we should not set our purpose on being revealed to men as one who fasts, but give our hearts to the Father.

From the connecting words *"so that"* we learn the meaning of the command. We must not separate out only the action of washing the face and make it a rule. We must hear what heart Jesus teaches through that action. When we also receive the reason for the word, we can get out of imitating the outward appearance and actually turn toward God.

The word *"you do not appear to men to be fasting" (Matthew 6:18)* humbles the heart that tries to show off one's faith to others. The fact that one has fasted does not need to become the center of conversation. Set your heart on what you ask of God and on how you should live according to His will. When the purpose of prayer is clear, the desire to make it known also decreases.

The word *"but"* makes the direction of the heart clear. The heart that asks God and at the same time tries to gain the glory of men as well is easily divided. If you hope for the Father's help, concentrate on the Father. Even while waiting for the answer,

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we must not try to fill up our lacking hearts by receiving special treatment from people.

The word *"to your Father who is in the secret place" (Matthew 6:18)* tells us the One we are to rely on. Even in a place unknown to people, the Father is there. We do not need to think that we are bearing every burden alone. We can tell the Father our real needs and ask for the grace by which He cares for us.

What cannot be obtained by fasting we have already received. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all; and bearing those sins passed on to Him, He received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death. To those who believe this gospel and have received the remission of all sins, God has given the Holy Spirit as a gift and made them His own children.

Fasting is not a matter of paying more of the price of that salvation. We come to the Father believing in the merit of Jesus, who saved us. There is no need to think that the remission of sins becomes more complete only if we make our bodies suffer. Because the grace we have received is certain, we can boldly ask the Father for help without boasting of our own pain.

The promise of the One who sees in secret

Let us read the latter part of verse 18. *"Your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:18)*. Even if people do not see the appearance of our fasting, the Father sees. Jesus delivers us from the thought that what no one knows of is in vain. With the assurance that the Father knows, we can treasure the time of prayer.

In the word *"who sees in secret" (Matthew 6:18)* there is the Father's attentive care. God knows even the heaviness of heart that we could not explain to others. In the place of prayer, do not hide, but tell Him honestly. Even if we are clumsy in expressing ourselves to people, we can give the Father the heart directed toward Him.

Keep in your heart the expression *"your Father" (Matthew 6:18)*. What matters is not how strong we are as we fast, but who the Father is. We pray to the One who knows and cares for His children. Even at times when our resolve wavers, we can rely on the goodness of the Father. The basis of faith does not lie only in the size of our labor.

The promise *"will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:18)* makes us look toward the Father's answer. Do not change this promise into a calculation of surely getting the result you want in proportion to the time you fasted. The Father knows even the needs we do not know of. We must trust His wisdom, ask for help, and respond to the will He teaches.

Even if what we prayed for is not accomplished right away as we thought, there is no need to make the labor we show to people any bigger. Examine again before the Father what you asked for and with what heart you are waiting. While continuing to tell Him the help we need, we can carry out today's responsibilities according to the word. Even in the time of waiting, faith actually moves.

The purpose *"so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father" (Matthew 6:18)* and the promise *"will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:18)* are there together. It is a life of giving one's heart to the Father and trusting His answer. Lay down the heart that tries to have everything confirmed by people. The faith that the Father sees makes us act honestly even in places that are not seen.

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The everyday life of a person who asks for help

The help we have asked for in prayer must be connected with actual life. If we have asked Him to solve a difficult matter, we must also receive the responsibility that God makes us realize through the word. When the need to correct our own fault has been revealed, we cannot keep holding on to the same attitude and only wait for the answer. A person who relies on the Father also receives teaching.

The word Jesus spoke earlier is *"your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8)*. The Father knows our needs. When we have this faith, we do not try to gain the Father's attention by exaggerating our earnestness. We can tell Him honestly and entrust it to Him.

Jesus also said, *"Pray to your Father" (Matthew 6:6)*. That the Father already knows does not mean there is nothing left to ask for. Actually ask for help from the One who knows. Do not hide even the problems that have not been solved, but tell Him and ask for wisdom. Living with an open heart within that relationship is the life of prayer.

We must not treat the people around us harshly on the grounds that our prayer is earnest. We can also be absorbed in our own problems and ignore the needs of others. As befits a person who asks the Father for grace, look after your words and faithfully carry out the responsibilities entrusted to you. The heart that hopes for the will of God is revealed together with our attitude toward those close to us.

If, while praying, you think of a person who needs help, tell Him about that person as well. It is not only we who are in difficulty; others also need God's care. Widen your heart a little beyond your own circumstances and ask for grace together.

Sharing the comfort we have received and looking after one another's burdens also belong to the life of faith.

Do not compare your experience of fasting with that of others. The length or the degree of hardship does not tell the whole height of one's faith. What matters is the faith that relies on the Father and the heart that receives the word. Rather than exalting our own labor, words that help others come honestly to God are fitting.

The prayer that gives one's heart to the Father

At the beginning of the passage comes fasting meant to be seen by men, and at the end there is the promise that the Father sees. Jesus turns our eyes from the evaluation of men toward the Father. We must not place the meaning of fasting in being recognized by others, but in the heart that actually asks God for help.

Receive the word *"do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance" (Matthew 6:16)* into your own heart. Examine whether you are setting your heart on displaying your distressed appearance so that it may be recognized. The Father already knows our circumstances. Tell Him your real needs, and lay down the purpose of gaining people's attention.

Hearing the command *"wash your face" (Matthew 6:17)*, learn the simple attitude of obeying the word. Do not try to add your own special method, but follow the will Jesus has made known. Before people, live your everyday life honestly, and before the Father, open your heart and ask. Those two attitudes do not conflict with each other.

Set your heart only *"to your Father who is in the secret place" (Matthew 6:18)*. The Father, who saved us, knows His children

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who pray. If we rely on His love, we can be freed from the burden of endlessly having to prove our own devoutness. We need only give thanks for the grace we have already received and ask truthfully for the help we need.

If you have something to tell God today, do not begin with dressing up your own appearance. Give Him your real heart with the faith that the Father knows. Rather than putting forward outward hardship, hear the word and follow its will. I hope that prayer directed toward the Father will lead our everyday lives to be ever more honest. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The kingdom of God to be sought first where our treasure and our worry are

< Matthew 6:19–34 >

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

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and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Where we put our treasure and the direction of our heart

Jesus asks where we lay up our treasure, examines what we look at and whom we serve, and then teaches the care of the Father to those who worry about eating and clothing. Possessions, the heart, and worry are not separate problems. The direction of our life changes according to what we regard as most precious.

Let us read verse 19. *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19)*. What is laid up on earth can be damaged and lost. Jesus makes us look back on how solid the things we depend on really are.

The words *"for yourselves" (Matthew 6:19)* ask what the way of truly benefiting oneself is. Laying up many things does not always benefit the soul. Because of the worry of guarding them, we may fail to hear the word and fail to look after people.

The words *"moth and rust destroy" (Matthew 6:19)* reveal the fact that damage comes to what we have. Just because we gathered it with great effort does not mean that all of it is preserved as it is. As the words *"thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19)* say, there are also losses that we cannot prevent by our own strength. If we set our hearts on possessions alone, our whole life is shaken by their instability.

Let us read verse 20. *"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:20)*. Jesus does not tell us to throw away our treasure and live without any purpose. He tells us to change the place where we put our treasure. It is a life that uses what we have received for the things God regards as precious, and looks to what He preserves.

When we hear the words *"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20)*, we come to think about how to use what we have today. We can use it to preach the word to souls who need it, to look after those who believe together with us, and to take on the good work entrusted to us. We must not regard only the increase of our own possessions as success, but must regard as precious the benefit that pleases God.

Let us read verse 21. *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21)*. The heart turns toward what it regards as precious. If we look at what we are most afraid of losing and what we willingly spend our time for, we can know the direction of our heart. Look back honestly on whether, while saying with your mouth that you love God, your actual interest stays only on possessions.

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The eye that lights up the whole body

Let us read verse 22. *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22)*. Following treasure and the heart, Jesus speaks of the eye and the whole body. What we look at and how we judge affect our whole life. We cannot take lightly where we put our heart.

The words *"The lamp of the body is the eye" (Matthew 6:22)* tell us the importance of seeing. If we fix our eyes on greed alone, even a necessary responsibility looks like an obstacle. If we regard the will of God as precious, we can discover the good we are to take on even in the same circumstances. We must examine what our own eyes see as big and what they pass over.

The words *"If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22)* show that the faith of the heart and actual life are connected. Rightly receiving the word does not remain only in our thoughts. It leads to the actions of using our possessions, sharing our time, and treating people.

Let us read verse 23. *"But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23)*. If the heart regards a wrong thing as precious, life also follows that direction. The more sure we are that we see rightly, the harder it can be to admit a wrong. Jesus warns us to place even the judgment within us before the word.

Do not apply the warning *"If therefore the light that is in you is darkness" (Matthew 6:23)* only to others. Look back on whether you are explaining a wrong choice as a good way for the reason that it brings gain. The fact that there is something to be gained does not prove rightness. We must correct our own judgment in the light of the written word.

The question *"how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23)* lowers our self-confidence. The harder we move while holding on to a wrong purpose, the farther we can go. We must ask God for right faith and judgment, and rather than defending a wrong that has been exposed, we must correct it according to the word.

A life that cannot serve two masters together

Let us read verse 24. *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).*

Jesus says clearly that we cannot serve two masters together. Using riches and making riches our master are different. We must look back on who decides the final purpose of our life.

The words *"No one can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24)* expose the heart that tries to mix the two directions conveniently. We want to follow the will of God as well, but when we have to go against the word for the sake of gain, we may choose gain. In that choice it is revealed whom we actually exalt more. Faith must be clear even at the moment of decision.

The words *"or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24)* show the priorities of the heart. Examine which side you make light of in order not to lose the other side. If we throw away honesty and break our promises in order to protect our gain, riches are occupying the place of master.

Do not avoid the words *"You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24)*. We cannot judge this problem by how much or how little riches we have alone. Even with little, we can depend on money alone, and we can also use the riches entrusted to us

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according to the will of God. Together with the amount of our possessions, we must examine whom we serve.

A person who serves God does not handle money irresponsibly. He manages what is entrusted to him honestly, makes the necessary preparations as well, and takes on the responsibilities he has promised. But he does not push the word of God aside in order to gain money. We must keep the relationship in which riches are something to use and God is the One to believe in and obey.

What we serve is revealed also when we give up our possessions. Examine whether you always avoid giving needed help for fear that what you have will decrease. We need the faith that uses what we have received from God according to the will of the Lord. If we believe in the care of the Father, we can keep from clinging to riches as though they were our only protector.

The Father, who knows our life and our body

Let us read verse 25. *"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25).*

After the word about two masters, Jesus deals with worry. When we try to turn from a heart that depended on riches, the need for food and clothing can feel heavy. It is not that Jesus does not know that need; He teaches us to see something greater.

Listen to the question *"Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25)*. While worrying about the need for food and clothing, we can forget God, who gave us life. Jesus makes us see, before the Father, not the things we need but ourselves, who need them.

Let us read verse 26. *"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26)*. Jesus tells us to look at the birds of the air. While we look at them, He makes us learn the fact that the Father feeds them. What and how much we have stored up is not the only basis for His care. We must believe in God, who makes us live.

In the words *"your heavenly Father feeds them" (Matthew 6:26)*, the One who cares for us is clear. The birds did not make all the conditions of their own life by themselves. Even while we make our efforts, we must give thanks to the Father, who has granted us that life, and ask Him for the help we need.

Jesus asks, *"Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26)*. God regards His children as precious. Do not regard even yourself as a worthless person for the reason that your possessions are few. The grace that saved us is not measured by the amount of riches. We must remember the fact that we are people who belong to the Father.

Jesus, whom the Father who feeds the birds sent, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and He bore the sins thus passed on to Him and received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus, who rose again from death, accomplished, receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God. To the Father, who saved us in this way, we can entrust today's life as well by faith.

Believing in the care of the Father is not an attitude of stopping all the work that is needed. Only, we must not think

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that everything depends on our own ability and possessions alone. While taking on the responsibilities entrusted to us, we must place the dependence of our heart on God.

What worry cannot do

Let us read verse 27. *"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Matthew 6:27)*. Jesus asks about the power of worry. Spending our heart a great deal does not mean that we can rule our life that much more. If we hold on with worry even to what we cannot change by our own strength, it becomes hard to take on even the work we must do today.

Answer honestly the question *"Which of you by worrying" (Matthew 6:27)*. Making the necessary preparations and repeating only fearful outcomes in our heads are different. We must decide concretely what to prepare and take it on, and leave to God the outcomes we cannot guarantee. Do not let worry take the place of faith.

Let us read verse 28. *"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin" (Matthew 6:28)*. In the matter of clothing as well, Jesus tells us to look and to consider. He did not give only the command to stop worrying. He gives us grounds to examine what the Father does. We must open to the care of God a heart that has been narrowed by worry.

The words *"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow" (Matthew 6:28)* make us change where we look. If we keep counting only what we lack, we miss what God is already doing. Look at what the Lord shows you and consider its meaning. Faith is not turning away from reality but remembering what the Father does in the midst of reality.

Let us read verse 29. *"And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:29)*. Jesus compares the great glory a man had with the beauty God gave to a flower. Human possessions and adornment are not the standard of all value. If we know what God bestows, we can look back on the heart that used to envy only the wealth that is seen by people.

Let us read verse 30 as well. *"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30)*. Jesus teaches that God, who clothes the grass of the field that is here only for a while, looks after His disciples. It means that His concern for us is not less than for the grass of the field. Even in the midst of worry, we must remember who the Father is.

The words *"will He not much more clothe you" (Matthew 6:30)* hold our hearts fast to the Father. When what we need has not yet been supplied, our hearts can become impatient. Even then, do not conclude that the Father has forgotten His children. Tell God your actual needs, depend on the word He has given, and do step by step the work that is yours to take on.

The assurance that He knows what we need

Let us read verse 31. *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:31)*. While we repeat the same worry in words, our heart can become more anxious. Jesus tells us to speak believing in the care of the Father that He taught earlier. We must distinguish between the prayer that tells Him our needs and the worry that has forgotten the Father.

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In the words *"'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:31)*, the needs of actual life are contained. Jesus does not tell us to be ashamed of those needs. He makes clear right afterward that there is a Father who knows all those things. We must tell Him honestly what we need, but we must not be bound only by fear, like people without God.

Let us read verse 32. *"For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:32)*. The Father knows the fact that we must eat and be clothed in order to live. When we ask God for spiritual things, the needs of daily life are not pushed out of His concern. Jesus makes us believe the fact that the heavenly Father knows all those things and cares for us.

The words *"For after all these things the Gentiles seek" (Matthew 6:32)* make us look back on the purpose of our life. If eating and clothing alone become the whole of life, the other responsibilities are always put off. A child of God knows the will of the Father. While asking for what we need, we must not forget what we live for.

The words *"knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:32)* give us boldness to pray. There is no need to hide our lack or to dress ourselves up as though we were living well. Tell the Father your circumstances honestly and ask for wisdom. Faith appears not in words that deny our difficulties but in a heart that depends on God.

Even when you see another person worrying, do not apply this word coldly. Rather than concluding that he has no faith, listen to the need he is going through and ask the Father together with him. If there is some part in which you can help, actually take it on. We who believe in the care of the Father can also take part in the labor of looking after one another.

The kingdom and righteousness to be sought first

Let us read verse 33. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. Jesus tells us what a heart that has laid down worry must turn toward. It is not a life that does nothing while leaving the heart empty. He gives us the direction to live seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

In the words *"seek first" (Matthew 6:33)*, there is a priority. If we say that we will think about the will of God only after all the problems of life have been solved, it then keeps being pushed back. In today's circumstances, examine first what is right. We must learn the order of regarding as precious the will God has entrusted to us and then asking for what we need.

The command *"seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)* teaches a life that belongs to God. Believe in the gospel of salvation and ask that this truth may be preached to other souls as well. Ask for the wisdom and strength to actually do what God says is right. We need a heart that puts the will of God ahead of our own glory.

We can believe the promise *"and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. The Father knows the needs of life that He spoke of earlier. Do not turn this promise into a meaning that He will endlessly increase the riches we want. Even in a life that seeks the kingdom and righteousness, we must take care that our heart is not taken captive by riches again.

The faith that seeks the will of God first also sets our plans right. It does not put off the responsibilities we must take on, refrains from promises we cannot keep, and faithfully prepares what has been given. It does not think that, because we have something prepared, God is not needed. It gives thanks to the

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One who has entrusted everything to us and uses it according to His will.

Take on today's responsibility by faith

Let us read verse 34. *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34)*. He tells us not to shoulder in advance today all the weight of tomorrow. There are difficulties and responsibilities to take on today. Entrusting tomorrow to the Father, we must do by faith the work given to us today.

There is no need to take the command *"do not worry about tomorrow" (Matthew 6:34)* as meaning that we are not to make preparations for tomorrow. It is a word telling us to turn from the worry that tries to control the future completely. Prepare now what is to be prepared, but do not think that you yourself must be responsible for every outcome that has not yet come.

The words *"Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34)* make us live today. Take on one by one the things you can settle now. Ask for the help you need, correct wrong judgments, and do the good work God has entrusted to you. We must not lose even today's faithfulness because of the fear of tomorrow.

Our heart turns toward where our treasure is, and our choices change according to the master we serve. A person who believes in God as Father can turn from the heart that tries to protect his life by possessions alone. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and faithfully take on today's life. Tomorrow as well, there is the Father, who knows us. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Seeking the righteousness of God is our destiny

< Matthew 6:21–34 >

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father

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knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

While a person lives on this earth, he must have some cause to live for. Only when there is a cause does life have any savor. If someone lives every day only because of the problems of food, clothing, and shelter, without any cause, that person will truly find no savor in living.

When we look at the word of the Bible, the Lord said, *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22–23)*. And He said, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24)*. He told us not to worry about what we will eat, what we will drink, or what we will wear, and in conclusion He said, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. In this, our Lord spoke of how Christians should live as they live on this earth after receiving the remission of sins. The lamp of the body is the eye; if the heart itself goes wrong, everything goes wrong, and if the heart is right, everything is right, and so I understand this to be a word telling us that we must use our hearts well. Also, the Lord said that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the flowers of the field, and He says that God gives food and clothing to all creatures and

provides everything in its season so that they can live. So I understand that He told us not to worry but to live by faith.

The Lord said, *"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26)*. But some people say that since the Lord told us to look at the birds that fly in the air, do the birds not also flap their wings, and do people not also live because they make efforts? Of course we live because we also make efforts, but in fact we live because God has arranged things so that we can live by making efforts. The grass of the field and the flowers, too, bloom as they do because God has provided all the climate and conditions in which flowers can bloom.

If the heart is right, everything is right

It means that our lives, and our very life, too, are lived because God has arranged things so that we can live in this world. That is indeed so. We live because God has enabled us to live; if God did not permit it, how could we live? The point our Lord wants to make while speaking of all these things is this: for what, truly, will we live, and for what must we live?

What should our hearts be like before God? Will we give our hearts to our own flesh and live that way, or will we truly live for the righteousness of God? It means that we must set our hearts right. It means that we must hold faith firmly in our hearts. For us Christians, if the heart goes wrong, everything goes wrong, and I know that if the heart becomes a heart that seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then even if we are lacking, everything is all right.

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If Christians live for their own righteousness and have a fleshly heart that wants to live the rest of their time in the flesh for their own flesh, that in itself is a curse and a heart of curse. That darkness grows without limit, and it ends up darkening and killing many people. If instead, lacking though we are, we live not for our own flesh but for God, for the spread of God's gospel, and not for our own glory but for the glory of God, then God supplies and adds to us everything we need while we live on this earth. He has promised that He will enable us to live in the flesh as well, and that He will let us live according to the right heart we have set. We believe that word.

Truly, what is wrong is for our hearts to go wrong. Usually, as Christians live after receiving the remission of sins, even the righteous must lead a life of faith for a long time before they reach the level where this point becomes clear. If the heart is not settled on this point, then although they say they live for God, later they end up falling into a heart that wants to follow their own flesh and a heart that wants to live for their own glory. And later, after rejecting, betraying, and trampling this gospel, they live for their own glory. There are many such Christians. Everyone who has followed the Lord until now and then quit halfway has fallen into this.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"

Truly, He told us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We must come to have this kind of faith. God has given this faith to you and me. He saved us in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, remitted our sins, put us to death in Christ

so that we could not live for ourselves, and enabled us to live for the glory of God.

Our brothers and sisters, too, come to have such a heart as they come out following the Lord. If we serve the Lord diligently, we come to experience this word that says, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. And we come to learn faith in our hearts. If we live for the Lord, we experience, lacking though we are, that the Lord grants us grace. But even among the workers, there are many who, having received the remission of sins, live this way merely because living this way is right. They just live that way, and then, if midway something is not to their liking, they complain and do this and that.

But the Lord spoke clearly. How is it right for us to live? He said that it is right for us to live seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, that this is right, and that if we live this way He will reward us and bless us with both. This kind of faith, faith that believes the word of God, is truly necessary, and it is necessary to have right thinking and right faith before God.

We must pray to God to give us the faith and the heart that seek first for the righteousness of God and live for that righteousness, and we must also sort out our faith. "What, truly, is the purpose of my life?" We born-again people, whether saints or anyone else, whether workers or not, are all workers.

God has entrusted us to spread the gospel while we live on this earth, and He has also promised that if we live for the gospel, He will add to us all that is on this earth. We must have faith that believes this; if we do not have faith that believes this, we must ask for faith, and we must hold fast to this word. We must know that if we live this way, this is what happens.

Thinking, "How will my flesh live?" is also all part of a process. Because people have flesh, it is natural to worry for the

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flesh. That is how it is when our faith is young, but as we go on living, we must think once about what kind of faith we should have before God and sort it out once in our hearts. “Am I living for the righteousness of God, with that purpose, or am I just living?” If we have not lived with the purpose of living for the righteousness of God, we must have that purpose, ask for that faith, and also believe. I believe that if we live by faith, God will give to us according to the word He has promised. And even if He does not give in that way, I believe that what is right before God is a life that seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and that this is right faith.

We Christians do not know ourselves well. But as we go on living, our true colors are revealed. When we set our hearts to live for the gospel and go forward following the Lord, and when we are lacking, we throw ourselves upon the Lord, throw away our shortcomings and everything else, and follow the Lord with faith that believes in Him, then we can live a life that seeks the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

As we go on living, all those whose faith has not been established are revealed. Even those whose faith has been established do not seem much different in the way they live outwardly. Yet a person who lives having set a clear purpose comes to live the rest of his life clearly for the spread of the gospel until he goes before the Lord, until the Lord comes to this earth. And he remains in the Church of God. But a person who has not set his heart on the purpose of living for the kingdom of God and His righteousness disappears somewhere along the way. That is why it is necessary for us to set our hearts right and hold the goal of our hearts rightly.

Our flesh now has very many shortcomings, and it may seem that we will never be able to keep up in the future either. Even so, if we clearly set our hearts, saying, “I am lacking, but I will

live for the gospel of God," and believe the word of God, the Lord holds us up in that way, leads us, and blesses us so that we can live that way. The heart is extremely important, and faith is extremely important.

The destiny of having no choice but to live for Christ

As I always tell you, I, too, once tried to go into business after meeting the Lord. I wanted to sell goods for just three hours a day, then close up shop right away, and live the rest of the time for the Lord, doing what I wanted to do. Rather than spending a lot of time making money, I would spend only a few hours and earn as much income as someone else earns working all day—no, about twice as much—and live all the rest for the Lord. But in fact, that, too, was all something I was doing for myself.

Once I came to know the Lord, I saw that even if I worked all day and used my head to run a business, at most it would only solve the problems of food, clothing, and shelter. Then what, in the end, is my life? After meeting the Lord, how will I live the rest of my life? Will I live for myself, or will I live for the Lord? I thought it over and calculated. Money does not come in so easily just because one decides to live making money. Money comes in only when God permits it; when people chase after money, money runs away. In truth, it is hard.

Once, I thought about myself before God. How will I live from now on? I wanted to live for the Lord. Now, anyone who is a Christian, anyone who has received the remission of sins, wants to live for the Lord and wants to live for the gospel. They want to live that way, but as to whether they have the ability to live that way, they have no ability. They know that the work of

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God is right, but because they must make a living right now, the life of their own flesh becomes a greater worry. They want to live that way, but because they have no ability, they cannot live for the Lord on their own.

What is needed at such a time is this word: *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)*. Because we are no more, because we have died, because Christ lives in us, because we are people of Christ, we cannot help but live only for Christ. It means that all the saints, the people of God, all who have received the remission of sins, were born with such a destiny. It means that they have been changed into such a destiny.

Our old self has died. We have become new people in Christ. When I think about myself, even though I wanted to live that way, I had no faith and no ability, so I could neither serve the Lord nor live that way. But if the Lord has made me into such a destiny, then I am a person who cannot help but live for Christ and for the gospel. After I came to know that I was a person who could not help but live such a destined life, I realized, "Ah, we Christians are all such people! We are not people who can live for ourselves! It was because we did not know ourselves well that we tried to live for our own flesh; in fact, we have died and become new creations. And we have become people who cannot help but live for the Lord!"

After I came to know this, I gave up all life for myself. Even if someone were to bring me tens of trillions, hundreds of trillions, or thousands of trillions, that would not be for me but for the gospel and for God. If my old self were alive, I could live for myself, but since the old self has died and is no more, how can the old self live for me? Even if I am unworthy, my old self is no more, and even if I am outstanding, my old self is no more.

I am a new creation and a person of Christ. You, too, belong to Christ.

Even though this has become our destiny, people are deceived by Satan the devil and try to live for their own flesh, thinking that this is for their own good, but in fact it is not. To live for oneself is in the end to be deceived by oneself and to be deceived by the devil. We are already no more; the Lord is in us and rules us, and the Lord has made us instruments of the righteousness of God. It has already been determined this way for us by destiny. This is destiny.

After I came to know this fact, that was the end of it. The Apostle Paul said, *"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*. So this was what he meant! Whatever I do, lacking though I am, because I live for the glory of God, I am unashamed, and I eat well and live well. After I was born again, my heart became so at ease that even my body grew healthier.

My old life is over. Because I am a person made with the destiny of having no choice but to live for Christ, I could not help but live for the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Being lacking, I did not live it all well, but when I set my heart to live that way and tried hard to live so, God made it so that I did not worry about eating and drinking, that is, about the problems of food, clothing, and shelter. I do not worry about the problems of food, clothing, and shelter. My purpose has changed.

God is asking us for what purpose we will live. And He tells us and commands us to live a life that seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are lacking, but we are people of Christ; we have no ability, but if we pray and ask for help for the sake of the kingdom of God and His righteousness and, lacking though we are, live by faith and follow Him, the Lord works through us. He blesses such people, holds on to them,

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leads them, and accomplishes the will of God through such people. That is why we must use our hearts rightly and well and come to have this kind of faith. Whether a worker or a saint who is not a worker, everyone must become a person of this kind of faith.

In my life I have gone through many processes. Because God long ago made me go through many such processes, when I hear that a saint or a worker is in such and such a state, I know at a glance. “So that is your state right now. You may talk that way, but it is all for yourself. Do you know what a life that seeks the kingdom of God and His righteousness is? Whether you eat or drink, it is all for the glory of God, and a life that does not put forward one’s own righteousness as long as the gospel is spread—that is precisely that life.”

To have come first means to have experienced many things first. And it means that, as I followed the Lord, the Lord made me go through such processes in detail. Even when attending school, is it not extremely important to go through the process? The process is extremely necessary.

I hope that all of us, the workers and the saints alike, will truly live for the glory of God, whether we eat or drink. I hope that you will have this kind of faith, the faith to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. This is what God has commanded us and promised us. Our faith must become this kind of faith that seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

This word is a promise of blessing

Whatever work we do, whether that work goes well or not, for what must we do everything? We must do it for the glory of

God. Whether we eat pork, vegetables, or noodles, whatever we eat, we must eat for the glory of God. Even thinking, "Eating this is bad for my body, so I had better eat less," whatever it may be, we must eat or drink with one goal in view.

In fact, this word is a word God spoke in order to give us blessing. He said, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. What are all these things? They are what He spoke of before, namely, what we will eat, what we will drink, and what we will wear. Until now we have lived worrying only about these, but this word means that if you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, pray for the spread of God's gospel, unite your hearts, and, lacking though you are, serve together by faith, He will solve all the problems of food, clothing, and shelter, whether you eat or drink. In fact, this word is an extremely blessed word.

There are very many times when God commands us in order to give us something. Dear fellow believers, do we not want both to serve the Lord and to live well in the flesh? Then what must we do? If we live a life that seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, everything is taken care of. As the word says, *"Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out" (Deuteronomy 28:6)*, we are blessed even when we fall, and everything goes well.

Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we are the people of the kingdom of God. You and I are the people of Christ. Because we are the people of Christ, we follow His law, what He has commanded. I think that in the future the gospel will be spread beyond measure. So I am preparing to make books and preach the gospel in more places. I am pushing the work forward, thinking that we will preach the gospel on an enormous scale in the future.

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"Tomorrow will worry about its own things"

The Lord said, *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34)*. It means that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and live for God, then although there are times when hard things come and times when we live this way or that, the Lord will guarantee our food, clothing, and shelter and take responsibility for our whole lives. Just as He has made all things live, just as the birds that fly in the air make their own efforts but God gives them air and makes food available in the fields so that they can live, and just as the flowers, too, bloom and display their glory because God grants all the climate conditions so that they can bloom, so it is with our lives as well. He said, *"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30)*. It is a word saying, how much more will He do so for us! It means that God takes responsibility for our whole lives, keeps us, and blesses us.

Dear fellow believers, do not think that these words I am giving you are words pieced together just to preach a sermon. As you know, I am a person who has nothing. Because I cannot memorize Bible verses well, I sometimes write them down in a notebook and bring it along. But I actually believe this word, and I am telling you this because the Lord has worked for me according to this word and will work for you as well. I am not playing with words, piecing things together just to preach a sermon.

Since He said that sufficient for the day is its own trouble, if today was troubling, that is enough, and we need only sleep soundly. And when we get up, is it not a new day again? In fact,

the Lord has accomplished everything so that we can live by faith. He has spoken everything and done everything. We need only believe the word of God and follow by faith. But not knowing this, people live struggling. "He said that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will take responsibility. I believe." If we live that way, everything comes to pass according to this word.

We must rejoice that the gospel is being spread. And we must keep our hearts. Dear fellow believers, if you have a desire in your heart and want to live your life happily, if you truly want to live rightly and righteously by faith, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Keep this word in mind, and believe the word of God that says, *"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*. And believe that the Lord has saved you with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is, that He had your sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and removed them, died on the Cross in your place and brought the judgment to an end, and rose again and made us live again. If you thus believe that we have become the people of God, the people of Christ, and that we have become people destined to have no choice but to live for God and for the gospel, God takes responsibility for everything. In any situation, however lacking, hard, or dangerous, the Lord is with us. But if we do not believe the word of God, we must go through that hardship alone. We must live with the Lord. When we meet hardship, we must go through it with the Lord; when we meet joyful things, we must be with the Lord; at all times we must live with the Lord. The lives of you and me, all of us, have been determined with that destiny. Whether we believe it or not, that is how it is. Since that is so, believe. If you do not believe, you will be left all alone, so believe.

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It is hard, but it is truly good. The weather is muggy, the work is not going well, and there is much to do, but still it is good. For we will keep doing this work until the day the Lord comes, and then depart. I hope that the day will come quickly when, after we have eaten much and taken strength and done much of God's work, the Lord will come and say, "Well done," and let us reign as kings.

Still, let us set our hearts straight. Faith is something that arises only when such circumstances come upon us. If one comes to believe firmly just by looking at the word, that much makes one a servant of God. In any case, because when we believe the word and follow it He does for us according to the word, I give thanks. ✉

Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Brighten your heart with the gospel

< Matthew 6:22–23 >

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

He said, *“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light” (Matthew 6:22)*. This word tells us how important our heart is in our spreading the gospel. If our heart is truly bright, we can preach the gospel to all the people around us. Mission work, that is, the spread of the gospel, is in fact not done with material things but by faith; it is done with the word of the truth, and with the faith of our hearts that believe the gospel. However much we may go abroad, fully equip ourselves with the language of that country, abundantly prepare material things, and prepare everything, even the customs of that country, the point is that if the preacher’s heart is not bright but dark, the gospel is not spread. As the word says, the gospel is spread when the preacher’s heart is bright, that is, when the preacher has no sin and the light of that gospel, the light of the truth, the light of the remission of sins shines into people’s hearts. How can we spread the gospel to people? If our eye is good, we can spread the gospel.

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The Lord said, *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22–23).* He is asking how great that darkness would be. If we are certain of the fact that we have no sin, that Jesus has taken away all our sins, that it is certain we are saved and certain we have no sin, and so our faith in the Lord and in the gospel is certain, how brightly that light will shine! This means that no matter how many people there are, it shines the light of this gospel brightly and abundantly on all those people. But if one's heart is dark, if one's heart is not in the gospel, He is asking how dark that light would be. Our Lord says, *"You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).* Jesus also says that He Himself is the light. And He says that the world is darkness.

The person who can preach the gospel

When we believe in the Lord and receive salvation, keep that gospel in our hearts, and are abiding in the truth and in faith, we can preach the gospel to all peoples. The spread of the gospel can be done only by those who have received the remission of sins, and among those who have received the remission of sins, only by those who keep this gospel in their hearts. The person who believes, within the word of God's truth, that he has no sin, that the Lord has taken away all those sins, and that he himself is the light, can preach the gospel.

A person whose heart is dark cannot preach the gospel. Whether it is the work of spreading the gospel at home or the work of going abroad and spreading the gospel, a person whose heart is dark cannot preach the gospel. Only a person whose

heart is bright can give out light. The Lord says that we are the light of the world. And He says that our heart is the lamp of the body. When we accept and keep the Lord, who shone light into our hearts, and that gospel, testify that the Lord has removed our sins so that we have no sin, and drive out with this gospel all the residue of faults in our hearts—that is, when with a clear conviction in the gospel we have driven out human weakness and darkness with the light—only then do we become people who can preach the gospel to others. A person whose heart is full of the gospel alone and satisfied with the gospel alone, a person who knows that he has become the light through this gospel, a person who can give thanks for the gospel alone and whose heart can be filled with the gospel alone—such a person can spread the gospel.

A person who has the gospel and yet pursues the world and pursues riches cannot spread the gospel. Our Lord is telling us what kind of person can spread the gospel. The person who can preach the gospel is one who is satisfied with that light planted in his heart and does business with that light. He is saying that the person who has light in his heart, whose light is full to overflowing, and who boasts of that light is the person who spreads the gospel. If there is a person who cannot shine the light that is in his heart, that person is surely a person who serves two masters and a person who does not do business with the light he has.

This means that it is so with you and me. God has shone this light into you and me. It is that light which is the light of the world, the light of the truth, and truly the light of life—the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through this light we must rejoice, do business with this light, make this light brighter, and open the door wider so that this light shines more. When you light a gas lamp, it is weak at first, but after a little time passes, does it not

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give out a great deal of very white light? Likewise, those who heat up this light themselves, that is, those who hold fervently to the fact that they themselves have no sin and that the people of the world also have no sin, can serve this gospel and preach the gospel. But a person who hides the light that is in him under a basket, a person who serves two masters, a person who buries the gospel in the ground, cannot do the work of the gospel. Even if we provide that person with riches, bring him Bibles, and build him a chapel, he cannot do the work. The Lord has planted in our hearts that light of which it is said, *"who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6)*. Dear fellow believers, what matters is how brightly we shine the light that is within us, how greatly we kindle it and shine it. This means that when we kindle and shine the light of our hearts, the people of the world look upon the light of the truth that is in our hearts, and by looking upon that light, mission work is accomplished and those souls are saved. This means that the light that has shone into our hearts is at first only as big as a mustard seed, but it does not end there; it rules over our whole life and every part of us, shines in every direction of our whole body, and shines on all the people outside as well.

The Bible expresses this in various ways, such as doing business. But to spread the gospel, we must first confirm what kind of gospel this gospel is that we have received, whether we ourselves—not someone else—have truly received the remission of sins, whether we have no sin, and whether there is not even a speck of darkness in us. When we ourselves are convinced that it is truly so, we become servants who can preach the gospel to others as well. But if we ourselves have no conviction in this gospel, even if we have the thought that we must preach the gospel, the gospel is not spread. When we

preach the gospel, if we ourselves first abide in conviction and shine on others the light of that gospel of which we are convinced, then through one or two of us, all the people of this world can receive the blessing of the remission of sins.

Two or three people with conviction are enough

Whatever city we may go to and preach the gospel in, many people are not needed. Two or three people who have conviction in the gospel through the word can evangelize that whole city. In this city where we are, too, in fact a few people with conviction in the gospel can give out the light of the gospel to everyone. Spreading the gospel is not a matter of saving every single person. When the light of the gospel is given out, there are those who accept it and those who do not. But the point is that whether or not we can give out the light of the gospel does not depend on a large number of people, but on how much conviction they have in the word of the truth, even if they are only a few. Spreading what we believe, what the Lord has said, is precisely the spread of the gospel.

You and I must remember well the word of God we read today, namely, the word *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22)*. It is not that we cannot preach the gospel because we lack language skills, nor that we cannot preach the gospel because we have no money. Whether or not we can preach the gospel to all the peoples of the whole world depends on whether our hearts have conviction in the gospel. It is saying that if our hearts do not have conviction in the gospel, we cannot spread the gospel.

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Do you rejoice and are you glad because of this gospel? Do you love the world, or do you love the Lord? If you have a heart that loves the Lord, whatever you may lack, it is no problem. If only your eye is bright, if only your eye is good, it is no problem. This means that if only your eye is good, you are fully qualified to become a missionary.

Dear fellow believers, our Lord, through the baptism He received from John, had all our sins transferred to Him and took them away, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose again. Is that so, or is it not? We have no sin. Our Lord has removed the sins of all the people of the world as well. This very thing is the gospel, the gospel we must preach. It is the gospel of the truth that came from heaven. All the people of the world also have no sin. Our Lord has saved them. This is the very lamp, and this is the very eye. Dear fellow believers, before we do any mission work, we must ask ourselves. We must look carefully at whether or not we are serving two masters, and we must take good care of our hearts, that is, our eyes.

First take good care of your own eye

The saints who have this gospel, all of us, must take good care of our own eyes. We must always wipe them and take good care of them. Before preaching the gospel to others, we must take good care of our own hearts. When we do, we ourselves live and the people around us also live. But if we fail to take good care of our own eyes, we ourselves are dark and the other person is dark too, so that instead of preaching the gospel we end up killing people. The point is that before God, we ourselves are important. Before God, more than anything else, we ourselves are important. We ourselves are truly important because we

ourselves are the very mirror, and are like the moon, which, when the sun gives out its light, receives that light and shines it back on the earth. The Lord emphasizes the importance of this eye.

If our heart is bright, that is, if our heart truly abides in faith, in conviction, and in the word of the truth, we pass; but if our heart does not stay in the gospel and in the truth but pursues the greed of the world, we fail. Before preaching the gospel to others, we must first examine carefully whether or not our own eye is good right now, keep well the light that is within us, nurture that light well, and become people who tend the fire well so that the light can spread outward. When the flame of the gospel first rises within us, when a gospel evangelistic meeting first blazes up like fire within our own hearts, we can preach the gospel to others as well. We become people who receive the light the Lord has shone on us and spread it. I believe that when we ourselves first have conviction in the gospel, when we do not serve two masters in the world, when we eat and drink together with the gospel, enjoy glory together with the gospel, and live together with the gospel, other souls will hear the gospel through us and receive the remission of sins, and they too, just like us, will receive and enjoy glory and blessing in God. The preacher must first know clearly whether or not there is darkness in his heart, and whether or not he serves two masters. He must know the fact that he must first drive out the darkness in his heart. God wants to send such workers. We must carry out by faith the work God assigns us. Without faith, we can never do the work God assigns us, nor can we walk with God. We must carry out the work God is doing in these last days.

Let us preach the gospel abroad and preach the gospel at home as well. Do you have this light? Are you the light? There are also many who, even after receiving the remission of sins,

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love the world and leave. If someone says he will go, who can stop him? But we cannot leave. We go out following the Lord. Dear fellow believers, do you truly want to become people whose eye is good so that it lights up the whole body? Do you want to become a lighthouse in this dark world? Do you want to become the light? We are in fact the light. If only we take good care of this light, we do precious work. We are used for precious work. We can live in precious blessing. Countless people of this world have until now wanted to meet people like us, people who have no sin. It is no exaggeration to say that those people have lived in hardship all this time in order to meet us. We are the light. I hope that you will drive out the divided heart, the fleshly mind, or the darkness that is in your hearts with the light of the gospel. I hope that you will first shine the light of the gospel within yourselves. Let us first change our inner selves into light, and then preach the gospel to souls. ✉

◇ About the Next Series

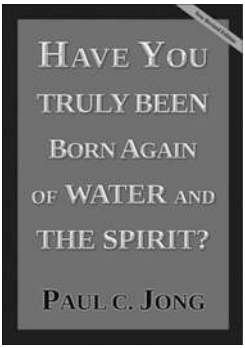
The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

We sincerely hope that the books by Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will serve as spiritual nourishment to strengthen your faith.

News about newly released books, as well as various ways to access them—including eBooks (PDF, EPUB), audiobooks (M4A, MP3), and online reading—can be found at **www.bjnewlife.org.**

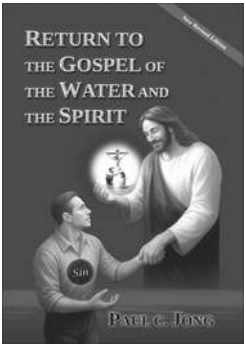
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

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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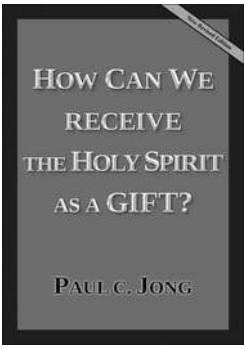
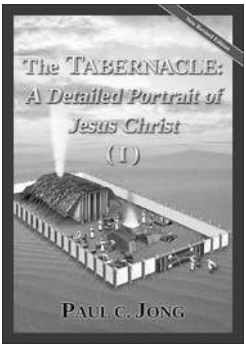
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



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]

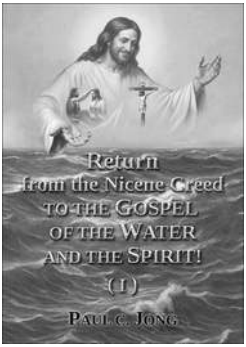


How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

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.

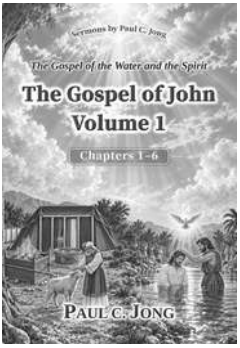
The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

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.

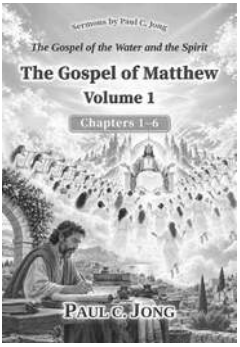
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of John (3-Volume Series)



"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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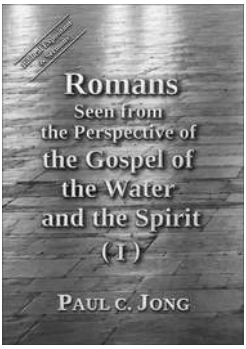
Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

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,

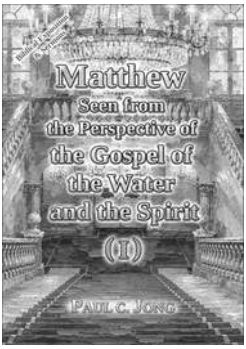
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of 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.

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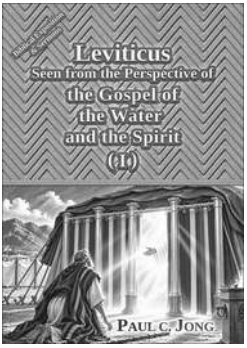
Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

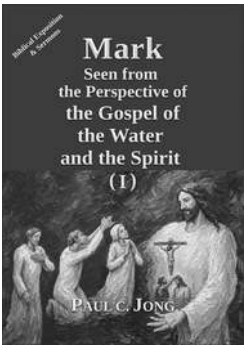


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the 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)



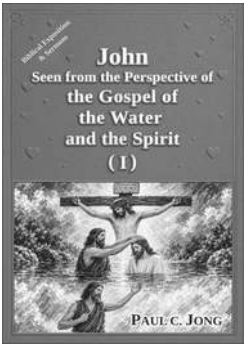
Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

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)

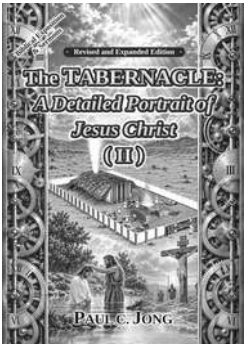


"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central 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!

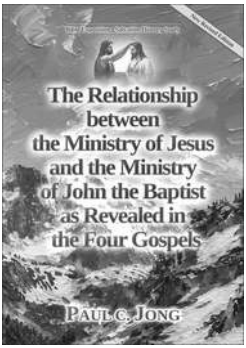
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



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.

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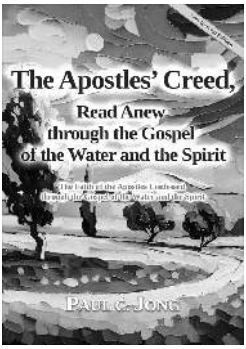
Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

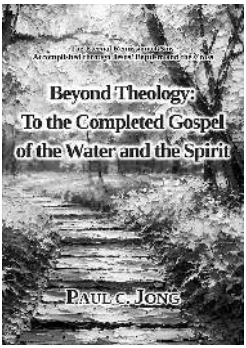


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission 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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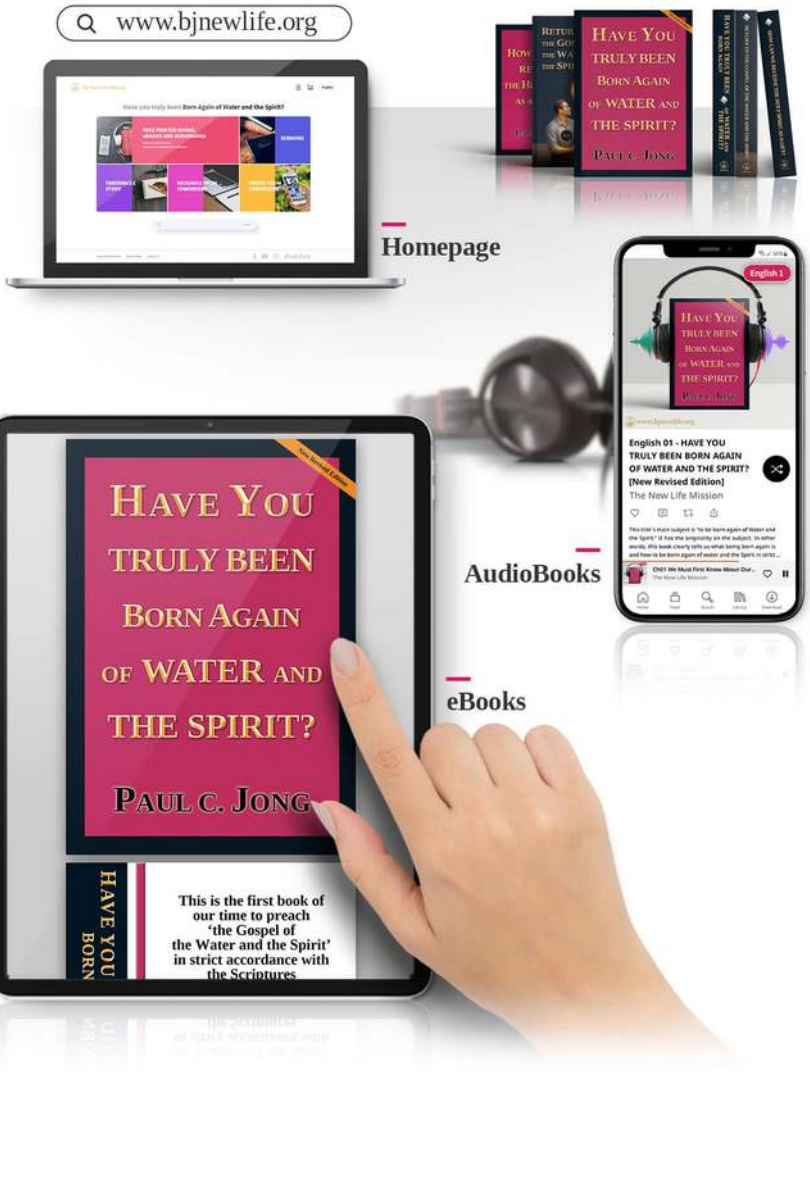

Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

If you wish to possess printed books to build up spiritual nourishment, or if you sincerely wish to participate in our gospel spreading ministry, please apply by writing your reason, name, contact information, and address to the email address below.

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Please help us spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ through our books so that more people can be born again of the water and the Spirit. We would also be grateful if you could introduce our website and books to many people and invite them to visit.

THE NEW LIFE MISSION
Contact: John Shin, General Secretary
E-mail: newlife@bjnewlife.org



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We pray that you will live a victorious life through God's blessings in these last days within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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Sincerely,
The New Life Mission



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 suffered for a long time because his problem of sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this agony, he came to believe that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world through His baptism by John the Baptist, and subsequently bore the judgment in our place on the cross.

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.

All righteousness fulfilled at the Jordan River

The first thing Jesus did as He began His public ministry was to receive baptism from John at the Jordan River. To John, who tried to prevent Him, the Lord said, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Through that baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus, and the Lord received the judgment for those sins with the blood of the Cross and then rose again from the dead. This is the “all righteousness” that Jesus fulfilled.

The word ‘fitting’ carries the meaning that there is no way more suitable than this. The priests of the Old Testament offered sacrifices day after day and year after year, but as long as people sinned, those sacrifices could never come to an end. So Jesus, who is God, came in a human body and, through that baptism, which was like the laying on of hands, had the sins up to the end of the age passed on to Him once and for all. A salvation that leaves no more sacrifice to be offered—this was the most fitting way that God had determined.

Whoever believes in this righteousness does not strive to enter the kingdom of heaven by piling up his own righteousness. In the Sermon on the Mount 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). A life of calling God Father and entrusting tomorrow to Him begins with believing in all righteousness fulfilled at the Jordan River.

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