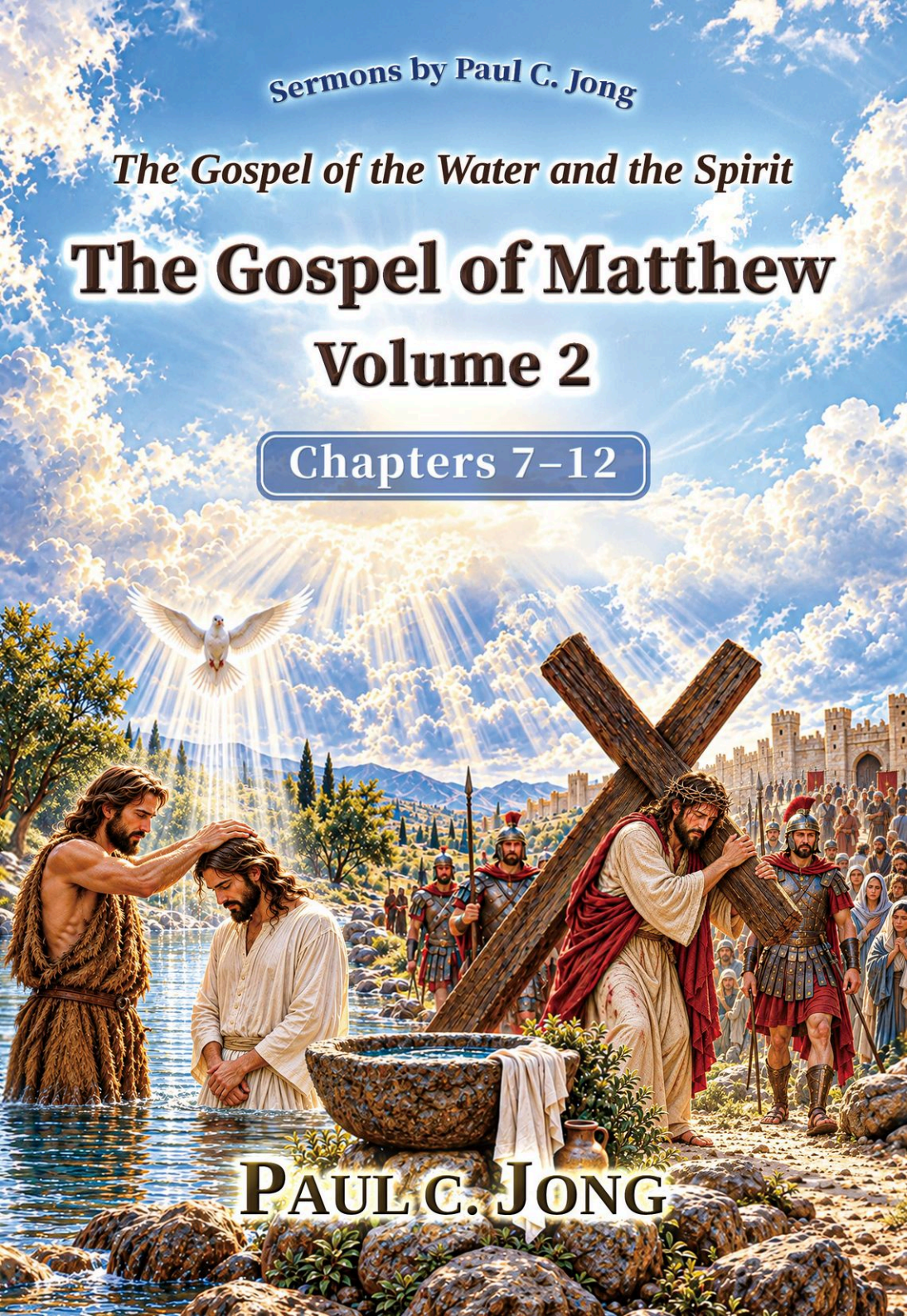
Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Matthew

Volume 2

Chapters 7–12



PAUL C. JONG

“That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” (Matthew 1:21)

To the paralytic lying on a bed, Jesus first proclaimed the remission of sins. Then, by raising the sick man up and making him walk, He showed that He Himself had the authority to remit sins.

Jesus is God, who remitted our sins by having our sins passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross as the price of those sins, and then rising again from death. When we rightly know who He is, we can accept His word in our hearts.

The soul that has pursued its own righteousness through repentance and effort, only to become worn out by condemnation, needs the authority of Jesus, the King of kings, who is able to remit sins. Let us humble ourselves before the word of the remission of sins, and look to Jesus, who fulfills that word, and believe in Him.

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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Our 'The New Life Mission,' established in 1991, is carrying out a literature mission ministry that translates and distributes Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual sermon collections into multiple languages worldwide.

Pastor Paul C. Jong has been easily and clearly conveying Jesus' salvation work according to the Word of the Bible to this day, so that many people can receive true remission of sins and return to God through just this one book. And together with his fellow workers, he continues to make tireless efforts even now to spread the gospel of water and the Spirit throughout the world.

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The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Gospel of Matthew

Volume 2

Chapters 7–12

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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Preface

Jesus, who lifts off the burden of sin

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Jesus calls us in order to give us true rest. To people who live bearing the burden of sin, He gives the way to resolve that sin, and He lets them come before God without fear. This rest is the rest enjoyed by the heart that believes in the remission of sins that Jesus has granted. That is, people who had been weighed down because of sin come to know the love of God and come to live giving thanks to Jesus, who saved them.

Through the word of Matthew, I wish to preach this grace of the remission of sins to you. I hope that you will believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, and that those who have already received this grace will live following Jesus with that faith.

Jesus, who calls sinners and makes them righteous

Dear fellow believers, whom did Jesus come to call? Was it people who have much to put forward before God and who consider themselves righteous? Jesus came to call sinners who cannot resolve their own sins. The word He spoke, *"For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:13),* is precisely a word directed to us. To those who know their own sins and desire salvation, Jesus Himself becomes the Savior.

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People think that if they live good lives, pray a lot, and offer something to God, the problem of sin will be resolved. But the sins already committed cannot be removed by good deeds. What we need is the mercy of God, who has pity on sinners and rescues them from sin.

Jesus knows our weaknesses and faults. Even while knowing what sins are in our hearts, He calls sinners. Therefore, there is no need for us to hide our own sins or to blame them on others. We must admit that we are sinners who are to be judged before God, and receive the salvation that Jesus grants. Those who know that they cannot escape from sin by their own strength humble their hearts and come to Jesus.

Jesus called sinners in order to rescue them, make them righteous people, and have them live as children of God. We must turn our hearts away from the discouragement we felt as we looked at ourselves and know what Jesus has accomplished for us.

The salvation in which He took all our sins upon Himself

The mercy of God was revealed in the salvation by which He actually removed our sins. Because judgment always follows sin, God did not say that there was no sin while leaving our sins as they were, but prepared a sacrificial offering that would have the sins passed on to it, and the judgment for those sins. In the sacrifices of the Old Testament, God had a sinner lay his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering to pass on his sins, and had that offering shed its blood and die; this is the way of atonement that God ordained for sinners.

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When we know this meaning, we come to know how important to us the baptism Jesus received from John is. John the Baptist received the mission of representing mankind, giving baptism to Jesus, and passing on the sin of the world. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins that you and I will commit throughout our whole lifetime are also included in all those sins of the world. Jesus bore the sins that had been passed on 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 Savior. This is "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" that Jesus fulfilled for us.

A person who believes in this gospel receives by faith the righteousness of God that Jesus fulfilled and becomes a righteous person who has received the remission of all sins, and God gives him the Holy Spirit as a gift. Therefore, relying on this salvation, we can boldly say that we are the children of God.

Do not leave your sins separately outside this salvation. If Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him, then the sins you know about, and even the sins you have not yet realized, are within it. If, each time you commit sin, you try to wash it away again with prayers of repentance, your heart is still bound to your own efforts. The One who removed our sins is Jesus, so we must believe in our hearts in the remission of sins He has already accomplished.

This faith makes us honest. For there is no reason to hide our wrongs to make ourselves look righteous. While admitting and correcting our sins and faults, we place the basis of our salvation on the righteousness that Jesus fulfilled. Because we believe in the grace by which He granted complete salvation even though He knew our shortcomings, we can come before God.

Faith that relies on the word of the remission of sins

What we must now receive in our hearts is the word of Jesus. If we think that on days when our hearts are joyful we seem to have been saved, and on days when our hearts are heavy we have become sinners again, then we end up judging the salvation of Jesus by our own feelings. Though the condition of our hearts changes, what Jesus has accomplished does not change. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are assured of the remission of sins on the basis of that word.

The reason the centurion believed that his servant would be healed by the word of Jesus alone was that he knew His authority. We, too, need the faith that knows the authority of Jesus, who speaks. For He has the authority on earth to remit sins. Receive the word that Jesus has removed our sins as more precious than your own thoughts. Faith is not the self-confidence that one has become a strong person, but reliance on the salvation that Jesus has granted.

Jesus said that the one who hears the word and does it is a man who built his house on the rock. Just as rain and wind strike even a house built on the rock, so even after we have believed in the gospel, our weaknesses are revealed and we meet with difficulties. If, each time, we cling to how well we have done, our hearts are easily shaken. Those who believe the word of Jesus and follow His will have a clear basis to return to and rely on, and that is precisely the righteousness of God, which has saved us.

Religious acts cannot take the place of this faith. Jesus said that the one who enters the kingdom of heaven is not the one who, saying *"Lord, Lord,"* claims to have done many things in the Lord's name, but the one who does the will of the Father in

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heaven. The will of the Father is to believe in the salvation that the Son, Jesus, accomplished. We must lay down the desire to add our own righteousness and accept the gospel that Jesus has given.

I hope that you will not keep the word of the remission of sins only as familiar knowledge. If, while knowing the fact that Jesus bore the sin of the world, you continue to be afraid because of your own sins, you must receive in your heart that this salvation has been fulfilled for you, too. Believe in that grace, give thanks, and enjoy rest of heart within the remission of sins.

The rest enjoyed by taking the yoke of Jesus upon us

Jesus tells us, whose burden of sin He has lifted off, to learn from Him. *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29)*. We who have been saved learn His heart while doing the work that Jesus entrusts to us. In a life of serving the gospel, we come to know ever more deeply how great the love was with which Jesus saved us.

Even as we do the work of God, our shortcomings are revealed. We see ourselves failing to treat others generously, putting our own thoughts first, and complaining even about small labors. At such times, think again of the grace that saved us. Jesus knew even these very sins of ours and had them passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. The more we know that love, the more we lower our hearts, which used to exalt ourselves, and rely on Jesus.

Those who have received the remission of sins have a heart that wishes others, too, to enjoy this grace. According to the will

of Jesus, who said to give freely what has been received freely, we, too, preach the gospel and serve that work together. It is labor offered out of thankfulness for the salvation we ourselves have received. When people who had suffered because of sin believe in the gospel and come to give thanks to God, we rejoice too.

As we follow Jesus, there are also times when we must lay down our own will and endure hardships. But we do not walk that path by our own strength alone. The Father numbers even the hairs of our heads and regards us as precious. When we rely on God, who saved us, we can walk by faith even in the midst of fear. This means taking off the burden of trying to complete the remission of sins by our own labors, and serving Jesus with the grace we have already received.

When we deal with the brothers and sisters who serve the gospel together with us, we must also remember this grace. If we know the great mercy we ourselves have received, we cannot carelessly condemn the shortcomings of others. We must first examine the plank in our own eye and help our brother. Jesus called those who do the will of the Father His own family. We who have received the same salvation must share one another's labors in the church and care with love for the weak, so that they, too, may live relying on the word.

The rest that Jesus gives is not something obtained only after finishing all our work. Even while we learn from Jesus, who is gentle and humble, and serve the gospel, He gives rest to our hearts.

I hope that you who encounter this word will clearly believe, through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in the remission of sins that Jesus has granted. If you are still weighed down under the burden of sin, accept the salvation that Jesus has accomplished. And those who have already received the

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remission of sins, live relying on that grace every day. Jesus, who called us, took all our sins upon Himself and was judged on the Cross. I hope that you will give thanks to Him and become people who enjoy rest of heart in Jesus. ✉

Contents

Preface ---------- 7

Sermons on Matthew Chapter 7

Sermons by Paul C. Jong

1. Discern with eyes that see clearly
(Matthew 7:1–6) ---------- 21
2. The children who pray and the good Father
(Matthew 7:7–12)---------- 31
3. Reject covetousness
(Matthew 7:13–21) ---------- 39
4. Be one who builds his house on the rock
(Matthew 7:13–29) ---------- 49
5. Can we do the will of the Father?
(Matthew 7:20–27) ---------- 66
6. He who does the will of the Father by faith
(Matthew 7:21)---------- 84
7. At the place where He ended His words
(Matthew 7:28–29) ---------- 104

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Sermons on Matthew Chapter 8

Sermons by Paul C. Jong

1. You who have received the remission of sins,
offer the gift that Moses commanded
(Matthew 8:1–4) ---------- 113
2. The place opened to those who believe in the word
(Matthew 8:5–13)---------- 141
3. The Lord, who Himself bore our weaknesses
(Matthew 8:14–17) ---------- 154
4. The faith of the person Jesus praised
(Matthew 8:5–13)---------- 162
5. Draw a clear line in your heart to live for the Lord
(Matthew 8:18–22) ---------- 168
6. It is right to live for the Spirit
(Matthew 8:18–22) ---------- 176
7. Jesus, who is with us in the midst of the tempest
(Matthew 8:23–27) ---------- 183
8. The heart that looks on those who have been set free
(Matthew 8:28–34) ---------- 191

Sermons on Matthew Chapter 9

Sermons by Paul C. Jong

1. He healed the paralytic
(Matthew 9:1–8) ---------- 203
2. New wine into new wineskins
(Matthew 9:9–17)---------- 214

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3. Those who came forward by faith in the midst of suffering
(Matthew 9:18–26) ---------- 227
4. The reason the Lord came to this earth
(Matthew 9:1–38)---------- 240
5. The Lord, who came to call sinners
(Matthew 9:10–13) ---------- 261
6. Words that acknowledge the Savior and a life that follows the word
(Matthew 9:27–34) ---------- 278
7. The Holy Spirit is obtained after one receives the remission of sins
(Matthew 9:18–31) ---------- 291
8. Let us learn the Savior's heart and ask for workers for the harvest
(Matthew 9:35–38) ---------- 307

Sermons on Matthew Chapter 10

Sermons by Paul C. Jong
1. The disciples who walk faithfully according to the word with which He sent them
(Matthew 10:1–15) ---------- 323
2. Freely you have received, freely give
(Matthew 10:1–15) ---------- 338

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3. The disciple who walks according to the promise
even in the midst of suffering
(Matthew 10:16–23)---------- 350
4. Prepare an actual faith
(Matthew 10:16–23)---------- 363
5. Within the Father's care, confess the Savior
(Matthew 10:24–33)---------- 380
6. Take up your own cross and follow the Lord
(Matthew 10:34–39)---------- 393
7. The Lord, who remembers even small acts of service
(Matthew 10:40–42)---------- 408

Sermons on Matthew Chapter 11

Sermons by Paul C. Jong
1. Do not reject the true love of the Lord
(Matthew 11:1–14) ---------- 423
2. From the days of John the Baptist until now
the kingdom of heaven suffers violence
(Matthew 11:1–15) ---------- 438
3. The people who stood before what they had heard and seen
(Matthew 11:1–19) ---------- 458
4. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that
John the Baptist testified of
(Matthew 11:12–19)---------- 470
5. The responsibility of the cities that received much
(Matthew 11:20–24)---------- 509

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6. You will find rest for your souls
(Matthew 11:25–30)---------- 521
7. Become one whose debt of ten thousand talents
has been canceled
(Matthew 11:20–30)---------- 533

Sermons on Matthew Chapter 12

Sermons by Paul C. Jong
1. Let us follow the Holy Spirit with one heart
(Matthew 12:1–8)---------- 561
2. The Lord of the Sabbath
(Matthew 12:1–8)---------- 585
3. The place where the hand of restoration continues
(Matthew 12:9–21) ---------- 601
4. The Lord, who came to break the religions of the world
(Matthew 12:1–21) ---------- 613
5. Guard your spiritual life well
(Matthew 12:1–21) ---------- 631
6. Reveal your faith with your heart and lips
(Matthew 12:22–37)---------- 653
7. The time to respond before the One who is greater
(Matthew 12:38–45)---------- 665
8. A family that comes together in the Father's will
(Matthew 12:46–50)---------- 677

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CHAPTER

7

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Discern with eyes that see clearly

< Matthew 7:1–6 >

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”

The word that comes back to the one who judges

Jesus turns the eyes that were examining other people back toward the person himself. Even the person who tells his brother what has gone wrong is under the judgment of God. He first deals with the heart that regards oneself as the one who judges and only the other person as the one who is judged. Anyone who forgets this fact comes to look down on his brother even while saying what is right.

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Let us read verse 1. *"Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1)*. The warning Jesus gives makes us think about the results of our words. Finding out other people's faults does not guarantee one's own rightness. The person who judges is also standing in the place where he must answer before God for his own heart and deeds.

The passage says that there is a speck in the brother's eye. Because of that speck, the brother needs help. At the same time, there is a plank in the eye of the person who points it out. Jesus reveals the brother's problem and the speaker's problem together. The truth cannot be treated differently depending on whose wrong one looks at.

If you clearly know another person's wrong, examine your own heart as well with that same word. It is easy to scrutinize the other person's words strictly while thinking that there is always a reason for one's own words. But the word God has given has the same authority over both the one who hears and the one who speaks.

The person who is also measured himself

Let us read verse 2. *"For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matthew 7:2)*. Jesus turns the judgment a person applies to others back upon that person himself as well. In verses 1 and 2, the words *"judgment"* and *"measure"* interlock again and again, making clear the meaning that one receives just as one has used. In *"with what judgment you judge"* and *"with the measure you use,"* these phrases point to the very standard that person used, so no standard has been given by which he alone can escape.

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To measure is to weigh and determine whether the other person did well or poorly. We sometimes draw a conclusion about a whole person from a single action of his. But for ourselves, we attach the circumstances that led us to that action and many reasons. This is applying a strict standard to others and a loose standard to ourselves over the same wrong.

Jesus sets this unfair heart before the word. Before you speak of your brother's wrong, apply that judgment to yourself first. A person who urges others to be truthful comes to acknowledge his own lies first. A person who urges others to serve comes to look back on what he himself is living for.

When one examines oneself, the weight of one's words also changes. A person who knows his own shortcomings does not make his brother's failure material for boasting about himself. Instead of the satisfaction gained by lowering the other person, he comes to seek for his brother to understand the word and stand upright. What this passage calls one to turn around is not merely a few words, but the heart with which one looks at one's brother.

The eye that sees the speck yet does not know the plank

Let us read verse 3. *"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3)*. A plank is the large timber laid across the top of the pillars to support the roof when a house is built, that is, a main beam. It is saying that even though a timber that large is in his eye, he finds the small speck in someone else's eye but does not realize the plank in his own eye. Even if one has the ability to see problems, one may have no awareness of oneself.

Verses 3 and 4 are both questions, asking *"why"* and *"how."* Before giving the command in verse 5, Jesus first asks, so that the person who has long examined his brother's eye may look back on his own eye by himself. Knowing another person's condition in detail cannot take the place of knowing oneself before God.

If we hold on to our own desires as though they were right, we cannot help others rightly. If we point out the other person's faults to gain our own profit, and exhort him to make him follow our will, we must first set that heart right before God. Jesus deals even with the heart behind the words that show on the outside.

Serving fame, wealth, or power as the goal of our hearts as though it were God, while calling on God with our mouths—this is the plank that covers the eye. In that state, whether a brother brings us profit and whether he listens well to our words become the standard of judgment. To help our brother according to the word of God, we must first throw away the wrong standard we are holding on to.

Recognizing one's own wrong requires honesty. When our wrong is revealed, if we add that the other person also did wrong, our gaze moves back to our brother. What Jesus points out is precisely the plank in one's own eye. The wrong you must acknowledge, acknowledge just as it is, whether the other person's wrong is brought to light or not.

What to examine before saying you will help

Let us read verse 4. *"Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:4)*. The one who speaks steps forward, offering to help. But Jesus first looks at the state in

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which he says those words. The mere form of words offering help does not make that exhortation right.

To remove a brother's speck, one must first be able to see clearly. When a person whose eye is covered reaches out his hand to the other person, he may add his own problem to that person. Rebuking a brother because he does not follow one's will, or repeatedly talking about a brother's faults to relieve one's own feelings, are such cases.

Exhortation requires a heart that is willing to listen to the other person's words. If one thinks one already knows everything, the brother's explanation sounds only like an excuse. If we accept the word in which Jesus told us to examine our own eye first, we come to distinguish between what we actually know and what we have added from our own thoughts.

The other person who appears in the passage is a brother. The purpose of helping him does not lie in having him remain a person who did wrong. It lies in his speck being removed so that he sees clearly. If, even after finishing the exhortation, one keeps calling the other person by the same fault without end, one must examine again one's first words about helping one's brother.

Jesus, who exposes hypocrisy

In verse 5, Jesus calls out, *"Hypocrite!" (Matthew 7:5)*. Hypocrisy is the state of speaking words that call on and serve God outwardly while holding on to something else inwardly. In Matthew chapter 15, too, there were those who avoided honoring their parents by saying that what they were to give to their parents had been given to God, and Jesus called out to them, *"Hypocrites!" (Matthew 15:7)*. In chapter 7, that discrepancy between the outside and the inside is revealed in the words

directed toward a brother. It is demanding a right life of others while turning away from the wrong that is in oneself. The Lord does not leave this discrepancy hidden.

Hypocrisy is not corrected by saying many religious words. We must bring out our own wrongs so that the word may deal with them. If we do not acknowledge our shortcomings before God, we end up using even the word we know to exalt ourselves. But if we apply the word to ourselves first, the starting point of exhortation changes.

In the matter of sin, too, no one can stand above other people by his own righteousness. Whether it is a brother's shortcomings or our own, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. As the price of the sins thus passed on to Him, the Lord shed His blood on the Cross, received judgment in our place, and died, and He came back to life from death and rose again. Whether one is the one who judges or the one who is judged, those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with their hearts receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Those who believe in this grace cannot say that they became righteous because they were better than others. They became righteous because of the salvation Jesus accomplished. Therefore, whenever you see your brother's weakness, remember the grace bestowed on you. As one who has received the same grace, you must help him believe the word and stand upright.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, there are times when you must acknowledge your own wrong words and heart. At such times, lay down even the religious pretexts for covering up the wrong. Believing in the remission of sins you have already received, you need only acknowledge honestly what was

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wrong and turn back. A heart that knows grace does not look for reasons to keep insisting on its own wrong.

The order of removing the plank first

Jesus says, *"First remove the plank from your own eye" (Matthew 7:5)*. The command to do something first sets the order in which to put it into practice. Before hurrying to correct your brother, you must correct your own heart. First of all, lay down the attitude of demanding of the other person alone the word you do not apply to yourself.

Acknowledging one's own wrong first does not make the brother's wrong justified. In the passage, there is still a speck to be removed. But to do that rightly, the person who speaks must himself accept the word. Within the single verse of verse 5, the command to remove the plank and the word that you will remove the speck are both contained.

If you have put your own interests first, throw away that greed. If you added words without confirming the facts, take back the words you added. If you spread your brother's wrong to other people and sought recognition that you were right, turn away from that attitude. When you acknowledge your own wrongs specifically, you also come to accept specifically the command to remove the plank.

Do not make your turning back first depend on the other person's attitude. If you say you will correct your wrong only if the other person apologizes first or acknowledges your words, the order the Lord has given keeps being pushed back. The word of Jesus has been given first to you yourselves, who are now hearing that word.

Keeping this order requires faith. One may be afraid of losing the strength to exhort if one humbles oneself. But the strength to help people rightly does not come from appearing to be a person without fault. It comes from believing and following the word of God oneself and helping one's brother with that word.

A heart that sees clearly and helps a brother

Let us read the last part of the passage. *"And then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5)*. The words *"and then"* set the order, and *"to remove"* looks ahead to what will take place after that order is followed. Jesus does not prevent the act of removing the speck itself, and He placed the end of this command in helping one's brother. Once we have removed the plank that was in our own eye, our brother's problem is seen more accurately. We become able to help without mixing our own desires with the other person's problem.

A person who sees clearly distinguishes between an actual wrong and his own displeasure. Just because a brother's words do not please you does not mean that they are all sin. Say precisely what has gone against the word, and refrain from words that rashly pass judgment on the other person's whole character. Speaking so that the person hearing the exhortation can know what he must turn from is the way to help your brother.

You must also rejoice when your brother's wrong is corrected. A heart that thinks that if the other person becomes right, the authority one had in pointing it out earlier will be reduced is still self-centered. Removing the speck is a work meant to bring benefit to your brother. Receive with joy his accepting the word of the Lord and standing in peace.

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You, too, need your brother's help. If you think of yourself only as a person who always removes specks, it is hard to accept the exhortation others give. As one who hears the word together with them, listen also to the words that point out your shortcomings. Before Jesus, both the one who speaks and the one who listens are under the rule of that word.

The discernment that treats what is holy as precious

Let us read verse 6. *"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces" (Matthew 7:6)*. Jesus, who said not to judge a brother rashly, goes on immediately to speak of discernment. It means that the word not to judge others does not mean not to distinguish anything at all. A person who has removed the plank from his own eye and has come to see clearly can also see how precious things should be handled.

The passage places *"what is holy"* and *"pearls"* side by side, and puts the word *"your"* before the pearls. It is a word spoken about what is already in the disciples' hands. That pearl is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which gives life to sinners. Because the salvation the Lord accomplished is all contained in it, those who have received that truth cannot change it to fit people's reactions or make it material for quarrels.

What this warning points to is not a person's social status or outward appearance. The passage makes us see the actual attitude of trampling what is holy under foot and turning to tear apart the one who preaches it. If you set someone down as an adversary only because he asked a question that was uncomfortable for you, you go back again to the judging that

was warned against earlier. Asking in order to know the word and seeking to trample the word differ in purpose, so examine that difference honestly.

The word *"turn and tear you in pieces" (Matthew 7:6)* is a charge meant to protect the disciples who preach the gospel. However, Jesus only said not to give and not to cast; He did not say to tear the other person to pieces. Even after discerning a harmful attitude, do not oppose it in the same way, but entrust the handling of that matter to God, who will judge. And do not turn away from others who want to hear the word just because one person tramples it; give that pearl freely to those who want to hear.

Jesus made those who step forward to fix their brother's eye examine their own eyes first, and He gave those who have come to see clearly the discernment to treat what is holy as precious. When we follow that word, words that seek to defeat others decrease, and words that actually help our brother come alive. Apply the word to yourself first, and with a heart that has received grace, see your brother clearly and help him. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The children who pray and the good Father

< Matthew 7:7–12 >

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

The One who first said to pray

The reason we can pray is that God has said to ask. Jesus did not first ask what the disciples had the ability to obtain. He promised to give to those who ask, to let those who seek find, and to open to those who knock. The starting point of prayer lies in God, who gave this promise.

Let us read verse 7. *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7)*. After each command, a promise of an answer follows. Jesus leads the disciples out of looking only at their own ability and turns them toward God, who gives.

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For people, the way of solving things by themselves has been laid out before the way of asking for help. Since there are many things they can handle with their own wisdom and experience, prayer keeps getting pushed back. Then, when they are faced with something that is not resolved even when they do so, this word telling us to ask turns us back to the Father. Acknowledging one's lack and asking God for what one needs is to believe and follow this word.

Serving God also requires help. There are times when, even while knowing the work we must do, we have difficulty because we do not know how to handle it. At such times, do not just calculate your own limits and stop; ask God for wisdom and strength. Jesus' command makes precisely such a person come to God.

The faith that asks, seeks, and knocks

The three commands follow one after another. After asking, one does not stay still but seeks, and one does not stop at finding but knocks. One seeks again a way to make good use even of what one has received by asking, and if that way is blocked, one knocks again before the blocked door. Jesus teaches, together with prayer, a life of acting by faith. Even after asking with your mouth, carry out the work entrusted to you with a heart that believes in God.

If you have asked God for wisdom, listen to the word and examine the work that has been entrusted to you. If you need help, share that need with the people who serve together with you. Asking and seeking go on together within faith.

When we look again at the promise of verse 7, He said that for the one who asks *"it will be given"* and for the one who

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knocks *"it will be opened."* Neither the One who gives nor the One who opens is the person who asks himself. The one who knocks looks to the One who opens the door and holds on to His promise. To entrust the answer to God while continuing to ask and seek toward Him is the attitude of faith.

You who receive this command, do not separate prayer from life. If, while asking God for something, you keep putting off the small responsibilities entrusted to you, what you have asked for and the direction in which you live will diverge. Ask the Lord for help, and, relying on that help, faithfully carry out what you can do now.

The promise given to those who ask

Let us read verse 8. *"For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew 7:8)*. Taking up again the three commands of verse 7, He confirms that the one who asks receives, the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it is opened. If we read this word in reverse, it also means that the one who does not ask does not receive, and the door that is not knocked on is not opened. God has promised to give, and He has entrusted the asking to us.

People draw back even from the place of prayer on account of their own lack. But the Lord's promise is directed toward those who ask. What God receives is not something to boast of that you have prepared, but a heart that relies on God.

You who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit call God Father. Because you have become children, you have also been given a place to ask of the Father. You can ask the Father for what you cannot do by your own strength. In serving the church, preaching the truth,

and helping those who believe together with you, too, you need the Father's help. Lay before God the needs you tried to bear alone.

Even while waiting for the answer, remember who it is that gave the promise. Through the word that follows, Jesus makes known what kind of One the Father is. The assurance of prayer becomes all the clearer through knowing and trusting His character.

Will he give a stone to a son who asks for bread?

Let us read verses 9 and 10. *"Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?" (Matthew 7:9–10)*. Jesus speaks of what parents do in giving their children something to eat. What the son asked for is bread and fish, that is, food to eat.

These two verses are in the form of a question, and Jesus did not supply the answer. When He asks whether there is anyone who would give a stone to a son asking for bread and a serpent to a son asking for a fish, the listeners answer for themselves that there are no such parents. From this clear fact that everyone knows, Jesus makes them look to the heavenly Father.

This example is a word given so that we would call it to mind when doubt still remains in our hearts even after we have asked. Just as children come to feel grateful to their parents when they ask their parents for what they need and receive it, those who have prayed and received realize that it is the Father's answer and give thanks. When you pray, honestly make known what you need, and believe the word that the Father gives good things to His children.

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The center of this parable does not lie in a technique by which children move their parents as they want. It lies in the fact that parents know how to give good things to their children. Jesus turns the eyes of the one who prays toward the Father, who gives.

How much more the Father who is in heaven

Let us read verse 11. *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11)*. While plainly exposing the evil of people as it is, Jesus acknowledges that they give good things to their children. And He has us look to the goodness of the Father, who is higher than they.

The words *"how much more"* contain a clear comparison. It means this: if even people who fall short give good things to their children, will not the heavenly Father give good things to His children? We must not think of God's goodness as small, fitting it to the imperfection of people. The Lord makes us believe in the abundance of the Father.

The goodness of the Father, who takes evil ones as His children, was revealed most greatly in the salvation of Jesus. Jesus, whom the Father sent, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lives, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment in our place, and died, and He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit as a

gift, and become children of God. Among the good things the Father gives, there is nothing greater than this.

Therefore, children of God do not count salvation as a reward for their own zeal. Believing in the grace they have already received, they ask the Father for what they need. Ask for strength to do the work God has entrusted to you, wisdom to care for those who serve together with you, and faith to hold on to the word in the midst of difficulties. The Father knows what His children need.

It is also the Father who determines what is good. There are times when, knowing that having too much would instead lead to things going wrong, He delays what was asked for; so even His not giving it right away can be an answer. If you insist only on the method you first thought of, you can easily miss the help He is already giving. Accept with thanks, too, His correcting your thoughts through the word or His letting you receive help from those who serve together with you. Prayer is connected to a life that trusts in the Father's goodness and follows His will.

Turn the desire to be treated well toward others

Let us read verse 12. *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12)*. This verse begins with *"Therefore."* He is drawing the conclusion by taking up the word telling us to ask and the word saying that the Father gives good things. Jesus also speaks to those who ask of the Father about their responsibility in how they treat other people, and He makes the heart that wants to receive good things lead on to doing good things to others.

People know their own needs well. When they have difficulties, they want someone to listen to what they say and

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actually help them. Jesus turns that very desire toward other people as well. It means that instead of waiting until others first recognize our needs, we are to look into what help other people need.

If you want to be respected, listen seriously to what other people say as well. If you want others to speak according to the facts when they speak of your wrongs, keep to the facts when you speak of other people as well. If you want to receive help when you need it, help other people with what has been entrusted to you. The word leads the desire to be treated well into concrete obedience.

If we read this word together with the preceding word on prayer, the heart toward God also comes into view. To ask of God, who lacks nothing, is to acknowledge Him as the One who is able to give, and the Father is pleased that His children look to the Father for what they hope for. Children who want to receive good things from God serve the Father with prayer and praise, and by being faithful in the work each has been given.

That does not mean, however, that this command is a bargain telling us to do good in order to buy answers from God. If we serve with the calculation of obtaining blessings, we end up using God instead. Serving because we are thankful for the grace we have received is the way of children. In the light of the word, correct also the attitude of seeking good things toward God while seeking only your own benefit toward people.

The law is the commands God established, and the prophets are those who taught the will of God to the people. By saying that this word to treat others is those commands and that teaching, Jesus makes known that this exhortation does not stop at trivial manners. A life lived according to the word God has given shows in one's attitude toward other people, and the confession that one will serve the Lord extends even to looking after the

needs of the people one is with. Those who know the grace they have received do not turn away from those they are to serve.

Trust the Father and ask for today's needs

Jesus led those who ask to the heavenly Father. He led them to believe that the Father gives good things, and to treat other people with that faith. It is to ask with a heart that relies on the Father, and to help other people with what one has received.

Make known to God what help you need now. Seek according to the word God has given, consult with the people who serve together with you, and ask in faith for the way the Father opens up for you. Prayer to the Father becomes strength to fulfill today's responsibilities.

Begin also to look after the needs of other people. If you think of the help you would like to receive, you will know with what heart you should approach that person. As children who ask the heavenly Father for good things, I hope you will live gladly doing the good works entrusted to you. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Reject covetousness

< Matthew 7:13–21 >

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

The Lord said, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13–14)*. That the way is difficult means that it is narrow and steep. Who would like to pass up a big road, such as a four-lane or eight-lane road, and go on a narrow path only ten or twenty centimeters wide on a cliff, where one can barely set down one foot? But the Lord said that the gate of life

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is narrow, so few find it, and that the gate of destruction is wide and broad. It is that the way to obtain life is difficult.

The very life of believing in the Lord, knowing and believing the truth and so being born again, and receiving the remission of sins and living as a righteous person, is difficult. That is why, even though the way to obtain life is plainly visible to their eyes, people do not go on it and do not believe, because that way is too difficult. It is not that people cannot believe because they do not know. The way of truth is there. But they do not want to step onto that way. Why? It is that they do not want to go on it because, if they go that way, they are persecuted, the way is narrow, and it is too much of a single, one-way path. The Lord spoke this word to all people, but I believe that He spoke it especially to those who say that they believe in Jesus.

Those who believe in Jesus also go on the broad way. The broad way refers to the way that the people of the world approve of. Believing in Jesus and quitting drinking, believing in Jesus and quitting smoking, believing in Jesus and living kindly and so becoming a good person—this is what all the people of the world, too, hope for and want. When someone believes in Jesus and becomes a kind person who does not curse and does not make drunken scenes, even those who do not believe in Jesus applaud, because it is above all to their own benefit: “Right, you believe well. Believe in Jesus. A person has to believe in Jesus to become a decent human being.” That is because they themselves suffer no harm. But when someone believes in Jesus, receives the remission of all sins, is born again as a righteous person, and becomes one who preaches this gospel of the remission of sins, people dislike it. It is because they are darkness, so they dislike the children of light, and because, when they meet the children of light, their own darkness is exposed.

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There was a certain pseudo-religious group. The leader of that group is a person who has nothing to do with the Bible. He does not open the Bible and preach. It is said that he claimed that he himself had no sin, did away with worship services, and lived claiming that his group was the kingdom of heaven. One thing that is clear is that this man is not a person who believes in Jesus.

Faith that seeks to become a good person is the broad way

Yet when such a religious group behaves that way, people regard everyone who believes in Jesus as being like that. Dear fellow believers, religion and the faith of the born-again are clearly different. If we look at certain religious organizations, it is said that they do not smoke, do not drink, live kindly, and never curse. But, dear fellow believers, the purpose of believing in Jesus is not to become a good person who does not smoke or drink, a person of upright conduct. To put it clearly, believing in Jesus is to pass on to Jesus all the sins in our hearts, the sins committed in deeds, and the sins we will commit in the future, and so to receive the remission of sins, become righteous, and become children of God.

Believing in Jesus in order to become a good person who does not drink or smoke is the broad way. It is the way that the people of the world approve of. That is a mistaken human way of thinking. There are many people who believe in Jesus in order to be changed by believing in Jesus and become good people. If one is going to believe in Jesus in order to become a good person, one can become a good person even by shaving one's head and going into the mountains. When a person goes around like a good-for-nothing, people say, "Go to church, will you, so that

you can become a good person." It is that people have it wrong. It is that Satan the devil has wrongly planted such a thought in people.

For example, there are stories of a man who was a notorious good-for-nothing in his neighborhood believing in Jesus and becoming a very gentle person. People boast of such things as evidence that one has believed in Jesus.

But causing people to take that as evidence of having believed in Jesus is the work of the devil. Believing in Jesus is a good thing. But not drinking after believing in Jesus is not the mark of believing in Jesus. Speaking in tongues does not mean that one believes in Jesus. Having become a good person by believing in Jesus, a person who used to curse a lot having become a person who does not curse—this is not believing in Jesus. That is learning hypocrisy. Dear fellow believers, when a person who used to steal readily stops stealing, a person who used to fight readily stops fighting, a person who used to swindle readily stops swindling, and a person famous for never greeting others becomes famous for greeting others well, who would be most pleased? Would the people of the world be pleased, or would God be pleased? Even when one does this, there is still sin in the heart. It is that there is sin in the heart because one commits sin every day. So even though the people of the world applaud, when God looks at it, He says, "Stop putting on hypocrisy. Stop living a false life."

Dear fellow believers, is that believing in Jesus? Concerning the purpose of believing in Jesus, Jesus said, *"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'" (John 3:5)*. It is that being born again of water and the Spirit, that is, a sinner receiving the remission of sins by believing in Jesus, is the purpose of believing in Jesus. We must believe in Jesus knowing

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the purpose. Yet people have made Christianity into a religion. The extreme example of this is the pseudo-religious group I mentioned earlier. It is said that that group did not let husbands and wives live together. Even granting that the leader did so following his own greed, the people who followed him there for ten years are more foolish. What kind of believing in God is it to not let people who are married live together? Is it written that way in the Bible?

Dear fellow believers, people want to go on the broad way, and the broad way has a wide gate. If one wants to go on the broad way, one can go on the broad way at any time. Even as for Jesus, one believes in Him if one wants to; it is as one pleases. But the narrow way, the way of life, is not so. The way is difficult, and the gate is narrow as well. It is that that gate is both hard to find and hard to pass through. Even though there are many churches in this world, there are not many churches that truly cause us to receive the remission of sins, cause us to know the truth, rightly preach the word of truth of the Bible, and cause us to rightly understand and know it. Each denomination says that its own denomination is the truth, that it is orthodox, that it is the descendant of martyrs. But that is a story told only within their own denomination, and they disparage one another's denominations and exalt their own. Those who go on the broad way of the world believe in Jesus without being born again.

"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness"

Those who go on such a broad way have greed. They have avarice. The Lord said, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves"*

(Matthew 7:15). The conclusion of those who go on the broad way is wealth. It is money. The Lord said, *"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matthew 7:16–17)*. Then, dear fellow believers, what is it that those who go on the broad way, the religious leaders who have not received the remission of sins, desire? It is covetousness. They gather people together and, saying that whoever just comes in is born again and is a child of God, they increase their numbers and set their hearts on building a big chapel.

It is avarice. It is that they gather people together and strive to make their churches grow in order to gather money, and when even one person comes in, they do not truly ask and teach him as follows: "You are a sinner. You must receive the remission of sins. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus Himself had your sins transferred to Him, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment in your place, rose again, and saved you. Do you believe in Jesus? Do you still have sin now?" Jesus said, *"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15)*. For us the born-again, leading a life of faith is rejecting covetousness. The purpose of our believing in Jesus Christ is to be born again, and the life of faith that a person who has received the remission of sins by knowing and believing the truth of the water, the blood, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ leads after that is rejecting covetousness. Only when we cast away covetousness do we not bear the fruit of falsehood, the fruit of destruction.

But if we harbor covetousness and pursue covetousness, we cannot do the work of the Spirit. We cannot lead a life of faith, and we cannot preach the gospel to people either. If there is

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covetousness in our hearts, we must cast it away. We must reject it. Covetousness is not just one or two things. Dear fellow believers, why does a person fall into ruin? Why does he suffer destruction? It is because of covetousness. The very first thing Satan the devil did to Adam and Eve was to stir up covetousness. God had said, *"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17)*, but the devil urged them to eat that fruit. The devil brings covetousness, and if we harbor covetousness, we suffer destruction. All good things come from above, from God. When we cast away covetousness and, following the Spirit, go forward toward the work of saving souls, serving God, God gives us all the best things from above. But it is that if we pursue covetousness, all those good things do not come to us.

The life of faith of the born-again is rejecting covetousness. It is enjoying things only within the bounds that God has permitted, giving thanks within those bounds, and setting our hearts on the work of saving souls. It is not setting our hearts on the visible things of this world, but setting our hearts on the work of God, the work of saving souls. Does covetousness come into your heart and mine, or not? It does. What happens if we pursue covetousness? We cannot do the work of the Spirit. It is said that one life is more precious than the whole world, but it is that if we pursue covetousness, we cannot save even one soul. Only when we reject covetousness do the best things come. You and I live harboring many covetous desires of the flesh without realizing it ourselves. But the Lord said to reject all covetousness, and that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

Dear fellow believers, how much covetousness are we harboring? It is because of covetousness that our life of faith does not go well, because of covetousness that we cannot follow the Lord, and because of covetousness that we are not doing the

work of the Spirit. It is said that we know the tree by its fruit, and if we reject covetousness, receive with thanksgiving what God permits us, and live by faith, following the Spirit, God is One who can bring us many more precious things. And He does bring them. God never leaves those who follow the Spirit abandoned, but He fills what they need. The problem is that things go wrong when we harbor covetousness and pursue covetousness. It is said that the leader I mentioned earlier, too, secretly piled up a great deal of wealth. Dear fellow believers, false ones always pursue covetousness. Ministers who are not born again easily pursue covetousness.

Even born-again ministers will surely pursue covetousness if they do not follow the Spirit. Lot, Abraham's nephew, pursued covetousness. He went into the land of Sodom and lived there. He could not lead even one person to salvation, and he only barely preserved his own life and came out bringing his daughters, while his wife became a pillar of salt and all the property he had was burned up in the fire. If even a righteous person was like that, then all the religious leaders who are not born again, those who pursue covetousness, are all false ones. They come wearing sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. They only seek to take away what belongs to people.

The Lord comes to a heart that has cast away covetousness

As I see such things, I also guard myself. "Ah, a person can become like that. I myself can truly become like that, too." And with that, I come to my senses once again. "Is there anything in me that pursues the covetousness of the flesh? Since I am a

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human being, I can become like that, so I must cast away covetousness." That leader is clearly not a person who believes in Jesus. People call such a thing a pseudo-religious group, and it is literally a pseudo-religion. Everything that human beings have made is religion, and believing in what God has accomplished is faith. Faith is believing and following what God has said—that since He has saved us in this way, He will give us the kingdom of heaven—and the work that God Himself planned and Himself accomplished by sending Jesus. Faith is looking up to what God has done, believing it, and following it. But religion is what human beings have made by themselves.

This age is racing toward the end. What you and I must be on the alert for as we live is casting away covetousness. Tens, hundreds, and thousands of kinds of covetousness come into our hearts without ceasing. If we receive all those guests, there is no longer any room to receive Jesus. When Jesus came to this earth, there was no place for Him in the inn, so He was born in a stable. It is that because there were too many people in the inn, Jesus was born in a stable, which was lowly but had no guests. What does this tell us? It tells us that the Lord comes to those who have cast away covetousness, and that He can come into us, dwell at rest, and work together with us. Human beings are by nature lumps of covetousness. Telling a person who is not born again to cast away covetousness is the same as telling him that he might as well die. If you take away covetousness, nothing is left in a human being. But the born-again must cast away covetousness. Why? It is because if we pursue covetousness, we become like Lot, and because we cannot follow the Spirit, so we cannot bear spiritual fruit and cannot do the work of the Spirit.

Then how should we live? We must live casting away covetousness, doing the work of the Spirit, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. This is the yardstick by which you and I must live.

Our conduct can be this way or that way, but if our hearts become soaked in covetousness, things go wrong. That is why the Bible says, *"Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23)*, and says, *"Take away the dross from silver, And it will go to the silversmith for jewelry" (Proverbs 25:4)*. It is so for me, and it is so for you as well: only when we cast away covetousness can we bear good fruit. That is not to say that we should do nothing at all. We should do what God has permitted us, but we must cast away covetousness. This is the life of faith. Only when we cast away covetousness after being born again do we come to follow the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit. I hope that all of us will cast away covetousness and live bearing the fruit of the Spirit. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Be one who builds his house on the rock

< Matthew 7:13–29 >

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?—ASV). And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not

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do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

I will share the word by asking questions and answering them on the basis of the word the Lord spoke. First of all, the Lord said, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13–14).* Why did He tell us to enter by the narrow gate? It means that the gate of life is narrow and the way is rugged, so there are few who find it, but the gate of destruction is wide and broad, so many people go in by it; therefore, if we are to obtain life, we must enter by the narrow gate. And He said that if we enter by the narrow gate, that way, too, is difficult. I understand that the word "difficult" means very narrow and dangerous.

Why did the Lord tell us to enter by the narrow gate? We can understand it if we ask ourselves again and think about it. It is because this does not simply end as one saying or one sentence, but is related to the life of people and to your salvation and mine. That is why the Lord said that only when we enter by the narrow gate do we obtain salvation and obtain life. But He said that if we enter by the narrow gate, the way is difficult. Is the way of obtaining life, obtaining everlasting life, and following the Lord so smooth and easy? For it to be difficult means that it is hard. Dear fellow believers, is it easy to follow and serve the Lord? It is extremely difficult.

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There are many religions in this world, but we are not a religion. We are a matter of faith, of belief, and of the truth. There is only one truth. But in this world there are countless religions and beliefs. How many people there are who say that they themselves are God, who say that they themselves are Jesus, who say that they themselves are the Savior or the Holy Spirit! How many people there are, too, who each say that their own denomination is the truth! In the midst of all that, is it an easy thing to meet and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and to follow the Lord while spreading the gospel? It is extremely hard and difficult. If it were a broad way, anyone could plod along it, but this way is a very narrow single path. Because it is a single path, there is no side path cutting across apart from this way. We must follow exactly the way that the forefathers of faith who obtained life walked. Because going by another way bears another result, we must go by that narrow way.

Entering by this narrow gate the Lord spoke of is by no means an easy thing, but we must enter by the narrow gate. We must receive the remission of sins and go to the kingdom of heaven by believing in Jesus Christ, who is the narrow gate, and after receiving the remission of sins, we must follow the Lord and preach the gospel to many people throughout the whole world. The Lord said, *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9)*. The Lord called Himself the gate of life, the door of the sheep, the gate of the kingdom of heaven, and the gate of salvation. Only the Lord has spoken such words.

Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no one, whether a man or a god, who has personally made a way so that whoever believes in him will go to the kingdom of heaven and obtain salvation. In every religion there is a god and there are followers under it, and the religion says to the followers, "If you do this, you will obtain

everlasting life and obtain salvation, but if you cannot do so, you will not obtain everlasting life," and so shifts all the responsibility onto the followers. But our Lord did not do so; He said, *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6)*. The Lord Himself became the door of the sheep and paved the way so that the sheep could go to the kingdom of heaven. The Lord has saved us from all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is why the Lord said to enter by the narrow gate.

"Beware of false prophets"

The Lord said, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15)*. Why must we beware of false prophets? It is because they plunder while wearing sheep's clothing. Wearing sheep's clothing means that outwardly they act as if they were very meek and gentle. But inwardly they are ravenous wolves. If we do not want to be robbed of anything, we must beware of false prophets. It means that a false prophet shears off all the sheep's wool and sells off and devours everything, even the sheep's life, meat, and hide. That is why He said that a true prophet is a good thing, but false prophets must be guarded against.

Dear fellow believers, you and I must beware of false prophets. Around us there are many people who wear sheep's clothing and do the work of false prophets. Dear fellow believers, if you just lift up your eyes, are not such things countless and commonplace? Even in the church and even in the place of teaching, there are false prophets. They wear sheep's clothing

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and act like good people, but in the end they take away what the church members have and sell the members to make them their own food and fleshly gain. And in the end they sell the members to the devil and make them go to hell.

It says that they are ravenous wolves. It means that they rob. What does a robber steal? He steals money. Claiming that they are building a chapel, they have the members give large sums of money, and there are even cases in which those who give a lot of offerings obtain high positions. Is that all? Building offerings, offerings for a thousand burnt offerings, thanksgiving offerings, tithes, Sunday offerings, and so on—there are some fifteen kinds of offerings by name. This is no different from plundering. When you look at the big buses going to church, many elderly people are riding in them. They are going to offer their devotion. They simply save up crumpled money and take it with them. They go with devotion, with a sense of mission that only if they themselves go to church and pray will their descendants prosper.

Dear fellow believers, you must not be plundered. If you meet a false prophet, you are plundered. You gain nothing, and you are robbed even of what you have, and in the end even of your life and your own soul. Dear fellow believers, if you meet a false prophet, you go to hell even though you believe in Jesus. Even though you believe in Jesus, you fail to receive the remission of sins and become a sinner, and even though you believe in Jesus, you are placed under the law and lead a life of faith, and in the end your own soul goes to hell. That is why the Lord said to beware of false prophets.

"You will know them by their fruits"

The Lord said, *"You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16)*. Why did He say this? When we see the fruit, we come to know the true nature. However much a person who attends some church says that his church is good, if the members of that church are sinners who have sin in their hearts, everyone in that church, starting with the pastor, is a sinner. The Lord told us to know the minister by seeing the fruit, and to know whether a church is a good church or a bad church by seeing the fruit. A person cannot be known only by what he says. By meeting him once or twice and seeing only his outward appearance, his way of speaking, or his conduct, we cannot discern whether that person is a false one or not. But when we see the fruit, we can know clearly. We can know by asking the members of that church, "Do you have sin?" If one says that he has sin, and another person we meet also says that he has sin, we can know right away, "Ah, this church is not a true church but a church of a false prophet."

Dear fellow believers, among trees, too, there are apple trees, pear trees, and peach trees. Can you discern an apple tree, a peach tree, and a pear tree? People who have not lived in the countryside do not know well. Peach blossoms usually bloom reddish and pear blossoms bloom white, but just by looking at the blossoms people do not know well. Just as roses come in white roses, red roses, and yellow roses, people merely think, "I suppose the flowers bloom like that depending on the tree," and usually do not know well what kind of tree that tree is. But when autumn comes and the trees bear fruit, they can know. With one look at the fruit, they know that this is a peach tree, this is a pear tree, and this is an apple tree. Who would say, when apples have grown on it, that this is a pear tree, or rather a peach tree? That

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is wrong. The Lord's telling us to know the tree by seeing the fruit is a word He spoke in order to give you and me wisdom.

Dear fellow believers, how can we know a good church and a bad church, a church that has the gospel and a church that does not? We know by asking. Since He said that we know the tree by seeing the fruit, we only need to meet people who are already attending that church and ask whether they have sin in their hearts or not. Also, if they acknowledge both, saying that the gospel of baptism is right and also that one receives the remission of sins even by believing only in the blood of the Cross, that too is a problem. Then we only need to think, "This church is a church that does not have the true gospel." That is why the Lord said this. Therefore, we must discern well and attend church.

The Lord said that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit. Why did He say this? Dear fellow believers, it is natural that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit. If the tree itself is good, can its fruit become bad? If the tree itself is bad, can it bear good fruit? That makes no sense. If the tree itself is good, it bears good fruit, and if the tree itself is bad, it bears bad fruit. This is a word He spoke concerning those who have received the remission of sins. The characteristic of those who have received the remission of sins is that they cannot practice evil to the end. Even if they think of and plan something evil, they cannot follow it through to the end. Because the Holy Spirit is within those who have received the remission of sins, they cannot do so as they please. It means that they go on to a certain degree and then stop, and cannot do anything truly wicked.

Dear fellow believers, have you seen a very evil person among you who have received the remission of sins or among the workers? They may speak roughly, but have you seen a very evil and vicious person? There is no such person. If they have

received the remission of sins, each may have a different temperament and individuality, but on the whole they are all good. They are sheep. There is no one who thinks evil thoughts and does evil deeds. When you get to know them, they are all fine. However good a person in this world may be, he cannot be compared with the heart of a person who has received the remission of sins. They are extremely pure, and their hearts are gentle. Dear fellow believers, a good tree cannot bear bad fruit.

But He said that a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Dear fellow believers, can a sinner bear the fruit of righteousness? Is there anyone who becomes righteous by hearing the gospel a sinner preaches? There is not. But there are many who become righteous by hearing the gospel the righteous preach. This is a word He spoke concerning those who have received the remission of sins.

"Everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord'"

The Lord said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21)*. Why did He say this? Dear fellow believers, not everyone enters the kingdom of heaven just because he believes in Jesus. It means that just because a person attends church, or prays well and zealously, saying, "Lord, Lord," that person is absolutely not therefore one who has received the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, is a person one who has received the remission of sins because he says, "Lord, Lord"? Is a person one who believes in Jesus because he attends church faithfully? No. That is attending as a religion. We are a matter of faith. Jesus Christ came to this earth, had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose

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again from death, and removed all our sins. To look up to that and believe it is belief and faith. But religious people regard Jesus as their own god, believe on their own, hold on on their own, and serve on their own, and then go to hell. It is absolutely not that everyone believes in Jesus just because he attends church or prays a lot.

This word of the Lord, that not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, is a word that says that not just anyone enters the kingdom of heaven because he believes in Jesus. The Lord said that only he who does the will of the Father enters the kingdom of heaven, so who is it that does the will of the Father? For a person to act, he must first have faith. Only when there are a plan and faith in his heart does he act as his head and heart direct. Then a person who has not received the remission of sins in his heart cannot live according to the will of God the Father. On the contrary, those who have received the remission of sins do the work the Father desires, because the Holy Spirit is in their hearts and they want to follow the Lord's will. Therefore, only the righteous enter the kingdom of heaven. It is saying that only those who have the Holy Spirit in their hearts by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit do the will of God the Father and enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord said, *"Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matthew 7:23)*. Why did He speak this word? Lawlessness is not believing as God has spoken. Who are such people? They are false prophets, false church members, and false believers. It is not that they do not attend church; they are people who attend church but do not believe that Jesus has removed their sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, people who do not even try to believe it. It says that when such people die and stand before God, they will say, *"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name" (Matthew 7:22)*. It means that they stood

at the pulpit and preached sermons, taught, and led, and went out and preached the gospel, telling people to believe in Jesus. It means that they even cast out demons and did many wonders in the Lord's name. They gather many people, collect a lot of money, and spend enormous sums to build chapels as well. Many church members have the fixed notion that if they believe in a god and believe in a religion, they will be blessed only if they offer a great deal of devotion. So, thinking that they will be blessed only if they bring and offer a lot, they even compete in giving offerings.

They place the money envelopes up front and announce the names: "Deacon So-and-so has given an offering, Saint So-and-so has given an offering." What happens because they announce the names? Then the people who have been sitting there, not wanting to be outdone, produce more envelopes under this or that name. They think that if they bring and offer a lot, they will receive many blessings, and that they will get back more in proportion to what they have offered. To the people who have led their life of faith in this way, the Lord says that they are those who practice lawlessness, so they must depart. That is, it means that they are cast away before the Lord.

It means that they believed in Jesus to their heart's content, suffered much hardship, built chapels, were reviled a great deal because of the Lord, and brought and offered a great deal of money, yet their souls cannot go to the kingdom of heaven and are cast away. We must truly build the church that God desires. We must build a church in which the saints serve the Lord and the workers also serve the Lord. Workers who are not born again tend to demand service from the church members while not serving the Lord themselves. In the true Church of God, the workers, too, must serve the Lord, and the saints, too, must serve the Lord. That is the true church. And the true church must be a

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place where those who have received the remission of sins are gathered. It must be a church where God is, a church that refreshes God's heart.

The house built on the rock

The Lord said, *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock" (Matthew 7:24–25)*. Why did He say this? It means that whoever hears the word of God, holds onto that word, and firmly sets up his faith on the word is one who has built his house on the rock. It means that it is very solid. It means that such a person does not fall even if the end comes upon this world and some terrible tribulation comes. True faith is faith built on the rock. You and I believe in Jesus Christ. After believing in Jesus Christ, how can we live, standing firm and following the Lord, without our faith falling? It is by believing the word of God and planting our faith, our hearts, on that word. If we have such faith, we do not fall. It means that even if trials and difficulties come upon you personally and you are lacking, you come to stand steadfast because your faith stands firmly on the word of God.

But even if we have received the remission of sins, if we do not stand on the word of God, that is, if we do not stand by reading, hearing, holding onto, and believing the word, we collapse when tribulations, trials, and difficult circumstances come upon us. What kind of person is one whose faith is solid? Even though they seem lacking outwardly, the saints and the servants of God who hold onto the written word of God are the

ones who have very solid faith. Outwardly such people seem to be nothing much and look feeble. But whatever trials and difficulties come upon them, their faith stands solid, and they overcome all of it by faith. They do not fall. It means that by the faith that believes the word of God, they solve problems, drive away trials, and stand firm.

Therefore, the solidity of faith lies in holding onto and believing the word of God. Not holding onto the word of God, but saying only with one's own heart, "I believe, I believe," clenching one's teeth, straining until one's veins stand out, and making resolutions does not make one's faith good or make one overcome trials. Those who hold onto the word of God overcome difficulties, stand firm by faith, are able to follow God, and come to receive blessings from God.

The Lord spoke of the one who hears these words of His and does them. He does them because he believes and holds onto the word, because the word is right and is the truth. The faith of such a person is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. What kind of person is a wise person? The person who firmly holds onto the word of God and has made his faith solid by the faith that believes that word, the person who stands firmly on the word of God, is a wise person. Dear fellow believers, is not our salvation also like that? In the world there are many theories about salvation. There are people who say that they were saved because Jesus appeared in a dream and said, "I love you"; there are people who say that they were saved because they heard the voice of the Lord when they were praying; and there are people who say that they were saved because they believed from their mother's womb. There are people who say that original sin has been remitted and that actual sins are washed away by prayers of repentance, so that they will go to the kingdom of heaven later; there are people who say that one is saved even by believing only

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in the blood of the Cross; and there are people who say that they were saved by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. There are a great many.

But a wise person is a person who has built his house on the rock. It means knowing clearly what the Bible says, what the word of God says, holding onto that word, and standing firmly on it by the faith that believes the word. Because he stands on the word, saying, "I believe this word," that person becomes a wise person, his faith becomes faith approved by God, and the power to act by believing the word also arises. Therefore, you and I must become people of faith who have built their houses on the rock. Dear fellow believers, it is not that everything is done just because we have received the remission of sins. The remission of sins is the birth of a young life; once it is born, is everything done? It must drink its mother's milk. Drinking its mother's milk during the first year after birth is extremely important. Drinking cow's milk or rice gruel right after birth and drinking its mother's milk are completely different. Mother's milk contains every nutrient as well as antibodies that can overcome diseases. It means that if a baby grows up drinking it, then later, when it catches a disease, the strength that was hidden in the milk it has already drunk is brought out and drives the disease away.

It is the same with spiritual children. The first year after receiving the remission of sins is extremely important. Whether one has purely fed on the word for a year, or has only let the time pass without hearing or believing the word, is important. How is it with those who have only let the time pass? Whenever they encounter even a small matter, they always totter. They have no strength. When the wind blows this way they go this way, and when it blows that way they go that way; following the waves and following the wind, they follow the currents of the world.

Therefore, it is not that everything is done because one has been born again; from then on, one must hold onto the word of God. "My circumstances are like this, so what word should I hold onto? What does the Bible say? Among the words I have heard, what was said about this matter?" If you have not heard a word, you must hold onto the word that the other person preaches to you as you have fellowship. If you hold onto the word of God, you do not fall. Even when the floods come and the winds blow, you do not fall, because you have built your house on the rock. A great rock stands solid even when huge waves come upon it. If we believe this word, that is how it comes to be.

But what happens if we do not believe this word? Even at a small matter, our roots are pulled right out and we are swept away. Let us become people who build our houses on the rock. Dear fellow believers, is there anyone who, even after receiving the remission of sins, leads a life of faith without holding onto or believing the word of God? Then his faith dies. Before long he is not seen in the church. It is not because someone told him to leave. Those who are not seen in the church even after receiving the remission of sins are almost all such people. Therefore, if you want to become a person of faith who does not fall away from God and stands firm on the rock, you must hear the written word of God and the sermons, see them with your eyes, and believe them with your heart. And you must hold onto them. Even if we have no faith, if we hold onto the word with that faith which holds onto the word, with that attachment, the word gives us strength and power.

If we do not hold onto this word, then however much we say that we have faith, we have no strength. Once our own strength is all drained, we simply droop. We obtain strength, obtain blessings, obtain power, obtain everlasting life, and receive the

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remission of sins from the word. That is why we must hold onto the word.

Faith built on the word

What does it mean that the foundation was laid on the rock? The most basic faith is the faith that believes the word of God. And the most important faith is also the faith that believes the written word of God. It is extremely important. There are many people who say this and that about this gospel. But a sermon preached by holding onto the word of the Bible and taking that word as its foundation cannot be torn down by human learning. There is a fundamental difference between a person who speaks holding onto the word of God and a person who has left the word of God, learned doctrines, and speaks of them. One has vitality, and the other is a faith like the chaff blown away by the wind. That the foundation was laid on the rock means that one has placed one's faith on the word of God, that one has the faith that believes the word of God. You and I must have this faith. The servants of God, the laypeople, the deacons, the workers and the missionaries, and all the brothers and sisters must all have this faith.

Do not just come on Sunday with your Bible tucked under your arm, listen to the sermon, say, "Ah, that word is right. Amen," and end there; go home and read more of the word of the Bible. As the saying goes, knowledge is power; if you know this truth, it gives you tremendous strength, blessings, and power and makes you solid. People talk about this gospel, saying this and that. So when I tell them to say what the problem is, they voice some kind of complaint. Then I say, "The Bible says this," and explain the word of the Bible. One word settles it completely.

However much they say that their doctrine is this or that, regarding the remission of sins it can be settled completely with one word. This is how enormous the difference is between those who believe the word of God and those who do not. Those who believe the word of God, even when they are attacked, rather grow by using it as fertilizer, and preach the gospel using even the opposing theories as material. I hope that you, too, will become like that.

Whom does the foolish man who built his house on the sand refer to? That person is a sinner. And he is a person who does not hold onto the word of God even after being born again. Dear fellow believers, do you think that once you have received the remission of sins, your faith is maintained even if you do not hold onto the word of God? Not at all. However smart a person may be, does his faith grow without his hearing the word of God? It does not. If one reads the Bible alone, one's knowledge may increase, but faith grows in the heart when one comes to church and hears the word, hears the words of those who have gone before, and hears the word through the gatherings of the church. If one does not hear, faith absolutely does not grow. That is why a person who built his house on the sand is a foolish person. He is a person who built his house on his own thoughts. Saying, "So-and-so said this and so-and-so said that, and when I put it all together, this conclusion comes out," he pieces doctrines together and believes accordingly. A person who believes in that way is a foolish person. Even though he believes in Jesus, he goes to hell; even though he believes in Jesus, he is cursed; and when he meets difficulties, he does not receive God's power and protection. Therefore, you must believe, hear, and hold onto the word of God, and you must come at the times of gathering, hear the word, and have fellowship together. I hope that you will

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believe that the word of God itself, because it is a living word, gives blessings and strength.

"He taught them as one having authority"

The Bible says, *"For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29)*. What does this word mean? The word of the Bible and the word preached in the Church of God are different from the teachings of the people of this world. The words Jesus spoke are fundamentally different from the words of any intellectuals in this world. The words of Jesus are the words of life. If we believe the words of Jesus, we receive the remission of sins, obtain faith, receive blessings, obtain the strength to fight against and defeat Satan the devil, and obtain the power to save and guide other people. These words are the truth and the words of life. That is why the words of Jesus and the words of the scribes are fundamentally different. It is a difference of power. If we believe just as God has spoken, it actually comes to be so, but if we believe the words of the people of this world, no power at all appears. If we believe the written word of God, power appears, and it comes to be just as the word says. It is speaking of that difference.

Those who are not born again talk while pretending to be learned. Their speech may be smoother. But power appears far more in those who believe the word that is preached in the born-again Church of God by the faith that believes the word of God. That is what it is speaking of. Dear fellow believers, you and I must lead a life of faith that builds our houses on the rock. To do so, we must hold onto and believe the word of God. I hope that you will become not foolish people but wise people and firmly build the house of faith on the word of God. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Can we do the will of the Father?

< Matthew 7:20–27 >

"Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?—ASV). And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

The Lord said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21)*, and He also said, *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them,*

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I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24).

Return from those who are false

When we look at the Book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament, I cannot tell you how many other gods besides the LORD God the people of Israel served, such as Asherah or Baal, and all kinds of idols made of wood or stone. So God sent His servants and said to them, "Do not do so. Return to the LORD. God is one. The LORD is the true God. Return to Me. I will bless you." But even though they heard the word of God, they did not return to God.

So God said through His servants, "Because you neither listen to My words nor return to Me but serve idols, I will send enemy armies into this land and strike you with the edge of the sword." He exhorted the people of Israel through the servants of God.

But the people of Israel did not return. They kept on serving idols, and they carved wood, made things of it, and revered them as gods. The Lord said that whoever hears His words and does them is like a wise man.

Dear fellow believers, to hear the word of God and do it, we must receive the remission of sins. Is not the one who does it a righteous person? How can anyone do the word without being a righteous person? Only the one who hears the word of God and does it is a wise man.

The Bible says, *"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3).* It means that if we are to do the word of God, how could we do it without believing that word? We can do the word of God when we believe it. If we do not believe, we

cannot do the word. The word the Lord spoke here, *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock" (Matthew 7:24–25),* also means that when we do the word of God, we do according to that word because we believe that the word of God is the truth.

It means that whoever lives believing the word of God receives God's protection even there, whatever tribulation and disaster may come upon him, even if the judgment of God comes upon him. It means that one who is not so is like a man who built his house on the sand, so that when the rain pours down, the floods come, the winds blow, and a great river sweeps over that house, the house falls because it was built on the sand. It means that he could not do it because he did not believe. It means that because he believed according to his own thoughts, he could not believe the word of God completely, and because he did not believe, he could not do it either, and although he did the work of God while saying that he believed in God, on the last day he will receive judgment and go to hell.

In verse 21 before this, too, the Lord said that only he who does the will of the Father enters the kingdom of heaven. It is the same when we say that we do the will of God the Father, that we live according to His will. Only when we have the faith that believes the written word of God can we live as God is pleased, though we fall short.

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The one who believes the word of God lives according to the will of the Father

He said that only he who does the will of the Father enters the kingdom of heaven, but among people who, like the people of Israel, are stubborn and rebellious and cannot follow the word of God, who is there that lives according to the will of God? The one who does the will of the Father and enters the kingdom of heaven is the one who believes in the water and the blood of Jesus, the one who believes God's word of salvation.

I hope you will know that the one who believes the word of God can live according to the will of the Father and comes to enter the kingdom of heaven. Then who is God, who came to this earth according to the will of the Father? It is Jesus Christ. God so loved the world that, having created you and me and loving us, He sent Jesus to this earth to make us His children and also to let us live happily forever with the Father in the Father's kingdom.

God the Father sent His only Son Jesus, transferred the sins of all the people of this world to Jesus through John the Baptist, and caused them to be saved. It was Jesus who obeyed in accord with that will and heart of God the Father to save us. Jesus alone is the One who did perfectly according to the will of God the Father. By believing in Jesus, who obeyed the Father's will and removed all our sins, we are saved according to the will of God the Father and can do the Father's will. Receiving the Savior by faith was the Father's will toward us.

However, all mankind were sinners from birth, so they could not live according to the word of God. They could not help but go against it. But God loved us one-sidedly and sent His Son, and Jesus came to this earth clothed in human flesh to save sinners. And by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, He had

all our sins transferred to Him. And He gave His body on the Cross, rose again, and saved us. By sacrificing Himself on the Cross to save all sinners, Jesus saved from eternal destruction the sinners who could not live according to the word of God and went against it.

This is the great love of God. If we look at the whole history of mankind, human beings were beings who, going against God, could not help but be destroyed. Jesus Christ loved such beings and gave Himself for us, and through that love we who were sinners were saved from sin. And by opening our eyes to that love of God, who removed our sins and delivered us from judgment, and by believing in Jesus Christ and accepting the remission of sins, we have become those who can believe, follow, and do the word of God. We have become those who live according to the will of the Father. By believing in Jesus, we have come to enter the kingdom of heaven.

We ourselves are beings who cannot do the word of God. The people of Israel bowed before stones, carved wood and bowed to it, and bowed under great trees. What reason did they have not to believe in God, who led a great multitude of people in the wilderness for forty years and protected them so that their clothes did not grow old and their sandals did not wear out, the God who actually worked among their ancestors and in their own country? Yet they served idols. If we too had not known that love with which Jesus Christ came, saved us from all sins, and made us the people of God, we would still be bowing before stones and before trees and going against the word of God. But by believing in the Lord, who showed mercy, we were saved.

We came to know Jesus, and so we came to know and believe that the word of Jesus is the truth and that God loved us. Thus we have become able to return into God’s embrace. So by believing in Jesus Christ, we have come to know that the written

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word of God is the truth and to believe and follow it. If Jesus Christ had not saved us, who were sinners, we could not have done the word. Because Jesus Christ saved us with His love, we follow the Lord, believe and do the word, and live according to the will of the Father. All of this is the grace of the salvation of Jesus Christ.

False prophets who prophesy as they please

Our Lord said that we would know them by looking at their fruit. It means that when we look at the fruit, we come to know their true nature—what kind of people they are, whether they are truly God's people or not, whether they are true prophets or false prophets. It means that if the fruit is not true fruit—that is, even if a person himself believes in Jesus, preaches the gospel, and does the work of God, if the people who hear and believe the gospel he preached do not receive salvation—then the person who preached the gospel is not one who does the will of God. He is neither one who believes in God nor one who does the will of God.

That is, he is not one who does according to the word of God. Such a person cannot believe the word of God and goes against it. Just as the people of Israel did not believe to the end the word that the servants of God preached and went against it, and then died by the swords of the enemy, were taken captive, and suffered the miserable fate of their king having both his eyes put out, so those who do not accept this gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ the Son of God has given, will go to hell in the end.

Countless false prophets appeared and prophesied to the people of Israel, "There is peace, there is peace; there will

absolutely be no disaster for you." The people of Israel believed the words of the false prophets and believed wrongly, thinking, "Surely God would not do that to us." But God said through the prophet Jeremiah, "Because you do not return to Me, I will surely send the sword and strike you," and it came to pass just as He had said.

The king of Babylon came, killed the people with the edge of the sword, picked out all the young men, the women, and the useful people, and carried them off to Babylon and made them do forced labor. Then, when seventy years were completed, God brought them back. The word that He would make them return again through servants such as Zerubbabel, Ezra the scribe, and Nehemiah was fulfilled. In exactly the same way, even now God has sent His servants countless times and made them proclaim the word of God, and those who do not believe that word and rebel against it will surely enter the unquenchable fire of brimstone. This is inevitable. Whether among people who now say they believe in Jesus and God or among those who do not believe, hell is what those who go against the word of God and do not believe it will surely meet.

Those who do not believe the word of God's gospel and go against it will enter the unquenchable fire of hell that burns with fire and brimstone and will suffer torment forever. It will surely be so. This is what our Lord was speaking of.

Now there are many people who, so to speak, play the prophet, cast out demons, and do many works of power, calling themselves servants of God. But however much they call themselves servants of God, cast out demons, do works of power, build large chapels of red brick, and are respected throughout the world as servants of God, if they do not know the word of God and go against it, then as the price of that, on the last day the floods will come and the winds will blow and beat on that house,

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and because it is a house built on the sand, it will fall, and great will be its fall. That is, it means that they will end up entering the fire of hell. We must believe the fact that however much people say that they believe in their hearts in Jesus as their Savior and strive to do well in their deeds too and to live good lives, if they do not believe the word and rely only on their own efforts to live good lives, they go to hell.

Believing the word that God has spoken is the goodness of man, but those who do not believe the word of God and strive to live good lives in human terms go to hell while relying on that human goodness.

Who are the false prophets in this world? They are those who babble whatever comes out of their own hearts and believe as they please. Such people are false prophets. God said to Jeremiah, *"These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jeremiah 25:11)*, saying that as the price of rebelling against the word of God, the people of Israel would live in captivity for seventy years. But a prophet who seemed good-hearted appeared and prophesied that it was not so, that before two years were up God would surely bring them back. Seventy years and two years—they prophesied differently. Whose words do you think the people of Israel believed? Going along with what was pleasant to hear, they believed the words that they would suffer only two years and then return. That was a faith of their own thoughts. In the end, just as God had said, the people of Israel lived in captivity for seventy years.

In the old days, those who went against the word of God were put to death, but now those who go against this word of the gospel—that Jesus Christ has removed all their sins with the water and the blood—inevitably go to hell even though they believe in Jesus. The Lord said, *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name*

cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:22–23). Who are false prophets? The false prophets of the Old Testament did not say that if the people did not return to God there would be chastisement, there would be curses, there would be the judgment of God, and they would suffer destruction, but lied, saying, "There is peace, there is peace! It is all right, it is all right!" God said that such people are false prophets.

The false prophets of the New Testament era say that if you believe in Jesus, it is all right even if you have sin, that there is peace, that you will go to the kingdom of heaven. They cry out a false peace, saying that because people believe in Jesus, they will go to the kingdom of heaven even if they have sin. So it is hell. Why? Putting forward the doctrine of sanctification and the doctrine of justification, they say that even if people have sin, they will go to the kingdom of heaven and will not be destroyed. One who says in this way that people go to the kingdom of heaven even if they have sin is a false prophet.

One who says from his own thoughts that believing in Jesus is only being regarded as righteous, and that it is not that Jesus actually removed the sin of this world so that sin has actually disappeared, is a false prophet. One who says that sin disappears gradually, and that even if we have sin, God regards us as righteous because we have faith in Jesus, is one who preaches lies. He is a false one who prophesies whatever comes out of his own heart. False prophets tell lies: "People have sin, but it is all right because they believe in Jesus. You are different from people who do not believe in Jesus and have sin. You have sin, but because you believe in Jesus, you will go to the kingdom of heaven, where there is no sin. So do not worry and do not be anxious." In this way they reassure people. This is exactly what

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a false prophet is. It is false prophets who say that it is all right because people believe in Jesus, that they will not go to hell but will go to the kingdom of heaven.

The Holy Spirit who comes into those who believe the redeeming gospel of the water and the blood

Today, too, the One who gives true delight and joy in our lives is Jesus. It is the salvation of Jesus. Jesus Himself is our Savior. Jesus' coming is itself our salvation, and His coming and receiving baptism is itself the evidence that He had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him. Do you know Jesus, who came by water? Jesus' being sacrificed on the Cross is the evidence that He loved sinners. By coming, Jesus Christ removed all our sins. Jesus Christ came to this earth and saved us from all sins once and for all. By receiving baptism from John, by receiving the judgment of blood on the Cross, by rising again from the tomb, and by being alive and sitting at the right hand of the throne of God, Jesus Christ has completely delivered us human beings from sin. To those who believe this, to those who receive it in their hearts, He has given the right to become children of God.

But those who do not accept Jesus, the Master of the gospel who gave the water and the blood, those who do not accept what Jesus Christ has done, that is, the gospel of the truth of the water, the blood, and the Spirit, will go to hell. Sinners are those who cannot help but go to hell. Because human beings are beings who cannot live according to the word of God, those who believe that Jesus the Savior gave the water and the blood receive salvation by faith.

When we think of ourselves, who have been saved by believing in Jesus, by believing the word of the water, the blood,

and the Spirit, the thought comes to us: if we too had not believed in Jesus, would we not have been just the same as the people of Israel? It means, are we not people who could not help but go against the word of God to the end? When we look at ourselves, are we people who can live doing according to the word of God? We are people who cannot do it. But God the Father sent Jesus, saved us, and delivered us from sin. It means that although our deeds fall short, we believed the word of the gospel of salvation of the water and the blood, which God speaks through the servants. By faith we received salvation. We too were those who could not help but be destroyed together with many people, but by believing in the Lord we believed the word of God and obtained salvation. Jesus Christ Himself is the One who has brought us true joy, true everlasting life, and true salvation. He Himself is our delight, our thanksgiving, our glory, and our joy.

In today's word the Lord said that only he who does the will of the Father enters the kingdom of heaven, and that only he who hears His words and does them is like a wise man. The meaning of this word is as follows: it means that he who does the will of the Father can do the Father's will by believing that Jesus saved him with the water, the blood, and the Spirit, and that he who does according to the word of God, too, can do it when he believes the word of God.

Those who are swept away to hell

It means that because the Holy Spirit is not within those who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the blood of Jesus, they could not believe the gospel and live according to the will of God the Father, nor could they do it, and as a result they came to go to hell. But it means that those who do according to the

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will of the Father, according to the word of God, became those who do the will of the Father because they believed in Jesus the Savior, whom God sent. Those who do the word of God could do it because they believed that the word of God is the truth. This is the grace God has bestowed on us, and it is the mystery of God. Since it says that only those who do will enter, some people do not really understand what this means, think that it is enough just to live well in human terms, and only strive to do, but all who believe in this way have sin. Therefore, on the last day God will say that they practiced lawlessness, that is, that they are sinners who have not received the remission of sins, and will send them to hell. It means that those who have sin will go to hell.

The Bible can by no means be understood through the learning of this world. Since it literally says that only those who do will enter, everyone tries to do. But who can do this? How could anyone know through the learning of the world that one can do only when one believes? One cannot know it. Also, without even knowing what the meaning is, people think that it means unconditionally living good and kind lives, and so they are like a blind person who goes along without knowing the way and falls into a pit. It means that although they attend church zealously, in the end they fall into a pit and come to ruin.

The word of God is spirit. Only when the word of God, written by the Holy Spirit, is interpreted through the born-again servants and people of God, who have received the remission of sins and have the Holy Spirit within them, do we come to know what that word means. Otherwise, we cannot know what the word of God is saying.

Even today, those who, like the people of Israel, do not accept the word of God to the end and do not accept the gospel of the water and the blood, which is preached unceasingly

through the servants of God and the saints, will go to hell on the last day. And even now many people strive to live according to the will of God and to do the word of God. I cannot tell you how ignorant this is. Rather than striving to do the will of God, we must first believe the word of God. Believing the word of God is doing the will of God and living according to His will. God has said as follows: "If you believe My word, if you believe that I sent My Son and saved you, you become those who do My will. Therefore, you become My children, enter My kingdom, become a house that does not fall, and live beautifully and happily with Me forever." God is exhorting us to believe the written word of God, the word that is preached through the people and servants of God. Dear fellow believers, we cannot live according to the word of God. If we say that we can live by it if we strive, though we fall short, that is ignorance and an arrogant thought.

This word tells us that just as we, the born-again people of God, were saved from all sins by believing the gospel of God, who came by water and blood, and so believing the word, in our living, too, we become those who do by believing the word of God. God is telling us who are born again that the one who first believes the word of God and lives, the one who believes the word, is the one who does the will of God and the one who does the word.

Dear fellow believers, in this age countless people are being swept away toward hell. A flood came, a dike burst in a certain area, and water poured down into the valley; huge pine trees were uprooted and swept away, rocks rolled down, houses were all submerged, walls were struck by the river water and broke apart, and cattle, pigs, and people were swept away. Now countless people are being swept away to hell by going against God's word of the gospel. They are inevitably going to hell.

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However much they clamor that they have peace, that they are not afraid because they believe in Jesus, they will surely go to hell. Who will not go to hell? Only those who believe will not go. All who do not believe go to hell. They are all people who would drown in the seawater, and among them a few have been saved. Truly only a small number have been saved.

Those whose names are on Schindler's List

There is a movie called "Schindler's List," and in it I saw that some eleven hundred among the Jews were saved in the end. To the end, Mr. Schindler gave millions of marks of his wealth to high-ranking officers of the German army and fed and kept alive eleven hundred people. He did so by spending all his property. Then, in World War II, Germany surrendered to the Allies. By then Mr. Schindler had run out of money, but just at that time Germany surrendered, and so eleven hundred Jews were saved. How many Jews died in all at that time? Six million. If it is eleven hundred out of six million, what is the ratio? Roughly one in several thousand was saved. I watched that movie and was deeply moved. Those whose names were in Mr. Schindler's ledger were saved. During the war Mr. Schindler ran a business making military supplies and delivering them to the army, and he used Jewish laborers as workers in his factory. He fed them and made them work, and he made a great deal of money. He did not run the business to save the Jews from the beginning.

But as he happened to see the Jews being slaughtered, the Jewish quarter being intensively attacked by the German army, and the Jews being treated as less than human and collapsing miserably, a desire to protect the Jews arose in his heart. So,

while having them work in his factory, he protected and guarded to the end eleven hundred Jews who were going to be killed, and he kept them alive until the war ended. So it is said that many descendants of those Jews are still alive today.

At the end of the movie, the war ends and Germany surrenders, and at midnight that night Mr. Schindler, a German, becomes a fugitive as a person of a defeated nation, and the Jews are liberated and become free people. In that scene where history changes, he says that he must leave before midnight, that they have become free people and he has become a fugitive. When the Jews give him a gold ring as a token of their gratitude, he looks at his car and his gold badge and is anguished, saying that if he had sold these he could have saved a few more people. The story ends in this way, and "Schindler's List" is a movie made from a true story. At that time six million Jews were slaughtered by the German army and were dragged off to camps and killed, and among them eleven hundred survived. Of course, there were also people who survived in other places. But what is clear is that the eleven hundred protected by Mr. Schindler received a precious salvation against odds of several thousand to one.

In this present age, too, there are people who believe in Jesus and many who do not, and we are living in this age in which billions of people live. Among them, those who have been saved are extremely few. You and I have been saved as some of those few people. And the rest are inevitably going to hell. Today's word of God was such a word. It says that people are going to hell.

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The crossroads between the kingdom of heaven and hell

People could not do the will of the Father and could not live according to the word. They did not know what the will of God was. They try to do the word of God, but they do not know that word. In the midst of this, those who believe in the water and the blood have been saved. But countless people are being swept away to hell. We too could not help but be swept away like that with them, but God the Father sent us His Son Jesus. To save us, who could not live according to the word of God and could not help but rebel against it, He transferred all our sins to His Son through the baptism John gave, and Jesus shed His blood on the Cross in our place, received the judgment, rose again, and saved us. We believed that. We believed because we cannot do it by ourselves. We believed and received salvation. That is how you and I received salvation. Dear fellow believers, give thanks that you have been saved. And know that those who go against the word of the gospel will surely be destroyed, however smart they may be in human terms.

We must not have a "surely not" attitude. We must not think, "Even so, He will somehow rescue us; even so, it will be all right." The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. This is the line of salvation. When it cuts cleanly, only that is salvation, and there is nothing else. It is that narrow. It is sharp, precise, and narrow. When God speaks of the water and the blood, one is saved from sin only by believing that word; if one does not believe the gospel of the water and the blood, one goes to hell. However smart and strong-willed one may be, even if one lays down one's life for the kingdom of God and is martyred, even if one offers all one's property to God, even if one does

some work while anguishing over all one's filthy sins, if one does not believe the gospel of the water and the blood, it is hell.

There are people who, while believing in Jesus, are anguished, saying that they do not want to sin but keep sinning in their hearts, and who in the end fail to know the gospel and are not saved. God does not make allowances. God has sent His servants countless times and has preached the word countless times through His people. If one does not accept the word of God, it is hell. One must quickly receive salvation.

The salvation God has given does not come by good deeds or by works. Whether one believes the word of God or not—by this, the kingdom of heaven or hell is decided. So we have received salvation among many people. We have received salvation because Jesus Christ saved us. He became our Savior. And this word is the word of salvation. Now many people are being swept away toward hell. Anyone who goes against the word of the water, the blood, and the Spirit is a foolish person. He is a foolish man, just as it says, *"Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand" (Matthew 7:26)*. Because of that foolishness, he will go to hell. There are so many such people in this world. Both I and you could not help but go to hell, but God the Father sent Jesus and transferred all our sins to Jesus, and the Lord saved us. We were saved from all sins by believing this word of God, that Jesus saved us with the water and the blood. We have been delivered from the power of sin, destruction, and darkness. I give thanks.

Jesus' coming was itself salvation for us; the baptism He received from John was itself the remission of our sins and His washing away the sins of sinners cleanly; and His dying on the Cross and rising again was itself His saving sinners from the punishment of all sins. Jesus Himself has become for us a living

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hope, a living joy, and a living life. Without Jesus we could not have been saved, but because Jesus came, we were saved. And though we do not know how we came to believe, we, who are so lacking, came to believe the word preached by God's menservants and maidservants, by brothers and sisters. As soon as we believed the gospel, we were saved from all sins. We have come to receive the eternal and boundless blessing of God. I give thanks. By believing the gospel, this one thing alone, we have received all the blessings of God. The one who purely believes the word of God becomes one who does before God. Before trying to do something, before trying to do good, first believe God's redeeming gospel of the water and the blood. Then you will become one who does the will of the Father. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

He who does the will of the Father by faith

< Matthew 7:21 >

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

Could I perhaps be such a person?

Jesus Christ Himself said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21)*. Because of this word, many people are trembling with fear.

Christian believers think that they will all go to the kingdom of heaven if they believe in Jesus Christ, but this word says that not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven.

I suppose that there are people who, while reading this Bible passage, think, "Could it be me? What if I turn out to be the one who appears in this word?" Though they think, "This must be a word spoken to other people!" this word still lingers as an echo in a corner of their hearts.

People become anxious in their hearts. So there are many church members who hold onto the latter part of the word, which says *"but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21)*, and, thinking, "All we have to do is live

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according to His will," zealously give tithes, pray at dawn, preach the gospel, live good lives, and strive not to commit sin. This is truly regrettable. Many people are falling into error because they do not know the meaning of this word. Therefore, all of us must know clearly what the will of God the Father is, and live while believing and doing the will of the Father.

The first will of God is to believe with the heart in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus, the Son of God, had the sins of the people of this world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and removed the sin of the world, and so to live having received the remission of all sins in the heart. Knowing that this is the will of God the Father, we must receive the remission of sins and be born again according to the will of God.

Does one go to the kingdom of heaven by saying, *"Lord, Lord"*?

The Lord said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21)*.

We must look at the will of the Father by dividing it into two. First, it is the will of the Father that one receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, who has saved us from sin with the water, the blood, and the Spirit that God has given, as one's own Savior; and second, it is the will of the Father that one keep that faith and spread the gospel. That will of God was to remove the sins of the people of this world.

Satan the devil caused Adam and Eve, the first ancestors of us human beings, to sin and to fall. But God gave us the gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit, which removes all those

sins of man (the sins within the heart and all the sins we commit through our faults as we live). This was the will of the Father.

We must know and believe the Father's will of salvation accurately. It was not the will of God to give tithes faithfully, do good works, and pray at dawn faithfully; rather, it was the will of the Father to save people who have fallen into the sin of this world from all the sins of the world with the gospel that came by the water, the blood, and the Spirit of Jesus. It was the will of God the Father to rescue those who are dying, having fallen into their own sins.

The Bible said that one does not enter the kingdom of heaven just because one unconditionally says, *"Lord, Lord."* One does not enter just because one calls on the Lord or just because one believes; rather, one had to know rightly and believe what the will is that God desires for us human beings. It was the will of the Father toward us human beings to rescue us—who could not but fall into sin and go to hell because of the sinful nature inherited through Adam and Eve—from sin, from judgment, and from hell.

This is how the will of the Father is done

The Bible records, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. The most beautiful thing Jesus did for man after coming to this earth was remitting all the sin of man. The Bible says that the beautiful gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit, by which God has saved us from the sin of the world, is the gospel that fulfills all the righteousness of God.

When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, the will of God was all fulfilled through Jesus Christ. God the Father wanted to make us, who had been sinners amid all the sins of the

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world, children of God through the water baptism that passed on the sin of the world to His Son Jesus. For that, His Son Jesus had to have all the sin of the world of all mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. The will of God the Father was to make countless people His own children. So He sent His own Son Jesus Christ to this earth and passed on the sin of the world of all people, who had fallen into the devil's enticement, sinned, and were dying, through the baptism the Son received; and by sacrificing on the Cross the life of the Son, who had had the sin of the world transferred to Him, He paid the price of life, bought us, and made us His own children. This gospel was the gospel of the water and the Spirit that fulfills the will of God the Father.

When Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, died on the Cross, and rose again, the will of God the Father was all fulfilled. Also, by the faith that believes that all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus when He received baptism from John, and that He received all the judgment for us through His death on the Cross, we have come to have the faith that believes according to the will of God the Father and have become those who do the will of the Father.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). In order to save His people from their sins, Jesus had to bear those sins, and in order to have the sin of the world transferred to Him, He had to receive baptism from John the Baptist as the first work of His public ministry. That was the will of the Father. *"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 Christ came to this earth, had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, and fulfilled the will of God through His death on the Cross and His resurrection.

We must know this clearly. When people see this word, it is right for them to know exactly what it is to live according to the will of God the Father and to live so; yet they mistakenly think that contributing a great deal of material goods when a chapel is built, or selling their own house and offering it all to the chapel, is serving and living according to the will of God. However zealously they may offer what is theirs, if they misunderstand the will of God the Father and serve according to their own thoughts, God does not accept it. Only when people know, believe, and do the will of God rightly do they become righteous and enter the kingdom of heaven.

We who believe in Jesus must know and do the will of God. It is wrong faith to claim to act according to the will of God while relying on one's own denomination without knowing the will of God. There are many who mistakenly think, "Where else would acting according to the will of God be, other than leading a life of faith in an orthodox denomination?" but learning and leading a life of faith in an orthodox denomination does not mean that one does the will of the Father. Even if a denomination has a long history and tradition, if it does not know the truth that God has removed sin, that history and tradition cannot guarantee salvation. They must realize that they are building up wrong faith there, learn what the will of God is, and believe properly.

The faith that knows and does the will of the Father is the faith that believes and does this gospel, in which Jesus came by the water, the blood, and the Spirit and saved sinners from all the sins of the world. Such faith was the faith that believes and does according to the will of the Father. If your faith has not been this faith until now, the history of your faith must be rewritten. Have you been born again of water and the Spirit? Has your sin been passed on to Jesus? When did you receive the remission of sins? Only when you are born again by believing

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that the sin of the world was all passed on through the baptism Jesus received from John are the history and tradition of faith built up. The longest tradition in the world, planned from before the foundation of the world, is the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Must we not know the will of the Father in order to do it?

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). The will of God is that we be made completely sinless by believing in the water and the Spirit that Jesus has given. I also understand that living by faith in our life of faith is the will of God. If, even after believing in Jesus Christ, a person still has sin remaining in his heart, such a person is one who has not yet entered into the will of God.

Being made completely sinless and becoming holy after believing in Jesus Christ is entering into the will of God and believing according to the will of God.

I have asked Christians of the world the question, "After believing in Jesus Christ, is it right to have sin, or is it right to have no sin?" At such times, there were many people who said that they have sin even though they believe in Jesus Christ; even after believing in Jesus, they still do not know what the will of God is. The will of God is that we become holy ones without sin and receive the Holy Spirit in our own hearts. Therefore, I tell you once again that it was the will of God that you and I become righteous by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit in our own hearts.

It is said that long ago, in a certain household, there was a son who obeyed very well. When his father said to that son, "My child, you will have to go over to the village across the way," before his father could even finish what he was saying, the son said, "All right, Father," took a basket, and went off. That son just went, without even hearing what he was supposed to do when he got there, and without knowing where he was to go or what exactly the purpose was. Following after him, his father said, "No matter how well you obey, should you not know the purpose of the errand you are going on?"

Even so, the obedient son said, "Father, it is all right. I will obey in everything. Who is there to obey besides me? If there is anyone who obeys as well as I do, tell him to come forward," and it is simply unconditional obedience. But not long after saying "Yes" and leaving, he comes back carrying only an empty basket and says, "I have been to the village across the way." I cannot tell you how triumphant he is, though he has come back empty-handed. Is it a good thing that he simply ran off and came back unconditionally, without knowing why his father sent him on the errand and without bringing back what his father wanted? Should he not have known what he was told to do, so that he could accomplish its purpose and come back? That son obeyed unconditionally without knowing the will of his father.

We, too, can be the same way if we know and believe in Jesus Christ wrongly. If you and I, without even knowing the will of God the Father, serve doctrines with utmost devotion and lead a religious life, giving tithe offerings, praying with fasting, doing volunteer service, and praying all night, and then die in a state of having sin, we will go before God, fail to go to the kingdom of heaven, and end up going to hell. It is the same as that son, who went off unconditionally carrying a basket and only showed

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zeal, but could do nothing because he did not know his father's will.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:22–23).

There is something God has entrusted to us human beings, and there is a faith He requires. It is believing in Jesus Christ, and knowing and believing the fact that all our sins have been passed on to Jesus. But many people do not know what God has entrusted to them, and without even believing the truth of the water and the Spirit, they just play the prophet in the name of the Lord, cast out demons, and do many mighty works.

The "many mighty works" here refers to the power of strength, such as building three or four chapels, selling one's house to give offerings, and laying down one's life for the Lord. Having played the prophet means having played the role of a leader. These were people who, like the Pharisees, rejected Jesus without knowing the will of God while claiming to act according to the word of God.

Today, too, there are religious people who believe like the Pharisees. They sometimes perform the power of casting out demons, and being exceedingly zealous, they did everything well—offerings, service, preaching the gospel, and so on—with nothing they could not do. But our Lord will say to them, "How can you call Me Lord? I do not know you; do you know Me?" and, "You who have practiced this lawlessness, depart from Me." No matter how much power they have, they will be forsaken by God.

On that day, people as numerous as the clouds will come before the Lord's judgment seat and say, "O Lord, I believe. I

believe that You are my Savior." They say to the Lord, "I love You," but there is sin in their hearts. To those who believe in Him yet have sin in their hearts, that is, to the sinners who have not received the remission of sins, the Lord says, *"Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."* On that day, those who believed in the Lord yet died without receiving the remission of sins will come before the throne of Jesus Christ and, boasting of their own righteousness, will hold their heads up stiffly, saying, "For the Lord I played the prophet, for the Lord I built chapels, and I sent out as many as fifty missionaries." But the Lord says to the sinners who believe in Him, "I do not know you at all. You who have practiced this lawlessness, depart from Me." "What do You mean? Do You not know that I played the prophet in Your name? I was the senior pastor, I was the pastor of several organizations, and I always taught Jesus Christ and told people to believe; do You not know me?" "I do not know you at all. You who claim to know Me while having sin, depart from Me."

Before God, lawlessness is having believed in Jesus with sin still present, and not having believed according to the law of the water and the Spirit for salvation that God has established. Having served Jesus without knowing the will of God is lawlessness. Just as it was wrong to go on an errand without knowing for what purpose the father sent him, it means that being unconditionally zealous even while believing in Jesus, without receiving the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit, is lawlessness. Lawlessness is not having believed in accordance with the will of God or not having obeyed the word of God. Lawlessness, in other words, becomes sin.

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In the Bible, the will of the Father is as follows

The will of God is to believe in the gospel of the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit. The true gospel on this earth was the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has given. Also, it was the will of God that in their lives the righteous, as children of God, believe according to the word of God and live for the gospel.

Those who say that they believe in God must know the will of God clearly, but countless people are just being zealous without knowing that God has given the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit. That is wrong faith. If you ask them, "Why do you believe in Jesus?" they say, "I believe in order to be saved from sin," but in reality their hearts are full of sin.

"Do you have sin in your heart?"

"Yes. I have sin."

"Then have you been saved or not?"

"Of course I have."

"Then does one who has sin go to the kingdom of heaven?"

"No."

"Then is it the kingdom of heaven for you, or hell?"

"The kingdom of heaven…. Don't I go to the kingdom of heaven because I believe in Jesus?"

"Did you not say that you have sin? Did you not say that if one has sin, one goes to hell?"

"……"

However much he may insist, where will this person who has sin go? He goes to hell.

People think that if they believe in Jesus, it must be the will of God to send them to the kingdom of heaven even if they have sin. But God does not send those who have sin to the kingdom of heaven. Then where is the will of God? The will of God that

the Bible speaks of was that people be born again by believing in the gospel that the Son of God has remitted all our sins through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River and the blood of the Cross. Thus it was the will of God that all people become righteous by faith.

Those who believe in the gospel of the blessing of being born again of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has given have become children of God who have done the will of God. Our becoming children of God comes about by believing in the water and the blood of Jesus. Those who have become righteous without a single sin are the children of God. When God has said that we are righteous, only the righteous who have believed in Jesus and been born again of water and the Spirit can be called children of God. Even though one does have sin, will God just overlook it because one believes in Jesus? God is One who cannot lie. That is why, when standing before God, a person who has sin comes to confess that he has sin, and a person who has no sin comes to confess that he has no sin.

God the Father calls those who believe in the gospel of the water of the baptism Jesus received at the Jordan River and of the Cross His children. God has given us the truth that He transferred all the sins of the world onto the flesh of His Son, and that the Son therefore went to the Cross, died, and rose again. Because Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, God the Father had to judge Him on the Cross, even though He was His own Son. Because the Father is One who cannot lie, He judged Jesus according to the law that says *"the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*. When Jesus was nailed to the Cross and died, He suffered so much that He cried out, *"'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken*

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Me?'" (Matthew 27:46), yet God the Father turned His face away.

To save us human beings from all sins, Jesus Christ had all the sin of man transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Because Jesus had the sin of all sinners transferred to Him once and for all through baptism, He knew exactly that, as a result, He would be nailed to the Cross and be forsaken by God the Father. Because the Son had the sin of mankind transferred to Him once and for all at the Jordan River, God the Father judged Him and turned His face away for those three hours.

The Bible says, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).*

Dear fellow believers, are we children of God or not? Only when a sinner accepts by faith in his heart the gospel of the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit, which is the expression of the Lord's love for sinners, does he become one who is born again. Now those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit of Jesus are born-again ones, the righteous. Those who believe have become righteous.

If God is for the righteous, who can be against us? When the righteous say before God and before people that they are righteous, those who have not received the remission of sins condemn them. That is why the Apostle Paul nails it down, saying, *"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns?" (Romans 8:33–34).* God has removed all our sin of the world through Jesus Christ. And the Bible records that God says to us, "You are righteous, you have no sin, you are My offspring, you are My child," and has given us the right to become glorious children of God.

Those who have been born again of water and the Spirit are the children of God. Only they are the ones who, as children of God, will go to His kingdom and live with God forever. Now they have become not created beings belonging to this earth but children of God belonging to heaven. Because God has made us His own children and made us sinless, no one can condemn the saved righteous, judge them, or cut them off from God. Those on this earth who believe in Jesus must rightly know and believe the gospel of the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit.

Just as one must know the Buddhist scriptures and believe them in order to believe in Buddhism, so in order to believe in Jesus Christ, one must know the gospel of the blessing of being born again of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has given, that is, the Bible, and believe it with the heart. One must know exactly what the word of God means and believe it, and if one intends to act according to the will of God, one must know which part is right to believe and how, and act accordingly.

It is the will of God that a sinner be born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Dear fellow believers, God's will is to make a person sinless and cause that person to be born again of water and the Spirit. *"This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3)*.

Some people slander, saying that those who have received the remission of sins will surely commit sin as they please. Among the people of Israel, too, there were those who said so to the Apostle Paul, and the Bible has said that it is right for those

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who slander without knowing the will of God to receive condemnation (Romans 3:8).

The will of God was that God would send His own Son, have all the sin of us human beings transferred to Jesus through the baptism He received from John, and save us from sin. This is the law of the Spirit of God that has caused us to be born again of water and the Spirit. The Bible says that this law has saved us from all sin and judgment, and those who believe have received the remission of sins from all the sins of the world. Those who believe this are children of God who act according to the will of God, so how could they love sin and commit sin? Those who do not know the will of God and merely slander the righteous, not standing on God's side, will receive judgment.

Dear fellow believers, have you come to know the will of God? The will of God is to cause us to receive the remission of sins, and also for us to serve the Lord in holiness in our lives, to serve souls by spreading the gospel, and to run the race of faith by believing the word of the Lord without compromising with this world. And those who have been born again of water and the Spirit testify of the word of God and, according to the word of God, live in the church for that work of saving the souls of other people. That was the will of God.

It was the will of God that we become righteous by believing in the gospel of the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit. It is not that we commit sin as we please because we have no sin; we commit sin because we are weak. But even that sin of the world has all been removed through the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross.

God the Father passed on to Jesus through baptism, by way of John, all the sin of the world that human beings commit in the world because they are weak. Because God, knowing that we would commit sin, sent His own Son, had Him receive baptism

from John, and had the Son die on the Cross and rise again, we have been saved completely by believing in the gospel of the blessing of the water and the Spirit. Dear fellow believers, this was the will of God. Do you understand?

The will of God is that we be born again of water and the Spirit and become holy. Now God lets into the kingdom of heaven only those who know and do the will of God.

It is the will of God to believe in the gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit that God has sent

The Bible says that doing according to the will of God is believing in Him whom God has sent. *"Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent'" (John 6:28–29).* If we want to do the will of God, we must have the faith that believes in Him whom God has sent. God is saying that this is doing the will of God. If believing in Him whom God has sent is the work of God, you must believe in Jesus Christ and believe in the gospel of the remission of sins of Jesus Christ.

"Therefore they said to Him, 'What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."'" (John 6:30–31).

Long ago, when Moses was leading the people of Israel through the wilderness, God sent down manna, the food of heaven, in the wilderness desert. Through that manna, the people of Israel did not starve even in the wilderness and were able to sustain their lives. What does that manna point to? It is the food of life that keeps one from ever hungering, and it was the flesh

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and blood of Jesus, that is, the gospel of the baptism Jesus received from John and of the Cross. Just as the people of Israel ate manna and obtained life, the spiritual children of God eat the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the food of life, by faith, obtain life, and live. God was pleased with that. We who believe the word of God can say that we have truly believed in God (John 6:32–39).

So when people asked, *"What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28)*, Jesus told them to believe in Him whom God has sent. God sent Jesus, but because people did not believe in Him, they could not eat the food of life either and were believing wrongly, without any relation to the will of God. If they wanted to follow the will of God and do the work of God, they had to believe in Him whom God had sent. This word says that believing in the work of salvation that Jesus Christ, whom God sent, has accomplished is doing the work of God. If we want to do the will of God, we must believe in that work by which Jesus Christ has given salvation with the water and the blood. Believing in and spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit and living for this gospel is doing the will of God.

Regarding doing the will of God the Father, the Lord finally says, *"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)*. Jesus Christ clearly says to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In this word, the works done by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all implied in baptism. When we come to know that, we can believe in God and know the work Jesus Christ did on this earth and the work to which God the Holy Spirit testifies. The gospel of the water and the Spirit was the testimony of those whom God sent. Countless prophets and servants of God have testified of the salvation of baptism

accomplished by Jesus, the representative of heaven whom God sent, and John the Baptist, the servant of God whom God sent. Therefore, you and I receive salvation when we believe the word that comes out of the mouths of the servants of God whom God has sent. For you and me to believe in the true gospel is to accept the will of God.

To do the will of God, we must believe in the gospel that came by the water, the blood, and the Spirit

If we want to follow the will of Jesus Christ and act according to the will of God, we must first believe in the baptism Jesus received and the Cross, that is, the gospel by which Jesus has saved us from sin with the water and the blood. It is the will of God to believe in Jesus, whom God sent, and to believe the fact that Jesus Christ, whom God sent, has removed the sin of the world with the water and the blood. When we believe in Jesus Christ, the will of God the Father is fulfilled in us, and when we spread that faith, it becomes doing the will of God the Father.

The Lord has promised that only those who believe in the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit, which He Himself has given, enter the kingdom of God (the kingdom of heaven). When we know the will of God clearly and, by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which all our sins were transferred to Jesus through the baptism He received from John and sinners were made holy from all sins, come to live for the gospel and live while spreading the love, salvation, and truth of God for the expansion of the kingdom of God, then on the last day we will go before the Lord and enter the kingdom of heaven that God the Father has prepared.

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Those who do according to the will of God the Father are those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is said that believing in Him whom God has sent is the work of God. Believing that Jesus Christ, whom God sent, had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, and that He alone is the Lord of salvation, is doing the will of God. That will of God the Father toward us human beings is the faith by which we accept, receive, and believe that He transferred all our sins to His Son Jesus through baptism by way of John.

The way of saving from sin was all accomplished by Jesus' receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, shedding His blood on the Cross, and rising again. Now our doing that will of God is believing in Him whom God has sent (the Savior). The faith that believes in the Lord of redemption, who had the sin of mankind transferred to Him through baptism, and lives preaching that faith is doing the will of God. And now those who are born again must live spreading this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the ends of the earth.

The Lord said that on that day many would come forward saying, *"Lord, Lord"* (Matthew 7:22–23). Who is the person who commits sin while claiming to believe before God? This word speaks of who the person is who practices lawlessness before God. Among those in this world who say, *"Lord, Lord,"* there are many who are not born again, and even though they believe in Jesus, they are tormented because there is sin in their hearts. So they pray desperately, saying, *"Lord, Lord."* After praying to their heart's content their hearts should feel refreshed, but because sin remains in their hearts just as it was, they say, *"Lord, Lord."* So when they go to pray on a mountain, they cry out, *"Lord, Lord,"* so loudly that the mountain seems about to move away, as if God were far away. A person who does not have complete faith comes to call out *"Lord, Lord"* often.

Look at what is written in the word. He said that even if people call Jesus, saying, *"Lord, Lord,"* not all will go to the kingdom of heaven. No matter how loudly they raise their voices and call out, *"Lord, Lord,"* they are rejected before the Lord. Only those who truly believe in Jesus as their own Savior and have heard the complete gospel of the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins can be acknowledged by God and be embraced in His arms. The will of God is that we be holy just as God is holy, and only when we believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior whom God sent, and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that He accomplished, and receive the remission of sins, do we become holy and become fit for the will of God. Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit was the faith that gives us life, the faith that does the will of God.

This word means that a person who practices lawlessness is a person who keeps calling on the name of the Lord while having sin. Many people gather on mountains and pray with loud voices. That is because their hearts have not been born again of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has given, and there is neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit in their hearts, so, afraid of going to hell, they call on the Lord urgently.

There are also people who, without having received the remission of sins, play the prophet in the name of the Lord, cast out demons, and do the work of missionaries and pastors. But there is no hope for them. He said that they work themselves to death for the Lord while having sin and in the end are forsaken by the Lord. Even being forsaken by people makes one's heart ache; if one is forsaken by the Lord, who is the King of kings and the Judge, where will one go? It is so very regrettable.

Dear fellow believers, I truly hope that such a thing will not happen. Hear, know, and believe, right at this moment, the

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gospel of the blessing of being born again of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has given. The will of God is to believe in the gospel of the blessing of being born again of the water and the Spirit that God has given and to be saved. This is the faith of one who does according to the will of the Father. I hope that not only you but also all the people of the whole world will be born again by faith in these last times. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

At the place where He ended His words

< Matthew 7:28–29 >

“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

The questions that remain after He ended His words

Dear fellow believers, after hearing a long message, we come to recall which content made an impression on us. But as the Gospel of Matthew concludes the words spoken on the mountain, it gathers our gaze on the One who spoke those words. It records both the fact that the crowds heard the teaching and were astonished and the reason they were astonished. Now we must consider with what attitude we will accept the words of Jesus.

“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching” (Matthew 7:28). At the beginning of chapter 5, Jesus saw the crowds, went up on a mountain, and sat down, and Matthew recorded its beginning, writing, *“He opened His mouth and taught them, saying” (Matthew 5:2)*. The teaching that began in this way comes to an end in this verse. Matthew marks in this way the beginning and the end of the words spoken on the mountain, and at that ending point he shows how the teaching sounded to the crowds.

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In the Gospel of Matthew, the record that Jesus had ended His words appears again and again besides this place (Matthew 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, 26:1). After that record, Jesus' next step always follows, and this time, too, chapter 8 begins with the record that Jesus came down from the mountain and great multitudes followed Him. The time of hearing the teaching has ended, but the questions that those words posed remain with those who heard them. They must now accept in their own lives the attitude toward their brothers, as well as prayer and discernment, the faith that calls on the Lord, and obedience to the word. The place where the sermon ended becomes the starting point of the response.

The crowds heard the teaching and were astonished

The passage does not exaggerate the people's reaction and fill it with various emotions. It records briefly that the crowds were astonished at His teaching. It does not go on to explain what they thought in their hearts, and in the following verse it reveals the reason they were astonished by connecting it with the way Jesus taught. What Matthew recorded is not the inner thoughts of the crowds but the nature of the teaching they heard.

We cannot read the reaction of being astonished as the completion of faith right away. What this verse tells us directly is the reaction the crowds showed after hearing the teaching. We who have been deeply impressed—do we actually believe in the Lord who spoke?

There is a difference between remembering a word with admiration and entrusting one's own judgment to that word. Even if people acknowledged that it was right when they heard

it, when an uncomfortable situation comes, they can follow their familiar thoughts. Therefore, the response needed by us who read this passage does not stop at repeating the assessment that it was astonishing. Accept in the decisions of your life the fact that the Lord has spoken.

The reason Matthew makes clear

"For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29). Matthew clearly reveals the reason. There was authority in Jesus' teaching. If we set aside who the One speaking is and accept the content only as good guidelines for living, we will miss the fact that Matthew emphasizes at this closing point. The Gospel of Matthew carries this word *"authority"* through to the end. When He was teaching in the temple, the chief priests and the elders challenged Him, saying, *"By what authority are You doing these things?" (Matthew 21:23)*, and the risen Lord said, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18)*.

Here there is no basis for explaining authority as a loud voice or a forceful tone. What the passage shows is what the Lord had said before and how He said it. In chapter 5, after the Lord said that you have heard what was said to those of old, He continued His words, saying, *"I say to you" (Matthew 5:22)*, and this word continues repeatedly in chapter 5. With the commandment not to murder, He shed light even on the heart that is angry with a brother, and at the end of chapter 7, He Himself spoke even of what will happen on that day.

We tend to acknowledge Jesus by picking out only the parts we like. We gladly listen to words of comfort, but we may keep our distance before words telling us to correct our own judgment.

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But the authority that Matthew testifies of does not remain only within the range we agree with. Because the Lord has spoken, whether our thoughts are right must also be examined before that word.

The Lord, who made His own words heard

Just before this, Jesus said, *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24)*. He likened the life of the one who hears His sayings and does them to a house on the rock. It is after such teaching that Matthew speaks of Jesus' authority. The Lord calls us to place our lives on His own word.

Jesus directly asks for a response to His own word. He makes it clear that the life of the hearer depends on that word. We must accept that word with faith that the Lord knows us and teaches us the right way.

Nor is there any reason to try to hide our weaknesses before this authority. The Lord has already exposed the faith that adorns itself with outward appearances. He spoke even of the piety practiced to be seen by men, the worry within the heart, and the judgment toward one's brother. Standing honestly before the Lord, who knows us exactly, is the attitude of accepting that word.

What those entrusted with teaching should remember

The words spoken on the mountain place the name of the scribes at the beginning and at the end. The beginning is the

word, *"Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 5:20)*, and the end is this verse, which says that the crowds compared Jesus' teaching with the scribes. Those who learn and explain the Bible cannot pass lightly over this contrast. Later, the Lord said to the disciples, *"One is your Teacher" (Matthew 23:8)*, so those who preach the word, too, are in the place of learning from that one Teacher.

Those who hear sermons, too, must distinguish between the impression of the preacher and the authority of the Lord. Just because an explanation is clear and the words are firm does not mean that all its content automatically becomes right. Examine what the Lord actually said. The role of those who preach the word lies in helping the hearers hear the words of Jesus more accurately.

We, too, speak of the Bible and exhort others in our daily lives. At such times, we must be careful not to attach the Lord's name to our own preferences. We must explain what the Bible says and the application we have thought of as distinct from each other, and we must be able to correct our lacking understanding. Those who exalt the Lord's authority examine even their own explanations before the word.

The word of the One who saved us

Faith that knows who Jesus is accepts what He has accomplished for us. The Lord, who knows the hearts of people and their end, came to this earth to save sinners. His word does not leave us alone under the burden of having to become perfect by our own strength. It leads us to believe in the Lord, who has solved the problem of sin and judgment, and to follow Him.

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Jesus, who has the authority to teach, had all the sins of the world, including even the sins we commit throughout our lives, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. As the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross, was judged in our place, and died, and He rose again from death. By believing this gospel, we have received the remission of sins, and God has given the Holy Spirit as a gift to us who believe. Because we believe in the Lord, who saved us, we trust His word and follow it.

Therefore, the Lord's authority cannot be a tool that keeps us bound in fear and makes us prove ourselves. Believing in His salvation, we can acknowledge our own wrongs that are revealed in the word and turn back. Faith opens the heart toward the word.

The life that follows after hearing

Dear fellow believers, at the end of Matthew chapter 7, we are standing with the crowds who have heard all the words. We can evaluate the Lord's teaching and go back, or we can live accepting His word. If we acknowledge the authority that the passage testifies of, we ourselves cannot be sitting in the final seat of judgment. We must correct our thoughts according to the Lord's word.

Let us examine what, among the words we have heard today, we must actually accept. We have been given the commands to examine ourselves before judging others, to ask believing in the Father's goodness, and to discern teachings by their fruits. Along with remembering more of the content, we need to respond to the word we have already clearly heard.

I hope that the confession of believing in Jesus as Lord will continue in your life after you have heard the word. Going one

step beyond keeping the sentences we admired, let us entrust our judgment to the One who has the authority to teach us. The words spoken on the mountain have ended, but our response, as those who heard those words, continues. I hope you will live each day believing and following the Lord's teaching. ✉

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CHAPTER

8

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

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

You who have received the remission of sins, offer the gift that Moses commanded

< Matthew 8:1–4 >

“When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, ‘See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’”

When we look at this word, a leper appears. When Jesus had spoken the Sermon on the Mount and came down from the mountain, a leper came before Jesus and said, *“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean” (Matthew 8:2)*. Then it is recorded, *“Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, ‘See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that*

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Moses commanded, as a testimony to them'" (Matthew 8:3–4). In the Bible, leprosy spiritually refers to the sin of man. After the Lord healed this leper, He told him to offer the gift that Moses commanded and to testify. What on earth does the gift that Moses commanded refer to? The gift that Moses commanded refers to the law of sacrifice recorded in the Old Testament. When we look at Leviticus in the Old Testament, the law of sacrifice appears there, and it is all of the following content: *"When a ruler has sinned, and done something unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD his God in anything which should not be done, and is guilty, or if his sin which he has committed comes to his knowledge, he shall bring as his offering a kid of the goats, a male without blemish. 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 4:22–24)*.

God said that the people of Israel had to offer the sacrifice of atonement to God because of their sins. The gift that Moses commanded means precisely to offer the sacrifice of atonement. In order for a person to offer a sin offering to God, he brought a sacrificial offering such as a male goat, a female goat, a young bull, or a female lamb before God, laid his hands on its head to pass his sins on to it, offered its blood, and burned its flesh as an offering. It is this sacrifice, in which the sins of people are passed on to the sacrificial offering, that is called the gift that Moses commanded.

The sin of man is like leprosy

In the Bible, leprosy is spoken of with regard to the sin of man, and it means that the sin of man is like leprosy. It is said

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that it takes about seven years for leprosy to show itself until the patient himself knows it. At first one does not know that one has caught leprosy, and then when some slightly strange symptoms appear, one begins to feel that something is strange. It is said that even after about three years one does not know it oneself, but after about six years others do not know it and only oneself comes to know it. It is said that around that time the skin rather becomes smooth and may even look fine. In this way leprosy shows itself only after a long time has passed, and the sin of man is the same. Leviticus chapter 13, too, speaks in detail about leprosy.

It means that the sin of man is the same. Man, too, is born into this world with sin, but without knowing it himself he passes through infancy, and only as he enters adolescence does he come to know the symptoms showing that he was born with sin. Only when a person reaches puberty at sixteen or seventeen years of age does he come to know his own sin, saying, "Ah, I am doing things like this." Later, as he passes through his youth and reaches middle age, he comes to know that man is this kind of being. This is what we call the sin of man. David confessed that man is a sinner from birth, saying, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5)*. As people enter adolescence, they come to know and experience their own sins, and at this time they receive the teaching to do good through the moral education of the world. And so they also wander and fall into anguish between human morality and their own sins. Also, from this time on, as they feel their own sins, they begin to lead a life of faith by their own thoughts in order to cover those sins. They rely on a doctrinal faith in order to wash away their own sins by their own thoughts.

Religion is a product of human thought, made by humans. Faith that humans have made with their thoughts is called

religion. People who are sinners make doctrines that fit their own thoughts, and they rely on their own efforts to do good deeds and to make their hearts clean. They make a law of rewarding good and punishing evil by their own thoughts, believe in it, and try to live a religious life. So they try not to do bad things, and if they have done one bad thing, they try to do two good things, and in this way they try to wash away their own sins. While living a religious life, people try for many years to cover their own sins with good deeds, but their own sins are not covered by their own good deeds. This is exactly the same religious act as Adam and Eve sewing fig leaves together and making themselves skirts after they had sinned before God. A skirt of fig leaves tears again after a little time passes, and then one must make a new one and put it on again, so it can never become whole. It means that in the end people could not cover themselves, and so they made up a good religion and tried to hide their own sins. This is religion made by the thoughts of man. Since people can never have their own sins washed away by a religion made by their own thoughts, it means that they receive the remission of sins only when they return to God through the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe.

Believe in the law of sacrifice commanded to Moses

After Jesus healed the leprosy, He told the man not to let anyone know, but to go to the priest, show himself, and then offer the gift that Moses commanded and testify. It was that he should testify that Jesus Christ had healed this leper's disease, by offering the lamb required by the law of sacrifice of the Old Testament. This was telling him to testify that God had removed all his sins. In the old days, in order to receive the remission of

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sins, the people of the Old Testament realized their sins through the law of God and offered one sacrificial offering in order to wash those sins away. They laid their hands on the head of the sacrificial offering to pass their sins on to it, took the blood of the sacrificial offering, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, poured out the rest of the blood on the ground, and burned the flesh as an offering, and so they could receive the remission of sins before God. This was the law of sacrifice that God commanded to Moses, and He required sacrificial offerings of sinners. All of us had to come before God through a sacrificial offering for the remission of sins in order to have our sins washed away. In the Old Testament, people had to come before God with an offering such as an unblemished male goat, female goat, or young bull, and they surely had to lay their hands on it to pass their sins on to it, and then take the blood of the sacrifice, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour it out on the ground. This sacrifice was the law of sacrifice for salvation that God gave in order to wash away the sins of man.

But the people of the Old Testament sinned every day. So God established a law by which, once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, the high priest offered the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement, so that all the sins of Israel, including all the sins that had piled up in the meantime, were remitted at one time. Man tried to cover his sins with fig leaves, but in order to receive the remission of sins, he had to offer a sacrificial offering to God in his place. For this, every sinner came before the priest, laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, took its blood, and gave it to the priest, and the priest had to put the blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour it out on the ground, and the flesh had to be burned in the fire. All of this speaks of the salvation in which Jesus Christ had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John

and shed His blood on the Cross, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It speaks of the truth that Jesus Christ came to this earth, had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him forever through the baptism He received from John, and shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment for that sin.

Without the remission of sins, one comes to resent God

When a person believes in God by his own thoughts, he often falls into error. Many people resent God. They have such thoughts as, "This is strange. I believed in God, so why is this happening? Why do things go so badly? I believed in God, so why do things not go well?" But, dear fellow believers, when you face and go through something, you must not first resent God; rather, you must examine whether your faith has been formed according to the word of God. When you meet with some unfair situation, as if God were not with you, you must consider whether you perhaps have not received the remission of sins.

Among the gifts that God gives us, the best is the blessing of the remission of sins. It is just as it is said in Matthew that if a child asks his father for something, even his parents in the flesh will give him good things, and how much more will God give us the best things (Matthew 7:11). What are the good things that God says He gives? They are precisely the remission of sins that He gives through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when we believe in Jesus as our Savior, we must not believe by our own thoughts, but must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins, and live by faith. And we must entrust our lives to God, but because people cannot entrust themselves to

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God and try to live according to their own thoughts, they cannot overcome this world and end up being defeated. If a person cannot overcome his own thoughts, he must again check his own remission of sins by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our true remission of sins is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Keep in mind that even if we cannot overcome, the Holy Spirit who is in us overcomes this world. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit overcome the world by believing in the Lord. And they readily give up the fleshly things of this world. But those who have not received the remission of sins cannot give up the things of the world and of the flesh. Sinners have too strong an attachment to some part of the world, but we the righteous, even when we have been attached to some part of the world, know how to quit it if it is not beneficial for serving the gospel. This is because the person who stakes his life on God and invests himself in righteous work is a wise person.

The characteristic of those who have not yet received the remission of sins is that they cannot overcome this world, and because they do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they resent the good God. If we have gone wrong before God, it is we humans who have gone wrong; God has done nothing wrong to us. Because we do not know and do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we do not believe that God is absolutely good and absolutely perfect, and so we resent God.

The Lord said that every good thing comes down from above (James 1:17). Everything that we call good comes from above, and what is evil comes from the desires of your flesh and mine. Yet the reason people resent God is that they do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and that the remission of sins has not come upon them. Even when there is a problem with our faith, we must not resent God.

And those who have not received the remission of sins often come before God with deeds. Most people make skirts of fig leaves and put them on to cover their own evil before God, and they try to deceive themselves and God. They try to cover their own sins by doing good deeds in their own way. Man tries to make up for his sins with good deeds. It means that man tries to cover his evil by repeatedly doing religious good that he has made by his own thoughts. A person sins and, to make up for it, does good deeds and keeps coming with human righteousness—how evil that is before God!

But how is it with the righteous who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? The righteous, too, have shortcomings and commit many sins, but they do not think that they could cover the sins they have committed with their own good deeds. Rather, by ruminating on the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they believe that all their sins have been washed clean. It means that sins are not washed away just because a person does good deeds to cover his sins, but that by faith one realizes what He has already washed away through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We believe that when we have offered that gift that Moses commanded, we have all the problems of our hearts solved and can praise the Lord. On the other hand, it means that those who cannot believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit lead a life of faith that keeps repeating itself.

In order for us humans to return to God, we must surely realize sin, and we come to know that sin through the word of the law. We realize that when we have failed to keep the law of God made up of as many as 613 laws and commandments, that is, what we must keep in our daily lives, it becomes sin. We come to know, saying, “Ah, doing what God told us not to do and failing to do what He told us to do is sin.” When we have come to realize this, we come before God with the offering that

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God commanded to Moses, lay our hands on the sacrificial offering to pass our sins on to it, and receive the remission of sins by offering that offering.

Also, some people ask what the many other things offered to God in the Old Testament besides the laying on of hands are, such as wringing off the neck of a bird like a dove or offering fine flour as an offering. When one comes before God, one must surely come with an offering, and that offering is precisely pointing out our sins and indicating, “I am a person who must die like this by the law of God.” If one comes with a bird, even though there is no laying on of hands, one wrings off its neck, tears its wings, throws away its crop with its filth, and then offers it whole before God. It is believing that, though we are people who must die like this, the sacrificial offering bore our sins in our place and was killed.

Only when you break your stubbornness can you believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

In the Bible, the firstborn of a donkey had to have its neck broken if it was not to be redeemed with a lamb (Exodus 13:13), and the young donkey that appears in the Bible refers to you and me. And the young donkey speaks of your stubbornness and mine. All these words speak of stubbornness or one’s own thoughts, and we must boldly break such stubbornness. Since God said that the wages of sin is death, if there is even a little sin, one dies. Therefore, we must submit to the law of God. We must acknowledge it before the word of God; if we do not acknowledge it, we can never come before God. We must acknowledge before God, saying, “I am a person who cannot but go to hell because of my sins.”

Even if we have committed only a very small sin, we can have all our sins washed clean by faith only when we have faith that believes in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit; but however many good deeds a person may have done, he cannot wash away the sin in his heart. Only when a person knows before God that he is someone who commits sin, acknowledges that he is someone who cannot but go to hell because of that sin, and believes in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, can he have his sins washed away by faith. Because we come before God with a sacrificial offering, we must lay our hands on the head of that offering and offer the shedding of its blood to the Lord. When we come to acknowledge before God through the word of the law that we ourselves are wholly sinners, we offer the sacrificial offering of atonement and receive the remission of sins before God.

Therefore He said that whoever comes before God must come with a sacrificial offering for his sins. This word does not mean to come with the money of the world. It is a word telling us to come before God by faith with a sacrificial offering and to lay our hands on it to pass our sins on to it. Even if a sin is a tiny one, one must surely bring a sacrificial offering, lay one's hands on its head, and offer the sacrifice by the shedding of its blood; what does this speak of? It means that, going beyond one's own thoughts and will, one must by faith pass one's sins on by the laying on of hands and offer the blood before God.

Human beings have thoughts called fixed ideas. They also have a stubbornness called their own subjective views. In particular, the more educated people are, the more their fixed ideas tend to harden. Those whose thoughts have hardened and who think that their own subjective views are always right often cannot accept the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

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because those thoughts have hardened. Therefore, we must cast away our own stubbornness and subjective views before God.

That is why we must come with a sacrificial offering when we come before God. The gospel of the water and the Spirit has completely broken human thoughts and plans. People think that it is enough simply to earn money, meet a good partner and marry, build a good house, and live comfortably. That is precisely the hardened thought of the flesh and the desire of the flesh. Because man is the lord of all creation, a being that resembles the image of God, and a being that lives forever, if he does not receive the remission of sins before God, he will go to hell and suffer forever. When a person believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sins, he goes to the kingdom of God and lives receiving eternal blessings and enjoying glory. That is why a person must know the fact that he is a being who lives forever, and must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins.

Therefore, we must consider what kind of beings we are before God. “What is life? Where did I come from, and where am I going? What kind of being am I before God, and what is my greatest problem? It is sin. Then how can this problem of sin be solved?” In order to solve the problem of sin, a person had to seek and meet God, and in order to meet God, he had to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, one had to offer before God that sacrificial offering that God commanded to Moses, offer it with faith that believes in the law of sacrifice that passes the sins of man on to that sacrificial offering, and so receive the remission of sins by faith.

That is why, when we come before God, we must surely come by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is, it means that we must surely come before God with the word of the law that God commanded and with the word of the water

and the Spirit that God has given us. First, when we come with the word of the law, which is the command of God, we can clearly know what is wrong with us before God. When we come to know through the law of God what is wrong before God, even if it is all right between people, we must acknowledge that we have sin and that there is the judgment of sin. And it does not end with acknowledging that sin; we must know that the wages of that sin is destruction and death. When the law of God says that the wages of sin is death, we must know that it is death, and we must believe the word of God just as it is. Just as the word says, *"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24),* in order to be delivered from all our sins, we must go to Jesus Christ, who came through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Why must we go to Jesus Christ? It is in order for us to receive the remission of sins. The gift commanded to Moses in the Old Testament refers to the law of sacrifice of offering through a sacrificial offering, as spoken of in the law of sacrifice of the Old Testament.

For the sacrificial offering to shed its blood, it had to receive the laying on of hands

The Bible says, *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11).* Also it says, *"Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:21–22).* Why did the sacrificial offering have to shed its blood

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in the Old Testament? It is because He told them to lay their hands on the sacrificial offering to pass their sins on to it. Because they obeyed that word and passed all their sins on to it, that sacrificial offering had to shed its blood and die as the price of bearing the sins in place of the sinner. When a sinner came to realize the sin he had committed, he brought an unblemished sacrificial offering, laid his hands on its head, and killed it at the place where the burnt offering is killed, and He called this blood the blood of the sin offering. This sacrificial offering had to shed its blood to make atonement for the sins of the sinner. In the Old Testament, in order to pass the sins of a sinner on to the sacrificial offering, one surely had to lay one's hands on it. It means that when a person lays his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, the sins are passed on (Leviticus 1:4). When the sins are passed on, the offering that has borne those sins sheds its blood and dies. This is precisely the blood of the sacrifice of atonement. Through the laying on of hands and the shedding of blood, the sins of man are remitted.

Also, the trespass offering is a sacrifice in which one repays the damage one has caused, adding one-fifth to the original thing (Leviticus 6:5). This shows that, in place of our having to die before God, Jesus Christ came to this earth and had all the sins of this world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Even if ten million or a hundred million blemished people die in our place, it has no effect at all in removing the sins of man. But because our Lord is the holy Son of God, who has no sin, the baptism He received and the shedding of His blood had great power for the remission of our sins. His baptism and death had great value. Since the Lord had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and died on the Cross for us, it came about that He

paid the price of our sins in full and more before God. That is why it is called the trespass offering.

The Lord said to offer the gift that Moses commanded and to testify. We must testify of the gospel. Matthew says, *"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)*, saying that Jesus saves His people from their sins. It means that the One who will save us is Yeshua in Hebrew, that is, Jesus.

Then we must consider the word, *"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'" (Matthew 3:13–17)*.

This word is the same as the word of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, a sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering to pass his sins on to it, killed the sacrificial offering, and put its blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering before God. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest went into the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle, where the ark of God was, and sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat seven times. Just as atonement was made in this way for a year's worth of sins, Jesus promised that He would make atonement for our sins in exactly the same way, and He kept that promise.

"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament received the laying on of hands from the high priest, the

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representative of sinners, and bore the sins of the people of Israel, Jesus had all your sins and mine transferred to Him thus, that is, just as that word of the Old Testament says. It means that just as the sacrificial offering received the laying on of hands, bore the sins, was killed, and shed its blood, and just as the burnt offering was offered before God, Jesus, who is God, came and fulfilled all righteousness by receiving baptism. Jesus had all sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again on the third day after He died, and so became our Savior. This is the law of sacrifice for salvation that God has commanded to us.

We must testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must offer to Jesus, with faith in it, the gift He commanded to Moses. The Lord came to this earth to fulfill these words of prophecy, and He fulfilled all righteousness just as was said, *"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 3:15–16)*. It is then that the word says, *"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)*.

Just as in the law of sacrifice of the Old Testament, the Lord came to this earth in the age of the New Testament and had the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Jesus had all sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so saved us who believe from all the sins of the world once and for all. This is the power of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that has saved us. We must testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

By what faith can all mankind receive the remission of sins?

How do we receive the remission of sins? We receive the remission of sins by believing in the baptism that the Lord, having come to this earth just as the word of the Old Testament said, received from John, and in the blood He shed on the Cross. Just as in the Old Testament the high priest passed all the sins of a year on to the sacrificial offering by laying his hands on it, John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus, and Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him once and for all through that baptism. Now all of us receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Because Jesus Christ took away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, He died on the Cross. *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Why did Jesus take away the sin of the world? Since He had the sins transferred to Him through baptism, He took away the sin of the world. Therefore, Jesus could be crucified. In the Old Testament, the sacrificial offering received the laying on of hands and had sins, so it had to die, and for this it had to shed its blood. The priest cut the sacrificial offering into pieces, put them on the altar of burnt offering, burned them all in the fire, and offered them before God. This speaks of having received the judgment for all sins. It speaks of the sacrificial offering having borne all the sins and received all the judgment. In the same way, Jesus Christ, too, had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John and shed His blood on the Cross, and thereby received the judgment for all sins. And He rose again from death and became the true Savior.

When we believe in God, we are saved from sin only when we believe that Jesus is our Savior. Therefore, we must believe

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in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. And this is the righteousness of God, not the righteousness of us humans. It is not that we received the remission of sins by doing good and doing good deeds, as if making skirts of fig leaves; rather, we must be saved from sin through faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as in the Old Testament a sinner brought one sacrificial offering, passed his sins on to it, killed the sacrificial offering, had it receive the punishment for his sins in his place, and so received the remission of sins, we are saved from all sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is the truth of being saved by believing in the righteousness of God.

So this salvation is just as the word of God says, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. A person is saved from sin by believing in the righteousness of God with his heart. We are saved by believing that Jesus thus received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so saved us. That is why the salvation of true sinners is not in us but in Jesus. This gospel of the remission of sins is not in us but in Jesus. Because God so loved the world, because He loves us, Jesus, who is God, came to this earth to save us, and thus received baptism from John, died, and rose again from death, and so saved us.

The right work Jesus did in saving us from sin

We are saved from all sins by believing in the right work that God has done for us, that is, His having saved us. This is the salvation of mankind. But when people believe in Jesus, without even knowing their own sins well, they think only of Jesus

having hung on the Cross, and out of sympathy they believe in Him. They believe emotionally, thinking only of how painful it must have been for Jesus on the Cross and how sorrowful He must have been, and they treat Jesus as if they themselves had made Him a god. Even if we do not acknowledge Him as God, Jesus Himself was God. He was the God who created the universe and all things. He is One who has no need of our help. Because He is the Creator, He is One who has no need of our help or sympathy. Rather, He is the God who has shown us mercy, had pity on us, solved the problem of our sins, solved our life and death, fortune and misfortune, and all our problems and difficulties, and blessed us. And He is the living and almighty God, who is able to judge those who oppose Him.

And when we believe in Jesus, we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is not that we simply believe in Jesus as our Savior; we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Among humans, people say, "I believe you, I believe you," promising each other not to change, but if one of the two betrays the other, they turn their backs on each other altogether, saying, "You betrayed me, so I betray you too," but God never does so. God made us unilaterally, and when we fell into the temptation of Satan the devil and fell into sin, He saved us. The Lord saved us unilaterally. Is that not so?

The Lord told the leper to offer the gift that Moses commanded and to testify. Just as He removed our sins in this way in the Old Testament, in the New Testament Jesus received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, and so saved us in this way. Just as in the Old Testament, the God of love has shown us love and mercy. In order to save us from sin completely, Jesus received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again from death. He actually saved us

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completely. This is the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

We must believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit and testify of it. Do you believe that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is salvation? I believe that the gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes the righteousness of God. Do you believe that our salvation did not come from human righteousness? Salvation is not something that you and I made, nor did it come about because you and I did good deeds; rather, God unilaterally saved you and me through the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)*. God made the world, us, and the universe and all things, and He so loved us that He even gave His own Son. God sent His own Son to this earth, and through the baptism the Son received from John, He passed all the sin of mankind on to the Son. And He even let the Son die on the Cross and raised Him again on the third day. Since He so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son, whoever believes in Him does not perish but has everlasting life. This word says that God sent the Son not to judge us but to save us from sin. We are saved by faith.

The salvation of the remission of sins does not come from us but has come from God, and we believe that God has saved us from sin. Faith is acknowledging and relying on the word, the salvation, and the love of God. The word faith carries the meaning of relying on and also the meaning of holding on to. We hold on to and believe in the salvation that God has made, not something we made. And we must testify of this gospel. We must testify of this gospel to the whole world. Of course, even at this very moment, we are diligently testifying of it.

Testifying of the gospel comes with sacrifice

In order for us to testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, sacrifice also comes with it. Jesus, too, came to this earth and was sacrificed for us in order to save us. Were the baptism Jesus received from John and the suffering of the Cross merely something that hurt for a moment and could then be shaken off? He suffered during the thirty-three years of His life before He hung on the Cross. He suffered from His very birth. You will know well that Jesus was born in a place where animals ate and slept. And because His father in the flesh was a carpenter, the household was not wealthy, and until He turned thirty, the Lord lived helping His parents. Then, when He was thirty, Jesus Christ received baptism from John, and for three years, while testifying of the kingdom of heaven and speaking the mysteries of God, He went through countless sufferings and sacrifices. He was also mocked a great deal.

There is sacrifice in spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Of course there is glory, but there is also sacrifice. It is because there is your sacrifice that the gospel is spread; if there were no sacrifice of those who went before, those who come after could not have been saved from sin. If those who received the remission of sins first quit, who will preach the gospel, and if there is no one who preaches the gospel, who can hear it? There must be someone who preaches for people to hear; if there is no one who preaches, how will they hear? People say, “Even if you do not preach, other people all preach,” but whoever preaches, there is the sacrifice of the one who preaches. So you must not make a show of living for the gospel, or try to give up because there is a little difficulty. Think about the sacrifice the Lord made for you and me. You must think about the Lord

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leaving the glorious throne of heaven, coming to this earth, and saving you and me.

It is not that you and I have no difficulties. In fact, there are a great many difficulties. As I often tell you, I came to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit while reading the word of the Bible. I came to know the truth because God taught me; it is not that I realized it because I was outstanding. When I read through the word, God lets me know, "Ah, this is what this means," and so I know. There is a clear reason why God has me, and you, gain understanding while hearing the word. It is that you and I should receive salvation and proclaim it. Proclaiming it may be hard, and persecution may come with it; will you refuse to receive salvation because you dislike that? What should one do if one does not want to receive salvation? One just has to enter a religion that makes skirts of fig leaves and puts them on every day, not speak the truth accurately, and acknowledge others, saying, "Yours is right too." Then one would suffer neither hardship nor sacrifice.

Because I knew the truth, I could not abandon the gospel

When we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is sacrifice, and we also receive mockery and contempt. In fact, things have become far better now because the ground for the gospel has been well laid. In the old days, one could not even bring up this gospel. I, too, agonized and wept for a long time before I came to believe and preach this gospel. "God, it is so hard to serve the gospel; shall I quit? God, I will not preach the gospel. From now on, please never tell me to preach the gospel." And then I wandered here and there. But God blocked every path

wherever I went. He did not let me wander around as I pleased. "What? Can I not even live like the people of the world?" But God had blocked every path. So I said to God, "God, can I not even do such things? Then please tell me why You made me know this truth and make it hard for me by having me keep this gospel." If I, too, were not going to keep the gospel, I would become a comfortable person by simply going back to the world and settling down there. Instead, I would end up far from the work of God's righteousness.

That is why I cannot do so. Because I knew the truth, I could not live that way. In the world, one could manage to eat and get by doing this and that, but as long as I knew the truth, I could not live that way. The Lord said to testify of the gift He gave to Moses, and just as in the Old Testament, I had to testify that in the New Testament Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us; I could not abandon this truth. That is why I have been doing the work of God's righteousness until now.

In fact, I know that you, too, have had many difficulties since believing this truth. I know that you are cursed at a lot for going to a strange church, and that because you have received the remission of sins you cannot go out into the world and cannot live as you please. But since it says, *"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—ASV" (Matthew 5:10)*, and also, *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12)*, that is in fact a glorious and thankful thing. Dear fellow believers, is it fun to go out into the world and live? Is there anything fun in committing sin? Even if there is temporary fun, that fun cannot last forever, and if one

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lives that way and then comes back before God, one is ashamed, embarrassed, and disgraced.

There is sacrifice in living for the gospel. The more one pays the price of sacrifice, the more blessed one is; this is the law of the Lord's kingdom. Whatever price of sacrifice we pay, if through our sacrifice those who seek God receive the remission of sins, that is enough. If a grain of wheat rots and bears much fruit, it is worth the sacrifice, is it not?

In fact, the difficulties now are not even counted as difficulties. When I think of the days when we went hungry because there was nothing to eat, what you are going through now is not even hardship. Perhaps that is why most things do not seem like hardship.

Dear fellow believers, what is so displeasing about being persecuted and suffering for the Lord? We, too, have been criticized by people, but does anything happen to us just because they do so? As we preached the gospel on this earth, we rather felt that it was more than we deserved that we could preach the gospel without even that much persecution. God has saved us from sin. Just as in the Old Testament the sacrificial offering received the laying on of hands and had the sins passed on to it, in the New Testament Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. Just as in the Old Testament the animal that had received the laying on of hands shed its blood and was killed, and then its flesh was placed on the altar of burnt offering, burned with fire, and offered before God, in the New Testament Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, testified of the gospel for three years, and then went to the Cross, shed all the blood in His body, received all the judgment for sin, and rose again. We must believe and testify that He has saved us

in this way. We must believe it no matter what hardship or what sacrifice there may be.

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Whether one lives in the flesh and dies, or lives for the gospel of God and dies, dying once is the same, but He said that after this there is judgment. That means that for some people there is an eternal reward, and for some people there is eternal punishment.

Since we know the truth of God, how can we not believe while knowing this truth, and how can we be negligent in testifying of it?

The gospel we serve in unity

In serving the gospel, there are difficulties for you, and there are difficulties for me as well. Dear fellow believers, is there sacrifice in our preaching the gospel, or not? Is there sacrifice in your living a life of faith, or not? Who is there who has believed this gospel and has not suffered sacrifice? Everyone has suffered sacrifice. Without exception, those who are serving the gospel in unity in this church have all suffered sacrifice, but because the gospel is so precious, they do not think that they have suffered sacrifice. Because what the Lord has done in saving us is so great, they have lived working with thankfulness without minding the sacrifice. We just need to live by faith like this; why would we run out, saying we dislike sacrifice, in order to try to live well? Let us believe the gospel and serve the gospel by faith. That is the most blessed.

Coworkers who have heard the gospel we preached, believed it, received the remission of sins, and want to preach the gospel together with us are rising up all over the world. When the gospel

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is spread surely into every corner through them, and workers of God are raised up in the regions where they are needed, the work of God takes place.

Dear fellow believers, have you sacrificed anything for the Lord? If so, the Lord will repay you. He will repay you a hundredfold on this earth, and in the Lord's kingdom He will repay you with rewards beyond words. Because the Lord loved us, we also love the Lord. In fact, the sacrifice we suffer is small compared with the sacrifice the Lord suffered to save us. I hope that you will remember that you received the remission of sins because of the baptism Jesus Christ received and His sacrifice, and that you will give thanks, thinking deeply about the fact that souls are saved through your sacrifice. What is sacrifice? If you have lost something after receiving the remission of sins, is that sacrifice? Is it a great sacrifice that you could not do everything for your children because you were serving the gospel? Are only your own children your children? I never think that only my own children are my children. I only have the responsibility to raise my own children; in this world, my true children are you who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has given. There are countless children of God in this world. The children of God also become my children. Is it not the same for you? You believe that the brothers and sisters in the church are your brothers and sisters and mother, do you not? Is only one's own household one's family? No, it is not. All the righteous who have received the remission of sins are our family. The righteous scattered throughout the whole world are also all our family, the family of God.

The Lord came to this earth and fulfilled all righteousness through the baptism He received from John, just as was said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized" (Matthew 3:15–16).*

That baptism was His receiving the laying on of hands, being immersed in the water, and then coming up out of the water. Then what does the baptism Jesus received speak of? It means that He received our sins through the laying on of hands and had all sins transferred to Him, removed all sins by dying on the Cross, and rose again. That is, it means that He fulfilled all righteousness. It means that the Lord fulfilled the righteousness of God through baptism and accomplished the right work for us. You have been saved by believing in the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross. Dear fellow believers, have you received the remission of sins? Do you have sin, or not? Did God save you and me, or were you saved because you believed well? That is right. We have been saved because God saved us.

Now is the time to sow the seed of the gospel

I will preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit regardless of how much time is left, but the end of the age is by no means far off. Since the day when we will no longer be able to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not far off, we must preach this gospel diligently while we can. I believe that for this we must truly set our hearts on it and pray.

Even in places where the gospel has been spread widely, people do not readily believe. Even so, we preach the gospel to them again. Whoever would receive the remission of sins must surely realize sin through the law and know that he cannot but go to hell, and must believe through Jesus Christ that the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which, just as in the Old Testament, Jesus received baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again, and saved us, is the righteousness of God. Everyone who

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believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, everyone who believes that it is salvation, is truly saved.

And God has told us to testify of this gospel of the water and the Spirit. You and I testify of this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Because we believe that our having much work to do means that the gospel is being spread that much more, we gain new strength every day and work. Every day we are preaching the gospel to many people, but compared with the world's population, it is not yet many. Even so, it is a cause for thanks that we can do it because God has permitted it to us. Would it be all right not even to do such precious work and just eat and get by every day? A life lived without doing right work is a worthless life. I believe that anyone who is a human being must live doing right work, doing the work that pleases God.

Dear fellow believers, let us live that way. Even if it is difficult and hard, the Lord will come in a very little while, so let us do the work of the gospel before things become more difficult. Let us not say that we will preach the gospel after earthquakes have occurred and the economy has completely collapsed and things have become hard; let us work more now. Even then, since we cannot help preaching the gospel, if the person next to us comes and asks us to teach him, we will teach him, but working now is tens of thousands of times better than working then. Just as a farmer does not miss the time but sows when it is time to sow, tends when it is time to tend, and reaps when it is time to reap, there is also a time for serving the gospel. Now is the time to sow the seed. Let us know this and not miss the time. I know that you, too, believe so, but I say it again and again because there is passion in my heart.

Dear fellow believers, I hope that we will consider where our hearts are, look to the places where we have not yet preached the gospel, and come to have hearts that want to preach the gospel

there. There are still regions where the gospel has not been spread much.

God has given you and me the word of salvation and of the law. By believing that word, we can live well forever and can keep awake and pray at any time. I give thanks to God. Dear fellow believers, even if it is truly hard, when we look to the Lord, the hardship disappears. There is much work to do, so do not lead a lukewarm life of faith with the thought, "But I have sacrificed this much." Have you sacrificed even to the point of death? Have you even died while working for the gospel? Think about for whom you have sacrificed. You must know that it was done for the Lord, and that your being able to sacrifice was also because the Lord gave you grace. Let us acknowledge that we did not sacrifice because we have more love than God, and let us live sacrificing as God gives us grace and faith. I give thanks to the Lord. You do too, do you not? I hope that you will live making sacrifices for the Lord as well. I am not saying this only to you but also to myself. I say it because our hearts keep growing slack.

I can never just sit still and leave the work undone. If I had finished all the work, I would rest, but when there is much work to do, I cannot rest. I know that not only I but you, too, have much work to do. Because we serve the gospel in unity, if I have much work to do, you also have much work to do.

If God keeps us, the gospel will be spread to the whole world. Let us wisely serve and spread the gospel, and let all of us live for the Lord and then go before the Lord with confidence. The more difficult the times, the more let us live praying for one another and caring for one another. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The place opened to those who believe in the word

< Matthew 8:5–13 >

“Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ The centurion answered and said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, “Go,” and he goes; and to another, “Come,” and he comes; and to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.’ When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour.”

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The centurion who makes known his servant's suffering

The centurion who came to Jesus makes known his servant's suffering. The one standing before the Lord is the centurion, but the one who actually needs help is lying at home. Today's passage shows the word of Jesus coming to pass across that distance between the two people, and it also teaches us what faith in the Lord is.

"Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented'" (Matthew 8:5–6). The centurion describes the condition specifically, saying that his servant is lying at home with paralysis and is suffering dreadfully. Paralysis is a disease that keeps a person from moving his body as he wills even though he has the intention, and it is a disease that is hard to cure by human hands. Since his servant was lying with such a disease, the centurion made the suffering of a member of his household his own problem and brought it to Jesus.

To present someone else's need on his behalf, one must first look into that person's situation. If we see the people entrusted to us only in terms of their usefulness and role, their suffering is pushed to the back. The centurion's plea held his servant's anguish just as it was. We, too, must be able to listen carefully to what is making the people with us struggle and present it to the Lord.

We who pray for others are likewise people who ask for the same grace. The centurion, too, came to the Lord because he could not solve his servant's problem by his own strength. Those who seek help come to stand in the place of relying on the Lord's

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power. Having a responsibility and needing help can very well exist together.

Jesus hears that plea. Even a person who can command soldiers and servants becomes, before the Lord, a person who asks for what he needs. This is because his position cannot become the power to heal the disease. In this way, the passage reveals in turn the authority a person has and the authority of the Lord, on which he must rely.

So you, too, when you meet a need you cannot resolve, do not try to hide it. You can ask the Lord. Even when you grow weary trying to handle alone even the problems of the people you care for, rely on the Lord. Pleading for others is an act of faith that acknowledges our own limits while asking that the Lord's help come upon that person.

After hearing the word that He would come

"And Jesus said to him, 'I will come and heal him'" (Matthew 8:7). Jesus says that He will come and heal him. When the centurion made known his servant's condition, He responded to him directly. The Lord heard his plea and promised healing, and the centurion's answer comes right after he hears this word.

"The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed'" (Matthew 8:8).

The centurion says that he is not worthy to have the Lord come into his house. He did not put forward his own position and try to fit the Lord to his own way. Rather, he humbled himself before Jesus and confessed that the Lord's word alone was enough.

Here humility and faith appear together. While humbling himself, he believed greatly in the Lord's power. Even while saying that he was not worthy to receive the Lord, he asked Him to do it only by a word. The heart that knew that he himself was small led to faith that relied on the Lord's greatness.

When people feel that they lack the qualifications, they easily draw back even from asking the Lord for anything. But the centurion, while not claiming that he was qualified to receive the Lord, believed that his servant would be healed. Our pleas, too, come from relying on the Lord's grace. Even while acknowledging the fact that we are lacking, we can present to Him the help we need.

Conversely, while saying that we exalt the Lord, we can in fact insist that we will believe only when all the conditions we have set are met. It is the attitude of being willing to accept the word only after seeing it with our eyes and confirming it with our hands. The centurion did not make even the Lord's coming to his house in person a condition of his faith, and he simply believed the One who was speaking, just as He spoke.

When we compare it with the leper in the paragraph just before, this answer becomes clearer. The leper came to the Lord, worshiped Him, and said that if He was willing, He could make him clean, and Jesus put out His hand and touched him and told him to be cleansed (Matthew 8:2–3). The centurion, even after hearing the word that the Lord would come in person, declined it and asked for just a single word. He held on to the word without seeing either the touch of the Lord's hand or the Lord's coming to his house.

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What a person who lives under authority knows

"For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (Matthew 8:9).

The centurion explains the world in which he lives every day. He, too, is under the authority of others, and under him, too, there are soldiers. He is a person who both receives commands and gives commands. What he gave as an example was not the loudness of a voice, but the relationship and authority that enable one to give commands.

The passage does not say that the reason his men move is that the centurion keeps shouting. When he says go, they go, and when he says come, they come—that is all. Explaining this relationship between word and action, the centurion trusted Jesus' word. It was the faith that when the Lord commands, it comes to pass according to that word.

The order of the words in verse 9 is also worth noting. Before speaking of the soldiers under him, the centurion first introduces himself as *"a man under authority."* Then he lists in turn three commands: when told to go, one goes; when told to come, one comes; and when told to do this, one does it. With this matter that he knew from experiencing it daily in the army, he confessed what the Lord could do by a word.

What the centurion held on to was a single word that the Lord would speak. Today, that word is written in the Bible for us. Being strongly convinced of just any word does not make true faith, so hold on to the word that God has actually written down, just as it is. Picturing the result we want and believing the Lord's promise must be distinguished.

Also, reading this scene does not mean that people are given authority like that of Jesus. The centurion could command his soldiers, but for his servant's disease he pleaded with the Lord to heal it. He knew how far his own authority extended and what he had to rely on the Lord for. We, too, must lay down the thought of governing everything with our own hands.

Those who believe the word of God look to the Lord, who fulfills that word. So there is no reason to be trapped in constantly measuring how strong our faith is. The One the centurion believed in was Jesus. His conviction was that if He spoke, his servant would be healed, and Jesus regarded that very faith as precious.

The praise He let those who followed Him hear

"When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'" (Matthew 8:10).

Jesus heard the centurion's words and praised him. Yet those who heard this word were the people who were following the Lord. One person's plea led to a teaching that made everyone in that place look back on their own faith. The Lord let them know what they should see.

What Jesus marveled at was not the centurion's social position or military ability. Jesus said, *"Such great faith."* What mattered was how he had received the Lord's word. As those who followed Him also heard this word, they came to examine the content of faith, going beyond their own position of being at the Lord's side.

The words *"not even in Israel"* bring to mind the people of Israel of that time. They would accept only if they saw wonders

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and miracles before their eyes. Yet the centurion, without seeing any sign at all, believed that if the Lord spoke, it would be done just so. We must look back on whether we ourselves truly believe in the Lord and the word He has spoken.

If we set the centurion above other people and exalt the man himself, we miss the meaning of this praise. His faith was precious because he acknowledged the Lord's authority. What we need, too, is not the boast that we have become special people, but faith that believes in Jesus rightly. We must learn from the passage what the Lord delights in.

Even when true faith is revealed in other people, we must be able to rejoice and learn. This is because pride in having believed for a long time can make us take lightly the confession of someone who has newly come to believe the word. Jesus showed the faith of this centurion to those who followed Him. So do not decide in advance by your own standard from whom you will learn what.

The Lord's praise turns our eyes back to the content of faith. The question of which place we belong to is not enough by itself. We must ask whether we believe that when Jesus speaks it comes to pass just so, and whether we are accepting His salvation as our own conviction. Even we who follow the Lord closely need this question.

Those who come from afar and sit down in the kingdom of heaven

"And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11).

Starting from the plea of one centurion, the Lord broadens His word to the place in the kingdom of heaven. He says that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He showed that people who had been thought to be outside would take part in God's promise.

The words that they will come from east and west make known that God's grace reaches even those who are far away. Then by what will the Gentiles take that place? They take it by the faith that believes the word the Lord has spoken. The fact that this word follows right after the centurion's confession makes the meaning of that scene all the clearer.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, too, were people who were declared righteous by believing the word God had spoken. That those who come from east and west sit down with them means that they enter the same place through the same faith. Sitting together in the kingdom of heaven is not a place that people win by raising their own position, but a matter of taking part in the grace that God gives. It is a great joy that this hope is open to those who come to the Lord and believe the word.

So when you preach the gospel, too, do not decide who will accept it by your own experience alone. Even people who are not in a familiar environment can believe the word. Sometimes those who hear for the first time accept the Lord's salvation more clearly than those who have stayed long. We can preach the Lord's salvation beyond origin and background.

Also, those who feel that they have been far away can have hope before the Lord's word. The Lord's grace comes upon us beyond the environments we have passed through and our past history. Do not look only at where you have come from, but see whose word you are listening to now. The Lord makes known the way of salvation to those who believe in Him.

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When the church accepts this word, it comes to treasure the will of the Lord, who has us sit together. We must examine whether we have a heart that comfortably accepts only those who are like us. If we treat brothers and sisters who believe the same gospel by dividing them by origin or circumstances, we have forgotten the grace the Lord has bestowed. We must welcome one another with the salvation we have received together.

The faith needed even in a familiar place

"But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12). This word contains a solemn warning. It means that even if people rely on the status of being the sons of the kingdom, if they have no faith, they cannot take part in that place. The Lord made known to those who relied on outward qualifications that true faith was needed.

Even so, this word cannot become grounds for despising people of a certain origin wholesale. What the Lord warned against was the attitude of considering oneself safe regardless of faith, and this warning applies just the same to those who claim to believe in Jesus yet believe according to their own thoughts rather than according to the written word. So we who hear this word, too, must look back on whether we are making the environment and history of our own life of faith the grounds of our salvation.

Having attended church for a long time and believing the gospel are not the same thing. The more often we hear the word and the more familiar we are with its content, the more we must honestly examine our own faith. Rather than stopping at

repeating familiar words, we must confirm whether we are accepting in our hearts the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

Jesus, who healed the servant with a single word, had all the sins of the world—which include even the sins we commit throughout our lifetime—transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And as the price of those sins that had been passed on to Him, He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and died in our place, and He rose again from death on the third day. Those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit just as it is receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. The basis on which we can stand before God is this very salvation that the Lord has accomplished.

When we put our faith in this salvation, we have no need to inflate our record. We come to see even the work we have done for a long time as a response to the grace we have received. This is because we have become righteous people through the salvation the Lord has bestowed. Faith holds on to what the Lord has accomplished rather than to how much we have accumulated.

Therefore, we must hear the praise and the warning of the passage together. While the Lord regards faith as precious, He awakens the heart that relies on outward position. If we hear only the comfort and turn the warning toward other people, we miss the passage's intention of making us examine our faith. We, too, must stand honestly before the Lord as people who believe the word.

Healed that same hour He spoke

"Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.' And his servant was

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healed that same hour" (Matthew 8:13). Jesus told the centurion to go and said that it would be done as he had believed, and at that very hour the servant was healed. The condition of the servant who had been lying at home was changed by the Lord's word. The authority of the Lord, which the centurion had believed in, was actually revealed.

Matthew records this result briefly and clearly. He does not make us wait for a scene of the Lord arriving at the servant's house. He spoke, and that same hour the servant was healed. The centurion believed that the Lord's word would reach even the servant who was not before his eyes, and the Lord answered that faith.

We cannot read the words *"as you have believed"* as a formula that whatever we wish will all come true. The centurion's faith was directed toward Jesus' word and authority. If we change this word to mean that it is enough to picture strongly in our hearts what we want, the object of faith shifts away from the Lord to our own conviction. Faith relies on the Lord.

From this event we learn that the Lord is the One who is fully able to heal diseases. At the same time, those who plead with the Lord must entrust the answer to His will. We must not extend the healing recorded in the passage into a guarantee that every sick person today will surely be healed at the same hour. Our faith as we plead must always be directed toward the Lord and His word.

Faith in the Lord's salvation is based on the facts He has accomplished. We know and believe His work of salvation recorded in the word. So when your heart is shaken, rather than demanding a new sign, confirm again the word He has already given. What the Lord has accomplished is not something that appears and disappears according to our feelings.

The centurion's plea was for his servant, and the answer, too, reached the servant. The person we entrust to the Lord is not always before our eyes either. Even when we cannot look into all of his circumstances, we can pray for him. While looking for and doing what help is needed, keep presenting that person's needs to the Lord.

The way back, believing in the Lord's word

Dear fellow believers, the passage does not tell us to learn the centurion's strong personality. It shows his coming to the Lord bringing another person's suffering, his believing the Lord's word while humbling himself, and the response of Jesus, who regarded that faith as precious. The direction of the faith we need also lies right here.

Let us ask that the gospel be preached even to those who are far away. Let us not lower even our expectation that such a person can receive the Lord's grace just because his background differs from ours. The word that many will come from east and west and sit down together broadens the hope of us who preach the gospel. We must honestly preach to anyone the salvation the Lord gives.

We must also break free from the attitude of being willing to move only after confirming every result before our eyes. When the Lord tells us to go, we must be able to believe that word and go back. Entrust to the Lord's hands even the places you cannot confirm. Faith accepts the Lord's word and makes us walk the path entrusted to us today.

The centurion came to make known his servant's suffering and went back having received the Lord's word. Let us, too, come to the Lord with our needs, and believing His word, go

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back to our own places. Our conviction lies in Jesus and the word He has spoken. I hope that with that faith you will care for others and live preaching the Lord's salvation. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who Himself bore our weaknesses

< Matthew 8:14–17 >

“Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.’”

The person who was lying in a house

“Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever” (Matthew 8:14). Jesus entered Peter’s house, and there was Peter’s mother-in-law, lying sick with a fever. Earlier, several people came to the Lord and pleaded with Him, but this time Jesus sees a sick person inside the house He has entered. In this way, the Lord’s care reaches even into the places of everyday life.

The words *“lying sick”* briefly show this woman’s condition. The One who acts in verse 14 is Jesus. The Lord entered that house, and He saw the woman lying there. Matthew does not record that this woman first did some special deed. So the help that came upon that woman began from the Lord, who saw her.

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When you are weak, your heart, too, may shrink at the thought that you cannot be someone needed by anyone. But the Lord also looks upon the weak circumstances of people. Even a person who is lying sick receives the Lord's care. Remember that there is One who sees our weakness.

When the church reads this scene, too, there is a person it must first attend to. If someone who had been working together with us is sick and resting, we must first take care of that person's needs before asking when that person can work again. Even if the share that person can manage now has become smaller, that person is a brother or sister who has received the same grace. We need a heart that holds the place of the weak person precious.

He touched her hand, and the fever left her

"So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them" (Matthew 8:15). When Jesus touched the woman's hand, the fever left, and the woman got up and served the Lord. The order Matthew recorded is clear. The Lord first put His hand on the person who had been lying sick, and the person who had received healing got up after that and served.

The woman did not stand before the Lord after overcoming the fever by her own strength. Jesus healed her. Grace came first, and service in response to that grace followed. When we think about this order, we come to be freed from the calculation that we must do something for the Lord in order to receive help. We serve the Lord with the grace we have received.

The short record that the woman got up contains a real change. The person who was lying down in the previous verse now appears as a person who serves. The Lord's healing did not

remain only in words but appeared as a change in that person's life. The woman who had received grace went forward to the place of serving the Lord, who had healed her.

That does not mean, however, that we can demand this same thing of a person who is still sick. The woman in the passage got up after the fever had left her. If we turn the service of a person who has regained health into a duty that a person who is still sick must bear, the order of the grace the Lord bestowed becomes blurred. We must look after each person's weakness and find the things we can do to help.

The people who brought others when evening came

"When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick" (Matthew 8:16). Following the healing that took place in one house, a scene unfolds in which many people come to Jesus. People brought those who were demon-possessed to the Lord. Those who needed help and those who brought them appeared together before Jesus.

Bringing someone is a labor of accepting that person's need as one's own matter. If those who were demon-possessed had not come before Jesus, they would have remained in that same condition that evening as well. The people who brought them took that trouble because they believed that Jesus could heal. We, too, can lend a hand in bringing people who are in difficulty to the Lord. Do not leave such a person to cope with everything alone.

But the One who solved the problem here is Jesus. The labor of the people who brought them is precious, but the power to heal is in the Lord. When we remember this, even in the work of

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helping people we come to lay down the burden of feeling as though we were some kind of savior. We faithfully give the help we can give, and we ask the Lord to bestow His grace.

Helping someone learn the word, praying together, and attending to the needs of actual life are connected with one another. If we hurriedly hand only answers of faith to a person who opens up about his difficulties, we may fail to attend sufficiently to his needs. In the passage, people themselves brought those who needed help. We, too, must learn the labor of being with others in word and in deed.

The authority by which He heals with a word

Jesus cast out the demons with a word and healed all who were sick. The Lord's power was revealed in the face of the power that had been oppressing people and the diseases of the body. Matthew does not introduce any special procedure in detail, but lets us know the fact that Jesus acted with a word. So, before this record, examine yourself as to whether you are fully believing in and following His word.

In the previous scene the Lord healed by touching her hand, and here He casts out the demons with a word. So we cannot read this as if power arises when one repeats a certain gesture. The One who is important is Jesus. Because the Lord had the power, people received healing through His touch and His word.

This record gives us who are in suffering the hope of coming to the Lord. Jesus is not One who turns away from human weakness. We can come to Him with our illnesses and pain and plead with Him. Tell Him your needs, believe in the Lord's power, and ask for help. We can also pray for the brothers and sisters who are hurting together with us.

However, believing in that power is different from dictating to the Lord the time and the way of the outcome. We believe the word and ask, but we leave the answer in the Lord's hands. Even when our faith feels small, we need only ask the Lord with that small faith. Even if the situation does not change right away, keep loving and caring for that person. A community that relies on the Lord does not press a sick person to prove his faith.

The word of Isaiah was fulfilled

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses'" (Matthew 8:17). Matthew explains what these events of healing reveal. It is that the word spoken through Isaiah was fulfilled. Matthew does not let us remember Jesus' healing of illnesses only as an astonishing event, but makes us see the fact that the One whom God had promised has come.

"Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4). Isaiah spoke of the One who bears our sicknesses and sorrows, and Matthew connects Jesus' work of healing to this word. Matthew is testifying that the One who Himself bears those weaknesses is none other than Jesus.

In the word *"He Himself took,"* we see how close the Lord is. The Lord is not One who leaves the burden to others and only watches, but One who knows the pain people bear and helps them. There are times when the body is weak, times when the heart grows weak, and times when faith is shaken. We can tell Him about any of those weaknesses. Lay down the desire to appear strong outwardly, and ask for the Lord's grace.

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It is also important that God's promise and Jesus' deeds are connected in this way. The healing that took place in one house and the healing of the people who gathered in the evening are contained within the work of salvation that God had spoken of beforehand. When we believe in the Lord, who fulfilled the promise of the Bible, we move beyond hoping for chance help and come to rely on the One who is faithful.

The salvation He took upon Himself for us

Jesus, who Himself bore our weaknesses, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. The sins that were passed on to the Lord through the hands of John the Baptist include, without a single one missing, the sins we commit throughout our lives. As the price of those sins that had been transferred to Him, the Lord shed His blood on the Cross, received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and died, and He 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 gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord, who has remitted our sins, also attends to our weaknesses and sicknesses. Even after we have received the remission of sins, sicknesses of the body and pain of the heart may remain. That does not mean, however, that we must hide our own weaknesses and appear to be perfect people. It is enough to live relying on the Lord as people who have received grace. The more you know your shortcomings, the more firmly you should hold on to the certainty of the salvation you have received.

Even while a problem does not disappear at the time we want, we can rely on the Lord's grace. Paul recorded the Lord's word

and his own response to that word as follows: *"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9)*. Paul learned the power of Christ, who upheld him in weakness. We, too, while asking for recovery, can rely on the Lord in our present weakness.

What a person who is going through difficulties needs is not a demand to hide his condition, but a place where he can share his pain, pray together with others, and receive help. Rather than striving to keep your faith alone, value the place of prayer together with the brothers and sisters who received the remission of sins before you. From those who have walked ahead, you will learn not only the word but also how to endure by faith. The heart that believes in the Lord, who took our sins upon Himself, leads us to care for one another.

A life of seeking recovery and serving together

Dear fellow believers, Jesus healed the woman who had been lying in the house and the many whom people had brought to Him. And within those deeds of His, the promise of God was fulfilled. In this passage we see the Lord's power and compassion together. So we can come to the One who knows our pain, and we can also help those who are suffering together with us to rely on that grace.

When you need to ask for help, tell the Lord. If you need others to pray for you, share it with those who believe together with you. If you now have the strength to help someone, look after that person's needs and take on the share you can manage.

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The heart that acknowledges our limits and relies on the Lord, and the labor of actually helping, must go together.

A person who has received recovery can serve the Lord, remembering the grace received. Just as the woman got up and served, use the strength given to you with a thankful heart. Rather than comparing the size of your service, it is enough to find the work you can manage today. It is to cast away the calculation of trying to obtain salvation by repaying grace, and to serve with the grace already received.

Waiting for and caring for those who are still weak is also part of that service. Just as the Lord saw us in our suffering, let us also look after one another's needs. With hearts that believe in the Lord, who Himself bore our weaknesses, let us pray together and become a strength to one another. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The faith of the person Jesus praised

< Matthew 8:5–13 >

"Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.' And Jesus said to him, 'I will come and heal him.' The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, "Go," and he goes; and to another, "Come," and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this," and he does it.' When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.' And his servant was healed that same hour."

Today I would like to share the word about the faith of the person Jesus praised. A centurion is a military commander who leads a hundred soldiers. When his servant was suffering terribly

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from paralysis, this man felt so sorry for him that he came to Jesus and pleaded with Him to heal him.

"But only speak a word"

When the centurion asked so earnestly, Jesus said, *"I will come and heal him" (Matthew 8:7)*. Then the centurion answered, "No. I am not worthy to have the Lord come to my house. How could One so exalted come? Just do it with only a word." And he set out his own reasoning. He said that since he himself was also a centurion in the army, when he told his subordinates to do this, they did it; when he told them to go, they went; and when he told them to come, they came.

The Lord is the King of kings and is Jesus, who is the Christ; so how could a lowly soldier like himself tell the Lord to come and go? He could not do so, and there was no need to do so either. For even if the Lord did not come in person, if He said, "Be healed," the servant would be healed. Dear fellow believers, how do we know the Lord? We know Him as the Savior, as King, to about this extent. But to put it precisely, He is Jesus, who is the Christ. The word Christ means the Anointed One, that is, the King of kings. The One who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and the highest of all in everything is the Master of you and me. He has saved you and me from sin. The centurion said this, citing his own experience: "Even the lowly soldiers under me go when I tell them to go and come when I tell them to come; how could I tell One so exalted to come and go? Just do it with only a word. That will be enough."

Jesus regarded this faith of the centurion as very precious. *"When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great*

faith, not even in Israel!'" (Matthew 8:10). And He told the centurion to go, saying that it would be done as he had believed. When the centurion went back, he found that his servant's paralysis had been completely healed at the very hour Jesus had spoken.

Believing the word of the Lord, who is the Christ, is faith

This is what teaches you and me the life of faith. How must we believe in the Lord? It is to believe in the Lord, who is the Christ. The word Lord refers to God, who is our Master, and the word Christ refers to the One who is the King of kings. To believe that when the Lord, who is the Christ, speaks to us, it will be done according to that word—that is faith like the centurion's.

The point is that even if the Lord does not appear in person, if it is written in the word, then because our God, the King of kings, has spoken it, this word is the truth and things will be done according to this word. And if we believe this word, it is fulfilled according to the word. This is faith. Today you and I have been saved from sin; how were we saved? It has been recorded that our Lord, who is the Christ, came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist, was hung on the Cross, said, *"It is finished!"* and died, and then rose again and saved us. What He has done for us, for mankind, is recorded here. If we hold on to this word and believe it, we are saved.

When Jesus received baptism, He said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. If we see this word and know and believe its meaning, thinking, "Ah, by Jesus' receiving baptism from John the Baptist, John the Baptist passed

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on the sins, and Jesus had our sins transferred to Him. And bearing those sins, He went and was nailed to the Cross and died, then rose again from death and saved us," and hold on to it, we are saved. That is why we have been saved today. We received it by faith. This is true faith, and this is the life of faith.

For example, there are times when fear comes rushing in. There are times when an evil spirit brings fear. What do we do at such times? There is no other way. "O Lord, You who are the Christ, please protect us." And if we say, "In the name of Christ Jesus I command you, Satan the devil, depart!" he cannot but depart. Why is that? When we give the command in the name of the One who is the King of kings, our Master, and our Savior, how could worthless things such as the devil and demons withstand it? This, too, is the same faith. Receiving salvation, too, is receiving it by believing the word of God. We are saved by believing in Jesus, who is the Christ, and while living on this earth, we live a life of faith and are victorious by holding on to the word that Jesus, who is the Christ, has spoken and following it by faith. This is the life of faith.

We must rightly know who the One we believe in is

If we believe in Jesus, we must know precisely the One we believe in. If we do not know precisely the One we believe in and know Him merely as the Savior, then when something comes attacking to oppress us, we know that He is the Savior, but because we have no other knowledge, we lose heart. But Jesus is the Christ. He is Jesus, the King of kings, and Jesus, the Lord of lords. Even if the dragon, the chief of the devils, comes to us, it is nothing. All cannot but submit before Christ Jesus. He loves you and me, and He is loving us even now. He has saved

you and me. When we believe in Him, we obtain true salvation; when we believe in Christ Jesus, we can also drive out the devil; and when we believe in Christ Jesus and the word written here, we also receive blessings and come to do the work of God.

The reason we, who have no power at all, can do the great work of God is that we believe in Jesus, who is our King and the Christ. Because we have welcomed Him into our hearts, we can be victorious and can also go to the kingdom of heaven. In fact, betraying Christ Jesus is betraying the King of kings, and it is casting away blessing by oneself. God said to Abraham, *"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you" (Genesis 12:3)*. As we live a life of faith, we must rightly know whom we believe in and whom we follow, and follow Him.

There are people who seem to do well in the world for a while even after betraying the Lord. Still, I pity them. If one betrays the Lord, who is the Christ, one has fallen away from blessing, and in the end it is destruction. Even if they eat their fill in the world for a while, nothing remains, so it is miserable. Dear fellow believers, even if we have nothing at all, if we love and believe in Christ Jesus, who loved you and me, we can be victorious. We are victorious. I have done so until now. I do not believe in my own strength, but I believe in my Lord, who is the Christ, and believe His word. And when I lack something, I pray, "God, please fill what I lack."

I hope that today you and I will have the faith that says, like the centurion, *"Only speak a word" (Matthew 8:8)*. If Christ has spoken to you and me, we need only believe that word. The Bible is all the word that Christ has spoken to you and me. If we hold on to this word, and when we do not understand, ask those who have gone before us to teach us and believe it, then we not only receive salvation and receive love but also become victors in this world. We will do the work of God while receiving

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blessings, live beautifully and happily, and then meet the Lord. I hope that, like the centurion, you will follow with the faith that believes in Jesus, who is the Christ, the faith that believes His word, and be victorious. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Draw a clear line in your heart to live for the Lord

< Matthew 8:18–22 >

"And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, 'Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' Then another of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.'"

The Lord spoke of several things in this word. While He was on this earth, the Lord healed many sick people, remitted the sins of sinners, and made it known that the Son of God is our true Savior. So countless people followed Jesus, and among them was a scribe. A scribe was a person who studied and taught the law, a person respected among the Jews. That scribe came to Jesus and said, *"Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go" (Matthew 8:19)*. Then Jesus said, *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20)*. This conversation between the scribe

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and Jesus seems just like a question being given an answer that has nothing to do with it.

In the scribe's eyes, Jesus was very worthy of respect and had much power, so the scribe had the hope that if he followed Him around, there would be much to gain, and that even if he gave up his present position, things would be far better. So he said that wherever Jesus went, he would follow, but Jesus said that foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but He Himself has nowhere to lay His head. "Even if you follow Me around, there is nothing for you to gain. You saw Me feed more than five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish, saw Me raise the dead, and saw Me heal the sick, and so you want to respect Me and follow Me, but I have nowhere to lay My head. In this world there is nothing at all that I will hand down to you in the flesh. So if you follow Me with your desires, it is wasted effort. There is nothing at all to gain." In this way the Lord firmly refused him. Since He said that He had nowhere to lay His head, it seems that while Jesus was in the land of Israel, He did not have even a handspan of land as private property. So it seems that Jesus said so.

"Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead"

Another one of Jesus' disciples said to Him, *"Lord, let me first go and bury my father" (Matthew 8:21)*. Jesus said, *"Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead" (Matthew 8:22)*. Usually, among us, when ministers, workers, or saints are serving the Lord and their physical parents pass away, they are naturally told to go, hold the funeral, and come back. Also, if there is some matter, they are told to go, take care of that matter, and come back. But Jesus said to let the dead bury their own

dead. Here we can see that the viewpoint from which the Lord sees and the viewpoint from which we see are different.

The Lord's viewpoint is as follows. Those who are spiritually dead already have no interest in the truth, and all there is for them is to eat and live until the day their physical life ends, then die and go to hell; so He said to leave the work of burying to such spiritually dead people and, as for you, to follow Him. If what we do today is not merely a religious life, this word is truly a very fitting word.

If what we do were not the work of saving souls, we would live compromising with the world; but just as the Lord came to this earth and gave His own body to save sinners from sin and give them everlasting life, we too do the work of saving souls and saving lives. If that were not so, even though we know the truth, we would have no choice but to go out into the world and live, and we would have nothing to agonize over for the spread of the gospel. Because countless souls depend on us, we are doing the work of serving the gospel in order to preach the gospel to those souls, and you are doing this work even in the midst of difficulties and suffering. The Lord told us to follow Him, and that is fitting. After we receive the remission of sins, we follow the Lord, and following the Lord is itself the work of saving lives. I believe it is fitting for us to follow the Lord for this work.

Among the brothers and sisters there are people who hesitate. There are people who say, "I will just earn a little and live a little, only to keep my own flesh alive; the work of saving souls is for special people, and I will live that way." I believe that is not fitting. It is right for us to receive salvation, keep this gospel, and preach it to others. If you and I, who received the remission of sins first, live that way, what will become of the people who must hear the gospel? Will they not die? *"Most assuredly, I say*

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to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24). But if you and I live only for the flesh and do not do the work of saving lives and following the Lord, will not all those who have not yet been saved die? They will all die.

The Lord said to us, *"Follow Me" (Matthew 8:22)*. How will we live from now on? The Lord told us to follow Him. Following the Lord is fitting. The word *"Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead"* is very fitting. There is nothing wrong with it at all. There is something we must truly remember and keep in mind. Because those who went before you received the remission of sins and, while suffering much, preached the gospel to you, you came to know and believe, received salvation, and are in the church today. In the same way, we too must become a grain of wheat that rots for the souls who have not yet received the remission of sins. If we do not become a grain of wheat, we will be like that scribe who said, "I will follow You anywhere, Lord," and followed the Lord with fleshly desires. Then the Lord would have said, "I have nothing, so much so that I have nowhere to lay My head, so do not be disappointed for nothing, and give up following Me."

In many places throughout the world, many people are hearing this gospel and receiving the remission of sins. We will preach the gospel until the people of the whole world all know this gospel and until God's workers rise up abundantly, and after that we will go before God. We must live until the flower of the gospel blooms and the fruit is harvested, and until the Lord comes. We must fulfill this work. This is so for everyone, whether children or young people. We must not pretend to follow but must actually follow the Lord. Following is living for the gospel. When we serve and follow the Lord, as a result we come to do the work of saving souls, and we come to know how

great that work is. We also come to know that the Lord bestows grace.

Draw a clear line in your heart

We must draw a line in our hearts. Since the Lord told us to follow Him, we must clearly draw a line ourselves in our hearts as to whether we will follow the world or follow the Lord. *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)*. This is drawing a line in the heart. Since the Lord had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and became our Savior, we are now those who are dead to the world. That is drawing a line in the heart by faith. It is not only in the truth that this is so; it is drawing a line in life as well. However we live in this world, even if we are lacking, we draw a line at least in this part: that we live for the Lord, for the salvation of souls, and for the spread of the gospel. From then on, a line is drawn in our hearts to live according to the word *"whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*. We must at least make up our minds and live. Whatever we do, what is clear is that until the day the Lord comes, we give this one life to the Lord and live for the gospel. It is important to make up our minds firmly in this way and live.

You and I must have such a heart every day, and you must draw a clear, bold stroke across your lives. Just as the people of Israel could not go back to the old days again after they crossed the Red Sea and crossed the Jordan River, we must now draw a line with the world and become people who are set apart. In serving Jesus Christ, there is a need to be supplied with what we

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need both spiritually and physically. Such things we are to receive in the Lord, and as for the rest, we must clearly draw a line in our hearts. The Lord has told us this.

Will we follow the world, or will we follow the Lord?

If those who went before had not followed the Lord in that way, would there be people being saved in many places throughout the world? It is because we become a rotting grain of wheat and make the sacrifice that bears much fruit, cast away fleshly desires, make up our minds, and follow the Lord by faith that such fruit is borne in many places throughout the world; if we did not do so, would saved souls have arisen on their own? They could never arise. So in my heart I want to follow the Lord well and go to the Lord just as I am. I want to go while following the Lord. Also, how hard it is for you, who serve the gospel together! As one who has gone before, I want to look after such matters, and I have a heart that hopes God will allow all of us to live together in the Lord until the day the Lord comes.

What the Lord said—to let the dead bury the dead and for you to follow Him—touches my heart. Since the Lord said to follow, we need only follow. To follow, we must make up our minds, and we must clearly draw a line in our hearts. The world and we have nothing to do with each other. We have nothing to do with the world that is not born again, and the reason we live in this world is that we must preach the gospel to those who are not yet born again. We must make up our minds in such matters and follow.

The paths of the born-again are just two. Do they follow the world, or do they follow the Lord? The reasons may be

complicated, but there are just two. Do they follow the world, or do they follow the Lord? It is right there that the division is clearly made. I want to follow the Lord. You also want to follow the Lord, don't you? If you follow the Lord, joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure are all within it, and you are happy. But if you follow the world, it may be good for a while, but you have to take responsibility for everything yourself, and it is hard. You are alone.

Here in the Lord, even when we go through difficult things, we unite and do everything together, and even when there is something sad, we share the sorrow together, so joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure are all here. It is good. And it is good because we do not do bad things but do the work of saving souls. When one lives only for oneself, there are always many ups and downs. We must firmly settle our purpose. That is exactly what making up one's mind means. For whom will we live? When we make up our minds for that goal, we can get past most things. Our hearts become broader too. When one looks at oneself, one's heart becomes narrow. When the Lord told the disciples to follow Him, was He not telling them to follow in order to save souls? So we too must set our goal on the Lord and follow, and must not follow the world but follow God. That is so. I truly want to serve the Lord, and I want to live together with the ministers and the brothers and sisters, filling all that we need both spiritually and physically until the day the Lord comes. There is nothing else at all besides the heart that wants to follow the Lord.

But more important than filling what we need is what is within our hearts. In our hearts we must ceaselessly make up our minds to follow the Lord. Let us live by faith, and let us live that way.

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I hope that there will be no one among us who loves the world and follows after it. Following the world amounts to nothing much. Let those who follow the world follow the world, and let us follow the Lord without change and live that way. Do you understand? ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

It is right to live for the Spirit

< Matthew 8:18–22 >

“And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, ‘Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’ Then another of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’”

The word we read today tells us that, as we follow the Lord, of the two—whether we will live for the Spirit or live for the flesh—it is right to live for the Spirit.

When Jesus was on this earth, He was very popular. Although later, up until He was hung on the Cross, He was slapped on the cheek, stripped of His clothes, spat upon, and despised, in fact, when He was on this earth, Jesus was, in today’s words, a superstar. He was more popular and had more power than Superman, who flies in the sky. Superman cannot prepare a meal for some ten thousand people in a field, but Jesus prepared a meal for more than ten thousand people who were in a field.

Jesus was popular with men and with women, and with the sick as well. If a popularity vote had been held in Israel, Jesus would have been the most popular. So the people of Israel tried

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to make Jesus king. If only Jesus had wanted it, He could even have become the physical king of Israel. Many people surrounded Jesus, saying, "Teacher, Teacher," and followed Him even while stumbling and falling down, and countless people wanted to become Jesus' disciples.

Then a scribe came forward. At that time, a scribe was a respected leader who studied and taught the law. He said to Jesus, *"Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go" (Matthew 8:19)*. This scribe was completely captivated by Jesus. "If only I have You, everything will be solved. Even if I get sick, the problem will be solved, and if I have no food, You will give me food, so I will lack nothing. In any case, I will follow You."

"The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"

Then our Lord said, *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20)*. This is the word the Lord spoke to this scribe, and to us as well. "Are you following Me because I exercise My power and do something for you in the flesh? I do not want to become your king in the flesh, nor to gain popularity, nor to prosper in the flesh in the world. Even the birds have a place to lay their heads, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head and no house. Even if you follow Me, there is nothing at all to gain in the flesh." Jesus was telling this scribe that he ought to follow spiritual things but was instead following fleshly things.

For us, too, when we follow the Lord, the question is whether we follow the Spirit or follow the flesh. For what will we, who have believed in Jesus and received the remission of sins, live the rest of our lives from now on? Will we live for the salvation of souls, or will we live hoping that our flesh will prosper?

Because we have a body of flesh, of course we also want our flesh to prosper. We want this to go well and that to go well, too; we want both to go well. But if we are told to choose one of the two, what will we choose? Which is it right to choose? First, we must ask ourselves this question: "Will I do the work of saving souls all my life, or will I please my flesh? Which is right?" "The work of saving souls is right." "Then what will you choose?" "I will choose the work of saving souls." "Then do you not want what your flesh wants?" "I do want it. But I do not follow it because following only the flesh is not right. It is not that I do not follow it because my flesh dislikes it; my flesh likes it, but I just do not follow it because it is not right."

"Then how will you live from now on? Will you live for the Spirit, or will you live for the flesh?" "It is right to live for the Spirit." "Then what is living for the Spirit? Is it not the work of saving souls, the work of preaching the gospel to people so that souls may receive salvation? Then, whatever position you may be in, will you live for the spiritual work of God?"

"Yes. I have no ability and no great skill, but because it is right to live for the Spirit, I will live for the Spirit, though I am lacking. Lord, please give me all the rest that I need. If You give it, I will receive it, and if You do not give it, I cannot receive it, but I would like You to give it. I cannot do even one thing well, so I cannot do both things, the work for the flesh and the work for the Spirit. Please let me save souls. I will do spiritual work."

This means that because of that one faith—that it is right to live for the Spirit—regardless of whether we do our work well or not, we will live offering before the Lord even the smallest things: our hands and feet and mouths, our hearts and thoughts, our souls and our material possessions. Our Lord said that we must live for the Spirit. We must know well this word that the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. God has bestowed all

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the grace needed on everything in this world. Even the birds of the air sleep in their nests when the sun goes down, and in the morning they spread their wings again and fly freely through the wide sky God has given them, seeking food. But when our Lord was on this earth, He did not have a single place to lay His head.

This means that the Lord had no house. He had no house for His flesh. If, when He was on this earth, the Lord had wanted only His own flesh to prosper, He could have become not only the king of one nation but also the physical king of the whole world. Because He had that much power, He could have been raised up as king by all people. But the Lord gave up the things of the flesh in order to save people's souls. Because the Lord also had a body of flesh, before He died on the Cross, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, *"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me" (Luke 22:42)*. He knew both the pain and the joy of the flesh, and He also knew what the flesh likes. But our Lord did not follow the flesh.

The soul of man is eternal

Our Lord pursued the salvation of our souls. That is, He followed the Spirit. When a person dies, he becomes a handful of earth and a handful of ashes. If you go to a crematorium, you will see that even a person who had a fine, sturdy build is left with only a handful of whitish powder once he has died and been burned. Even a person buried in a grave returns to the earth once the body has completely decayed, and even if you gather up that earth, it does not make a handful.

But the soul of man does not vanish so meaninglessly. The soul of man is eternal. Our Lord was born on this earth, had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received

from John, suffered death on the Cross in our place as the judgment for sin, and rose again. If we believe this, our souls live forever. The Lord, who is God, Himself did the work by which we are saved forever, the work that never vanishes, and He also wanted the disciples who follow Him to do the work of the Spirit.

So what our Lord is saying through this word to the scribe, and to all of us, is that we must set the goal of our whole lives on doing the work of the Spirit and make up our minds. It means that although we cannot help but live doing the work of the flesh, in our hearts we must clearly decide to do the work of the Spirit. When our Lord said this word, there was another person beside Him. *"Then another of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead'" (Matthew 8:21–22).*

While speaking of death and new life as separate, our Lord told us not to do work that will vanish, work that is vain, and work that has no worth at all. And He wanted us to do the most precious and eternal work, namely, this work of saving life: having people's souls receive the remission of sins so that they live forever as children of God, and so that they live receiving blessings before God both in this life and in the life to come. That is why He told the disciple to leave the burial of the dead to the dead and to follow Him.

It is right to live for the Spirit

The words Jesus spoke to this scribe and this disciple are words He is speaking to you and me, who have already believed in the Lord, received the remission of sins, and have a heart that wants to follow the Lord. What must we do? Will we live the

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life of the flesh, or will we live the life of the Spirit? Do you want to do the work of the Spirit all your life? Have you made up your mind to live that way?

Our Lord wants us to make up our minds and live that way. The Bible says, *"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)*. Our Lord wants us, whose lives come once and then return to God, to do the work of the Spirit. I, too, have a body of flesh, so I have various hardships and anguish. I have much agony over whether to do the work of the Spirit or the work of the flesh. But I believe that, whatever my flesh may be like, it is right to do the work of the Spirit, and although I cannot do it 100 percent well, I have clearly made up my mind. I have decided to spend the rest of my life doing the work of the Spirit and then go before the Lord.

Dear saints, I hope that you, too, though you have a body of flesh, will set your hearts on doing the work of the Spirit and live that way. Only then will there be no life of regret, will we live a blessed life before God, and will many people receive the remission of sins through us. Just as those who met Abraham received blessings, we must remember the fact that when we live by the Spirit, our families and many people around us receive blessings. If we give up living by the Spirit, not only will our own lives become vain, but countless people will go the way of destruction. And we must do the work of the Spirit, knowing the fact that we ourselves will only have our souls saved, while our lives in the flesh fall into destruction. Like our Lord, we must do the work of the Spirit all our lives and then meet the Lord.

Even though we have many shortcomings and weaknesses, we must live worthwhile lives with a faithful faith, living a life of preaching the gospel even to one soul, praying for that soul, and preparing and sharing everything so that souls may receive salvation, and then going when the Lord says, "Come," and

welcoming the Lord when He comes. The Bible says, *"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)*. We must live the rest of our lives as guides who turn many people to Jesus Christ, clothe them with the righteousness of Jesus, and help them obtain salvation.

Living for the flesh is not right; we must live for the Spirit. Though we are lacking, let us follow our Lord. Even when it is hard and difficult, let us follow the Lord. Our Lord, too, had a hard and difficult time when He was on this earth. His thirty-three years of life were by no means smooth. Though we, too, are all too often not strong enough to fight against the desires of the flesh and overcome them, we must make up our minds and live for the Spirit. I hope that you will set the goal for the rest of your life on the work of saving souls and live that way. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who is with us in the midst of the tempest

< Matthew 8:23–27 >

"Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!' But He said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, 'Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'"

The boat they boarded following the Lord

"Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him" (Matthew 8:23). When Jesus got into the boat, the disciples also followed. They were not people who had left the Lord, gone their own way, and then met the tempest. They were in the same boat as the Lord, and they were on the path of following Him. So today's passage begins with the fact that fearful things can come upon even those who follow the Lord.

Just before this, Jesus told those who wanted to follow Him what that path is actually like. Now the disciples have followed the Lord into the boat, and on that path they meet a great tempest. The confession that one will follow cannot remain merely words

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spoken in a peaceful place. Even in difficult situations, we must remember whom we are with and believe in the Lord.

When problems arise even though we went forward in obedience, we easily begin by doubting whether we took the wrong path. But we cannot blame every difficulty on our own wrong choices. The disciples followed Jesus, and on that very path they met the tempest. So before judging the Lord's leading by looking only at the circumstances before our eyes, we must remember this fact that the passage shows us.

Then the important question moves from how calm things are now to who is in that boat. The disciples were with Jesus, but in the face of the threatening waves they did not sufficiently trust who He was. Through this event the Lord dealt with the disciples' faith and revealed His authority.

The waves covering the boat, and Jesus asleep

"And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep" (Matthew 8:24). A great tempest arose on the sea, and the waves covered the boat. The danger was not only in the disciples' imagination; it was waves that were actually sweeping over the boat. Matthew records this perilous situation and Jesus asleep side by side.

The disciples saw the waves and judged that they were now going to die. To them, the danger before their eyes loomed larger than anything else. Yet Jesus, who was with them, was asleep. Even while the Lord does not move visibly, His authority has not disappeared. Nor did His sleeping in the boat mean that the Lord did not know the condition the boat was in. Even as they saw the tempest, the One the disciples had to remember was the Lord, who was with them.

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We too can feel, when we urgently need help, as though the Lord is doing nothing. But at such times, do not turn the anxiety that rushes in straight into the conclusion that the Lord is not taking care of you. The waves arose after the boat had set out, but among the tasks that lie before us there are also many difficulties that can be foreseen. Before starting a task, to consider where the dangers may lie and to first tell the Lord about that task and ask for His help is also faith.

This scene does not let us boast of the disciples' courage. They were afraid and needed help, and the Bible records them just as they were. To acknowledge that our faith is weak is the honesty needed to hear the word. So rather than hiding your fear before the Lord, bring it to Him.

"Lord, save us"

"Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!'" (Matthew 8:25). The disciples came to Jesus, woke the Lord, and cried out for Him to save them. They told Him that at this rate they were going to die. It was a short plea, but in it their own situation and the fact that they needed help are clearly contained. People who were in the midst of the tempest came to the One who would give them help.

When we pray, it is not that we must speak only polished words after putting all our thoughts in order. The disciples asked the Lord just as they were, in a fearful situation. We too, when we go through difficulties, can honestly tell Him the help we need. To acknowledge what we cannot cope with and to ask the Lord—that is the beginning of prayer.

Not asking for anything, thinking, "Since He is with us, He will take care of it," is different from the faith that trusts the Lord.

The disciples woke the Lord and asked for help. If things work out without our asking, it is hard to recognize whether that is the Lord's help; but if we ask and wait and then receive an answer, we come to know that the Lord, who is not seen with the eyes, has heard our plea. In this way we draw closer to the Lord; so do not hold your problems alone and be anxious, but tell them to the Lord.

This plea also contains the shared cry, *"We are perishing."* It is not a scene of one person asking only for his own safety. We too can hold in our hearts the needs of the community with which we serve together, and ask the Lord together with those who go through difficulties with us. Rather than spending your heart on blaming one another, share what help is needed and tell those needs to the Lord together.

The fear He dealt with before the wind

"But He said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm" (Matthew 8:26). Before rebuking the winds and the sea, Jesus first spoke to the disciples. He asked them why they were fearful, and He called them those of little faith. Along with removing the danger, He dealt with the faith of the disciples who stood in the face of that danger.

Although the disciples had already woken the Lord and asked Him to save them, the Lord called them those of little faith. Asking alone did not fill up their faith completely. Both before they asked and while they were asking, they needed the faith that the Lord, who was with them, hears and answers. The Lord's question turns their eyes from the waves to the One who was in that boat.

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Jesus did not turn away the disciples who came to ask for help; He first pointed out their fear with His word and then immediately arose and rebuked the winds and the sea. So as we tell Him our difficulties, at the same time accept the word the Lord speaks to you. As we ask and listen in this way, we come to know Him more deeply.

The Lord's rebuke contains the direction in which faith must grow. If we try to fit every danger into our own calculations, our fear keeps growing. Learn the faith of knowing who the Lord is and entrusting yourself to Him. Even when you tell Him about difficult matters, do not merely list your problems, but trust the Lord, who is listening to those problems.

It became very calm

When Jesus arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, the sea became very calm. Matthew records this change right after the scene in which great waves were covering the boat. The winds and the sea, which the disciples could do nothing about, became still before the word of Jesus. Right in the midst of the very situation they had feared, the Lord's authority was revealed.

What the disciples did at this time was only to ask the Lord for help; the One who made the tempest still was Jesus. So we must remember both the need for supplication and the One who answers. Do not look for the power of prayer in your own expressions or in the intensity of your emotions, but look to the Lord, who hears our supplications and acts.

We ask, believing that Jesus is the One who is able to help. But we cannot set Him the condition that every difficulty must disappear at the time we want and in the way we want. A person who trusts the Lord's power entrusts even his own will to Him.

Even while we wait for an answer, we must do the things we ought to do, following the word the Lord has given us.

Even after the sea became calm, something remained for the disciples to learn. The Bible does not end by recording only their relief at having escaped danger. They begin to ask what kind of One Jesus, who was with them, is. The next verse shows that, right there where the problem was resolved, one must go on to know the Lord more deeply.

"Who can this be"

"So the men marveled, saying, 'Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'" (Matthew 8:27). The men marveled and asked who this One was whom even the winds and the sea obey. A little while earlier they had feared they would die because of the waves, but now they look at the One who ruled over those waves. Our gaze, too, as we read this event, must follow this question and gather upon Jesus.

This One is the Lord, who not only cleansed the leper, made the fever leave, and cast out demons with a word, but also rules even the winds and the sea. He put on a human body and got into the same boat as the disciples, but because He is God, who made the winds and the sea, those winds and that sea obeyed. The disciples were still marveling before this question, but later, after they saw the Lord, who died on the Cross and rose again, and received the Holy Spirit, they believed without wavering who this One is. So do not stop at the memory of having experienced His help once, but come to know and believe more clearly the Jesus of whom the Bible testifies.

Jesus, who rebuked the winds and the sea, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to

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Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He overcame death and rose again. We who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. That very Lord, who rules the winds and the sea, is the One who saved us from sin.

If we believe in this salvation He accomplished for us, the ground on which we can rely even in the midst of difficulties becomes clear. The boldness of our hearts can be shaken at any time, but the salvation the Lord has accomplished does not change according to our feelings. So even while we tell Him our fearful hearts just as they are, we can place our faith in the Lord, who saved us.

Let us come to the Lord with our fear

Dear fellow believers, the disciples met the tempest on the path of following the Lord and asked the Lord for help. Jesus dealt with their fear and made the tempest still, and they now look with new eyes at the One who was with them. Today's passage teaches us both the reason we must pray in the midst of difficulties and the One toward whom that prayer must be directed.

If there is something greatly shaking your heart now, ask the Lord. Honestly tell Him the needs you cannot resolve by your own strength. Pray also for those who go through difficulties with you, and share with one another the help that is needed. If we have hearts that rely on the Lord, we can ask for help together without pretending to be strong on our own.

As you pray, also listen to the word of the Lord. If you only hope for your circumstances to change, you may simply pass over the word that deals with your fear. Remember who the Lord is, who asked why they were fearful. Whenever fear tries to dominate your judgment, return to a heart that believes in the Lord, who is with you.

Let us live each day with the faith that knows what kind of One Jesus is. Tell Him also about the matters still waiting for a resolution, and give thanks for the help you have received. The Lord was beside the disciples who stood in the face of the great waves. Let us also rely on Jesus, who saved us, pray, and go forward following His word. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The heart that looks on those who have been set free

< Matthew 8:28–34 >

“When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’ Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, ‘If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.’ And He said to them, ‘Go.’ So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.”

The way that no one could pass

“When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass

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that way" (Matthew 8:28). When Jesus arrived at the other side, in the country of the Gergesenes, two demon-possessed men came out from among the tombs and met the Lord. Matthew records that they were so fierce that no one could pass that way. In this scene, both the suffering they were going through and the threat that the people around them faced because of it are revealed together.

In the previous event, the wind and the sea made the disciples afraid, but this time there appear people so fierce that others could not pass by. Here, too, Jesus reveals His authority. The reader who was asking just before, *"Who can this be?"* now comes to see how even the demons react before Him.

The two men were held captive by demons. Their fierceness was that of men rushing on only as they willed, so that no one could reason with them or stand in their way, and that is why it was difficult even to pass along that way. But the very ones who needed to be set free were the men themselves. So do not see these two men only as beings who caused trouble to those around them. It was precisely they who were to receive the grace of having the demons depart before the Lord.

We, too, when we look at someone, easily think only of the difficulties we suffer because of that person. Then what help that person needs to receive is pushed aside. This passage makes us watch to the very end, until the two men are set free. Let us look together at how grace comes upon people who had been regarded only as a problem.

"You Son of God"

"And suddenly they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to

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torment us before the time?'" (Matthew 8:29). The demons called Jesus the Son of God. They knew who He was, but their attitude was not one of gladly welcoming Him. Crying out, they asked what they had to do with Him, and whether He had come to torment them before the time. It was they, not Jesus, who first cried out, and that cry was not words of gladness but words that pushed Him away.

The demons recognized the Son of God, and yet they cried out that they had nothing to do with Him. This shows them disliking the Lord's word and trying to hold out before it, yet being unable to do anything in His very presence. So do not, for your part, stop at knowing the words of faith, but examine your own faith. Those who believe in the Lord entrust their own judgment to His word and accept His rule.

We also meet a reaction similar to this where we preach the gospel. When we first speak to people, many avert their eyes and push us away, saying it has nothing to do with them. But if we do not stop after once or twice, and speak to them again whenever we have a chance to meet them, there are times when they open their hearts and come to listen. The first harsh reaction is not that person's final answer.

Therefore, as we look at this scene, there is no reason to put evil power in the same place as the Lord and be afraid. The passage clearly shows what place the demons are in before Jesus. They were in the place of pleading with Jesus, and the fact that they had to leave when the Lord spoke becomes even clearer in the conversation that follows.

Faith does not grow by gathering much knowledge about fearful powers. It grows when we know who the Lord who rules us is and believe His word. The demons' reaction recorded in the passage, too, is not meant to satisfy our curiosity but to reveal

the authority of Jesus. The One on whom we must rely is the Son of God, who has that authority.

The demons asking for permission

"Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, 'If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine'" (Matthew 8:30–31). Just then, far off, a herd of many swine was feeding. The demons pleaded with Jesus that, if He was going to cast them out, He would send them into that herd of swine. This request contains an acknowledgment that Jesus could cast them out. They were in a position where they could move only if the Lord permitted them.

As we read this scene, we come to think that the Lord is fully able to act even for a person whom it seems no help could reach. It was hard for anyone to pass that way, but before Jesus the demons were pleading. In this way it is revealed that even the power that made people afraid cannot go against the authority of the Lord.

Once the Lord was there, the demons that had been holding the two men captive now speak of withdrawing. The fear they showed reveals how great the authority of Jesus is. Remember this direction. Those who believe in Jesus do not give themselves over to the thought that evil power is greater than the Lord. Authority belongs to the Lord.

Even so, we must not put this authority forward as if it were our own. In the passage, the One who commands is Jesus, and we are only people who believe in Him and rely on His salvation. Rather than putting forward forcefully dominating someone as the power of faith, we must have the attitude of preaching the

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Lord's salvation to that person and asking the Lord for the help that is needed.

This is why we must rely on the Lord even when we help others. If we think we can solve every problem with only our own words and efforts, we easily become discouraged when we hit our limits. While doing the work entrusted to us, we ask the Lord for grace. It is Jesus who saves people and delivers them from evil powers.

When He told them to go, they left

"And He said to them, 'Go.' So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water" (Matthew 8:32). When Jesus commanded them to go, the demons came out of the two men and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep slope into the sea and died. After just one short command, a clear change took place. The demons that had been holding people captive left according to the word of Jesus.

In this event, we must not pass over the fact that the two men were set free. The death of the herd of swine stands out greatly, but before that there is the record that the demons came out of the men. The passage makes us see not only what was destroyed but also that those who had been held captive were set free. We must read these two facts together.

The death of the herd of swine was a loss that really happened. We cannot lightly pass over it as something without any meaning. But if we evaluate the whole of Jesus' coming by that loss alone, we end up missing the grace that came to the two men. We must look at both what was lost and who was set free.

When we judge what God has done, too, if we look only at the loss and gain that come to us, our view becomes narrow. A person's hearing the gospel and obtaining life is more precious than our convenience. The value of helping someone does not become lower just because it takes time and effort. We must regard as precious the grace of salvation that has come upon people.

The town that was told everything

"Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men" (Matthew 8:33). Those who tended the swine ran away, went into the city, and reported all these things. Matthew writes that their report also included what had happened to the men who had been demon-possessed. So the news that the people of the town heard was not only that the herd of swine had died. What had happened to those two men was reported as well.

The people of the whole city who heard this news came out to meet Jesus. At first they had only heard it as a story from afar, but now they came out to meet Him in person. What had remained a rumor now became a matter to which they had to respond. Faced with the fact that Jesus had come, they, too, come to reveal what attitude they will take.

We, too, hear what the Lord has done. We learn the content of the gospel, and we also hear the news that someone has come to believe that gospel. At such times we may pass it by, thinking we have merely learned one more piece of information. But in the word we have heard there is something to which we must

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respond. Believe in the salvation the Lord has accomplished, and gladly welcome those who have received that grace.

When someone's difficulties go on for a long time, it is easy to remember that person only as he was in the past. The two men in the passage, too, were people who posed a threat to those around them. But now the demons have left them. If we have heard what the Lord has done, we must take careful note of that change. Do not keep people pinned down by your old impressions alone.

Put the beginning of the passage side by side with this section. In verse 28 no one could pass that way, but in verse 34 the whole city came out to meet Jesus. To the very place people had avoided, the people of the town now walked out of their own accord. The news brought by those who had fled called the whole city out before Jesus.

An unexpected plea for Him to depart

"And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region" (Matthew 8:34). The people of the whole city met Jesus, saw Him, and then pleaded with Him to leave their region. The demons asked Jesus for a place to go into, but the people asked Jesus to leave. Although the Lord's authority was revealed, the passage does not end with the words that the people welcomed Him.

Since the two men had come back sound in body and mind, it was something worth holding a feast over in that town. There must still have been other people in that region who were sick or bound, so they could also have asked the Lord to stay. But their plea was the very opposite. Hear this as a word that makes you

look back on your own faith: seeing something marvelous does not mean that one gladly welcomes Him.

We may seek the Lord when we gain something beneficial to us, yet want to keep our distance when the Lord's word tells us to change our thinking. At such times we must look back on whether we sought only the help we wanted or truly tried to believe in and follow the Lord. Faith is accepting even the fact that the Lord rules our lives.

Jesus, who set free the two men in the country of the Gergesenes, had all the sins of the world, which include even the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. To pay the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross, received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and died; and He rose again from death and saved us from sin. By believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we have been saved from all sin and have received the Holy Spirit as a gift. So believe in the Lord, who has given this salvation, and gladly accept His word.

Those who have accepted the Lord's salvation also regard as precious the others He has saved. Even if their schedules and convenience change a little, they can rejoice that a person has obtained life. When they remember the grace they have already received, they come to look back on the heart that would push away the Lord's work merely because an inconvenient change has come to them.

Let us regard those who have been set free as precious

Dear fellow believers, at the beginning of the passage there were two men so fierce that no one could pass that way. When

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Jesus commanded, the demons that had held them captive left. But the final request of the people of the town was that Jesus leave. In this way, the Lord's authority and people's rejection are both revealed within a single passage.

So examine what you are regarding as great. Are you not passing over the grace that has come upon people while counting only the inconvenience and loss that have come to you? A single person who has heard the gospel and received the remission of sins is precious. We must also willingly give our hearts and effort to helping that person believe in the Lord and live in the word.

To do so, you can set aside time to pray for someone and listen to that person's needs. If there is someone who wants to know the gospel, do not hurry to evaluate him, but explain it to him step by step. Look not at how much your efforts are recognized but at whether that person rightly knows and believes the Lord's salvation. A heart that regards people as precious leads to such practical help.

Do not push the Lord away when He speaks into your life, either. If there is something for which you must correct wrong thinking and lay down your own convenience, respond to that word. We are people who believe in Jesus, whom even the demons obey. Going beyond knowing Him only as knowledge, we must gladly accept the rule of the Lord, who has saved us.

Let us regard as precious the fact that the two men were set free. As people who have ourselves received grace from the Lord, let us rejoice in the salvation of others. Believe in the salvation Jesus has given, draw near to Him, and faithfully help those who do not yet know that grace. ✉

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CHAPTER

9

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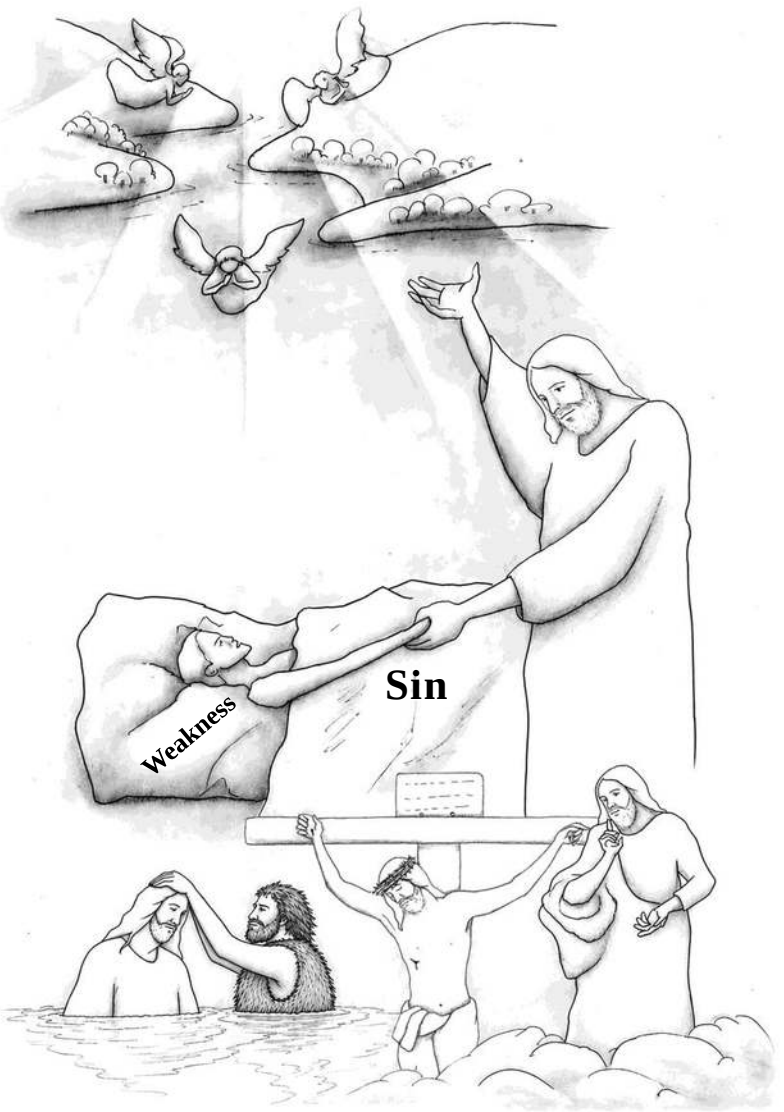

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

He healed the paralytic

< Matthew 9:1–8 >

“So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.’ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemes!’ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.”

This word in Matthew chapter 9 speaks of whether there is sin in a person’s heart or not, and of whether our Lord has removed the sin in our hearts. Is there sin in your heart and mine, or not? We lead a life of faith not with our heads but with our hearts. When we realize the fact that there is no sin in our own hearts, we gain strength in our hearts and live in this world while boldly working our way through problems. But if we do not realize in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts, our life of faith has no strength, and we cannot do anything.

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Only when we feel in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts can we solve all the many problems we have through faith in God. On the other hand, if we do not feel in our hearts that we have no sin and do not settle it clearly in our hearts, all the problems end up tangled again like a tangled skein of thread. That is why we must first recognize that there is no sin in our own hearts. We must not say, thinking with our heads, that there is no sin because it has been passed on, but must confirm in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts. When we confirm in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts, we come to look to God and come to ask God for help with the eyes of faith.

A life of faith must be lived with the heart. If it is not lived with the heart, if we do not realize in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts, everything becomes theory. God the Father, too, becomes a Father of theory, the fact that we have received the remission of sins also becomes theory, and the life of faith also becomes theory. Therefore, when we receive the remission of sins and lead a life of faith, we must start by first realizing deeply in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts. When we realize that there is no sin in our own hearts, we come to call on God the Father and come to pray. When we feel and realize it in our hearts, we come to do the work of God, the work of the gospel. So we must first clearly realize in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts.

Dear fellow believers, is there sin in your hearts, or not? When there is no sin in our own hearts, a new heart arises and new strength comes. And we enjoy rest in the Lord. We are at peace. We entrust everything, hope for everything, and obtain everything. The person who knows that he has received the remission of sins and believes in his heart that there is no sin in his own heart truly gains new strength, his heart becomes warm and at ease without his knowing why, and his worries disappear,

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so that he comes to lead a right life of faith. Therefore, rather than solving many other problems, we must first feel that there is no sin in our own hearts.

We are those who have no sin. We who have been born again by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are people who have no sin, that is, saints. Even though there are many problems, our hearts are at peace because we are those who have no sin at all. Those who have received the remission of sins have no sin.

We are just the same as this paralytic

A paralytic appears in this word. Four men carried the paralytic, went to Jesus, tore open the roof, and let him down (Mark 2:3–4), and through their faith the paralytic received the remission of sins from Jesus and was also healed of his disease.

Do we ourselves truly have such faith? Do we have the faith that if we go to Jesus we receive the remission of sins and are also healed of our diseases, the faith that we who have already come to Jesus have truly received the remission of sins, the faith that believes that we ourselves have no sin? When we have such faith, the problems of the flesh are also solved, and we also receive blessings. As to when we receive the grace of God, it is when we know that there is truly no sin in our own hearts and enjoy that joy. Then we can entrust various problems to the Lord and receive answers.

This word says that people who believed in Jesus brought the paralytic to Jesus, and that the paralytic received the remission of sins from Jesus and was also healed of his paralysis. We are just the same as this paralytic. We, too, have come to the Lord, led by people of faith. And we have been saved by believing that

the Lord had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross and received the judgment for us, and rose again from death.

We are just the same as this paralytic. A person who has been struck with paralysis has a perfectly sound mind, but he cannot do as he wishes. He cannot do things, and he has no strength to do them. In the same way, we human beings, too, have an ardent wish to become a certain way concerning the problem of sin or the problems of life, the problem of death or the problem of everlasting life, but it does not turn out that way. Since it does not turn out that way, such a person is precisely a spiritual paralytic. That is precisely a paralytic; what else would be a paralytic?

Our Lord is not One who came to this earth only to heal people's diseases; He came to remit people's sins. And He came to give salvation to sinners, to give the kingdom of heaven to sinners who cannot but go to hell, and to give people the bliss of living in the kingdom of heaven forever. Our Lord came to solve the problem of people's sins; then has the Lord solved the problem of sin or not? He has solved the problem of sin that is in your heart and mine. It means that He has solved the problem of sin for those who believe in the Lord and come before the Lord. And He has solved the problem of everlasting life, and He has also solved the problems of the flesh.

The authority of the Son of Man, who remits sins

We must check once again and make certain whether there is truly sin in ourselves or not. This is because if this part is not certain, if it does not come about in our hearts, everything becomes theory. Then we become just like the scribes and the

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Pharisees. They despised Jesus, saying, "This is blasphemy. Only God can remit the sins of people, so who are You to say that You remit the sins of people? Are You God?"

If we do not truly believe in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts, if we do not realize it in our hearts, we are just the same as these Pharisees. To them, who said, "How can You remit the sins of sinners?" the Lord said, asking whether they did not know that He had the authority to remit sins.

Our Lord has cleanly removed all the sin in the hearts of you and me who believe in the water and the blood, and has made it so that there is no sin in our hearts. Yet not to believe it and to say that, because one is lacking, one cannot say that one has no sin is a Pharisaic way of thinking.

Even if, like the paralytic, our thinking is perfectly sound but we have no ability at all to do anything, and even if problems are piled up mountain-high on us, the fact is that our Lord has actually removed all the sin in our hearts. He has made them hearts without sin. That is why we must have faith in leading a life of faith, and we must lead a life of faith starting from realizing in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts, having received the remission of sins by faith in the Lord.

When the scribes and the Pharisees saw Jesus and said that He was blaspheming, Jesus knew their hearts and said, *"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?" (Matthew 9:5)*. They did not believe in Jesus as God. Because they did not believe, they said that He was being insolent. Jesus came to this earth as the Son of Man, but He wanted to teach the Pharisees, and us as well, that He Himself has the authority to remit sins.

Jesus asked the Pharisees, who did not acknowledge Him in their hearts, whether it was easier to remit sins or to heal a disease. For man, both are difficult.

Dear fellow believers, can man heal paralysis? It is said that there are doctors who claim to heal paralysis. But can they really heal it perfectly and flawlessly? No matter how famous a doctor a person who has collapsed from a stroke may go to, can all the blood vessels in his head that have burst, hardened, and become blocked be opened up, and can his whole body be made completely sound? Man can do neither. He can neither heal paralysis nor remit the sins of people. But for Jesus, paralysis or the problem of people's sins is no problem.

Jesus said, *"That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6)*. For our Lord, it is simple to remit people's sins, and it is also simple to solve the problems of people's flesh, such as paralysis.

A life of faith is lived not with the head but with the heart

Dear fellow believers, we must lead a life of faith with our hearts. We must believe in our hearts that we have no sin and follow the Lord with our hearts. The faith that there is no sin in our own hearts must be in our hearts. Only then does our life of faith become right and powerful, and we come to live in much grace and blessing before God.

This may seem like a small difference, but there is a very great difference between leading a life of faith with the head and leading a life of faith with the heart. What is done with the head is understood all too easily, like one plus one equals two, but nothing remains. Once a person lets it pass by quickly, nothing at all remains. But when we lead a life of faith with the heart, that is, when we believe in our hearts that the Lord has removed

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our sins and that there is no sin in our hearts, the peace of the Lord comes upon our hearts, and all anxiety and worry disappear.

Why is that? It is because the person who has no sin in his heart is in the bosom of the Lord. The Lord said, *"Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4)*. Because he is in the Lord, whatever problem he may have, it is all the Lord's problem, so his heart is at peace. It is just as a weaned child sleeps peacefully, held in its mother's bosom (Psalm 131:2). All the problems of a child's eating, growing, and digesting are entirely the mother's responsibility. Likewise, the one who believes in his heart that there is no sin in his own heart is at ease in his heart, because all his problems are the Lord's problems that are in the Lord, and the Lord will take care of them. Such is the difference between leading a life of faith with the head and leading a life of faith with the heart.

Let us think it over with our heads. When Jesus received baptism from John, our sins were passed on to Him, and He received the judgment for those sins on the Cross and rose again, so we have no sin. If we are asked to discuss salvation and being born again, with our heads we move on in one second, saying, "No problem. Done." But what happens if we realize in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts, even though the heart is a little slower? It does not end with a calculation; much remains in our hearts.

Dear fellow believers, we must believe in our hearts that there is no sin in our own hearts. We must lead a life of faith looking to the Lord with our hearts, believing with our hearts, and following with our hearts. The Lord has infinite power. Sometimes the Lord gives us power, sometimes He solves some problem for us, and sometimes He gives us wisdom and understanding. He solves our problems in various ways.

What the Lord wants from us most is to make us know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to remit sins. Our Lord wanted to reveal that, and He wanted all people to know truly in their hearts that the Lord has removed your sins and mine. So we must truly want to lead a life of faith with our hearts, and that faith must dwell in our hearts. When we follow with our hearts and confirm that there is no sin in our own hearts, we can look to the Lord for everything. Man's thoughts are like waves. They surge in and surge out. Thoughts do not give man rest.

But a seed planted in the ground does not quickly wash out like a wave. Once it takes root, it keeps growing and bears fruit, and again it sprouts and bears fruit. That is what faith in the heart is. Is there faith in the Lord in your heart? Do you believe that there is no sin in your heart? Do you believe that if there is no sin in your heart, even if your prayers are stammering and clumsy, when you clearly bring that problem to God and rely on the Lord, the Lord will solve it and help you? In fact, when we know that there is no sin in our own hearts and lead a life of faith with that faith, God solves all the remaining secondary problems by grace.

You and I lead a life of faith not with the head but with the heart. Our faith must not be surging seawater; it must take root in this earth. When we abide in the faith that the Lord has removed our sins, the faith that we ourselves have no sin, we come to bear fruit like the herb that yields seed and the fruit tree that yields fruit with seed in it (Genesis 1:11).

We must believe the word of God not with our thoughts but truly with our own hearts. Just as the paralytic believed the word that was spoken, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2),* took up his bed, rose, and walked away, and so received the remission of sins and also had his problem solved, there must be in our hearts the faith that believes in our

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hearts that God has already given us such grace, the faith that we ourselves have received such grace.

God has already bestowed such grace on us. Dear fellow believers, what is a life of faith? A life of faith must be lived with the heart, by faith. Faith makes us firm, and faith solves all our problems. We must believe the word of God not with our heads but with our hearts. Dear fellow believers, is there sin in your hearts, or not? Is it that, having calculated it with your heads, there is clearly none, or do you truly feel in your hearts that there is no sin in your hearts? If you feel it in your hearts and believe it in your hearts, then, just as the paralytic was healed of his paralysis and also received the remission of sins, you and I are the very people who are blessed.

God bestows grace on children who have no sin

This paralytic was healed of his disease, also received the remission of sins, and became a child of God. That does not mean that he would live by his own strength from then on; rather, God the Father gives grace to His children according to their needs. We must live with that faith. We should have the faith that believes that God has not only remitted our sins but is also One who delights to bestow grace on the children who have no sin, that is, on the children who believe and realize it in their hearts.

I believe in God. God has removed all my sins. The reason we have no sin is that God has removed our sins. When we have no sin, God bestows grace on us in various ways and gives us blessings. Also, because there is no sin in our hearts, we follow the Lord by faith, preach the gospel, and live brightly. Because

there is no sin in our hearts, we live happily and blessedly, like kings. If we have sin, we are nothing.

In the Old Testament, God commanded a man of God not to eat bread nor drink water in that land, nor return by the way he had come (1 Kings 13:9). At first he simply went on his way according to that command. But an old prophet followed him and, saying that he too was a prophet, deceived him, saying that an angel had told him by the word of the LORD to bring him back, feed him bread, and give him water to drink (1 Kings 13:18). The man of God, taken in by those words, went to that house, ate bread, and drank water, and in the end he met a lion on the road and died (1 Kings 13:24).

We are those who have no sin. There is truly no sin in our hearts. As long as we do not eat the words and teachings of false prophets, we do not die spiritually. In any situation we do not die spiritually. God raises, protects, and bestows grace on His people in any situation. Why does He do so? It is because those who have no sin are the children of God.

There is only one reason. He bestows grace because they are those who have no sin, because they are the children of God. There is no other reason at all. We must believe in our hearts that God has remitted our sins so that we are those who have no sin, give thanks in our hearts, hold on to the blessing of the remission of sins that God has given and to that faith, and, just as a weaned child is held in its mother's bosom, entrust everything in the Lord and live in complete reliance. This is the life of faith, and faith is precisely that.

Being spiritual is also precisely that. We lead a life of faith not with our heads but by faith, with our hearts. Believing that there is no sin in our own hearts, feeling and recognizing it in our hearts, and thinking of the Lord in our hearts—this is precisely faith. God has taught us to lead a life of faith with our

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hearts and has given us faith. Therefore, even if we have many difficult thoughts, we should at all times ruminate in our hearts on the fact that we are those who have no sin, believe and recognize it in our hearts, quietly entrust everything in the Lord, and live following the will of the Lord.

The greatest blessing is that we have come to have no sin

Among the blessings God has given us, the greatest blessing is that He has made us have no sin. Because we have no sin, we lead a life of faith and receive blessings from God. Because we have no sin, we live, and we will also go to the kingdom of heaven and obtain everlasting life. Because there is no sin in our hearts, we will also come to do the work that pleases God. Because we have no sin, we are those who have received many blessings. Just as the Bible says, *"You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Isaiah 38:17)*, the Lord has already cast all our sins behind His back. So, as the word says, *"Cast your burden on the LORD" (Psalm 55:22)*, we, too, should leave all our assorted thoughts entirely with the Lord and live the rest of our lives with that faith and that heart that the Lord has removed all our sins.

We must live with the faith that the Lord has remitted our sins, the faith that believes that we have no sin, in our hearts. This is precisely faith. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? A life of faith must always return to our own hearts. Whether we have sin or not, and whether we have received the grace of God or not, is decided in the heart. We lead a life of faith not with our heads but with our hearts, by faith. Our Lord has given us heavenly, spiritual grace and blessings. I give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

New wine into new wineskins

< Matthew 9:9–17 >

"As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.' Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.'"

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A new walk together that began at the tax office

Jesus called Matthew, who was sitting at the tax office. After that, a question arises over the meal, and then another question arises over the disciples' fasting. People asked why the actions of Jesus and His disciples were different from the way they had known, and Jesus answered that question by revealing who He is and what He came to do.

Let us read verse 9. *"As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him" (Matthew 9:9)*. At the very place where Matthew was sitting, the call of Jesus was heard. Jesus saw first, and He spoke first. So Matthew's new life opened not from his own resolve, but from Jesus' calling him.

Jesus said, *"Follow Me" (Matthew 9:9)*. The One he had to follow is clear. What was given to Matthew was not a vague task of trying to become a better person by his own strength, but a call to follow Jesus, who was right before him.

Concerning Matthew, the Bible records, *"He arose and followed Him" (Matthew 9:9)*. The person who heard the call actually rose and followed Jesus. The picture of him sitting at the tax office and the picture of him following Jesus are joined side by side within one verse.

The call to Matthew did not come to him by way of other people's assessment. Jesus called him directly. Therefore, when someone wishes to hear the gospel, we, too, must not shut off that person's future by looking only at his past. This is because the One who saved us from sin lets that person, too, hear the word of salvation.

A person who sat at the tax office was someone who, under the rule of Rome, collected taxes from his fellow Jewish people,

paid them to Rome, and made his living by that work. So people regarded him as one who had sold out his country and hated him. Yet the very person who wrote this Gospel is that Matthew. He did not hide the fact that he had been called while sitting at the tax office, but wrote it down with his own hand and left it behind. A person who has received a call is also the one who knows best that the call did not come from his own qualifications.

When we look at the scene after Matthew rose up, the call does not stop at changing one person's life. Jesus and His disciples are together in his house, and other tax collectors and sinners also come to that place. In a life of following Jesus, new relationships arise with people who will hear the Savior's word and meet His grace together.

The question directed at Jesus, who sat with them

Let us read verse 10. *"Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples" (Matthew 9:10)*. The Bible records that they *"sat down with Him" (Matthew 9:10)*. Jesus and His disciples, and the tax collectors and sinners, were in one place. The way Jesus meets sinners was revealed just as it was before people's eyes.

In that house *"many tax collectors and sinners came" (Matthew 9:10)* and sat down together. What sinners need is a way to come to Jesus, but Jesus first came near to them and showed His will to call sinners.

Let us read verse 11. *"And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Matthew 9:11)*. The Pharisees saw that sight and asked the disciples. To understand Jesus' actions,

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they first had to know the purpose for which He had come, but they judged the Teacher's actions by looking at the people sitting with Him.

The question *"Why does your Teacher" (Matthew 9:11)* in the end leads to asking who Jesus is. This is because if one does not understand Him who draws near to sinners, one cannot understand the lives of the disciples who follow Him either.

When Jesus heard this question, He did not leave His disciples alone in a difficult position. He answered it Himself. A disciple is not someone who must defend his teacher with his own wisdom in the face of every opposition, but someone who hears his teacher's word and answers according to its meaning. Therefore, what we preach must also be the meaning that Jesus Himself made clear.

Even so, this meal does not lead to an attitude of taking sin lightly. The One who had come to call sinners was with them. The reason people draw near to Jesus is not to receive permission to go on living as they are with their sins, but to meet the Savior who removes sin.

When we, too, meet a person who wishes to hear the gospel, we must treat him as a person who needs the word. If we comfortably accept only people whose outward appearance is familiar to us, we do not fully follow Jesus' call. Thinking about who needs salvation, put the Savior's word ahead of your habit of sorting people.

The physician who sought out the sick

Let us read verse 12. *"When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick'" (Matthew 9:12)*. Jesus explained His actions

through the relationship between a physician and the sick. No one would say that a physician who keeps away from people who need help is right. Just as the sick need a physician, sinners need the Savior who remits sins.

The word *"but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12)* makes clear why it is right for Jesus to meet sinners. A sick person seeks a physician because of his condition. In the same way, sinners, too, must come to the Savior because of their sins. Those who acknowledge that they need salvation ask Jesus for help.

The phrase *"Those who are well" (Matthew 9:12)* that Jesus spoke becomes the key to understanding the word about the righteous and sinners that follows. A person who thinks he needs no help has no reason to look for the Savior. But a person who has realized his sin knows that he cannot resolve it by his own strength. So rather than spending his effort on hiding his sin, he comes to rely on Jesus.

Let us read verse 13. *"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:13)*. Jesus told those who had asked the question that there was a meaning they still had to learn. If we stop learning with the thought that we already know the word, we may misjudge the will of God even while seeing it revealed right before our eyes.

Keep in your heart the word Jesus spoke, *"Learn what this means" (Matthew 9:13)*. Remembering the word and accepting the meaning of that word must go together. If, while knowing the word that God desires mercy, one rejects Jesus' actions in seeking to save sinners, one has not yet learned its meaning.

The sacrifices God established lead a person to realize his own sins and to rely on the way of atonement God opened. But if one boasts of one's own religious acts while keeping mercy at a distance, the heart that offers the sacrifices strays from the will

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of God. Jesus corrected their hearts with the word *"I desire mercy" (Matthew 9:13)*.

That mercy was shown in the work of saving sinners. Jesus, who came to call sinners, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, all of it at one time, through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, and within it are also all the sins we commit throughout our lives. As the price of that sin transferred to Him, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died in our place, and He rose again from death. The mercy of the Lord, who called sinners, is given to those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit as the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The new standard of a person who has been called

The word *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:13)* sheds light again on the scene of His calling Matthew, who was sitting at the tax office. Jesus did not call Matthew without knowing what kind of person he was; rather, He saw him and called him according to His will to call sinners. So before Matthew's life of following Jesus, there was first the Savior's grace.

That call did not stop at rescuing Matthew alone. Just as Jesus had called Peter and Andrew, He called Matthew, too, kept him by His side, and made him a worker who would hear and preach His word. The hand that had collected taxes later became the hand that recorded Jesus' words and the works He did. The Lord is the One who entrusts the work of God to those He has had compassion on and saved.

Those who have received this grace must remember by what they were called. If we think that our own qualifications were

the beginning of our calling, we will measure others by those qualifications as well. On the contrary, if we know that we were called by the mercy of Jesus, we can open our hearts to those who need the remission of sins. Remembering the grace we have received changes our attitude toward people.

What Jesus said to Matthew was to follow *"Me."* Therefore, rather than how others see us, we must first hear what Jesus is saying.

When we lead a life of faith for a long time, we can come to judge people only by the ways familiar to us. That is, we readily acknowledge those who fit well into the forms we have learned, and we keep those who do not at a distance even before they have heard the word. Those who learn from Jesus do not ask only whether an action fits the form, but also examine whether it follows the Savior's will.

The word *"not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13)* means that the way of repeatedly offering sacrifices to remove sins comes to an end. Every time they sinned, the people of the Old Testament had to bring sacrificial offerings and wash away their sins each time through the daily sacrifices and the yearly sacrifices. Today, the mind that seeks to obtain the remission of sins through one's own efforts and prayers of repentance often comes to take that place. But Jesus Himself had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of that sin, and, by rising again from death, offered the eternal sacrifice once and for all. Therefore, no more sacrifice remains to be offered for sin, and what the Lord desires is not our sacrifice but faith that believes this work. It is also within this flow that the question about fasting follows in verse 14, right after verse 13. Jesus was revealing, one after another, the mind that tries to gain the qualification to stand before God through prescribed acts.

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The question about fasting that follows also makes us ask about this center again. It is not enough just to look at what the disciples are doing; one must know who the One with them is. By revealing the relationship between Himself and His disciples, Jesus taught what it was fitting for the disciples to do now.

The joy of the time spent with the Bridegroom

Let us read verse 14. *"Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?'" (Matthew 9:14)*. This time the disciples of John came to Jesus themselves and asked. What they meant was this: they and the Pharisees fasted, so why did Jesus' disciples not fast? Whether one does the same actions or not was the core of their question.

Their question contains the comparison "*we and the Pharisees" (Matthew 9:14)*. They made the actions of others the standard of judgment. Fasting was abstaining from food, bowing down before God, and asking Him to grant one's earnest wishes. The disciples of John thought that this was what ought to be done, but they did not deeply know that the very One John the Baptist had testified of was now right before their eyes. So Jesus spoke of whom His disciples were with now.

Let us read verse 15. *"And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast'" (Matthew 9:15)*. Jesus spoke, comparing Himself to a bridegroom. While the wedding guests are with the bridegroom, it is a time of rejoicing. One cannot bring sorrow and attach it to that place merely

because others express sorrow. The fact that the Bridegroom is there explains the disciples' actions.

Listen carefully to the word *"as long as the bridegroom is with them" (Matthew 9:15)*. The disciples' joy came from their relationship with Jesus. They were joyful not because they had much or were highly esteemed by people, but because the Savior was with them and had called them. Those who look at the disciples' life from the outside must learn the very reason for that joy.

Jesus then also said, *"The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them" (Matthew 9:15)*. While speaking of the joy of being with them now, He made known in advance the time when He would soon hang on the Cross. The disciples' lives were not lives that repeated the same outward appearance at all times regardless of Jesus, but lives that went through both joy and sorrow as they followed the way Jesus walked.

And He said, *"Then they will fast" (Matthew 9:15)*. Jesus did not make fasting a useless thing; rather, He taught the proper time and relationship for that act. From this word we learn that we must not make the acts of faith a yardstick for comparing ourselves with others, but must perform them with hearts turned toward the Lord.

Your thanksgiving, prayers, and self-control must also contain that heart. If you put on only the appearance that others see, you may be empty inside. Make clear what grace the Lord has given you now, what you must turn back from before the word, and what you must ask for. When there is a heart toward Jesus, true meaning is contained in the acts of faith.

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The heart that tries to fit new grace into old ways

Let us read verse 16. *"No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse" (Matthew 9:16)*. Jesus spoke using a piece of unshrunk cloth and an old garment as an example. If one sews new cloth onto a garment that has been worn so long that it tears with even a slight pull, the new cloth pulls at the old garment, and the area around the patched spot tears open even more. Likewise, if we try to receive the grace Jesus brought by adding it a little to the righteousness we have, we cannot fully receive the meaning of that grace.

The result *"the tear is made worse" (Matthew 9:16)* reveals why the idea of adding something on was wrong. Faith that follows Jesus, too, is not built by keeping one's own merit intact while filling in only the lacking parts with the Savior's grace. If we stitch a piece of the gospel onto the religious habits and thoughts ingrained in us before we heard the gospel and onto the things we learned in the world, it becomes a halfway faith in which the truth and human thoughts are mixed together.

Let us read verse 17. *"Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Matthew 9:17)*. If new wine is put into old wineskins, both the wine and the wineskins are lost. Jesus deals with the heart that, while receiving what is new, tries to hold on to the old way of containing it. If we have received the salvation He gives, we must live by faith that fits that salvation.

Jesus spoke of the result: *"The wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined" (Matthew 9:17)*. If one puts new wine into old wineskins because one does not want to lose the old

wineskins, neither can be kept. If we stubbornly hold on to our former judgments to the end merely because they are familiar, we bring harm to enjoying and following the grace we have received.

The word that one must put *"new wine into new wineskins" (Matthew 9:17)* points in a clear direction. It means that the standard of our hearts, too, must change to fit the new grace Jesus has given. Having received the remission of sins, we cannot hold on, as the standard of salvation, to the old habit of weighing the qualifications for being righteous by our own deeds. Now the gospel must become the standard by which our identity and our lives are judged.

Those who have received the remission of sins grow together, hearing the word in the church that believes this gospel. They share the joy of the salvation they have received, and they learn how to ask the Lord for help and how to serve by grace. Not following teachings that bind their hearts again to religious merit, but remaining in the gospel that saved them—that is the life worthy of the new grace.

Jesus concluded with the word *"both are preserved" (Matthew 9:17)*. According to this word, we must fully receive and keep the grace the Lord has given. It means not harming grace by insisting on our own standards, but believing the gospel we have received just as it is and learning the life that fits that gospel.

Renew your heart to fit a life with the Lord

Matthew needed the response of rising from his place and following Jesus; the Pharisees needed to learn the will of Him who desires mercy; and the disciples of John needed to

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recognize the time when they were with the Bridegroom. The problems that appeared in the passage were each different, but they all meet at this: one must know who Jesus is and receive His will.

We who hear this word, too, cannot make what is familiar to us the final standard. Where Jesus calls sinners, the One who determines qualification is not us but the Lord. If it is joy the Savior has given, do not hide it for the sake of the appearance you show others, but reveal it. Let us learn, according to the word, the response fitting our relationship with the Lord.

Remember the record that in Matthew's house people sat down together *"with Him and His disciples" (Matthew 9:10)*. The life of those who have received grace is not confined to completing themselves alone, but opens into relationships of hearing the word together and coming to know the Savior. So even when we meet other people, we come to think that they need Jesus' grace.

Also keep in your heart the command "Go and learn." Laying down the attitude that we already know everything and learning the word again is not something to be ashamed of. If we have misunderstood the Lord's will, correcting it is what a disciple should do. If we insist only on our own way while saying that we follow Jesus, we lose the meaning of following.

Joy, too, must be enjoyed according to the word. Those who have received the remission of sins do not need to doubt even the grace they have received every time they see their own shortcomings. This is because the salvation the Lord has given is certain. Within that grace, correct your wrongs and learn the right way. When there is thanksgiving that believes the Savior's grace, we can rather look honestly at ourselves.

Jesus spoke of the wedding guests being with the bridegroom. If we leave out the Savior who is with them and measure only

the disciples' actions separately, we will misread faith. Each of our days, too, must be examined within our relationship with the Lord. Before asking what you have accomplished, look back first on whose word you are hearing and following.

Receive with your faith today the word to put new wine into new wineskins. Do not lock up the grace you have received within your old pride, but learn the remission of sins and the life of the righteous that the gospel of the water and the Spirit makes clear. Sharing the word with those who believe together with you and asking for help, walk with joy the way to which the Savior has called you.

The joy of a life of following Jesus lies in the fact that the Lord is with us. Like Matthew, who rose up at the tax office, let us respond to the call, learn from the Lord, and change the standard of our hearts to fit the grace we have received. I hope that we will not give this joy of walking with the Savior over to our own long-held judgments. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Those who came forward by faith in the midst of suffering

< Matthew 9:18–26 >

“While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.’ So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, ‘If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.’ But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, ‘Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.’ And the woman was made well from that hour. When Jesus came into the ruler’s house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, ‘Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land.”

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The father who came to the Lord over his dead daughter

A father came to Jesus, making known the death of his daughter. And on the road as Jesus was going with him, a woman who had long been suffering from a disease approached Jesus. The father pleaded with words before Jesus, and the woman quietly touched the hem of His garment from behind. The ways the two people looked were different, but the One from whom they sought help was the same, and Jesus knew the circumstances of the two people and responded to each.

Let us read verse 18. *"While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live'" (Matthew 9:18)*. This father did not hide what had happened to his daughter. What he sought from Jesus was not a comfort that would let him regard his daughter as not yet dead. He came to Jesus believing in Him as the One who would make his dead daughter live.

He said, *"My daughter has just died" (Matthew 9:18)*. He sought to bring Jesus into that very place where his own strength had run out. We easily think that we can go to the Lord only after our circumstances have improved to some degree. But faith is going to the Savior with the difficulties we have not been able to resolve, just as they are.

When we look at the plea *"come and lay Your hand on her" (Matthew 9:18)*, it is clear what help he wanted. He did not stop at pouring out his sorrow at length, but asked that Jesus would Himself come and lay His hand on his daughter.

Then the father said, *"And she will live" (Matthew 9:18)*. These were not words saying that he himself had the power to make his daughter live, but words of faith that if Jesus came, He

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could give life. Faith becomes clear not by regarding our own strength as great, but by knowing who Jesus, on whom we rely, is.

Also keep in your heart how he *"came and worshiped Him" (Matthew 9:18)* and pleaded. In that manner, trust toward Jesus and a humbled heart are contained together. A person who seeks help does not try to take the Lord's place, but comes exalting Jesus as the One who will help him. Earnestness and reverence are present together.

Those who go to the Lord for others can also learn from this father. It is not stopping at knowing the suffering of one's family, but making that need known to Jesus. We cannot change other people's lives and circumstances as we please, but we can go to the Lord with a heart that loves that person and ask for help.

Jesus, who set out on the road with that man

Let us read verse 19. *"So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples" (Matthew 9:19)*. Having heard the plea, Jesus arose and followed him. The father did not go back home alone. Jesus went with him on that very road on which he had sought help. So at the center of this scene lies not so much what the one who pleaded could do as how Jesus responded.

The Savior's response is contained in the short record *"So Jesus arose and followed him" (Matthew 9:19)*. The text records that Jesus *"followed him,"* letting that man go ahead. It is a procession in which the father, who knew the way, walked ahead toward his house, Jesus followed behind him, and the disciples in turn followed behind. Jesus did not merely hear his situation in words and pass by, but He Himself moved His steps toward the house where the daughter was lying.

The disciples also went along that road. The Bible records, *"And so did His disciples" (Matthew 9:19)*. Those who follow Jesus saw from close by how the Savior meets a person who is in suffering. A disciple is a person who hears the word and, at the same time, a person who learns how that word is manifested in people's lives.

But on the road on which Jesus was going to meet one person, another person came to Him. Responding to one person did not mean that He turned away from another. Jesus knew each and every person even amid the needs of many people, and even on the road on which He was going toward a great work, He did not miss one nameless person.

When our hearts are seized by one urgent matter, we lose the room to look after the people around us. But on the road of following Jesus, we come to learn whom He is looking at. We come not to think only of the matters that look big to us, but also to listen to the needs of the people seeking help before our eyes. Going with the Lord is also learning the Lord's heart.

To the father's plea there was a response: Jesus followed him. We, too, after praying, should not just keep looking into our own hearts, but must learn the Lord's will through the word. The more we learn how the Savior responds, the deeper our trust in Him also grows.

Even after we meet a difficult matter and seek the Lord's help, there remains for us a road we must walk. On that road we sometimes meet another person's need as well. So rather than being seized by the impatience that only your own matter must be finished quickly, look at the work the Lord is doing. After the prayers we have offered, there continues a time of learning the Lord's will and care.

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The faith of the woman who touched the hem of His garment from behind

Let us read verse 20. *"And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment" (Matthew 9:20)*. This woman had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years. Since she spent twelve years, day after day, with a disease in which blood flowed without stopping, it was by no means a short time of suffering. But rather than laying out that time as a detailed medical history, the Gospel of Matthew shows the fact that the woman who had long been sick now came to Jesus. That long-standing difficulty turned her toward the Savior.

She *"came from behind" (Matthew 9:20)* and touched the hem of His garment. The father pleaded in front, and the woman approached from behind. Jesus did not help them after making the outward appearance of the two people match exactly; rather, He saw the faith with which each of them relied on Him.

Let us read verse 21. *"For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well'" (Matthew 9:21)*. Here the reason the woman touched the hem of His garment is revealed. It was not that her hand touched it by chance. She reached out her hand because she believed that Jesus could save her. So, while looking at the movement of her hand, we must also read whom her heart relied on.

The words *"she said to herself" (Matthew 9:21)* reveal the faith that led that action. The woman did not merely count the years she had been sick, but looked at the power that is in Jesus. Going to the Savior while holding the conviction that He is the One who will save—that is faith.

What she touched was *"the hem of His garment" (Matthew 9:20)*, but the One who has power is not the garment but Jesus.

The woman touched the hem of His garment relying on Jesus, and Jesus spoke about that faith. Therefore, even when we learn actions of faith, we must not regard the action itself as the power that saves.

One person asked with words, and one person reached out a hand. When we look at the two scenes together, we come to know that faith is not learned by imitating outward appearances. Faith is not found in memorizing the father's words just as they are or in copying the woman's motion. Faith lies in knowing Jesus, on whom they relied, and in our seeking help from Him today as well.

The fact of having been sick for a long time easily makes a person discouraged. But this woman's story shows that even in the face of a long-standing problem, the way to go to the Savior is open. Do not shut away by yourself even the things you would ask of Jesus just because many years have passed. Make known the help you need to the Lord, who knows all our circumstances.

The Savior, who turned around, saw her, and called her daughter

Let us read verse 22. *"But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour" (Matthew 9:22)*. Jesus turned around and looked at that woman. She had approached from behind, but she did not remain a hidden person before the Savior. This is because Jesus spoke to her and set her heart at ease. Along with the help the woman sought, the words the Savior Himself let her hear were also given to her.

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Attention toward one person is clearly revealed in the action *"turned around, and when He saw her" (Matthew 9:22)*. Her problem was not buried among the countless needs in the crowd, and the Lord knew that woman. So when you pray, do not regard yourself as a forgotten being among countless people. The Savior knows those who seek Him.

Jesus said, *"Be of good cheer, daughter" (Matthew 9:22)*. On that very road where a father had asked Him to make his own daughter live, Jesus called this woman daughter. Together with the healing of her disease, the words of the Savior accepting her were heard, and the woman who had been suffering came to be at ease within those words.

Then He said, "*Your faith has made you well" (Matthew 9:22)*. The One toward whom this faith was directed has clearly been Jesus from earlier on. It was not that the thought the woman held became, in itself, the master of power, but that by faith relying on Jesus she received His help. So when we speak of faith, we must always make clear, together with it, who the One is in whom we believe.

The record *"the woman was made well from that hour" (Matthew 9:22)* testifies that Jesus' response was actually fulfilled. The disease that had continued for twelve years stopped *"from that hour,"* that is, right at that time. It was not that only words soothing her heart remained; Jesus actually saved the person who had been in suffering. This word makes us know the Savior's power and the grace He bestows on those who believe in Him.

The One who saves us from sin is also this very Jesus. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, even the sins we will commit throughout our lives, transferred to Him once and for all, leaving nothing out. And as the price of all those sins, by shedding His blood and

dying on the Cross, He received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death. We who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit have received the remission of sins and become children who call God Father.

If we believe this salvation that the Savior has bestowed, we can go to God and seek help. It is living as children who make their own weaknesses known to the Father. More than adorning the words of prayer beautifully, a heart that relies on the Lord is needed. Rely on Him, telling Him what is hard for you and what you want Him to help you with.

The word heard amid commotion and ridicule

Let us read verse 23. *"When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing" (Matthew 9:23)*. Jesus at last arrived at the ruler's house. It was not that the father's plea had been forgotten while He was responding to the woman. He arrived, without fail, at the very house to which He had first set out following him. In this way, the text shows the grace bestowed on the woman and the grace He would bestow on the dead girl connected on one road.

In the house there were *"the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing" (Matthew 9:23)*. *"Noisy"* is a word meaning clamoring loudly. The text shows side by side the scene of that house, filled with the sound of flutes and the noise of people clamoring, and the word of Jesus. However great the reaction that filled that house was, the One who determines what will happen was Jesus. The atmosphere before our eyes cannot take the place of the Savior's power.

Let us read verse 24. *"He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him"*

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(Matthew 9:24). Jesus told the crowd to make room and said of the girl that she was sleeping. The father had said that she *"has just died,"* and the crowd in the house was also playing the flute and clamoring over the death. Yet Jesus said of the same girl that she was *"sleeping."* What that word means is revealed by what Jesus did in the next verse.

The word *"Make room" (Matthew 9:24)* was directed at the people who filled that house. Jesus did not leave the work of making the girl live to their permission. The people were already each reacting in their own way in the face of death, but the Savior spoke and acted by His own authority.

At Jesus' word, it is recorded, *"And they ridiculed Him" (Matthew 9:24)*. The woman hoped for salvation, and the father believed that his daughter would live, but these people ridiculed. Before the same Jesus, such different attitudes appeared. If we confine what He will do within the limits of our own experience, we cannot believe even when we hear the word.

When we pray to the Lord over a difficult matter, too, other people's words can shake our hearts. But that does not mean that we can pray only after first equipping ourselves with logic to overcome all those words. The faith that seeks the Lord's help relies on His power. Knowing who Jesus is comes before people's reactions.

Jesus did not stop the work He was doing because of the people who ridiculed Him, and the next verse records what He did for the girl. Therefore, we who read the word must also follow what the Savior does rather than people's commotion and ridicule. We must see who it is who speaks the last word in the place of suffering.

The Lord of life, who took the girl by the hand and raised her up

Let us read verse 25. *"But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose" (Matthew 9:25)*. After the crowd went out, Jesus went inside. The Savior went into that very place where people thought that nothing could be done anymore. He did not merely look at the girl from afar, but took her by the hand, and the girl arose. In this concise record, Jesus' authority of life is revealed.

Take note of the action *"took her by the hand" (Matthew 9:25)*. Earlier, the woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment, but here Jesus took the girl by the hand. In both events, the master of power is Jesus. Both the woman who went forward by faith and the girl who could not come forward by herself received life from Him.

The Bible records the result as *"the girl arose" (Matthew 9:25)*. It does not say how the girl gathered her strength. It is only that, when Jesus took her by the hand, the girl arose. The Savior's power was revealed in the place where what people could do had come to an end. The One from whom we seek help is this very Jesus, who gives life.

Here, recall the father's plea once again. He had said that if Jesus came and laid His hand on her, his daughter would live. Jesus truly came and raised up that girl. In this way, the plea that relied on Jesus was connected with Jesus' response. He who had asked for help came to see with his eyes the power of the One in whom he had believed and to whom he had come.

Let us read verse 26. *"And the report of this went out into all that land" (Matthew 9:26)*. What happened in one house became known in all the land. Although it happened in the room from which the crowd had been sent out, it did not end with people's

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ridicule, and what Jesus had done spread widely. The Gospel of Matthew wrote earlier, too, that Jesus' fame *"went throughout all Syria" (Matthew 4:24)*, and right afterward it writes that the two blind men whose eyes were opened *"spread the news about Him in all that country" (Matthew 9:31)*.

"The report of this" (Matthew 9:26) came from what Jesus did. So when we speak of the Lord's work, we must speak of what the Lord actually did. There is no need to add human imagination in order to heighten emotion. The Savior's power, by which He took the dead girl by the hand and raised her up, is already sufficiently revealed in the word.

Those who believe this event rely on Jesus even in the face of death. This is because they know that the One who rules over our lives is the Savior. We can go to the Lord of life even while not hiding our grieving hearts. This is because, even if what we can do in the world has come to an end, it does not mean that Jesus' authority has also come to an end.

The one Savior, who hears different pleas

The father came for his daughter, and the woman came carrying her own disease. One had a death that had just befallen, and the other had a long-standing illness. Jesus met each of the two people in their circumstances. So there is no reason to compare whose need is greater and decide who may go to the Lord. Anyone who needs help need only ask the Lord.

How honestly are you making your circumstances known to God? Do not try to report only after sorting out by yourself all the matters that are hard to cope with. The father spoke of his daughter's death just as it was, and the woman came to Jesus while holding on to her suffering. You, too, make known your

unresolved circumstances just as they are, and seek the Savior's help.

Also, we must not take other people's pleas lightly. Suffering does not become a small need just because it is suffering we have not experienced. Just as Jesus turned around and looked at the woman, we, too, must look after those who seek help. Even if it is a problem we cannot solve on that person's behalf, we can pray together and help that person hear the Lord's word.

Faith does not boast of the way in which we went forward. What was revealed through the father's words and the woman's touch was Jesus, to whom they looked. Therefore, rather than comparing with one another the ways or expressions of prayer, we, too, must learn a heart that believes in and relies on God.

The father who asked, *"Lay Your hand on her" (Matthew 9:18)*, and the woman who believed she would be saved, thinking, *"If only I may touch His garment" (Matthew 9:21)*, both relied on the Savior, who is outside themselves. Faith is not endlessly looking into oneself in order to find strength within oneself, but setting one's heart on Jesus, who has made Himself known through the word.

People's ridicule could not give life to the girl, but when Jesus took her by the hand, the girl arose. Discern what you will listen to as you live in difficult circumstances. Rather than letting words that discourage you fill your heart, keep close to the word that makes clear the Savior's authority and grace, and seek help from the Lord.

Jesus told the woman to be of good cheer, and He raised up the dead girl. He is the Savior who has given us the remission of sins, and He is our shepherd. So do not draw back, ashamed of yourself as one who needs help, but rely on God. Within the grace we have received, we ask the Lord for what we need and keep learning the faith that trusts in Him.

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Jesus, who met the two people, was not One who evaluates suffering from afar. He heard the plea and set out on the road, turned around and looked at the woman, and took the girl by the hand. Let us entrust our lives to that Savior, who knows all our needs. For those who know Jesus, who gives life, there is always One from whom to seek help, even in suffering. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The reason the Lord came to this earth

< Matthew 9:1–38 >

“So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.’ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemes!’ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men. As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but

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sinners, to repentance.' Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.' While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.' So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour. When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land. When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!' And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes,

Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows it.' But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.' 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. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'"

Our Lord came to this earth and, going about everywhere, healed many who were demon-possessed, the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years, the girl who had died, the blind, and those who were demon-possessed and mute. The Lord came to this earth, saw the many crowds, and was moved with compassion; He looked with pity on their struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd, and He healed them. Our Lord came to this earth and did a great many things and spoke a great many words. At times He met the sick and healed them, and to the Pharisees or religious people He spoke the real truth. He treated each person according to his illness, and He healed every illness.

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The Lord could do so because the Lord Himself was God. If the Lord had not been the Creator, had not been the almighty God, but had been a mere human being, He would have done only one or two things well and would not have been able to do the rest. But because our Lord was God, He came to this earth and did all things. When the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years touched the Lord's garment, power went out from the Lord's body and cut off the source of that woman's flow of blood. And when it was said that a girl had died, the Lord said, *"The girl is not dead, but sleeping" (Matthew 9:24)*, and woke her up, and He healed the blind and the demon-possessed all in this way as well.

Our Lord did so many things during the three years after He came to this earth that the Bible says, *"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25)*. We believe that, among them, our Lord had His disciples record the events that could give us faith to receive the remission of sins and to believe that Jesus is God, and so gave us that word.

"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you"

Today we have read the whole of Matthew chapter 9, and if we look at verses 1 through 8, there is the record of Jesus healing a paralytic lying on a bed with a single word. Our Lord said, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2)*, and remitted his sins, and with a single word telling him to arise and go to his house, He completely healed this man's illness. With a single word, this man was healed.

When Jesus proclaimed the remission of sins to the paralytic, people murmured. "Who on earth are You, that You say You remit sins? Do You mean You are God?" People thought it strange. But our Lord said, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6)*, and He remitted the paralytic's sins and healed his illness.

We must remember the word the Lord spoke to this paralytic in the Bible. The Lord did not say, "Paralysis, be healed," but first proclaimed the remission of sins. That is because the Lord knew that what was needed more than being healed of the illness was the remission of sins. Even if the Lord had only healed this man's paralysis, that too would have been a fitting thing. But what profit would there be if a person were healed of paralysis and yet died with sin? Because one who dies with sin goes to hell, God knew what we truly need and spoke that way. So He said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. I understand that He did so because what had to come first of all was the grace of remitting the sins in our hearts.

People who could not possibly know that murmured greatly. "Does He mean He is God?" While Jesus was on this earth—particularly when He received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, and when He did the work of saving all people for three years—our Lord faced a great many challenges. There were countless challenges saying, "Are You God?"

The very meaning of the name Jesus is Savior, and yet it means that God, our Savior, faced many challenges saying, "Are You God or not?" They were challenges saying, "Are You really God? Is it true?" This scene in which the Lord healed the paralytic appears in more detail in the Gospel of Mark, and there we can hear the word the Lord spoke when He knew that people were murmuring. Let us look at that word together.

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"And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 'Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, 'Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Arise, take up your bed and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—He said to the paralytic" (Mark 2:6–10).

People murmured. "Who can remit sins but God alone? Yet are You God? Why does He say to the paralytic that he has received the remission of sins? He blasphemes. He is truly arrogant." What they meant was, "How can a man say such an arrogant thing? How can a man say about another person's sins that he has received the remission of sins?" Jesus knew the very center of people's hearts and spoke as follows.

"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?" (Mark 2:9). He asked which saying would be easier. For man, both are difficult. How difficult they would be! When a paralytic is lying there, would it be easy to say, *"Arise, take up your bed and walk"*? If one says that, the paralytic must actually shake himself off, get up, and walk away, so would it be easy to say such a thing?

Saying, "You have received the remission of your sins," is also difficult. If asked which of the two is easier, as a man one can never say, "You have received the remission of your sins." In the world there are many people who perform feats of superhuman strength or who claim to gather qi (vital energy) and heal illnesses, so between the word that heals an illness and the word that remits sin, what is at least easier for a man is healing

the illness. It means that if you ask an ordinary person which of the two is easier, in fact both are impossible, but even so, would not healing an illness be more possible?

Our Lord told the paralytic that he had received the remission of sins and told him to arise and walk, and only our Lord could speak this word. It is because the Lord is God. Jesus, who saved us, is the God of creation who created all things in this universe, and He is also the God who saved us from all sins, so He could speak that way.

The purpose for which the Lord performed miracles

Dear fellow believers, many sick people and demon-possessed people appear in the Bible, and the Lord did many works of raising the dead, healing the sick, and casting out demons to make people whole. But where did what the Lord truly desired and aimed at lie? It was to save people from their sin. That was the Lord's purpose. It means that saving people from sin was the purpose for which our Lord came to this earth and performed such miracles.

Dear fellow believers, what happens if a paralytic is healed? Is it enough just to be healed of the illness? If the illness is healed, will he never die? Does not everyone live in this world and then die? What happens when one dies? If one is judged before God with sin, will he not go to hell? Also, if a person is healed of paralysis, will he never catch another illness again? Even if paralysis is healed, he can catch another illness. He can catch malaria, he can catch typhoid, and he may also catch a cold and die. It means that people can catch countless illnesses, and in the end they fall ill and die.

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The authority to remit sins belongs to Jesus alone

In all the works in which our Lord healed illnesses, raised the dead, and cast out demons, what He wanted to reveal is just one thing: that Jesus is God. He performed those works to reveal this: that because Jesus is God, He remits people's sins and saves people from sin. What if some person had healed someone's illness or had raised the dead? He would not have kept still. He would have put advertisements in newspapers or on television, saying, "On such-and-such a day of such-and-such a month, I raised the dead. There are so many witnesses," made a great fuss, saying, "Bring me all the dead. I will raise them," and made a name for himself while receiving enormous sums of money.

In fact, in the past, advertisements such as the following used to be printed large on the front page of newspapers: "Master So-and-so, the great authority on name-making, comes to our city. A person's destiny depends on his name. If you change your name, your destiny changes." Then people bundle up their money, go to that master, change their names, receive talismans, and bring them home and put them up in their houses. In that way he goes around the whole country, drawing people in and raking in money. When that master leaves, another master who claims to practice astrology appears and sweeps through once again.

The Christian world is no different. Announcing that some revivalist is coming, they run television advertisements, hand out flyers, and put up countless banners. They say that whoever comes to them, whether sick or demon-possessed, will be made completely well. It is as if they guarantee that they will heal anything all at once. People receive the laying on of hands, fall backward, get up again, and are said to have become sound in mind, but, dear fellow believers, have they really become sound?

That is usually just a show, and after a little while they tend to go back to the way they were. And some people claim to have pulled lumps of disease out of the body and make a display of amazing healings. There are actually people who say they were healed that way.

But, dear fellow believers, is that really true? Satan the devil is a deceiving spirit. Saying that if one receives treatment or a name from such people, one's illness will be healed, one's business will prosper, and blessings will come to one's household—all of this is deception. For a while, something seems to go well. But in the end, if there is sin in that person's heart, illness is still flowing within him, and he comes to die.

Dear fellow believers, there are many who boast that their illnesses were healed and many who boast that they healed illnesses, but is there anyone who remits sins? The One who remits sins on this earth is Jesus. Only Jesus alone remits sins. Our Lord remits people's sins, and by exercising His power He also solves people's problems. But the reason the Lord performed such signs and miracles was to reveal that the Lord is God. What the Lord is ultimately speaking of is remitting people's sins.

Four men came groaning, carrying the paralytic's bed. At that time Jesus was in a certain house in Capernaum, and the place was a sea of people. People had surged in like seawater and filled the house. The four men could not possibly push through the people to get in. So the four men who had carried the paralytic went up onto the roof, tore the roof open, tied ropes to the four corners of the bed, and let it down in front of Jesus. While Jesus was speaking, the roof was torn open and a bed came down. The Lord saw the faith of that paralytic and of the four men who had brought him and let him down in front of Jesus. The man stricken with paralysis came down with his bed,

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lay before Jesus, and was looking up at Jesus with only his eyes wide open. When Jesus said to him, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*, this paralytic received the remission of sins, got up from his bed, took the bed on which he had been lying, and walked home.

Dear fellow believers, our Lord solves all of a person's problems, but how does He solve them? First He removes that person's sins. The Lord has already removed the sin of sinners. And to the soul who hears and believes the word of how our Lord removed sin, He says, "You have received the remission of your sins." Then that soul receives the remission of sins.

The Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, bore all the sin of the world and went to the Cross, was nailed to it, and received all the punishment and judgment for sin on our behalf. So He saved us from sin. We come to know that Jesus. When we believe in that Jesus, what does our Lord say? He says, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* When we believe that our Lord is God, that He came as a man, that He received baptism from John, that He had all our sins transferred to Him through that baptism, that He bore all the sin of the world, that He died on the Cross, and that He rose again, we can pass on all our sins to our Lord. When we believe in our hearts that the Lord has resolved all our sins through His baptism and His death on the Cross, our Lord tells our souls that we have received the remission of sins.

Our Lord first gives us the grace of the remission of sins. After that, He solves the problems of the flesh. Dear fellow believers, when we believe in the Lord, we often believe in Jesus for such a purpose, saying, "If You only heal this illness, I will do anything." But we must not do so. If one only wants to be treated for an illness, one can go to the hospital.

When we believe in the Lord, we must believe while keeping in mind the fact that the Lord first heals your sins. And you must receive the word of the grace of salvation in which the Lord said to you, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* that blessing of salvation. God speaks this word to those who believe in the Lord and believe in our Lord's baptism and the blood of the Cross. So those who have heard and believed this word have received the remission of sins. They have received the remission of sins and have been granted the grace of the remission of sins. It means that they therefore give thanks before God, and from then on, even if there are countless problems of the flesh, those many problems are solved one by one as they live a life of faith—having received the remission of sins, coming to church, and hearing the word.

Dear fellow believers, what kind of thing is the remission of sins? It is something the Lord gives unilaterally. Just as the Lord told the paralytic that he had received the remission of sins, the remission of sins is something the Lord gives.

We, who can do nothing, just like the paralytic

The Lord spoke to a paralytic, and what kind of illness is paralysis? Paralysis is when something goes wrong in the brain. If something goes wrong in the right side of the brain, the left side is paralyzed, and if something goes wrong in the left side of the brain, the right side is paralyzed, and one becomes paralyzed on one side of the body. It means that one cannot use half of one's body. Being unable to raise one's hand and unable to move one's foot—this is called paralysis. When paralysis is severe, the whole body may be paralyzed, and when it is even more severe, one falls into a vegetative state, and only when someone boils

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thin rice gruel and barely puts it into one's mouth can one barely sustain life. This is a paralytic.

When He told such a paralytic that he had received the remission of sins, He was saying that only the Lord remits our sins. And He was saying that a person can do nothing by himself to have his own sins remitted.

What can a person do to have his own sins remitted? What can a person who has paralysis do by himself? A paralytic can do nothing. Even if a person with paralysis wants to go to the well and draw water to drink, can he go? He cannot go. A person with paralysis thinks as he pleases, but his body does not follow. It means that though he has something he desires in his heart, he has no ability to do it. It means that he can do nothing.

What can you and I do to receive the remission of sins? Even if you offer your own firstborn son for your transgressions, can the sin of the transgressions you have committed disappear? If you go before God with much gold, silver, and treasure in order to come before Him with confidence, will God be pleased? It means that even if one brings and offers much gold, silver, and treasure, or wealth, or many lives—even one's own life—God does not want it, because God Himself is the Lord of life.

Then what does God want? When we receive into our hearts this word, this grace, and this salvation, in which God removed our sins by the water and the blood and said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* God is pleased with that faith that receives it.

Dear fellow believers, man can do nothing. Being a paralytic means being unable to do anything. To such a paralytic our Lord said that he had received the remission of sins.

Faith that knows the kernel, not the husk

We must know why the Bible was written this way. This Bible has been handed down for thousands of years, but today there is almost no one who fully unravels this Bible. Why is that? It is because the Bible is the word of God and the work of God, so only a person who has received the grace of God—that is, the grace of being told that he has received the remission of sins through Jesus—can interpret it, can believe this Bible, and can preach it to others. Anyone who is not so cannot come near it, whoever he may be.

Today countless people handle this Bible. They say that this word of the Bible is such-and-such in Greek, that the meaning of the original text is such-and-such, that theologically it is such-and-such, and that doctrinally it is such-and-such, and they try to approach it through the original text, through history, through the environment and background, and through the faith they themselves believe, but they do not reach salvation. It is because their own souls have not received the grace of the remission of sins directly from God. Such people, even when they see the word of life of the almighty God, do not see it, and even when they hear it, do not hear it. They merely know the husk and do not truly know the kernel. When you cut open a watermelon, the bright red flesh looks delicious, with black seeds embedded in it, and when you take a bite, abundant juice fills your whole mouth and it has a soft, melting taste. One must not, without knowing that taste, barely pare off the deep green rind, taste the pale white rind that has no taste at all, and mistake that for the taste of watermelon. The taste you get when you split the watermelon wide open and chew the red flesh is the real taste of watermelon. Those who have eaten a real watermelon can speak about watermelon. But those who have never eaten a real watermelon

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cannot speak about watermelon. Those who have only looked at it and pared off and eaten a little of the rind will say that watermelon is sweet and also somewhat salty. But those who have eaten a real watermelon can speak of its true taste, saying that it is very sweet and refreshing.

Our Lord has told you and me too that we have received the remission of sins, and He has given us the remission of sins. Our Lord came to this earth and received baptism from John, and through that baptism He had all our sins transferred to Him. Then He bore the sin of the world, went to the Cross, and as He was nailed there and died, He said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. And three days after He died, He rose again and ascended into the kingdom of heaven. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Believing it in your heart is faith. This paralytic received the remission of sins because four men tore open the roof of the house where Jesus was and let him down. Many people, a sea of people, heard the word, but those who truly had faith were this paralytic and the four men who had brought him. "If only we go before Jesus, if only we hear that Jesus' word, this problem will be solved. The paralysis will be solved, and all problems will be solved." They had such faith. It looked utterly impossible, but because they had faith, they acted by faith. They tore off the roof and let the paralytic down on ropes in front of Jesus. Jesus knew their hearts. "You believe in Me." And He said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*.

God knows your hearts. He looks to see, "Do you truly believe when you hear the word of God?" To those who have hearts that believe it just as it is when the Lord says, "This is how I have remitted your sins," our Lord says, "I have remitted your sins."

There are many people in this world, but those who meet the Lord are particular people. And those who are granted the grace

of salvation by the Lord are also particular people. Dear fellow believers, when we believe in the Lord, we must truly believe in our hearts that Jesus is God and that this word is the truth, and we must believe that salvation comes when we believe this very word of Jesus. Only then do we become special people who have met the Lord and received the grace of salvation.

Instead of that, we must not hope for a hot feeling to come, or hope for something like a special experience of receiving something in the body. People's bodies must not be handled carelessly. Our Lord healed paralytics, opened the eyes of the blind, healed the demon-possessed, and raised the dead. These are all words about the gospel. This means that our Lord gave salvation and brought back to life lives that had been dead. This means that to people who could not have fellowship with God because of their own sins, our Lord gave the remission of sins, made them children of God, and had communion with them. I hope you will know the fact that if you believe in the Lord and receive the remission of sins, the problems of the flesh are also solved one by one.

What our Lord gives first of all is the remission of sins. And the very first thing our Lord did when He came to this earth was also the remission of sins. I hope you will know that our Lord gives the remission of sins to all mankind. If one asks what the remission of sins is, it is the gospel of being born again of water and the Spirit. Dear fellow believers, our Lord wants the gospel to be preached throughout the whole world even now. And to those who truly believe the Lord's word in their hearts, believe that Jesus is God, and long for this gospel, this word, and this truth, God sends His servants and has them preach the word. And what He gives first as a gift to those who hear that word and truly believe it in their hearts is the gift of the remission of sins, in which He says, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."*

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When one receives the remission of sins, one becomes a child of God, and when one becomes a child, one becomes a righteous person. All these things happen at the same time. When the Holy Spirit is in one's heart and one comes to receive the remission of sins, one comes to have communion with God, and at that moment one has been born anew. God supplies the word to that soul that has been born anew, and that soul feeds on the word of faith and grows, and by believing the word, it also has all the problems of the flesh solved. We must know that our Lord solves all problems with the word. Our Lord did not behave strangely. He did not do things such as handling people's bodies carelessly. He mainly laid His hands on people and spoke. Dear fellow believers, in this age too, we must truly remit people's sins with the word, that is, by preaching the gospel.

The disciples who received the authority to remit sins

Dear fellow believers, I hope you will also know that our Lord gave such power to His disciples. After He rose again, our Lord told His disciples that if they remitted people's sins, they would be remitted, and if they left them as they were, they would remain as they were. Let us look at that word together.

"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them,

'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (John 20:19–23).

Our Lord gave the Holy Spirit to His disciples who had received the remission of sins, and then He said that if they remitted anyone's sins, they would be remitted, and if they left them as they were, they would remain as they were. This means that if Jesus' disciples preach the gospel, the sins of the people who believe that gospel are remitted, and if the disciples leave things as they are and do not preach the gospel, people's sins remain as they are. Those who had received the remission of sins received the authority to remit the sins of other people.

Dear fellow believers, it is not so with just anyone. Not everyone who preaches the word of Jesus remits sins. The one who preaches must first be born again. And not just anyone preaches the gospel.

Evangelists of the gospel are remarkable people. We must know and believe that our Lord came to this earth and solved this paralytic's problem of sin with a single word, and the problem of his flesh also with a single word. *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5), "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Mark 2:11).* Dear fellow believers, with two statements the Lord solved both problems, the spiritual problem and the physical problem. Our Lord is the almighty God in this way. The One who truly has power solves things with a single word. It means that one who has no power does it with his body, but the One who truly has power does it with words.

Our Lord is God. He is God to you, and He is God to me as well. He is God to all people. Our Lord speaks to you with the word: *"Son, your sins are forgiven you," "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."* For those who truly believe the word of God, works take place. For those who believe the word of

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God, works take place, and for those who do not believe the word of God, problems still remain, and they go on living in the midst of their problems. That is why we must believe the word of God. Do not think that the word that evangelists, that is, the servants of God, preach to you with prayer is the word of man. No matter who preaches it, if he is a person who has received the remission of sins and preaches according to the word by believing the word of God, know that he is an agent who preaches the word of God, know that the word he preaches is the word of God, and believe it in your heart. Then God will work in you. We must believe the word of God. We must hear the word, believe it, and preach it, and we must also solve all problems by believing the word.

Dear fellow believers, we must lead a life of faith. We must preach the gospel to the whole world. Those who are yet to receive the remission of sins must believe the word of God, and we who have received the remission of sins must also believe the word of God. It is by believing the word that we have all problems solved. Dear fellow believers, I hope you will keep in mind and believe the fact that problems are solved truly by faith, not because of what the church does or what people do.

The Lord has saved us, who were paralytics

You and I are all paralytics. You and I were people who could not do anything about our own sins by ourselves. We were people who wanted to receive the remission of sins but could not wash away our own sins—that is, until the Lord came and said that we had received the remission of sins. If the Lord had not come to this earth, received baptism from John, and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, and if He had not borne that sin,

died on the Cross for us, and risen again, He could not have saved you from sin. In that case, we would have had no choice but to remain paralytics still. But our Lord came to all of us who were paralytics, said to us, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* and actually saved us with the water and the Spirit. We have received the remission of sins through faith. I hope you will believe too.

And to the many paralytics who have not yet heard this word and so have not received the remission of sins, I hope you will not try to preach anything else, but will first believe the word of God yourselves and then preach the word you believe to them in order, step by step. And when you preach the word, pray as well, and ask for God's help and pray that He will move that person's heart. If your faith is lacking, I hope you will rely on the church. And you must not miss the gatherings where the word of God is preached but attend them and listen step by step. If your faith grows as you hear the word for one year, two years, three years, later you too will become a person who can pray for others and a person who can preach the gospel to other people.

A soul that has received the remission of sins must stay attached to the church

Dear fellow believers, those who have just received the remission of sins have certainly received the gospel, but when they preach it, though their words are correct, there is no power or work in it. Because their faith itself is only faith as small as a mustard seed, only as much faith as it took for them to be barely saved, no great work takes place. On the contrary, a person whose faith is weak may preach the gospel to others and then doubt, "Is this really right?" and his faith may die. Therefore you

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must bring souls to the church. You must bring them to the church, let them meet those who have gone ahead, and consult with them often. You must build a bridge for them. Then those who came before you will preach the gospel to them, and that soul in turn will receive the remission of sins. If you too listen and learn beside them, more faith in the word will grow in you, and you too will be able to preach to people with faith. Also, when you preach, people will receive the remission of sins. But even if those people receive the remission of sins, if they do not come to church, their faith ends up dying. It becomes like seed that fell on rock, which endures for a while and then withers and dies. That is why preaching the gospel is precious, but we must also have them come to church; before they come to church, plowing the field of their hearts is important, and connecting them with the church is extremely important. The Lord said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5)*, and a branch lives only when it is attached to the main stem of the vine. Therefore it is right to lead those who have received the remission of sins to the church. True evangelists of the gospel preach the gospel, but they must also prepare people so that they can come to church, and as a result connect them with the Church of God. Even if people have received the remission of sins outside, we must help them come to church and grow while hearing the word. So we must tell them that the place where the word is heard is the church, the place where worship is offered is the church, and the place where fellowship is held is the church, and we must have them gather with the church at the center. Then fruit will be borne naturally.

But if it is not through the church, no matter how much one preaches the word, no work takes place. If that happens, even if people receive salvation, no fruit is borne. Fruit gains nourishment only when it is attached to the main stem, and only

then can that fruit bear new life again. If it is not attached to the main stem, it is bound to die. Nourishment must come up from the root, but if it receives nourishment only through one person, then even while it is sucking up the nourishment it needs, it fails to be supplied with the further nourishment it needs and ends up dying. There is a limit to leading people only through personal fellowship, not through the church.

But if they come to church, they can meet ministers, meet brothers and sisters, and meet all kinds of people: people who are more lacking than themselves and people better than themselves, people who can tell them what they need to hear, and people who can have fellowship with them. So when they come to church and hear the word, they come to realize, "Ah, there are truly many treasures here. There are many precious people here," and they grow as they come to church and hear the word. That is why, when we first preach the gospel, we must plow the field of the heart well, and after we have preached the gospel, we must connect them with the church. We must graft them into the church. The Lord has saved us, who were paralytics. Through the word of God, our Lord has given us salvation. I give thanks. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who came to call sinners

< Matthew 9:10–13 >

“Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”

Today we have looked at the word from Matthew chapter 9, verse 10. Looking from verse 10, Jesus sat in Matthew’s house and ate a meal. The people of Israel at that time thought that a person who believes in God is a perfect person who is very humble, good, and gentle, does not commit sin, and does not make mistakes. They thought that God walks together with and dwells with a person who believes in God and lives a good and virtuous life. But Jesus overturned everyone’s thinking and ate a meal in the house of Matthew, who was a sinner in anyone’s eyes. And when He ate, not only Matthew but also many tax collectors who worked at the same tax office and notorious sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples and ate

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the meal. So in the eyes of the Pharisees, this could not be understood at all.

"Even so, how can this man called Jesus, who has a reputation in Israel, sit down to eat with people like that? It seems He is eating a meal that has no dignity and is unworthy of His name. Who one eats with is extremely important, so how can He eat with people like that?" This is what they thought.

The tax collectors of Israel at that time were people who were like thieves. They often assessed taxes several times higher than what was set and put the remaining share into their own pockets. Matthew, too, was such a tax collector. So when the people of Israel looked at him, they thought that, though he was of the same people of Israel, he was a thief—only one who did not carry a sword. The people of Israel had such an attitude, yet Jesus ate a meal with Matthew, who worked at the tax office, and even a crowd of Matthew's friends gathered and ate a meal, so they could not understand it. Jesus' disciples, too, did not observe any particular formalities.

In Israel there was the tradition of the elders of washing one's hands before a meal, but Jesus' disciples did not keep such rules of etiquette well either (Mark 7:2–5).

At any rate, the Pharisees are religious people. They are people who pretend to be very holy. In the eyes of the Pharisees who saw Jesus gathered as one crowd with tax collectors and disciples and eating a meal, Jesus was eating with people who were nothing but thieves. So in the eyes of the Pharisees, Jesus looked very insignificant. "So He is eating with people like those thieves." It means that this is how they saw it. So the Pharisees asked, *"Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matthew 9:11)*. This was probably not a question but mockery. Jesus heard those words and spoke.

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"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12). He spoke a word that is utterly obvious. A healthy person does not need a doctor. Does a healthy person need a doctor or not? No matter how famous a doctor may be, a healthy person does not need him. What doctor would a healthy person need? What use is a dentist to a person whose teeth are not decayed, and what need does a person who has no disease have of a specialist in that disease? Jesus spoke a word that is utterly obvious.

"I desire mercy and not sacrifice"

When we look at the next word, He has explained this word. He said, *"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:13)*. Of course, our Lord came to this earth to call sinners and make them righteous, but this word of verse 13 is profound. Anyone who realizes this word can receive the remission of sins and can meet the Lord. It means that the Lord said that anyone should go and learn what He meant in saying that He desires mercy and not sacrifice.

We must know the heart of the Lord, and we must know what the Lord has required. The Lord wants us to know what it means that He desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice. That is why He told us to learn what it is.

The word mercy means having pity, and having pity on someone and delivering him from sin is called salvation. The very highest summit of love is called mercy. Having so much pity on a sinner who could never be forgiven that He remits his sins is called mercy. The Lord said that He desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice.

Then what is sacrifice? It is a person himself offering something before God. A person himself offering his material possessions, offering his zeal, offering his utmost devotion, setting out delicious food, lifting up prayers, lifting up praise, and offering something before God is called sacrifice.

Even if we look at ancestral rites in the East, people set out a table for the rite filled with food and offer the rite with the thought that if they serve well, something will go well.

The sacrifice the Bible speaks of, too, is constantly offering something before God from one's own side. How zealously people offer praise, pray prayers of repentance, and offer material things from their own side closely resembles the scene of piling a table for the rite full of food and offering the rite. Being anxious to put something forward before God, diligently attending worship, trying to live a good life, and trying to please God from one's own side is called sacrifice. But the Lord said that He wished you would learn and know this: that He desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice. And He went on to say, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:13)*. That is why the Lord ate a meal with Matthew and Matthew's friends, made people who were lacking in the world His disciples, and saved the woman caught in the very act of adultery. He met people who had many problems in the world and gave them the remission of sins. Looking at the earlier part of this chapter, when people brought a paralytic lying on a bed, Jesus said to the paralytic, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2)*. The Lord gave the remission of sins, also healed the paralysis, and resolved the things that man cannot do.

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The Lord came to call sinners and make them righteous

What our Lord is saying here at the core is that the Lord came to call sinners and make them righteous. The very purpose for which the Lord came was so. What our Lord is saying is as follows: “All people are people like Matthew. Where is there a whole person? They are all just so-so. They are lacking and weak, and they are always like that. Where is there a truly whole person?” That is why Jesus came to this earth and ate a meal with Matthew and Matthew’s friends, and met with a leper and a woman notorious in her town. It means that He mostly dealt with people who, in the eyes of religious people, had bad reputations in the world. Jesus did so because He came to this earth to call such people, remove their sins, and make them righteous.

Our Lord said that He desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice. The Bible says, *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)*. All people commit sin. It was the set path for all people to be born as sinners, commit sin, and go to hell. But it means that the Lord came to save these sinners from sin. It means that our Lord came to save us sinners, and did not come to save hypocrites like the Pharisees, who pretend to be good, saying that they believe in God well in this world and hardly commit sin.

We must know well the purpose for which our Lord came to this earth. And we must think about it once again. Did the Lord come for people who live in this world without any particular problems? Or did He come for people who, while living on this earth, have problems and many shortcomings because of their own sins and because of their own weaknesses? We must consider that the Lord did not come for people who hardly

commit sin, live good lives, and have no problems, but came for people who have many problems.

But the religious people within Christianity today do not think so. Rather, they think the opposite. How do they think? People who are not born again usually think that it is enough to go to church, pray piously, pray many prayers of repentance, devote themselves to praise and offerings, not use harsh language, and live a good life. It means that they think that people who do these things are the ones who believe in Jesus, and that Jesus walks together with such people. But when we look at this word, Jesus' will is the exact opposite. The Lord said that He came seeking people who are lacking, weak, full of problems, and riddled with faults, and that He came to save such people.

Just as the Lord said that He desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice, our Lord came to this earth because He wanted to show mercy to us. The Lord came to this earth to resolve all our sins, to remove all our unrighteousness, sins, and weaknesses, and all curses and suffering.

Whom did our Lord call when He came to this earth? He said that He came to call not the righteous but sinners. Then, since the Lord came to call sinners, one may think that it is right to be a sinner even after believing in Jesus, but we must not think so. His saying that He did not come to call the righteous but came to call sinners means that our Lord came to call people who commit sin, people who are lacking, to remove their sins, and to make them righteous. He came in that way to make them righteous, make them children of God, resolve all their problems, clothe them with glory upon glory so that they live well, and let them receive blessings in both spirit and body.

Our Lord called sinners on this earth just as He had said. To those who truly cannot but go to hell because of sin, and whose

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very lives are unhappy, painful, and wretched because of sin, our Lord came, and by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, He had all the sins of those people's entire lifetimes transferred to Him. And bearing the sin of the world that had been transferred to Him through baptism, He went to the Cross, and as He was nailed to it and died, He said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)* and He rose again from death in three days and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. It means that the Lord, who is now alive, has called those who believe in the Lord and believe the fact that the Lord has removed your sins and all of my sins, and has made them righteous. It means that He has called sinners and made them children of God.

A person who knows his own weakness

We must consider and believe that the Lord came to this earth for this purpose, and we must humble our hearts before Him. If someone believes in Jesus but does not know this word, he will strive to put forward his own righteousness. If one thinks that although he does bad things in the world, he does them less than others, and that if he attends church faithfully, gives many offerings, rises high in church positions, prays many prayers of repentance, and often attends special prayer meetings, he is a very high-level Christian, that is wrong. It means that it is not right. What the Lord desires is that we truly bring all our sins, faults, and weaknesses before the Lord and confess as follows: "I am this kind of person. Because I am a person who commits such sins, I am a person who would go to hell according to the law of God that says, *'The wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23)*. It is only a matter of time for me; by my deeds, I am a person

who cannot but go to hell. I hope that the Lord will save such a person as me." The Lord hopes that you and I will truly know our own weakness and come forward in this way.

A person who knows his own weakness and honestly hopes for the mercy of God is a person who knows his own shortcomings. In our daily lives we feel that there are many weak and lacking parts in us. We come to know this more as we grow older. When we are young we do not know it well, but as the years pile up, we come to know it more, saying, "So this is the kind of person I was."

Ordinary people all make excuses even while doing wrong. They keep making excuses, saying, "Because of that person," "Because of that bad person." Then, at some point, they come to know, saying, "Ah, so this is the kind of person I am. So this is what I am like. So that is why our Lord came." So we must know this word in which the Lord said that He desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice, and just as the Lord said that He did not come to call the righteous but came to call sinners, while we are sinners we must come before our Lord, confess, "I am truly a person who will go to hell," and believe in the Lord.

Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John

Our Lord came to this earth and was born, and when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John the Baptist and fulfilled all righteousness. We can know that the Lord received baptism in order to do the work of making all people sinless through the word, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. He came to this earth and received baptism from John, and three years later He bore the

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sin of the world and went to the Cross, was nailed to it, said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)* and died, and He rose again from death in three days and ascended to the right hand of the throne in the kingdom of heaven. Through this we come to know that He truly came to save people like me and people like you.

He has truly shown mercy to us. We know that He is the One who came to remove our sins, not the One who came to give blessings according to how good a life we live. After we believe in the Lord and receive the remission of sins, what is it like? Our Lord has truly saved us through the water and the blood. The Lord was born on this earth, and when He was thirty years old He received baptism from John and had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, bore that sin of the world and went to the Cross, was nailed to it, rose again from death, and saved us. It means that after we have been saved by believing in this salvation, we are thankful that God has shown mercy to us, and so we believe in Him, praise Him, and give Him glory.

Whether one believes in Jesus or does not believe, no one at all has anything to put forward before God. The Bible says, *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)*. But our Lord came to this earth, paid the price of redemption, and bought us. In order to remove our sins, He received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred onto His own flesh, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, and saved us from sin. The Bible says, *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24)*. We have obtained salvation by believing in that redemption. God speaks of righteousness. It means that God has done the right thing of saving us. This is the very mercy of God. "God has done the right thing for us. God bore our sins and removed them all." We must know and believe the righteousness of God in this way.

On the other hand, our human righteousness is like a dirty rag. The Bible says, *"All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6)*. Human righteousness is like tattered clothes patched all over, a scrap of rag without a single sound spot. Our life is a series of doing a little well and then doing much more wrong than that, and again doing a little well and then doing something enormously wrong. Our whole lifetime is a series of mistakes.

That is why our Lord came to save us. Since He could not simply declare that we had no sin when we had sin, He received baptism from John in our place to save us, exactly according to the purpose for which He came to this earth. Jesus received baptism in order to wash away our sins and to bear our sins. In order to move the sins of your hearts over to Jesus and make them no more, He received baptism, and He Himself took responsibility for everything. He showed mercy. Since we go to hell if we have sin, He had all our sins transferred onto His own body through baptism, and the Lord died in our place and saved us. Our Lord came for this.

We boast only of the righteousness of God

The Bible says, *"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)*. It says that God so loved the world. That is why we have nothing to boast of before God. No, there is just one thing to boast of. It is the righteousness of God! The righteousness of God that has saved us, the righteousness of God that loved us and made us children of God, the righteousness of God that made us sinless, the righteousness of God that made us righteous, the righteousness of God that

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made us people of the kingdom of heaven, the righteousness of God that gave us the qualification to do righteous work, the righteousness of God that gave us the opportunity and blessing to serve the Lord—all these, the very best of good things, come down from above. Therefore, only that good work that came from God, only that righteousness of God that came from God, is worth boasting of; there is nothing else to boast of.

Sometimes when we gather and talk about our younger days, saying, "Back in my day," everyone says that they once lived well and lived it up. They say that back in their day they were this strong, and back in their day they were this pretty, but now they are not so. When one goes on boasting about oneself for a long while, what happens? Boasting a little is all right, but when one goes on for a long while, one starts to feel that something is not quite right, doesn't one?

When one boasts to one's heart's content, there was a tiny bit worth boasting of, but as one keeps on boasting a lot, the thought comes, "I am overdoing it a bit. I have exaggerated too much. I am doing wrong now." So one stops in the middle. There is nothing more to boast of, and as one goes on, one comes to know how excessive it was, and one stops altogether. But what is it like when we preach this gospel to others? Once we open our mouths, we cannot stop.

"Jesus received baptism from John in this way and had all sins transferred to Him. Because He had all our sins transferred to Him, He washed away our sins. Since the price of sin is death, dying, and hell, our Lord bore our sins, went to the Cross, and was nailed to it and died in our place. And He rose again from death and saved us."

When we tell such a story, even if we talk for three hours with spittle flying, it is not enough. Because God has done so very many right things for us, even talking all day long is not

enough. Even if we praise this story of salvation, preach it, and boast of it until our mouths go dry, we still have more to boast of. Why is that? It is because the work by which God saved us has so very, very much to boast of. And if we still cannot finish boasting, we do it again next time, and when we meet again next time, we boast again.

To preach this gospel of God is to boast of the righteousness of God. We boast of the righteousness of God, saying how much God has loved us and how He has loved us, and that in this way He has saved us, who were so lacking that we could not but perish and could not but go to hell. Whenever our shortcomings, weaknesses, and sinful appearance are revealed, the righteousness of God, that is, God's rightness, is exalted higher and higher. This is what is fitting in our lives. Rather than saying what we did and how we did it, we come to speak a great deal about how God has given us such salvation and blessings. Isn't that so for you and me? Yes, it is.

After we receive the remission of sins, at first we have a lot of our own righteousness. But what happens when we are born again and stay in the church a little longer? Our own righteousness all becomes nothing, and only the righteousness of God grows larger. However, if a person who has been saved does not know well about the righteousness of God, he is always like a little child. That aspect must now be developed through faith.

Our Lord came to show mercy to us. Because we were so wretched, so very, very pitiable, so clearly bound for hell, so very, very clearly bound to be cursed, and so weak, God clothed us with love, clothed us with salvation, and He Himself resolved all those sins. God has given all that merit to us.

Even if God hands over to us all the right things He has done, He is not shaken in the least, because He is the One who is so

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very, very right and has so very much to boast of. But we do well only a very little, and within limits. Because it is merit that amounts to little, if we were to hand that merit over to anyone else, we would be left penniless, so we hold on to what we have done to the very end and take it with us until we enter the grave. Even on gravestones people write, "While on this earth, this person held such-and-such a position, was such-and-such a judge, was the father of so many sons and so many daughters, and his achievements were such-and-such." Even if we look at the back of that gravestone, it is all that person's boasting. But the boasting ends there.

Dear fellow believers, are you and I people who are to receive mercy before God, or people who are to offer sacrifice? We are people who are to receive mercy. We are people who are to receive mercy, not people who are to offer our fine qualities before God. Our Lord always comes to people who are lacking and saves them, and then, through us, He has us go to people who are lacking and preach the gospel, and He has saved the souls who heard the gospel.

The will of God is this. The Lord did not come to this world for people who, whatever religion they believe in, hardly commit sin, do no wrong to others, and have lived good lives. He came for people who truly mourn because of their own sins, people who cannot find satisfaction in anything of this world in their hearts and want true satisfaction, people who want to do what is righteous and right and want to become God's people who live for others, and people who, whatever their circumstances on this earth may be, want to be saved before God and go to a very good place in the life to come. We must know that will of the Lord well and believe it well.

Truly, however high we may be, how high are we? However proud we may be, how proud are we? However outstanding we

may be, how outstanding are we? Our righteousness is nothing at all. Dear fellow believers, if you do well today and then do wrong for just one day tomorrow, everything you have done well until now completely collapses. That is why the Bible says of the law, *"Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).*

The Apostle James speaks of the law in that way. It means that if one has broken just one of the Ten Commandments, one has broken all the rest as well. And it means that if one has broken just one, even having kept all the other nine well until then is completely void. So it is saying that one cannot be saved by the law.

God had pity on us and loved us, so He sent His only Son to this earth, had Him receive baptism from John, and through that baptism passed all our sins on to Him. And because the Son of God bore our sins, went to the Cross and died for us, and rose again to make us live again, we believe with our hearts and attain righteousness. When we believe in our hearts that God sent His only Son to this earth to save us and saved us through the water and the blood, when we believe and acknowledge the rightness of God, we are saved from all sins and become children of God.

Therefore, as we look at this Bible, we have much need to change our thinking in every part of our life of faith.

Jesus did not come to call people who exalt themselves

Wherever many people gather, there are bound to be people who try to show themselves off. Some come putting forward their status or wealth, and even when they pray, the desire to be seen by people rather than by God sometimes comes first. And

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they sometimes engage in power struggles to become higher than one another.

I cannot tell you how much they swagger and show off, as if they were some haughty crane or some splendid peacock. Just as a peacock spreads out its tail of brilliant colors like the ribs of a fan and turns little by little in place showing off, so are people. In church, at a wedding hall, or at an alumni gathering—wherever many people gather—there are always many people who spread out their fine qualities and show off as if to say, "Look at me." And people look up to the one who has risen highest there.

Jesus did not come to call such people. It means that Jesus came to save from sin those who, whether they have money or not, have been discouraged at seeing themselves, have failed many times in life and so know what they are like, know that they are weak, know that they have nothing fine before God, know that they have nothing fine before people either, and know that even if they have something fine among people, they have nothing fine before God—that is, the poor in spirit, those who seek God and want to receive the remission of sins before God. And He saved such people from sin.

The Lord has saved us through the water, the blood, and the Spirit. After saving them in that way, He made such people His disciples. Those who have become Jesus' disciples are people who follow the righteousness of God and people who exalt the righteousness of God. They are not people who exalt man's own righteousness but people who exalt the righteousness of God.

Then, having made such people who exalt the righteousness of God His disciples, what does He do? "The Lord has saved you in this way. You are such a wretched person, but the Lord loved us, bore all those sins, removed them all, and made us sinless." It means that He has had them spread this. We must know the

will of God, live a life of faith that gives God the glory due to Him, and also live a life of preaching the gospel.

The blessing of living as servants of righteousness

If you and I can now do some righteous work, it is not because you are outstanding. It is God who has enabled you to do righteous work. You must know that it is not because you are outstanding that God has had you do righteous work, but that because you have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, He has given you strength and allowed the circumstances so that you can live doing righteous work. And you must give thanks.

Do you think that you can do righteous work apart from the church? In fact, apart from the church one cannot do any righteous work at all. On one's own, it is hard even to take care of one's own body. Even if one has become a minister, if he trusts in his own fine qualities, shows off, and does not serve God, he ends up straying from the right path. No matter how much he shows off, such a person cannot hold out long before God.

On the contrary, however lacking a person may be, the one who acknowledges his shortcomings before God and stays in the church is blessed. It is while we are in this church that we can serve the righteousness of God. God's placing us in the church after saving us is His giving us power to do the righteous work of God and to exalt, boast of, and spread the righteousness of God.

When you and I serve the Lord in the church and it becomes hard, we may perhaps have a thought like this: "Oh dear, this is so hard I could die. I wish I could rest a little." Dear fellow

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believers, at such times we must rest for a moment before God and think it over. We must consider and know that God has given us grace so that we can do such work, and we must give thanks.

If you and I do not do the work of God, what will we do? All our lives we will work ourselves to death to put food in our mouths, and even then we will fail to put food in our mouths properly, or we will be able to do nothing but struggle to put tasty food in our mouths. When we eat something tasty, it may be good until it passes from the mouth down the throat, but beyond that there is nothing at all. At most, it is only eating and excreting.

If one does not do righteous work, a person's life ends that way. But if one takes in nourishment well and uses it for righteous work—if one gives thanks for the righteousness of God, exalts it, and preaches it to people so that those who suffer because of sin receive the remission of sins—that person is a servant of righteousness. A servant of righteousness who lives offering himself for the gospel in this way is a greatly blessed person. The Lord desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice. I give thanks to the Lord, who came to call sinners. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Words that acknowledge the Savior and a life that follows the word

< Matthew 9:27–34 >

“When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’ And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you.’ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, ‘See that no one knows it.’ But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, ‘It was never seen like this in Israel!’ But the Pharisees said, ‘He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.’”

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The Savior recognized by two men who could not see

There were people who opened their eyes before Jesus, and there was a man who became able to speak. While there was a crowd that was amazed when they saw these things, there were also Pharisees who criticized Jesus. Although they had seen the same amazing work before their very eyes, people's hearts did not become one. So this passage asks how we know Jesus and how we respond to His word.

Let us read verse 27. *"When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!'" (Matthew 9:27)*. The two men were in a condition where they could not see, but they followed Jesus. This was because they believed that they could receive help from Jesus. They did not stop at lamenting the ability they lacked, but set out to find the One who had the power.

They called Jesus *"Son of David" (Matthew 9:27)*. Since David was the king of Israel, this calling is a confession that they recognized Jesus as the descendant of the promised king, that is, the Savior whom God had sent. In its first verse, the Gospel of Matthew introduced Him as *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1)*, and these two men are the first people to call Jesus by this name. So in this calling there is, together with a plea asking for help, faith in who Jesus is.

The words *"have mercy on us" (Matthew 9:27)* contain a heart that acknowledges what they needed. They did not assert their rights before Jesus, but asked for mercy. Faith is not exalting oneself as one who believes in Jesus, but coming to Him as a person who needs the Savior's grace.

They asked as they *"followed Him, crying out" (Matthew 9:27)*. Their heart toward Jesus showed itself in action. Of course, it was not because they shouted loudly that the power came about. What matters is toward whom that cry was directed. Therefore, even when we speak of earnestness, we must make clear who the Savior is on whom that earnestness relies.

The two men offered this plea together. They came to the same Savior carrying the same need. People of faith, too, can listen to one another's needs and ask the Lord together. It means not regarding another person's receiving grace as something that reduces our own share, but asking for grace together.

In the passage, the two men *"followed Him" (Matthew 9:27)* on the road and cried out, and when Jesus went into the house, they *"came to Him" (Matthew 9:28)*. Faith drew them closer step by step. They did not say that they would believe only after seeing the result; while they still could not see, they already relied on the Savior's power.

Jesus, who asked whether they believed He was able to do it

Let us read verse 28. *"And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord'" (Matthew 9:28)*. When Jesus went into the house, the two men came before Him, and Jesus asked about their faith. Going one step further than what they wanted, He asked whether they believed that Jesus was able to do the very thing they wanted.

In the words *"Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Matthew 9:28)*, the object of faith is Jesus Himself. It is different from vaguely thinking that something good will happen.

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It is believing that Jesus, who is speaking now, has the power. Faith is not a human power that moves on its own apart from the Savior.

Jesus clearly said *"I"* and thereby confirmed who the One was on whom they were relying. In our prayers, too, this center must be clear. If our hearts are filled only with the result we want and we forget God, the One of whom we are asking that thing, faith loses its direction. Prayer is coming to know the Lord while asking of the Lord.

The two men answered, *"Yes, Lord" (Matthew 9:28)*. They answered clearly to the question of whether Jesus was able to do it. A confession of faith does not become deep by being long; it becomes deep when one knows the Savior and acknowledges Him in the heart.

This short confession contains trust that Jesus is the One who would actually help them. A person may know explanations about God's power and yet not actually bring forward his own difficulties. But the two men did not stop at knowing; they came to Jesus. When we believe that the Lord is the One who will help, we come to tell Him what we need and to rely on Him.

In your hearts, too, there must be good desires that you cherish before God. Ask for the help you need to believe the gospel, live according to the Lord's will, help others, and fulfill the work entrusted to you. Do not say that you will believe only when your circumstances are all in place; rather, pray first with the faith that God is able to help.

When we confess that we believe in Jesus, we no longer set the problems of our lives apart as matters unrelated to Jesus. We learn through the word what we must do, and we ask for strength and wisdom for that work. It means placing our plans under the Lord's will and relying on Him. In this way, faith grows within a real relationship with the Savior.

The grace by which He touched their eyes and opened them

Let us read verse 29. *"Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you'" (Matthew 9:29)*. Jesus touched the eyes of the two men and spoke. Jesus' touch and His word came together upon those who had asked for help. The authority to open eyes was His, and their faith was faith directed toward that very Savior who had that power.

The word *"According to your faith let it be to you" (Matthew 9:29)* is connected to the question and answer in the previous verse. Jesus asked whether they believed that He was able to do this, and the two men answered that they did. So this word cannot be taken by itself and read to mean that whatever one pictures strongly in one's mind, one obtains just as it is. It is a word given within a relationship of believing in Jesus.

The first part of verse 30 records, *"And their eyes were opened" (Matthew 9:30)*. As the words *"their eyes"* show, the eyes of both men who had asked together were opened. What Jesus had said actually came to pass, and the two men received the grace they had hoped for. Now, going beyond the plea of the time when they were asking for help, they came to know in their own bodies the power of Jesus, who had healed them.

In the scene where He touched their eyes, the passage says, *"Their eyes" (Matthew 9:29)*. Jesus' power did not remain a vague greatness, but was revealed upon the concrete difficulty these two men had been suffering. Therefore, believing in the Lord's authority does not stop at speaking words that exalt Him, but continues on to telling Him our real needs.

The opening of the two men's eyes showed that Jesus had such power. But the greater purpose for which He came to this earth was to save us from sin. Through the baptism He received

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from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including each of our lifelong sins, transferred to Him once and for all. And as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death. Those who hold on to this gospel of the water and the Spirit as the object of their faith receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

The faith that knows the salvation the Savior has accomplished has such clear content. Sin does not disappear just because we strive to make our hearts bright by ourselves. When we hear and believe how Jesus removed our sins, and when we accept in our hearts what He has accomplished, we come to stand before God as righteous people who have received the remission of sins.

Even after receiving grace, we must keep listening to the One who gave the grace. The story of the two men does not end with their eyes being opened, but continues with the command Jesus gave them. Through this we learn that believing in the Savior's power and following the Savior's word must go together in our lives.

The rule of the word that is needed even in the joy we have received

Let us read verse 30. *"And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows it'" (Matthew 9:30)*. Jesus sternly warned the two men. The One who had opened their eyes also taught them what they were to do next. Rejoicing in grace and hearing what the Savior who gave the grace has commanded must go together.

The command *"See that no one knows it" (Matthew 9:30)* was clear. Even if we do not know all the reasons for it, we can

know what the word given to them at that moment was. Those who believe in Jesus do not say that they will obey only the commands they have fully understood. This is because they trust the One who spoke.

Let us read verse 31. *"But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country" (Matthew 9:31)*. The extent to which they spread the news was *"in all that country" (Matthew 9:31)*. Just before this, when the synagogue ruler's daughter came back to life, it was also written that *"the report of this went out into all that land" (Matthew 9:26)*, so the name of Jesus was already spreading widely throughout that region. The Bible records the command of the previous verse and the action of this verse side by side. So we cannot judge that their actions were all right just by looking at the result that the news spread widely. We must look at it by the standard of the words the Savior actually spoke.

Nor should we simply pass over the weight of the words *"sternly warned them" (Matthew 9:30)*. Jesus was not speaking of a light wish. Even the heart that rejoices in the grace it has received must be governed under the Lord's word. We cannot change the direction the Lord has commanded on the grounds that our zeal is great.

There is no need to read this scene by mixing it with the command to spread the gospel that has been given to us today. This is because the meaning of this command given to the two men is clear within this event. What we are to learn is to know exactly the work the Lord has now entrusted to us through His word and to follow it just as it is. It means not replacing all of the word with the way of zeal that is familiar to us.

Even when we help someone or speak of the Savior's grace, we must keep the meaning of the word. It is not proper to add to the facts in order to get a greater response, or to skip over the

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Lord's will while looking ahead to good results. Exalting the One who gave grace includes an attitude of respecting the words He spoke.

As we read about the two men opening their eyes, we learn the faith that asks the Savior for what is needed. And as we read about what they did afterward, we see that even after receiving grace we must learn obedience. So do not stop at a faith that receives help, but remain under the word of Jesus, who gave you help. The Savior leads our lives even after we have received grace.

The mouth opened for a man who could not speak

Let us read verse 32. *"As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed" (Matthew 9:32)*. As the two men were going out, another man was brought to Jesus. This time it was a man who was demon-possessed and could not speak. The difficulties of the people who came before Jesus were each different, but the One who gave them help was the same Savior.

Of him the Bible records, *"They brought to Him" (Matthew 9:32)*. Before this man stood before the Savior, there was the labor of the other people who brought him. Even a person who cannot explain his own condition by himself can be brought to the Savior. Not turning away from such a person is the service entrusted to us.

The first part of verse 33 reports, *"And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke" (Matthew 9:33)*. When Jesus drove out the evil power that had been holding him, the man spoke. The Savior's power is greater than the evil power that keeps people bound, and real freedom was given to the man who received help.

The words *"demon-possessed" (Matthew 9:32)* reveal what condition this man was in. But what we must see is how Jesus helped such a person. We must not make his suffering an object of people's curiosity, but must know the grace of the Savior, who restored him. What the passage conveys is the help that came upon one man who had been suffering.

As a result of what Jesus did, a change is recorded: *"The mute spoke" (Matthew 9:33)*. The man came to speak the words he had not been able to speak until then. We, too, must listen to such words as precious when someone has become able to speak of his own needs. It means not drowning out the voice of the person who was helped, but giving thanks together for the grace he received.

In this scene there is a picture that pairs with the two men before. From verse 27 to verse 30, eyes that could not see were opened, and in verses 32 and 33, a mouth that could not speak was opened. The two men before called on the Savior with their own mouths, but this man was brought along by the hands of other people without being able to say a single word. Even so, Jesus healed him with the same authority.

The fact that the Savior drove out the evil power gives faith even to hearts bound by fear. Because we know Jesus, we ask Him for protection and help. We do not regard the Savior's name as a means for people to use as they please, but entrust ourselves to the Savior's authority. It means relying on the Lord with this faith while listening to the word.

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The words that differed even though they had seen the same thing

Let us read the whole of verse 33. *"And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!'" (Matthew 9:33)*. The crowds marveled at what they had seen and said, *"It was never seen like this in Israel!" (Matthew 9:33)*. What Jesus had done became a great amazement to them.

But the passage does not end with the amazement of the crowds. Let us read verse 34. *"But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons'" (Matthew 9:34)*. The Pharisees judged the same event with entirely different words. Concerning the fact that the demon had been cast out, they criticized Jesus, saying that He had done that work by relying on the ruler of the demons. They attributed the Savior's grace to the work of an evil power.

Their words, saying that Jesus cast out demons *"by the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 9:34)*, were the exact opposite of the words of the people who had asked Jesus for help. The two men called Jesus the Son of David, but the Pharisees interpreted His authority as evil. Along with what we have seen, who we acknowledge Jesus to be must be clear.

This is not the first time such a division has appeared in chapter 9. When He healed the paralytic, too, the scribes said, *"This Man blasphemes!" (Matthew 9:3)*, while the crowds glorified God. At the end of this chapter, the Pharisees' words become harsher, and they attribute Jesus' authority to the ruler of the demons. Do not belittle what God has done in order to defend a judgment you have already made. When we hear the truth, we need a heart that lays down wrong thoughts.

Yet being amazed is not in itself a confession of faith. The crowds marveled, while the two men believed that Jesus was able to do it. So we must not stop at admiring the word when we hear it, but must believe in Jesus, who speaks the word, as the Savior. It means accepting the salvation that the gospel of the water and the Spirit reveals as grace given to us.

On the other hand, although the two men believed in Jesus' power and were healed, they departed from the command He gave them afterward. Their example makes us examine both the confession of faith and a life that follows the word. Having words that acknowledge Jesus' power does not make all our choices right as well. We must keep learning and obeying before the word.

In this way, the passage makes us examine our hearts by following the words that came out of people's mouths. The plea asking for mercy, the confession that believed in His power, the news spread beyond the warning, amazement, and criticism appear one after another. The words that come out of our mouths reveal how we know the Savior. So rather than the loudness of our words, what is needed is sincerity and obedience to the word.

From the confession of faith to a life of obedience

The two men answered, *"Yes" (Matthew 9:28)*. We, too, must hold in our hearts this confession that believes Jesus will help. Even if your circumstances have not yet been fully resolved, ask the Lord with good desires grounded in the word. Faith that knows the Savior makes us ask for the help we need, and also makes us wait.

After receiving grace, we must listen to Jesus' word as all the more precious. Just as the grace of opening their eyes was given

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to the two men, the great grace of the remission of sins has been given to us. A heart that is thankful for that grace grows as we learn the Lord's will. The words that we love the Savior and a life that follows what the Lord has commanded must stand together.

For what should we use our mouths, which have become able to speak? We should use them to speak accurately of the salvation Jesus accomplished, to lay before God the circumstances of those who need help, and to encourage those who believe together with us. Do not hide the grace you have received with criticism that twists the facts or with words that exalt yourself.

The Pharisees criticized the Savior right in front of the man who had been healed as he stood there. They used another person's restoration as material to defend their own judgment. When someone receives grace and rises up, we must first see the Lord's work revealed through him. It is right for us to lay down the desire to stand at the center ourselves and to give thanks together.

In prayer there is something we wish for, and in obedience there is a word we must hear. While telling the Lord what we want, we must also hear the will that the Lord wants from us. If we ask for His power only when we need it and then decide the next path as we please, we will miss the life of following Jesus. Our relationship with the Savior continues even after we have received an answer.

Remember also this flow of events: *"As they went out" (Matthew 9:32)*, another man came in. We must not forget the needs of others because of the grace we have received. While giving thanks for the help we have received, we can lead those who still need help to the Lord. It means going together to Jesus, who knows each and every person.

Let us ask for the help we need with hearts that believe in the Savior, and let us obey the word with hearts that exalt the Savior. Jesus opened the eyes of the two men and opened the mouth of one man. We, too, must live, according to the grace we have received, as people who see the truth rightly, speak right words, and learn Jesus' will.

Jesus is the Savior who is able to do it. With opened eyes, see rightly what He has done; with opened mouths, preach His word rightly; and carry the confession of faith you have made to Him on even into the choices you make today. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The Holy Spirit is obtained after one receives the remission of sins

< Matthew 9:18–31 >

"While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.' So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour. When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land. When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!' And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes,

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saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows it.' But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country."

In the Bible, in Matthew chapter 9 verses 1 through 8, which is the earlier part of this chapter, there is also the word about a paralytic who received the remission of sins. People brought a man who had paralysis to Jesus, so why did Jesus say to him that he had received the remission of sins? In that respect, this word is a little different from our thinking. So it shows us that we must look at the Bible from a different perspective.

Usually, when there is someone who has an illness, our concern is to heal that illness, but the Bible does not say only that. It says that all these people—the one who had a flow of blood, the one who had paralysis, and the blind—were given the remission of sins and were also healed of their physical illnesses. So when we look at this word as a whole, we can see that this word is the word of the remission of sins. We can see that a person receives the remission of sins from all his sins by faith.

When we look at the Bible, the woman who had a flow of blood touched Jesus' garment with the faith that if she only touched His garment she would be healed, and her illness was healed. The blind men, too, called out to Jesus and asked Him to heal their illness, and when Jesus asked, *"Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Matthew 9:28),* they answered that they believed. So Jesus touched the eyes of those blind men, and their illness was healed and their eyes were opened. Also, when the paralytic was brought to the Lord, the Lord saw their faith and said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5),* and He gave him the remission of sins and also healed his illness, so that he

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was changed into a perfectly healthy person, carried his bed, and walked all the way home. How does one receive the remission of sins before God? One receives it by believing in Jesus Christ.

Here the Bible says that the people who were healed of their illnesses—this man, too, who in Matthew chapter 9 verses 1 through 8 was healed of paralysis and received the remission of sins—could do nothing by themselves. It means that they could do nothing to be healed of their illnesses. Dear fellow believers, can this paralytic heal his own illness by himself? The question is this: just as he could do nothing, can we, in order to receive the remission of sins before God and to heal the disease of our sins by ourselves, keep all of God's law, offer all the prayers of repentance, and live upright before God? We cannot keep all the law, cannot offer all the prayers of repentance, and cannot live flawlessly, but our Jesus has remitted all the sins of those who believe in the Lord and come to Him, with the baptism the Lord received from John and the blood He shed on the Cross.

Dear fellow believers, a person's remission of sins is received only by faith in Jesus. It is not received by keeping the law well before God, nor by offering many prayers of repentance, nor by living a holy life; it is received only by faith. Why is that? It is because the remission of sins is so precious. It is because it is something of very high value that cannot be won by our efforts. Dear fellow believers, just as we cannot bring the life of a dead body back to life by our efforts, our receiving the remission of our own sins before God, yours and mine, also does not depend on our efforts. It does not come about by keeping the law well, offering prayers of repentance well, and living a holy life; rather, we receive by faith, through the word, the fact that Jesus Christ has remitted all our sins. That is why the Bible says, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8)*. The Bible says

countless times in the four Gospels as well that one receives the remission of sins by faith.

In the Bible there appear sick people and lepers, and they called out to Jesus, came before Jesus, and were healed. When the lepers came forward and wanted to be healed, our Lord healed them. It means that when they truly wanted to be healed and came to the Lord, our Lord healed them.

A person's remission of sins is received by faith. Blessings before God, too, are received by faith. They are not received by deeds. People who know nothing say that they are saved from sin, receive the Holy Spirit, are sanctified, become righteous, and go to the kingdom of heaven by keeping the law, offering many prayers of repentance, and living holy lives. But that is not knowing what they themselves are like. The Bible clearly says that the woman who suffered from a flow of blood came from behind Jesus and touched the hem of His garment. It means that she touched Jesus' garment from behind with the faith that if she only touched His garment she would be saved, and the moment she touched that garment she was completely healed.

But when this woman touched Jesus' garment and was healed of her illness, did faith come first, or did deeds come first? We must examine that. It means that faith came before deeds. It means that she had the faith that believed, "This One is surely the Son of God and is the One who can heal my illness. He is the God of power." It means that when she touched His garment with that faith, that power came upon her and she was healed. In fact, Jesus came to this earth and removed all your sins and mine. Indeed, our Lord came to this earth and, through His life of thirty-three years, cleanly bore all your sins and mine and removed them all. He bore and removed even the slightest sin. We receive the remission of sins by believing that fact, that gospel, that Jesus Christ. We receive the remission of sins by

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knowing that Jesus and believing in our hearts. And so we are saved from sin.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, too, is received by faith

Also, when we believe in Jesus Christ and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that too is received by faith. How does one receive the Holy Spirit? This too is received by faith. Let us look at the word in the Book of Acts.

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:38–41). Among these words, it says, *"To you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).*

What is this word saying? It meant this: Repent of what is wrong; turn from the wrong of not believing that Jesus Christ is the Savior; believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah; and, because you have received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. If we believe in our hearts that Jesus Christ came to this earth, had all our sins transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, washed them all away, and saved us by shedding His blood on the Cross, that He became our Savior, and that He removed all our sins,

then we receive the remission of sins in our hearts by faith. The word meant that the person who has received the remission of sins in this way is to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and then he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

How do we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? How does a person receive the Holy Spirit before God? First we must receive the remission of sins. We must know that Jesus Christ is our own Savior God, confess before that Jesus Christ all our own sins—present sins, past sins, and future sins—confess ourselves as those who cannot but commit such sins, and believe in our hearts in the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, who remitted all those sins, that is, by believing in the baptism and the Cross that Jesus Christ accomplished. We must believe that Jesus has removed all our sins. If we believe, the remission of sins takes place in our hearts. After that, we receive baptism as the sign that we believe, as the sign that we have received the remission of sins.

Why do we receive baptism? When Jesus received baptism from John, He had our sins transferred to Him by receiving the laying on of hands and went into the water. This is called baptism by immersion. And because He had all our sins transferred to Him through baptism, He bore our sins and died on the Cross, and Jesus Christ's coming up out of the water shows that He rose again and saved us. As the sign, as the evidence, that "I believe in this way," one receives baptism before God in the name of Jesus Christ. Then, when one receives baptism—when one believes and receives the remission of sins—what happens? One receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. One receives the Spirit of God, that is, the Holy Spirit, as a gift. This is precisely the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Those who have received the remission of sins surely receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. But those who have not received the

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remission of sins—that is, those who believe in Jesus yet have sin in their hearts, those who do not know the truth of how specifically Jesus removed their sins—do not receive the Holy Spirit. Those who have not received the Holy Spirit are not children of God. The Bible says, *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9)*. No matter how much such a person says he believes in Jesus, that person is not a child of God. Because he is not a child of God, even if he prays before God, God does not hear him and does not answer. Jesus spoke of the way to be born again as a child of God as being through water and the Spirit. He said, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. He said that only by believing the word of the water and the Spirit can one be born again, and only those who are born again can enter the kingdom of heaven. That is why, to receive the Holy Spirit, one must surely believe in the baptism that Jesus Christ received. Only then can one receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If one believes in one's heart that Jesus has removed all one's sins, one receives the remission of sins and comes to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Those who have received the remission of sins receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. A gift is something given for free. It means that to those who have the faith that believes in Jesus Christ as their own Savior and believes that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved them from all their sins, God has given the grace of the remission of sins and has also given the Holy Spirit as a gift. So He has made them children of God. From then on, when those who have become children of God call on God the Father, pray, and ask, God the Father hears those prayers and answers them.

Prayers, too, are answered by faith

In the Gospel of Luke, there appear an unjust judge and a very pitiable widow. It records that the widow went to the unjust judge time and again and kept pestering him, saying, "Please do this for me, please do this for me." But that judge was a very unjust judge. He was the kind of judge who did not fear God and also disregarded people. Nevertheless, because that widow came every day to bother him, told him her situation, and clung to him asking him to do it, it says that even though he was an unjust judge, he granted her request because he did not want to be bothered, because he did not want to be harassed.

Here, concerning when we pray, Jesus spoke in a parable *"that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1)*. It means that if what one asks for is right, when a person who has received the remission of sins does not lose heart and keeps praying before God, God the Father surely answers. It was a word of faith saying that if even the unjust judge granted her request so as not to be harassed, would not the true God all the more hear and answer the prayers that His own children pray—that is, His children who have the Holy Spirit, who have become His children by believing in Jesus? It means that if one receives the remission of sins—if one receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit—one can pray, and when one prays, He surely answers that prayer. So when we meet difficulties, we must examine whether or not we pray without losing heart. We must examine whether we are truly people who pray or not, and whether we are people who lose heart while praying or not. Even the unjust judge granted her request, so if, when we pray, we just lose heart and give up because it does not work after praying once, does not work after praying twice, does not work after praying three times, does not work after praying several times, will our prayers

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be answered? When we pray without losing heart, with the faith that if this is a good thing before God and truly the will of God, it will surely come about, God surely answers, and we receive the answer. That is why those who have received the remission of sins and, as a result, have received the Holy Spirit as a gift—the baptism of the Holy Spirit—are children of God and surely receive answers to their prayers before God. And the almighty God, the Father of Jesus Christ, becomes their own Father, and Jesus Christ becomes their own Savior God. Just as Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*, the Father of Jesus Christ becomes the Father of us who believe, that is, of you and me, and Jesus Christ becomes the Savior who has removed your sins and mine. That is why, whenever we do anything, we must pray without losing heart.

Our Lord also said, *"Your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:6)*. He said that even if one does not pray in a loud voice, if one is a person who secretly sets one's desire on God alone in one's heart and prays to God alone, He hears that prayer and rewards it. That is why receiving the remission of sins by faith is extremely important. We receive the remission of sins by faith. We become children of God by faith. We receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And we receive answers to our prayers by faith. The kingdom of God is entirely a world of faith.

Those who believe in Jesus live in the world of faith

The New Testament begins with the word, *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"*

(Matthew 1:1). Abraham is the father of faith, and David is a king. Both are people who received grace from God, people who received the remission of sins like us. Just as it was with Abraham and David, who are listed in this genealogy, what kind of world is it in which we live, we who believe in Jesus Christ, who came as their descendant? It is the world of faith. It is that we believe the word of God and pray, and if we believe, we receive gifts. So the baptism of the Holy Spirit did not exist only in the age of the apostles. In the word of Acts that we saw earlier, it said, *"The promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39)*. What is this saying? Dear fellow believers, this means that, though it was fulfilled then, in the age of the apostles, from after the apostles until now, and until the end of the age, one receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit by faith. It means that if we believe in the baptism Jesus Christ received and the blood of the Cross, that is, that Jesus saved us with the water and the blood, we receive the remission of sins, and at the same time as we receive the remission of sins, if we have the faith that truly confesses by faith and firmly believes in our hearts, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift before God the Father.

This truth is eternal. It means that it is not limited to the age of the apostles but is unchanged for you and me in this present age as well. Even now, those who receive the remission of sins, as they hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and hear the word of the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, say on the spot, "Oh, then I have no sin. Then I have no sin! I have been saved!" They say that they are righteous. Are you sinners or righteous? You are righteous. Who is the person who can say that he is righteous? It is the person in whose heart the Holy Spirit has come.

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Dear fellow believers, the Bible says, *"No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3)*. It means that no one can say that Jesus is his Lord and his God without receiving the Holy Spirit. It means that no one can believe that the Lord—Jesus—has removed all his sins. Those who believe in Jesus without the Holy Spirit in this way understand, and believe so, that because Jesus removed original sin but has not yet removed actual sins or future sins, they must offer prayers of repentance and must offer prayers of sanctification. That is why, for them, Jesus has not yet become a complete Savior. They end up saying something inconsistent: "I have been saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved." In a word, it means that they themselves are not yet people who have received the remission of sins, and that although they believe in Jesus, they have not yet become people who have entered into Christ. The Bible says, *"Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40)*. To be saved from this perverse generation, there is no way but to receive it by faith. There is no way but to receive it by the faith that believes that God is the almighty God and believes in Jesus Christ as one's own Savior. There is no other way. As the Bible says, *"There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)*, no one can be saved from this perverse generation except by faith.

Even in a perverse generation, one is saved by faith

Dear fellow believers, is this age perverse or not? Do children know their parents? Do parents know their children? This world is a perverse world. In Jesus' time, too, it was said to be a perverse world. It was a perverse world without even the natural order of things. What about now? In this age, if there

were the truth of being saved by believing and a way of being saved by mixing 50 percent faith with 50 percent deeds, which way would you choose? Would you choose the way of being saved by faith, or the way of being saved by believing and adding some deeds as well? How has God laid out for us the way to obtain salvation? It is the way of obtaining it by faith. We must calm our hearts down, put aside somewhat our own zeal that tries to do something and the thought that we can do it, and see how the Lord has saved us. We must acknowledge this: "I am a perverse being before God, a being who commits sin until I die." We must acknowledge that the remission of sins before God is received by faith. People who have much of their own righteousness and their own goodness resolve, "I will offer prayers of repentance for the sins I have committed no matter what. For the sins I commit while living, too, I will offer prayers of repentance every day and live a very holy life no matter what. I will offer prayers of repentance and please God no matter what. I can please people, too, and be acknowledged. I will become a person acknowledged before the church, before God, and before people no matter what." Dear fellow believers, are you doing that? Cast away such stubbornness, such vain willpower. It is shattered overnight.

We human beings are jars. What are jars made of? A jar for holding food is made by shaping it out of clay, baking it, and applying glaze. Dear fellow believers, a jar breaks if you tap it with a stone, breaks if it bumps against the edge of a rock while being carried, breaks if it is a small jar and you drop it while opening it, and breaks if a baseball flies in and hits it. That is what a jar is. Human righteousness is this weak and powerless. It is nothing. Today one says, "I will follow the Lord with all my life," but when circumstances become a little difficult, what shatters with a crack is man's goodness and man's will. Do not

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rely on human will, but I hope that you will be saved by believing in your heart in the salvation by which Jesus Christ removed all your sins and mine with the water and the blood, that is, by receiving baptism from John, shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rising again from death. I hope that you will receive the remission of sins by believing in your heart. Only then can you receive the remission of sins and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You can become children of God. You can obtain everlasting life. In this perverse generation, you can receive the remission of sins, become children of God, and be saved.

Dear fellow believers, if we have such stubbornness, I hope you will cast it away. Human righteousness is all shattered when it meets certain circumstances. Is there anyone who says he offers prayers of repentance well? If one sins only occasionally, one may offer prayers of repentance well, but if everything one sees is sin, one cannot offer prayers of repentance. "Lord, I believe." Those are the only words one has to say. Dear fellow believers, is your will strong? The Bible says, *"Be saved from this perverse generation. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:40–41).*

Dear fellow believers, in the old days, those who believed in Jesus and received the remission of sins received baptism right away. In the hearts of those who had received baptism there was no sin. The Holy Spirit was there. But what has become of Christianity today?

Even after receiving baptism, sin remains in their hearts just as it was, so they cling to prayers of repentance every day. But even if they offer prayers of repentance, it does not work. Even if they commit sin, offer prayers of repentance to their hearts' content, and come out convinced that it is now settled, a little

later they commit sin again, so they have to offer prayers of repentance again, and their prayers of repentance fall short. If a person lived one lifetime, he would have to offer prayers of repentance for about five lifetimes for the accounts to balance even somewhat. So when one calculates it in conclusion, it does not work. That is why God said, *"By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20)*. He said that the law makes us realize and know sin, but that we cannot be saved by keeping the law. Therefore, if we are to receive the remission of sins in this perverse generation, we must receive it by faith. We receive the remission of sins by faith.

Dear fellow believers, do you live good and upright lives? Can you receive the remission of sins without faith? You cannot. Our Lord has saved us. So we have no sin, have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and live preaching the gospel on this earth. But how many difficult things there are as we live on this earth! We only pray. When we pray, God hears, and when we pray secretly in our hearts, He rewards us secretly and answers us. Because we have received the remission of sins, we can pray. I hope you will not be deceived by absurd and wrong teachings. I hope you will not listen to the words that one receives the remission of sins by offering prayers of repentance.

In this age, in these last days, if you receive the remission of sins, you become children of God and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. Then, from that time on, God hears your prayers and answers them. Otherwise, if you do not believe in Jesus in that way, you go to hell even though you believe in Jesus. Even though you believe in Jesus, you do not receive the remission of sins and come to have no Holy Spirit in your heart. This means that you do not obtain the Holy Spirit. Then you believe in Jesus in vain. I cannot tell you how many people in this age believe in Jesus and yet have not reached this remission of sins. Dear

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fellow believers, I truly give thanks before God. If you have difficulties, I hope you will pray in secret. I hope you will keep asking. I hope you will pray, asking for grace and asking Him to resolve them. Then God will answer.

Dear fellow believers, if you have a desire in your heart, I hope you will pray before God. I hope you will believe. Then God will answer. Dear fellow believers, we must live with faith. We must pray by faith, receive the remission of sins by faith, receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit by faith, lead a life of faith by faith, live our lives by faith, serve the gospel by faith, and do everything by faith. The Bible says, *"Whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23)*. Let us live by faith. I, too, cannot guarantee anything at all by my own strength. I only believe—I pray and believe, believe the word of God, and believe in Jesus Christ; it is not that I can do anything because my will is strong. Dear fellow believers, man is a being who cannot even quit smoking by himself. Man is nothing. What can man do? Can he guarantee anything? He is nothing. Man is a being like a mist and like dust. He is nothing. He is like straw. Dear fellow believers, he is like ashes. Just as the ashes left after everything has burned are nothing once they are blown away with a whoosh, man, too, as a handful of dust and a handful of ashes, is nothing once he is blown away with a whoosh.

Dear fellow believers, God loved you and saved you. Dear fellow believers, believe in God. Jesus Christ is the Savior. Jesus Christ has removed all your sins with the water and the blood. Believe. Learn. Dear fellow believers, I hope you will believe in your hearts with that faith. I hope that those who have received the remission of sins will believe that they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a gift in their hearts by faith. Dear fellow believers, have you and I, who have received the remission of sins, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit or not?

We have received it. We cannot but give thanks. I give thanks. I believe that our Lord has remitted our sins. I also believe that He gives the Holy Spirit, and I give thanks. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

Let us learn the Savior's heart and ask for workers for the harvest

< Matthew 9:35–38 >

"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. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'"

The places Jesus went to

When we look at people's needs for a long time, a desire to help them may arise, but when the needs are too many, we may also feel at a loss as to what to do first. Today's passage shows where a disciple should begin at such a time. It is first to see what Jesus did, to learn His heart in looking at people, and to ask God, who is the Lord of the harvest, for workers.

Let us read verse 35. *"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel*

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of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matthew 9:35). Jesus, who had healed many people earlier, now went about all the cities and villages. After recounting what happened to each individual person, Matthew spreads out broadly and shows what Jesus did. Both the help He gave to one person and the gospel of the kingdom of heaven He preached in many places are the work of the same Savior.

The word *"went about all the cities and villages" (Matthew 9:35)* tells us that Jesus went in person to the places where people lived. He went not only to large cities but also to small villages. So when we think of the people to whom we will preach the gospel, we, too, must not set the range of our concern only by the number of people or by their outward importance.

The work Jesus did, *"Teaching in their synagogues" (Matthew 9:35)*, contains the labor of making clear the truth that people needed to know. Jesus did not finish His work at gathering people. He taught them so that they would hear the word and know what they must believe and what purpose God fulfills.

Also, Jesus worked *"preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 9:35)*. This news that Jesus preached reveals the purpose for which He went to people. It was that He made those who needed help know the salvation of God. So when we think of a worker of the gospel, too, we must first make clear what he is to preach.

Along with His teaching and preaching, the passage says, *"Healing every sickness and every disease" (Matthew 9:35)*. When we see that the passage records *"every disease"* side by side with *"every sickness,"* not only the illnesses of the body but all kinds of conditions that weaken both spirit and body were under the Lord's hand. The conditions of suffering people were all within Jesus' concern. Therefore, those who follow Jesus, too,

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cannot neglect their heart toward the person before their eyes on the grounds that they are preaching the gospel.

Seeing what the Savior did, we come to look back on our own labor. While setting our hearts only on finishing the work entrusted to us, have we not forgotten the very people who should receive help through that work? The Lord's work is the work of bringing truth and help to people according to His will. Giving the work its proper form and embracing that will must go together.

The heart He held when He saw the crowds

Let us read 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 crowds and was moved with compassion. He did not see only the outward appearance that many people had gathered; He saw their condition of struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd. The Savior's gaze rested on the actual situation of the people.

The record *"when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them" (Matthew 9:36)* is the starting point of the word about workers that follows. Before the statement that workers were needed, there was the heart that had pity on people. So before we, too, say that a few more workers are needed, we must first think of the suffering of the people who need that labor.

There are times when the shortcomings of the other person come into our eyes first. When we have to give the same explanation many times, and when no fruit is soon seen even though we help, our hearts sometimes close. But Jesus saw the

crowds and had mercy on them. The heart of a disciple is renewed right at the place where it learns that very gaze.

Mercy is not an attitude of declaring the other person's judgment right, whatever it may be. A person who has lost the way needs the right way, and a person who does not know the truth needs teaching. Jesus taught and preached the gospel with a heart of pity. True help conveys, along with it, even the truth that is truly needed.

On the other hand, we can treat people as bothersome objects even while conveying what is right. Our knowledge of the word must not become a reason to look down on the other person. We, too, are people who heard the truth through the Savior's mercy. If we remember that grace, we can have a heart that waits even when teaching those who do not yet know.

The word *"weary and scattered" (Matthew 9:36)* makes us look again at the condition of the crowds. The concern of a disciple, too, must go beyond how much he himself has labored and turn toward the person who should receive help. When we look into what that person does not yet understand and what help he needs, the content of our service also becomes clearer.

Learning the Savior's heart does not end with striving to hold on for a long time to the emotion that has been stirred in our hearts. It shows itself in small acts of obedience: listening to the end to what the person beside us says, checking whether he has understood well the gospel we preached, and seeking together the help that is needed. It is practicing the Lord's will toward people in the relationships entrusted to us today.

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The plight of sheep that have no shepherd

The passage describes the condition of the crowds as *"like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36)*. Sheep need a shepherd who will lead them on the way and care for them. Jesus did not see the crowds as being in a condition in which they could resolve everything by themselves. They were people in desperate need of care and right guidance.

The word *"weary and scattered" (Matthew 9:36)* shows that this figure of speech is not a vague expression. They were actually suffering hardship, and they were like sheep that, having no shepherd to lead them, are dragged here and there and wander with nowhere to go. Even a person who has not yet been able to bring up a request for help may have real needs. The Lord knows even the condition that lies deeper than the words that come out on the surface.

Moses, too, when he was asking for someone to lead Israel, asked that the people would not become like sheep without a shepherd: *"That the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd" (Numbers 27:17)*. That prayer, which asked for a worker to care for the people, was not meant to make a place for someone, but was a petition for the needs of the congregation.

In today's passage, too, there is no word that an opportunity had arisen for the disciples to exalt their own names. What Jesus showed His disciples was the hardship the crowds were going through. When someone comes to stand in front and work, if he makes that position a means of proving his own worth, he easily forgets the people he must care for. The role entrusted to him was given so that he would help those people.

There are times when we wander, not knowing whose words to follow. The way does not become clear just because there are

many voices to be heard. Jesus worked *"preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 9:35)*. The work of serving people in the church, too, must not end with each person adding his own opinion, but must aim at making people know and believe together the word the Savior has given.

At the center of that gospel is the salvation the Savior accomplished. For us, who are like sheep without a shepherd, Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and included in it are also all the sins of our entire lifetime, without any omission. As the price of that sin, the Lord shed His blood on the Cross and died in place of the sheep, and He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and they never again wander like sheep without a shepherd.

Those who know this salvation do not make it their goal to make other people lean on them. They make known what Jesus has done and help the other person stand on that word. The one who cares for others is himself also a person who has received the Savior's grace, and he must continue to receive the Lord's guidance. So the one who serves and the one who is served come to hear the Lord's word together.

He made them see the crowds from the perspective of the harvest

Let us read verse 37. *"Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few'" (Matthew 9:37)*. After seeing the crowds, Jesus spoke to His disciples. He did not know their condition alone and pass by; He made the disciples beside Him also see what the Lord sees. In this way a

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disciple is called from the place of watching the Lord's work to the place of hearing His will.

The word *"The harvest truly is plentiful" (Matthew 9:37)* turns the eyes of the disciples toward the place where they must work. Jesus did not see the crowds as people to give up on just because their difficulties were great. He saw them as people to whom the gospel must be preached and who must be cared for. So the fact that the needs are many becomes, rather, a reason to labor while relying on the Lord.

Then He said, *"The laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37)*. It means that people who will actually labor are needed. The work of the field is not accomplished merely by speaking of good intentions. There must be people who will learn, move, and serve people in the places entrusted to them. The disciples, too, had to know this need together.

In the word "harvest" we also see the purpose of this labor. It is not to gain the satisfaction of having done much work, but to serve so that those who did not know the gospel may hear the news of salvation and believe, and so that those who have believed may grow in the word. Because harvest is not reaping on the very day the seed is sown, there are also people for whom the word they once heard comes back to mind in a difficult time after a long time has passed, and who come to seek God. So we need to look back on what help we have brought rather than on how busy we were.

If we read along the flow of *"Then He said to His disciples" (Matthew 9:37)*, we cannot turn this word only toward other people. It was a word the disciples had to hear first. If we say that someone must work while we ourselves always stand outside, it amounts to our having only heard the Lord's word. The heart of a disciple must enter into that work.

Yet we must not use the word that the workers are few as an excuse to rebuke other saints. Jesus immediately makes clear what the disciples must do. It is that they must first ask the Lord of the harvest. Instead of first pouring out complaints when they saw the lack, He made them learn the way of bringing that need to the Lord.

Each of us differs in what we can do, and in the strength we have now. Even so, we can hold together a heart that desires the will of God to be accomplished. We must not forget the Lord's work while looking only at our own circumstances; while thinking of the Lord's work, we must find the small labor entrusted to us. Prayer makes us bring such concern to God.

Pray the Lord of the harvest

Let us read verse 38. *"Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38)*. What Jesus commanded His disciples was to ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers. By this He made clear who the Master of that field is. Even in the reality in which the work is much and the workers are lacking, this work is by no means work without a master.

Verse 38 begins with the word *"Therefore"* and connects the preceding need with prayer. It does not tell us to lose heart because the workers are few, but to ask God because we have come to know the lack. The lack we see with our eyes is not a conclusion for laying down our faith, but can become a specific subject of prayer.

The word telling us to pray to *"the Lord of the harvest" (Matthew 9:38)* makes clear to whom our prayer is directed. It is asking the One who knows most deeply what that work needs

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and who will send the workers. The master of a field has both the responsibility and the ability to send workers into his own field. The labor of finding people is also necessary, but first acknowledge that this is the Lord's work, so that your heart does not grow weary while you calculate only human ability.

The command "pray" requires the disciples actually to pray. It is different from not telling Him anything on the grounds that the Lord already knows everything. It is telling the Lord, who knows all, what is needed, and relying on Him. The Lord made His disciples gather their hearts on the will of the Lord of the harvest and ask.

As we pray, we must also examine for what purpose we are asking for workers. We must not stop at wishing only that our own burden would become lighter, but must ask that the gospel may be preached to those who have not yet received help. Ask that those who will work with you may know the Lord's will, grow, and fulfill the work entrusted to them, and ask that you yourself, too, may be given the heart of a worker. What must come before taking the work in hand is that heart which seeks to follow the Master's will.

If we rely on the One who gives workers, we also come to value the person who is already laboring beside us. We cannot treat that person like a tool to be used at our convenience, or demand of him, as if it were a matter of course, only the work he does well. He, too, needs the word, encouragement, and rest. Prayer that asks for workers also makes us look back on how we are treating the workers we have now.

While we ask God, it is also necessary that our hearts be changed. If, while wishing for people to work with us, we are unwilling to teach the work to anyone or entrust it to anyone, it is hard to work together. Lay down the thought that only you

must do it, and allow others time to learn. Our prayers and our attitude must together be directed toward the Lord's will.

The preparation of those who ask the Lord to send

Jesus had them ask for *"laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38)*. It is asking not for people who have merely put down their names, but for people who will actually labor in the Master's field. Therefore, in the heart of a worker there must be the attitude of serving according to the Lord's will, whatever he is entrusted with.

The petition *"send out laborers" (Matthew 9:38)* contains the intention to accept the place where the Master sends. Since there is One who sends the workers, the workers must labor in a way that fits His will. Rather than a heart that wants to pick out and do only the work we like, a heart that seeks to learn the work the Lord says is needed must come first.

Work skills must be learned, and the effort to carry out the entrusted work accurately is also needed. But if there is no heart to help people and to serve the gospel, then even with skill one can drift away from the Master's will. The Lord looks at the center of the worker's heart rather than at his unskilled hands. No one is born a worker from the beginning, so do not put off laboring because you are unskilled; it is enough to begin by learning from those who have walked ahead of you.

In the next chapter, Jesus calls His disciples and gives them power. The record *"when He had called His twelve disciples to Him" (Matthew 10:1)* follows. The disciples who heard the word to ask for workers to be sent are immediately called by the Lord. Seeing this flow, we come to think that the person who prays must himself also keep his heart open to the Lord's sending him.

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Yet this does not mean that everyone is entrusted with the same work. Someone preaches the word, and someone helps beside him with the work that is needed so that the word may be preached. What matters is not comparing one another's labor and contending over which is high and which is low, but looking together at the work the Lord intends to accomplish. Though the roles entrusted to us differ, the Master we serve is the same.

The passage ends with the command *"pray."* Prayer that asks for workers is not something we pick out to do only on days when our hearts are especially moved; it is the response Jesus taught His disciples. So bring before the Lord specifically the people needed for His work, and their faith and labor.

While praying in this way, do faithfully the work entrusted to you today. Do not lay down even the work you can do on the grounds that there are still not enough workers, and yet do not be bound, either, by the thought that you must handle all the work alone. It is laboring with the strength given to you now while asking the Master, and preparing to work with the people the Lord will send.

Let us ask together with hearts that have learned mercy

Jesus went to people, taught, preached, and healed, and He had pity on those crowds. The word about workers came out of this very work and this very heart. Therefore, when we think of the Lord's work, we must first remember this order. Rather than the amount of work people must do, we must first see the people the Savior cares for.

Think of a person who is struggling *"like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36)*. What he needs is not our showing

how much we have labored, but real help that helps him hear the gospel rightly and be guided by the word. The more we lay down the desire to show ourselves off, the better we see the help the other person needs.

When you hear the word *"The harvest truly is plentiful" (Matthew 9:37)*, I hope that your heart will not close. Do not think from the outset that you can do nothing because the needs are many. The Lord knows all those needs, and He showed His disciples the way of prayer. That we can ask by following the Lord's word—that is our hope.

Also, do not hear the word *"the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37)* as a diagnosis that has nothing to do with you. You, too, have grace you have received from the Lord, and you have a share of the work to do together with others. If there is work you do not yet do well, learn it, and if you need others' help, ask for it. We can serve the Lord's work while filling up one another's lack.

Our prayers must also be directed toward the person who labors beside us today. Pray that he may gain strength in the word and fulfill the work entrusted to him, and actually encourage him. The heart that asks for new workers and the heart that values the present workers must grow together. This is because we are coworkers who together fulfill the work the Lord of the harvest has entrusted to us.

Keep in your heart the word *"pray the Lord of the harvest" (Matthew 9:38)*. If we grasp the Lord's work as if it were our own, it is hard to work with others, and we easily despair in the face of lack. But if we acknowledge who the Master of this work is, the One on whom we should rely becomes clear. The place where our ability runs out is not the place where the Lord's work ends.

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Let us learn a life in which prayer and labor go together. It is not turning away from the work before our eyes because we have prayed, and not ceasing to ask God because we are laboring. It is treating people by learning the heart of the Savior, of whom it is written that He *"was moved with compassion" (Matthew 9:36)* for the crowds, asking Him to send people to work with us, and preparing ourselves, too, according to the Master's will.

Let us, too, look through the word at the crowds Jesus looked at. I hope that the Savior's heart toward them will continue into our prayers and our helping hands. Let us ask in faith that the Lord of the harvest will send the workers who are needed and will use us, too, in keeping with His will, and let us serve in the work entrusted to us today. ✉

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CHAPTER

10

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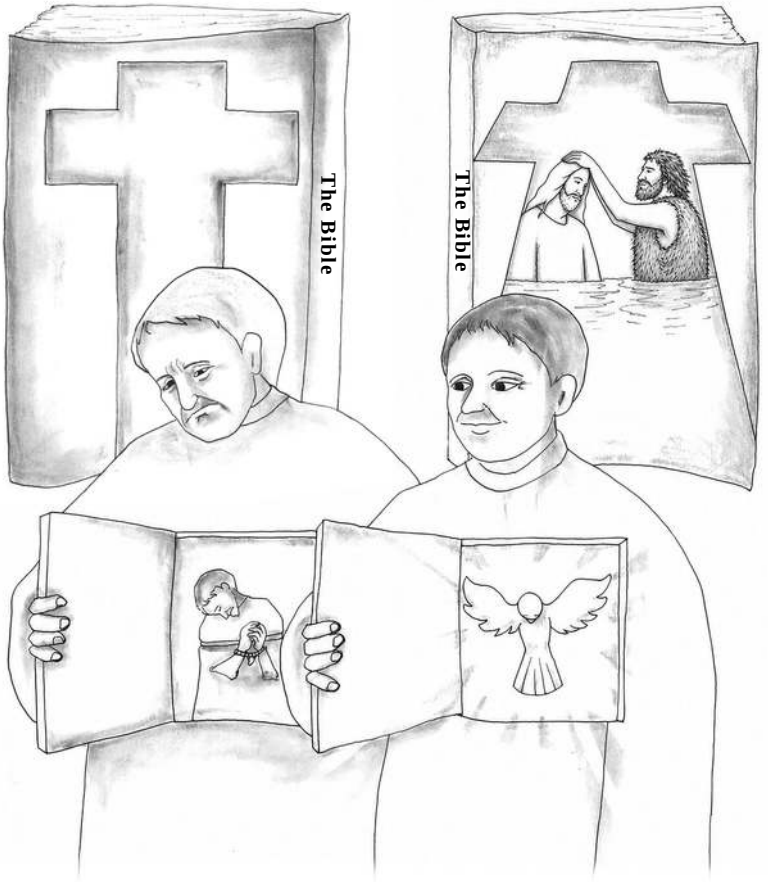

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The disciples who walk faithfully according to the word with which He sent them

< Matthew 10:1–15 >

"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who

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in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!'"

The people whom He called by name and sent out together

A person who sets out to preach the gospel needs a clear direction along with zeal. To whom must he go, what must he say, and with what attitude must he treat people? In today's passage, Jesus teaches that very way as He sends out the disciples. So the person who has been sent must follow the Lord's word from the time he sets out on the way to the moment he faces people's responses.

Let us first read verse 1. *"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease" (Matthew 10:1)*. At the end of the previous chapter, Jesus told them to ask that workers for the harvest be sent, and right after that He calls the twelve disciples. The prayer asking for workers and Jesus' action of calling the disciples are interlocked in this way. Also, the words *"all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease"* appeared in chapter 4, verse 23, and chapter 9, verse 35, where Jesus' work was summed up, and here they appear where the power given to the disciples is spoken of. What Jesus did and what He entrusts to the disciples are thus

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connected by the same words. The One who calls and the One who gives the power are both Jesus. Where and how that power must be used is made clear one by one in the commands that follow.

Let us read verse 2. *"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother" (Matthew 10:2)*. The names are recorded one by one. Real people were called to the work of preaching the gospel. These people, who had names, heard Jesus' command and now had to set out on the way, following that command.

Let us also read verses 3 and 4. *"Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Matthew 10:3–4)*. Matthew writes down the twelve men one by one. They differ in how well known they are and in the descriptions attached to their names, but they are all included in the list of those who are being sent out this time.

Verse 2 groups two pairs of brothers together with the words *"his brother."* Peter and Andrew are brothers, and James the son of Zebedee and John are brothers. Also, in this list there are two men named James and two named Simon. So Matthew attaches *"the son of Zebedee"* and *"the son of Alphaeus," "who is called Peter"* and *"the Cananite,"* and records each person distinctly. The people the Lord sends are not people who mingle into a crowd of similar names and disappear, but people whom the Lord knew and called one by one.

The list also contains the name *"Matthew the tax collector" (Matthew 10:3)*. The man who had been sitting at the tax office and was called in the previous chapter now stands among those who are being sent out. The grace of Jesus' calling is not bound

to a person's past. So the disciple comes to be entrusted with new labor according to the will of the Savior who called him.

At the end of the list it is recorded, *"Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Matthew 10:4)*. Judas heard the same word and walked the same road at Jesus' side, but he did not believe in Jesus as his own Savior. Following closely and believing with the heart are different things. So rather than boasting of the role you have been given, look back and see whether you now believe in Jesus as your Savior and follow His word.

After reading the whole list, our eyes must turn to Jesus, who sends them. It is the Lord who calls many people to one work. What matters is not who is more famous, but whose will one follows in going.

The Lord, who appointed the places they were to go

Let us read verse 5. *"These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans'" (Matthew 10:5)*. As Jesus sent out the disciples, He first spoke of the places where they must not go. It was not that every direction was equally open to those who were sent. They had to listen precisely to the command He entrusted to them this time and go by the way the Lord had appointed.

Let us read verse 6. *"But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6)*. In this sending, the ones Jesus appointed for them were the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Instead of choosing places that looked better by their own judgment, the disciples had to go and find them just as the Lord said.

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"The lost sheep" are people who want to meet God and want to live according to His will, but who wander because they have not met anyone who can guide them rightly on the way. In the previous chapter, Jesus had compassion on the crowds who were struggling like sheep without a shepherd. So the work entrusted to the disciples was not something detached from His heart. They were sent to go and find the lost sheep, preach the gospel to them, and give them help.

Even so, we must not change this command into a saying that the gospel must not be preached to other peoples in any age. The risen Jesus said, *"Make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19)*. Within the Bible, we must examine to whom, when, and what the Lord commands. The direction of this sending, too, must be received within that context.

Today we learn from this word the attitude of turning our hearts toward people who need the gospel. Even if someone outwardly has the appearance of faith, he may not know the remission of sins. So we must not assume from appearances alone that he must already know everything, but must calmly listen to what salvation he believes in and then preach the word.

A person who thinks of the lost sheep, rather than choosing people who will be of help to himself, first thinks of how much that person needs the gospel. Such people may be among the Gentiles, among the Samaritans, or among Israel. A heart that seeks the truth is not fully revealed by outward appearance, so do not hastily draw conclusions about the heart of someone who seems to have little interest now. Let us seek a way to preach the gospel and faithfully give the explanation that those who hear the word need.

Those who have been sent also need the perseverance to keep to the direction appointed for them. Even if there is no visible

response right away, they must not lightly change what the Lord has commanded. This is because it is Jesus who sets the way.

The word to preach and the help to give along the way

Let us read verse 7. *"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 10:7)*. The Lord appointed even what the disciples were to preach along the way. This way was not a way on which the disciples went to put forward their own claims or to make their names known. It was a way of preaching exactly the news that Jesus had taught.

The news *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7)* turns the eyes of those who hear toward the coming kingdom of God. A person who lived as though living seventy or eighty years on this earth were the whole of life comes to look back on his own way, asking whether he has prepared for the life to come before God. So the work entrusted to the disciples was not a work of picking out and preaching only pleasant words, as people wanted.

Let us read verse 8. *"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8)*. Along with the word to preach, Jesus also commanded the help to be given. He caused the Savior's power toward the sick, those facing death, those who were regarded as unclean, and those bound by evil powers to be revealed through the disciples. The power they had received had to be used in serving those who suffered.

The word *"Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8)* sets the attitude with which the disciples must work. They could not regard the power they had received as their own merit

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or turn grace into material for a transaction. The fact that Jesus gave it freely guides even the way it is shared.

The salvation we preach is also grace that the Lord accomplished freely. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and among them are even the sins we have committed all our lives and the sins we will commit in the future. And to pay the price of those sins transferred to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment in our place, and died, and He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins freely and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

So, while preaching this salvation, we cannot demand our labor as if it were the price of salvation. The basis on which those who hear obtain salvation lies not in what they have paid back to the one who preached, but in believing in what Jesus accomplished. We, too, have our share of labor, but the One who owns grace is the Savior. When we keep this order, we can preach the gospel rightly.

Giving freely is also different from preaching once and then washing one's hands of it. When someone who has heard the gospel wants to treat you hospitably out of gratitude, do not regard that as having settled everything owed on both sides and let him drift away. Rather, it is when you take that gratitude as an occasion to meet again, read the word together, and help him to be connected with those who believed before him that his faith grows. The heart that preaches the gospel freely holds within it the labor of being with that person until he stands on faith.

Relying on the Lord, who will provide what is needed

Let us read verses 9 and 10. *"Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food" (Matthew 10:9–10)*. In this sending, the disciples were not to concern themselves first with storing up supplies. Jesus told them specifically what they must not take with them and also told them the reason.

Together with this, we must read the word *"for a worker is worthy of his food" (Matthew 10:10)*. The command to give freely did not mean ignoring what a worker needs for his living. Yet a worker is not someone who goes around trying to get something out of souls. It means that it is fitting for him to receive as God, who entrusted the work to him, feeds and clothes him. Selling the grace of salvation for a price is different from God filling a worker's needs.

A disciple needed faith that does not measure his own safety only by the amount of what he has. Those who had heard the command *"Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper" (Matthew 10:9)* had to go on the way in the manner Jesus had set. If it is the way on which the Lord has sent us, we must entrust even our own preparations and worries to His teaching.

Money belts are pouches in which money is kept while traveling. If a person setting out on a long journey left with no money, no change of clothes, no sandals, and no staff, he could not but go hungry when there was no house to receive him. That is why verses 9 and 10 are connected with seeking out *"who in it is worthy"* in verse 11 and staying there. Of course, this specific travel command cannot be turned into a rule that today, when we go to preach the gospel, we must not take travel fare or

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clothes with us. But the lesson is clear that, whatever preparations we make, we must not put what we have ahead of the Lord's will, but must rely on the One who entrusted the work to us.

Those who hear the gospel also need a right attitude toward workers. Having received grace freely does not mean that what the one who preaches the gospel needs disappears. Serving together and sharing what is needed is not a transaction that pays the price of the gospel, but taking part in the Lord's work out of thankfulness for the grace already received.

For those who follow this word, a way to master worry also opens up. Worries about what to eat and what to wear grow larger the larger one's greed toward the world is, and when those worries grow, they cover up faith. Live with the heart that if you can live serving the gospel and your food and clothing are provided, you have nothing more to wish for. A worker with that heart does not let his heart be taken by vain things, but goes the way entrusted to him.

In the Lord's work there are both those who labor by faith and those who accept that labor and help. Do not think that you can do nothing at all if you do not have everything ready. But neither should you work irresponsibly, pushing your burden onto others. While being faithful to the work entrusted to you, gratefully receive the help the Lord opens up for you.

Wish peace on the house where you stay

Let us read verse 11. *"Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out" (Matthew 10:11)*. When the disciples entered a city or town, they had to find a worthy person and stay at his house. Even in the

way they met people, there was the Lord's teaching. They were not to move about according to their own convenience wherever they went, but were to stay faithfully at the house that had received the Lord's work.

The word to note first here is *"inquire."* Finding people comes before staying. Those who preach the gospel must observe people carefully, more than any surroundings, and see whether this person is seeking the truth and whether he has a heart to receive the word. The worthy house found in that way overlaps with the place where the lost sheep spoken of in verses 5 and 6 are. And at the house they had once found, they stayed *"till you go out,"* continuing the Lord's work through that house.

Let us read verse 12. *"And when you go into a household, greet it" (Matthew 10:12)*. As the disciples went into a house, they had to wish it peace. They were not told to look first at what they could get from that house. From the mouth of one who has been sent, words wishing peace must come out before words demanding something.

We, too, can remember this word today when we meet people. It means not seeing the other person only as someone needed for our work, but hoping that he will know the grace of the Savior and obtain peace. The purpose of preaching the gospel does not lie in increasing the number of people who bow their heads to our words.

Let us read verse 13. *"If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you" (Matthew 10:13)*. Jesus spoke both of when the peace the disciples wished would be received and of when it would not. People's responses would not all be the same. But that did not mean that, because of those responses, a disciple had to meet people with a guarded heart from the start.

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When we look at the word *"let your peace return to you" (Matthew 10:13)*, the wishing of peace remains intact either way. Peace comes upon the house that received it, and the one who wished peace loses nothing either. So even when a disciple is rejected, he can keep from losing his own peace or being bound by revenge. Do not try to force even the response of those who hear, but after doing the work entrusted to you, leave the judgment to the Lord.

When people do not respond as we expect, it is easy to regard them as opponents to be defeated. But a disciple was sent to preach the word of Jesus, not to go to people to vent his own feelings. So, while preaching precisely the word that those who hear need, he must guard his heart so that he does not stray from the Lord's will.

The responsibility of leaving a place that does not listen

Let us read verse 14. *"And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet" (Matthew 10:14)*. Jesus told them to leave a place that neither received them nor listened to their words. The disciples had a command not only for preaching their message but also for leaving. They did not have to use every possible means to get a response or remain held in one place without end.

However, read carefully the condition *"will not receive you nor hear your words" (Matthew 10:14)*. You must not hastily treat someone who, failing to understand for a while, asks again as the same as someone who does not receive the word into his heart. There are people to whom everything must be preached at

one time, but there are also people who, if everything is preached to them at one time, will instead be unable to receive it. When you cannot do it by your own strength, also preach by joining forces with other saints, and wisely discern whether that person has a heart to listen.

The action *"shake off the dust from your feet" (Matthew 10:14)* shows that the responsibility lies with the side that refused. God has left both receiving the word and rejecting it to the person's own will. So a disciple departs, following the Lord's command, from a person who in the end does not accept it. But do not use this word as an excuse to curse the other person whenever your pride is hurt. This is a matter of the response to the word that was preached, not a quarrel over how you were treated.

Let us read verse 15. *"Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" (Matthew 10:15)*. Jesus spoke of the day of judgment. He made it clear that hearing the gospel and rejecting it does not end as a light choice of taste. The word of the Lord, who sent the disciples, has authority, and those who hear that word have the responsibility to respond.

The words *"in the day of judgment"* tell where the final judgment lies. Those who did not accept the word will receive the judgment for their own sins before God on that day. Because that judgment belongs to the Lord, there is no reason for a disciple to try to exact the price of every rejection himself. Rather than changing the truth or becoming angry because he did not get a response, he need only entrust it to the Lord and take up the next labor.

Before the solemn word *"it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matthew 10:15)*, we who hear must also examine

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ourselves. We cannot end by taking issue only with other people's rejection. How have we received the word of salvation that has come to us? Knowing and believing the salvation Jesus accomplished is a response that cannot be put off.

Yet this word does not become a ground for those who preach to enlarge their own authority as they please. The reason a disciple's words have authority is that he preaches the word of Jesus, who sent him. One must not add one's own thoughts and then claim that those who do not listen will be judged. The more someone preaches the word of judgment, the more precisely he must keep the words the Savior spoke.

The way that is faithful to the word with which He sent them

This passage begins with the calling of the twelve disciples and the giving of power to them, records their names one by one, and ends with the responsibility that the city that rejected the word must bear. In between, where to go and what to preach, the grace to share and the needs of living, and the attitude in staying and the time to leave are set out in order. Jesus gave all the teaching needed for walking that way.

The disciples had to follow the word Jesus spoke when He *"sent out and commanded them."* We must not rely on the Lord only when setting out and then do things our own way after meeting people. Both in a house that receives us well and in a place that rejects us, we must keep the will of the One who sent us. People's responses can never become the master of a disciple.

When you preach the word, remember the command *"as you go, preach, saying" (Matthew 10:7)*. You must preach clearly the content the Lord has given. Do not blur the way of receiving

the remission of sins, and help those who hear to know the Savior. If you change the gospel to gain people's approval, you lose the purpose for which you were sent.

When you share the help people need, remember the word *"freely give" (Matthew 10:8)*. You must not clutch the grace you have received as if it were your own, nor try to sway the other person's heart on the grounds that you have helped him. Be people who share with thankfulness what you have received from the Savior.

Value the labor of those who are with you, and when you receive help, be thankful. Treat people while wishing them peace, and give the time needed to those who want to listen. What is preached must be right, and the attitude in preaching must be right as well. Do not let greed and anger come first while you speak of the grace of the gospel.

Even if you experience rejection, do not regard all your labor as having been in vain. Jesus knew even of such cases and spoke of them beforehand. Do not press yourself or others hard in order to prove fruit, but look back on whether you have faithfully preached the word entrusted to you, and seek the Lord's guidance. When you entrust the judgment to the Lord, you can keep the heart to serve the next person.

Even when you are in the place of hearing the word, you must not miss the Savior's gospel by looking only at the shortcomings of the one who preaches. Confirm through the Bible what the Lord has accomplished, and believe in that grace. Thankfulness for having received the word leads to the labor of serving so that others, too, may hear that gospel.

The Lord, who sent the twelve disciples, appointed the way for them and also gave them the word to keep on that way. Let us, too, live as people who preach precisely the gospel we have received from Him, wish peace on those we meet, and entrust

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the judgment of the results to the Lord. Labor that is faithful to the word with which He sent us—that is the response entrusted to us today. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Freely you have received, freely give

< Matthew 10:1–15 >

“And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city,

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shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!'"

Today we read the Gospel of Matthew, and here Jesus sent out His twelve disciples and commanded them as follows: *"These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give'" (Matthew 10:5–8).*

The ways of preaching the gospel in the old days and now are very different. In the old days, people went on preaching journeys without money, going around to this village today and that village tomorrow, and so carried out the work of preaching the gospel. These days the methods have changed a great deal, so the gospel is preached through books as well. Because books do not disappear once they have been given out, that work is truly rewarding.

Jesus said not to go into the way of the Gentiles nor into a city of the Samaritans, but rather to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. That is, He told them to seek out the lost sheep of the house of Israel and go to them. The Lord said not to enter a city of the Samaritans, and Samaria had been mixed with Gentile peoples; its religion was mixed, and its faith was mixed as well. That is why He told them not to enter there. He also said not to go into the way of the Gentiles. At that time the Gentiles did not know God, so it was hard for them to accept the gospel. Then who believes this? It is those who think of themselves as

lost sheep before God and earnestly seek God. When one goes to these people, the gospel enters in. The gospel enters into those who truly want to seek God, want to meet Him, and want to receive grace before God.

On the other hand, people who already have their own frameworks set in place only think that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a little new when they come across it, and they do not believe it. So we must put more effort into those who truly seek the gospel and are willing to accept it.

There are lost sheep in this world. There are lost sheep in Africa, and there are lost sheep in America, Asia, Northern Europe, and Eastern Europe as well. Though it may not seem so among people, there are people who know that they are truly lonely before God, who truly want to seek God, who believe in God, and who want to have the problem of their sins, the problems of life, and all their problems solved before God. Among the people who attend church, too, there are several kinds. There are people who regard believing in Jesus as something like an accessory and attend church as a matter of religion, and there are also people who think of the church as a social club and attend for the purpose of meeting people. People who like to meet good people and talk with them sometimes attend, regarding the church as a social club. There are also people who attend for business relationships, and there are people who attend with a truly pure purpose. The person who attends because he wants to seek God is a pure soul, and that person is exactly a lost sheep of the house of Israel. We must meet such people, but since such people cannot be recognized by their outward appearance, it is hard to find them. We can tell to some extent, but since we cannot know their hearts fully just by looking at their appearance, only after meeting a person and talking with him can we know whether this person is a lost sheep

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or not. We must preach this gospel to the person who is a lost sheep.

Jesus spoke as He sent out the twelve disciples, and among those twelve disciples there was also one who betrayed Jesus. Jesus sent that man out too. "How could there have been someone like Judas, who betrayed Jesus, among the twelve disciples? Did Jesus really not know such a person?" It is not that Jesus did not know. One such person was needed among Jesus' disciples. Only if he betrayed Jesus would Jesus hang on the Cross and die, and only if Jesus hung on the Cross and died would He receive all the judgment for our sins and would the will of God be fulfilled. Jesus left him alone in order to fulfill the Father's will. In the things God does there is truly no gap at all, and all of it is the truth.

The Lord's will is, *"Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"*

The Lord said, *"But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 10:6–7)*. Dear fellow believers, when we preach the gospel, do we say that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, or do we not? We do say so. We say that the day when the Lord's kingdom will come is at hand and that the destruction of this world is at hand as well. And we must heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons, and since we have received freely, we must give freely. This is speaking of the gospel. The gospel heals the sickness of people's hearts, makes them live, and also washes all their sins clean. It is truly fitting to do according to that word He spoke—that since we

have received this gospel of the water and the Spirit freely, we should give it freely—just as He told us to act in this way.

When the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached to them, people who have sin in their hearts have all their sins washed clean. How clean the Lord has washed all those many sins in this world! Truly, the Lord has washed the sin of this world clean with His baptism and blood. He has washed all sins clean, whatever the sin may be. Even exceedingly great sins—not only our individual sins or your sins, but even the sins of all the people who live on this earth—Jesus had transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross for us, rose again from death, and washed them all away. It is through the faith that believes this that we receive the remission of sins.

The Lord told us to preach such a gospel of the water and the Spirit. When He said that since you have received freely, you should give freely, He meant that we should preach the gospel to the whole world without cost.

"Freely you have received, freely give"

This word that says to give freely since we have received freely is a very important word. Yet there are also cases where a church strives only to build a chapel with people's offerings and is stingy in helping its poor neighbors.

The Lord said to us, *"Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8)*. Each one of us is serving in his own way for the Lord, for the gospel, and to preach the gospel to other people. Because we, too, have received the remission of sins freely, we must give the gospel of the water and the Spirit, with which the Lord saved us, freely to the lost sheep.

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So it is fitting for the workers of the gospel, too, to use the money they have earned through their toil for the work of preaching the gospel freely. Dear saints, is this fitting, or is it not? It is fitting. If we ministers and workers did not earn money and serve the Lord, we would all be people with nothing to do.

Has the Lord removed all our sins, or has He not? He has removed them all. Do we need to wash away our sins by fasting and praying, or do we not? We do not. Is there anything for us to cling to with tears every day while offering prayers of repentance, or is there not? There is not. Such things are not what we have to do. The Lord told those who have received the remission of sins, that is, the servants of God, that since they have received the gospel of the water and the Spirit freely, they should give it freely. If the servants and workers of God do not do the work of giving freely the gospel they have received freely, they have nothing to do. If the servants of God do not do the work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they are forsaking the office entrusted to them. If the servants of God who have been born again by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not truly serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit in some form or other, but tell only the saints to serve the Lord while they themselves do not serve the Lord, that is not fitting before the Lord.

The Lord said to give freely since we have received freely. We have received the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord washed all our sins white as snow with the water and the Spirit and removed all sins. Through the water and the Spirit, other people's sins have disappeared, and our sins have all disappeared as well. The Lord removed all sins in that way, so that we have received salvation by faith; if, after receiving this precious thing, we do not give it freely to others, what happens? It goes against the word of God, and there would

be no one more useless than that. When Jesus said to give freely since we have received freely, He meant that, since we have received the remission of sins without cost through the water and the Spirit, we should earn money, make books containing the gospel, and give them away freely, or spend our time going out and preaching the gospel with our mouths, and do things in this way. It means that, instead of doing this, one must not simply say, "You who have received the remission of sins, give a lot of money," or "Do this in such and such a way."

If we truly believe in the Lord, believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and read the Bible, there is not a single thing that is not fitting. Whether we look at the Old Testament or the New Testament, the word of God is all fitting. Since He told us to give freely because we have received freely, we must truly give freely. We must give the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world without cost. You and I must truly become people who are beneficial to others. We must become beneficial people in this world as well, we must become truly beneficial people to those who are dying, and we must become beneficial people to those who seek God and long for Jesus. "How can we benefit those who have not received the remission of sins? How can we be of help to them? How can we be beneficial to those who have received the remission of sins as well? How can we become people who broadly benefit others, both those who have received the remission of sins and those who have not yet received it?" We must think such thoughts. We must live that way with such thoughts and such faith. This is exactly the attitude of heart of those who have received the remission of sins. Merely receiving the remission of sins, receiving material blessings, and receiving this and that is not, before God, faith that believes in God. Truly living for others is the life of those who believe in God. This is what is right.

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The life lived for others is happy

Whatever we do, we must do all for the glory of God. The Bible says, *"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*. When we truly benefit others, our hearts are glad. That is how the hearts of those who have done such things are. When a person lives only for himself, there is not much joy. But when we benefit others while doing our own work, our hearts become very good and glad, and there is a sense of reward in our lives, so that our lives become very good. We must live rewarding lives. Only when we live rewarding lives are our hearts very glad and good. You will know better that living only for oneself is not very joyful. Everyone finds it hard as he lives his own life. But when we live for other souls, though it is just as hard, our hearts are joyful and glad, and we also receive all blessings more abundantly.

Not long ago, I saw on television the story of the following person. There was a man who saw that children abandoned after a war were starving to death and, feeling so sorry for them and so heartbroken, began the work of having those children adopted. He did not do it on a large scale from the beginning, but that work gradually grew, so that he came to do it on a somewhat larger scale.

When he passed away, his wife and daughter assumed that work, and the daughter, without even marrying, devoted herself into the twilight of her years to solving the adoption problems of orphans and to child welfare. In fact, a life lived for others is very happy. Anyone can have a heart that says, "I will live this life for others." When people actually live for others, they are very glad even if they do not marry. If someone truly has a heart that wants to live for others and for the Lord, then whether he marries or not, he lives an altruistic life and rejoices. That does

not mean not to marry. It means that even if one marries, it is very good to live for the Lord.

I think that if a person is born and then passes away without being able to live a life for others and for God, there is no life as regrettable as that. A life lived for others is a very happy life. If someone has simply lived and passed away without ever experiencing that, would that not be a vain life? Serving the gospel is exactly an altruistic life in this world, a rewarding and beneficial life. Because I live such a life, I feel very good, and even if I am lacking, it does not matter at all. In any case, living for others, living for the gospel, is truly good.

God is with us and helps the work we do. This is because we do not do this just so that we alone may make a living. That is, because we do it to bring spiritual benefit to others, God blesses this work.

So we must do it with faith that believes in God. That is, since we have received freely, we must give freely. Since the Lord gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit and paid the price of our sins, we must sacrifice something in order to preach this and give something to other people. Is that right, or is it not? It is right. The church must do so, the workers must serve the gospel with such a heart, and the saints, too, must believe in, serve, and follow the Lord with such a heart. Then I believe that God will give truly indescribable blessings to all the workers and all the people of God in this church. He gives such blessings. So we must do so with faith. I believe that this is exactly obeying God’s command to give freely since we have received freely.

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Strength comes from a heart devoted to the gospel

Dear fellow believers, God's love is giving. As the lyrics of a praise song also say, what we have becomes more abundant the more we share it, and love is serving. Love is giving. Is that right, or is it not? Dear fellow believers, are your hearts perhaps filled with the worry, *"'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:31)*? Then your heart shrinks, and you cannot do great things. "How can I serve the gospel? I go on living in my flesh too, but how can I also obey this command of the Lord and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world?" Have such a heart and such faith. Then your life will become abundant. Because God surely blesses you, you will receive blessings both spiritually and physically. But it does not work to do it thinking, "If I do this, God will bless me"; rather, your heart must first be that way, and your faith must first be that way. "I have done this, so please bless me." You must not do that. This is because God is not One who is indebted to us. It means that if you keep your heart right, have the right faith, and take on the challenge with faith that believes in the Lord, God will bless you.

In fact, we are distributing booklets all over the world for world missions. And we have preached the gospel, so that people in every part of the world have come to encounter the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Did we make up our minds, or did we not? Did we make up our minds and take on the challenge, or did we not? Has that work been accomplished, or has it not? It has been accomplished. Our beginning may look a little clumsy, but seen through faith, anything is possible. I know that you, too, have such a heart and such faith because the Holy Spirit is in you.

Dear fellow believers, do you believe that by doing the work of God we will come to preach the gospel to more people, or do

you not? We believe. Though we the righteous are lacking and have limits to our abilities, because we believe in the precious gospel, we accomplish all things by relying on the power of the Lord. In what people think of as nothing, there is something truly precious. The truth lies in what is ordinary.

We must live for the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Our hearts must be devoted to the gospel. We servants of God, ministers, and brother-and-sister workers are all people devoted to the gospel. Is that so, or is it not? It is so. Look at how we the righteous are preaching the gospel to the whole world. Where does this strength come from? Such strength comes because we do it with a heart devoted to the gospel. The power of the gospel is tremendous. But, dear fellow believers, if each of our churches lived only for its own church, would it do well, or would it not? It would not last long, and they would all collapse. When one church member came in, they would first look at how much in offerings that person would give, and they would treat well only those who give a lot in offerings. Dear fellow believers, then the gospel of the water and the Spirit is finished. It can no longer be preached.

You and I have preached the gospel until now with a heart devoted to the gospel and by relying on the power of God. All of us want to work by faith according to the Lord's command to give freely since we have received freely. And in fact we are working. Now God gives all the money that is needed. There is nothing to worry about. We earn money in order to serve the gospel more; there is absolutely no reason to lose heart because of money.

I give thanks to God for giving us wisdom so that we can preach the gospel to the world more efficiently. God has given all of us such a heart. Let us not look at ourselves but look to the

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Lord with such faith, and let us live lives of freely sharing the gospel by faith. I give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The disciple who walks according to the promise even in the midst of suffering

< Matthew 10:16–23 >

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”

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The Lord, who sends His disciples while knowing the difficulties

When Jesus sent the disciples, He did not speak only of the welcome they would receive. He also told them in advance of opposition, hatred, and danger. Without hiding that fact, He also taught them how to act and whom to rely on in the midst of difficulties. So today's word makes us know that a disciple is not a person abandoned alone in the world, but a person who goes forward having received the word of the Lord.

Let us read verse 16. *"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16)*. Jesus said that this sending out was like sending sheep into the midst of wolves. He did not send them without knowing the danger; He sent them knowing fully the circumstances the disciples would meet. So He told them in advance, so that when difficulties came, they would not think that the Lord had sent them wrongly.

Keep in your heart the word *"I send you out."* On the path the disciples walk is Jesus, who sends them. Those who oppose them are not the masters of that path. So a person who has received the Lord's command must not look only at how great the difficulties are, but must decide his next step remembering the One who spoke to him.

The figure *"as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matthew 10:16)* contains the harsh circumstances the disciples would face. In verse 6 of the same chapter, Jesus sent the disciples to *"the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* It means that He said the disciples, who were going to look for the lost sheep, were themselves sheep standing in the midst of wolves. That does not mean, however, that Jesus told them to act as if there were no danger

at all because they had faith. Right after that, He gave the command to be wise and pure.

The expectation that everyone will rejoice if we do the Lord's work must be corrected in the light of this word. There may be people who reject the gospel even when it is preached with good intentions. But that rejection cannot change the content of the gospel. Who the Lord who sends is, and what the word entrusted to us is—these hold the disciple firm on his path.

That does not mean, however, that we can claim that all our words and actions were right merely because there is opposition. What the passage speaks of is persecution received because of Jesus. If we call even quarrels that arose from our own rudeness or wrongdoing by the same name, we lose our purity. So a disciple must examine his own attitude in the light of the word even in the midst of difficulties.

After telling them of the danger, Jesus did not simply leave the disciples in fear, but gave them wisdom with which to act and promises on which to rely. So even when we read the words about difficulties, we must not fill our hearts by making up more anxious scenes, but must accept, one after another, what the Lord actually commanded and the help He promised.

Keep wisdom and purity together

Jesus said, *"Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16)*. He placed the two together within one command. We cannot abandon truthfulness while saying we are wise, nor can we lay down discernment while saying we are pure. A disciple must examine the situation, yet keep the truth he believes pure.

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The command *"be wise as serpents" (Matthew 10:16)* is connected to the preceding figure by the word *"Therefore."* The passage tells us that wisdom is needed because of the circumstance of being sent into the midst of wolves. Responding the same way to everyone, or stepping forward without weighing anything, is not boldness. We must think, in accordance with the Lord's will, about when to speak, how to explain, and where to go.

But that wisdom is bound in one sentence with the command *"harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16)*. Twisting the facts to our advantage or deceiving the other person is not the wisdom this command speaks of. If we get past a crisis by lying, we blur by our own actions the truth we must preach. So there must be truthfulness in our words and attitudes.

When someone treats us unjustly, the desire to pay him back in the same way can arise. Even then, a disciple must remember to whom he belongs. Just because we have heard evil words, we must not make our own words evil as well. Keeping the Lord's will comes before the tactics of defeating those who oppose us.

Being pure does not mean that we must endure alone without letting anyone know our circumstances. If we need help, we can share our circumstances with those who believe, and we can seek wisdom. Telling the facts honestly and receiving proper help also belong to truthfulness. Even those who do the Lord's work walk leaning on one another.

When we preach the word, too, we need the wisdom to listen to what the other person is asking and to explain in a way that fits that question. But we must not change the content of the gospel in order to give the answer the other person wants to hear. We should fit the way we explain to the circumstances, but we must preach the salvation the Savior has accomplished just as it is. In this way, wisdom and purity are needed together.

When we hold these two commands together, we learn the path between recklessness and compromise. We come to lay down both the thought that, since we believe in the Lord, we need not examine anything, and the thought that, in order to survive, it is all right to change the truth a little. That is, we ask the Lord for wisdom, deal with the facts honestly, and rightly testify of the gospel entrusted to us.

Beware of men, but remember the purpose of testifying

Let us read verse 17. *"But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues" (Matthew 10:17)*. After the command to beware of men, specific dangers appear. That is, the disciples would be delivered up to councils and scourged in the synagogues. He let them know that a place that is religious in name does not always welcome the Lord's disciples.

The words *"will deliver you up"* in verse 17 continue to *"when they deliver you up"* in verse 19, and in verse 21 to the words that brother *"will deliver up"* brother. The passage shows step by step that the hands that deliver up the disciples begin in unfamiliar councils and reach even to the closest family members. Yet Jesus also speaks of the testifying they will come to do in the very midst of those people. This is why a cautious heart and a heart that seeks to preach the gospel must be present together.

Let us read verse 18. *"You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:18)*. Jesus told them beforehand even about being brought before governors and kings. It was not a comfortable

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place that the disciples had prepared because they wanted it. But even in that place there was a purpose the Lord would accomplish. He meant it to be a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

The words *"for My sake"* make clear the reason for this suffering. It means that they are dragged away because they believe in Jesus and preach His word. So we too must honestly examine in the light of the word why we are being opposed.

The word *"as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:18)* adds a new meaning to the place of suffering. The place that the opponents prepared becomes, instead, a place where the truth of the Savior is heard. In verse 5 of the same chapter, Jesus told the disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles, but in verse 18 He said that in the place to which they were dragged, this would be a testimony to the Gentiles. It is the hands of those who oppose them that set the disciples before the Gentiles, whom they had not sought out on their own. So a disciple must remember whom he is to testify of, even in a place where he does not want to be.

Even so, there is no need to seek out suffering deliberately, saying that we believe this promise. Jesus told the disciples to be careful. However, in the face of difficulties that come upon us even though we try to avoid them, we must not be discouraged, thinking that everything is now over. The Lord can accomplish His own testimony even there. What a disciple must do is be faithful to the truth he has received.

We too have times when we must speak in a place that is unfavorable to us. At such times, do not be bound by words that make you look great, but make clear what the facts are and what word you believe. Ask for a heart that seeks to reveal the truth rather than to win by crushing the other person. The center of testimony lies not in our strength but in Jesus.

The Spirit of the Father, who gives what to speak at that time

Let us read verse 19. *"But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak" (Matthew 10:19)*. Jesus told them not to worry about how or what they should speak when they are delivered up. This is because there is the promise that what they should speak will be given to them at that time.

However, we must read it keeping to the situation *"when they deliver you up."* This word does not mean that we need not learn the Bible in ordinary times or that no preparation to preach the word is needed. It is the promise that He will help the disciples in the very place where they are persecuted and delivered up. The basis on which we can lay down worry is exactly this help of the Lord.

Since He said, *"It will be given to you in that hour what you should speak" (Matthew 10:19)*, a disciple is not a person who can obey only if he has prepared in advance every conversation he will have in the future. He believes the word given now, goes forward, and relies on the Lord to help him when it is needed. That the Lord told them now, beforehand, about what would happen at that time, which had not yet come, was also so that they would hear and keep this word in their hearts today, thinking of that day. This word frees us from the heart that tries to grasp in our hands even the things we have not yet experienced.

Let us read verse 20. *"For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matthew 10:20)*. Jesus made it clear that the One who would speak in the disciples is the Spirit of the Father. This is a far clearer promise than the

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vague comfort that courage will arise. The Lord, who sends the disciples, even told them who would help their testimony.

Think about the relationship between the Father and the disciples in the words *"the Spirit of your Father."* Even when one stands before those who persecute him, the relationship with God has not been cut off, and the Spirit of the Father is present. So even when it feels as if the opponent before your eyes holds all authority, remember this promise.

Even so, it is wrong to use this word as an excuse to put forward all our own thoughts as the words of the Holy Spirit. The help of the Holy Spirit is a promise given so that we may testify of Jesus; it was not given to be used to make absolute our own assertions that have departed from the truth. We must learn the word and keep it in our hearts, and ask for wisdom and boldness to testify of the Savior accurately.

Do not give up the confession of faith in advance on the grounds that you lack eloquence. What matters is to know clearly the Savior on whom we rely. Even in fear, we can ask the Lord for help and preach the word we have received. A person who believes the Lord's promise does not make his own skill with words his final reliance.

The name to hold on to even in the pain of close relationships

Let us read verse 21. *"Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death" (Matthew 10:21)*. Jesus says that severe hostility will arise even among brothers, parents, and children. It means that those who cause a disciple pain are not always only strangers. Since the Lord knew even

the wounds they would receive in close relationships, a disciple, too, must not accept such things merely as unexpected. Now, because the laws of the world prevent people from harming others on account of their faith, this word may feel distant. But if the world changes, this will happen exactly as He said.

The words that *"brother will deliver up brother"* show the pain of relationships shaken because of faith. That does not mean that Jesus commanded family members to harm one another. He revealed beforehand the opposition the disciples would receive. So we must not read the word that told of suffering in advance in reverse, as a command to do harm to others.

The word *"children will rise up against parents" (Matthew 10:21)* also weighs on the heart. This is because being close does not make people's response of faith the same as well. So even if someone close to us rejects the gospel, we must not fill our hearts with hatred, but must keep the Lord's word and ask that he may come to hear the news of salvation.

Let us read verse 22. *"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22)*. Here the reason for being hated becomes clear again. It is because of the name of Jesus. So what a disciple must hold on to is not the number of people who like him, but who his Savior is and what salvation he believes in.

If we forget the words *"for My name's sake,"* only the enduring of pain remains. But a disciple is not a person who piles up meaningless suffering; he is a person who cannot abandon that name because he believes in Jesus, who saved him. So the grace of the Savior becomes the reason for enduring difficulties.

Jesus, to whom belongs the name we hold on to, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. The sins of the disciples who are hated because of that name, and the sins we today will

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commit throughout our lives, were all passed on to Him at that time. As the price of that sin, the Lord shed His blood on the Cross, received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and died, and He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and so come to hold on to that name in the midst of any suffering.

Those who believe in this salvation must not forget, even in loneliness, that they are children of God. Tell God the pain that those close to you do not understand, and receive help from those who believe together with you. Keeping the faith does not mean pretending that one's emotions are not shaken in the least; it means relying on the Savior even in the midst of pain.

Endure to the end and go by the way the Lord has opened

Jesus said, *"He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22)*. It is a word telling them not to abandon, in the face of hatred, the confession they first made, but to keep the faith to the end. Even if difficulties go on long, a disciple's final hope lies not in the hands of those who oppose him, but in the Lord, who gives salvation.

However, the endurance meant when verse 22 says *"he who endures to the end"* is not a merit that pays the price of salvation. The remission of sins is not received according to how long one has endured persecution, but by believing in the salvation Jesus has accomplished. This word teaches those who believe in that Savior to hold on to the Lord's name and go forward to the end even in the midst of persecution.

Let us read verse 23. *"When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:23)*. Right after the word to endure to the end comes the command to flee to another city. Enduring and fleeing do not contradict each other. One can leave a dangerous place without abandoning the faith. The Lord did not say that the disciples must be held fast by the hostility of one place and bring all their labor to an end.

Thanks to the word *"When they persecute you in this city, flee to another" (Matthew 10:23)*, the disciples were able to keep going on their way. We cannot judge that someone has no faith just because he fled. This is because he is following the Lord's command and continuing his testimony in another place. Here there are, together, the will to keep the faith and the wisdom not to treat life carelessly.

He also said, *"You will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:23)*. This word announces that the Lord will come again, and at the same time shows that the Son of Man who comes at that time is God, who will judge all people. So the labor of the disciples was not a work abandoned to endless wandering, but a labor that put its hope in the Lord, who will come again and judge.

Even so, there is no need to make up dates from this word, or to fix the detailed order of the second coming for every event before our eyes. The command given to the disciples in the passage is that when they are persecuted, they should flee to another city and keep going forward. To fulfill the testimony entrusted to us today while believing that the Lord will come—that is the response worthy of this promise.

Faith that endures to the end also includes the obedience of changing one's course according to the Lord's guidance. Faith

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is not only holding out while staking one's pride on a single way of doing things. Keep the gospel that must be kept, and wisely examine, within the word, the methods that can be changed. Not leaving the Lord and staying in one place are different things.

Let us walk according to the promise rather than worry

In this passage, Jesus told of the danger, commanded them to discern, promised help to testify, and taught the way to go forward to the end. But if we pick out and read only the fearful words, we miss the will of the Lord, who cares for the disciples. We must see together both the fact that there is opposition and God, who is present in the midst of it.

Engrave the command *"be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16)* on your words and actions today. Abandon schemes to accomplish your own will, and lay down also the recklessness that ignores danger. When a disciple examines his circumstances while keeping the word he has received from the Lord, his labor becomes truthful.

The word *"do not worry" (Matthew 10:19)* has attached to it the promise that He will give what to speak. Turn your heart toward Him, remembering the help the Lord will give. There is no reason to give up obedience because you have not foreseen everything in advance and prepared all your answers. The One who sent the disciples helps them when it is needed.

Remember also that He promised the One *"who speaks in you" (Matthew 10:20)*. A disciple's testimony is not raising one's own voice alone, but relying on God and making Jesus known. So the time we spend now learning the word and keeping

it in our hearts enables us to remember the Savior even in difficult places.

If there is someone beside you who has been hurt because of the Lord's name, do not leave him to endure alone. Listen to his story, encourage him with the word, and seek together the help he needs. There is no need to evaluate faith by comparing whose suffering is greater. It is fitting for us, as people who rely on the same Savior, to care for one another.

Also, do not forget the word *"flee to another" (Matthew 10:23)*. If a proper way to escape difficulty has been given, you may examine that way. Do not try to prove your faith by staying long in danger, but ask for wisdom to keep fulfilling the work the Lord has entrusted to you. Obedience includes the discernment to know when to stay and when to leave.

For those who hold on to the name of Jesus, there is a Savior to look to until the end. People's hatred cannot take away His salvation, and today's difficulties cannot replace the end the Lord has promised. So we must believe the gospel we have received, fulfill the work entrusted to us now, and go forward on the next path the Lord opens for us.

The Lord sent the disciples even while knowing fully the world they would meet, and He promised the word they needed and the help of the Holy Spirit. Those who believe in the Lord who sends learn the way to walk even in the midst of suffering. Let us, too, rely on that promise, keep wisdom and purity, and hold on to the name of the Savior even in the midst of difficulties. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Prepare an actual faith

< Matthew 10:16–23 >

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”

Our Lord said that sending His disciples out into the world to spread the gospel was like sending sheep into the midst of wolves; He told them to go out into the world and live wise as serpents and pure as doves, and He told them to beware of men and be careful. And He spoke of the tribulations that Jesus’ twelve disciples would suffer in the future. But He told them not to fear and not to worry in those tribulations. This is because He said that at that time the Holy Spirit would give them everything

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they should say. The part where He said, *"Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death" (Matthew 10:21)*, and the words in which He said that they would be greatly hated because of the Lord's name but that he who endures to the end will be saved, that if they were persecuted in this city they should flee to another, and that the Son of Man would come before they had gone through all the cities of Israel, are words that Jesus spoke to the disciples of that time, and from verse 24 on, they are words He speaks to us. As we continue to look at this word, He said, *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matthew 10:24–25)*, and I understand that He was speaking of things that will take place on the last day in the same way that the Lord was persecuted, in the same way that He was falsely accused by people, was put on trial, was sentenced to death, and was nailed to the Cross and died.

Things just as this word says actually happened to Jesus' disciples. They were taken before governors and kings and were put to death. At that time the Holy Spirit was in the disciples' hearts and enabled them to say everything they had to say. And the Lord said to the people of Israel that in the future people who would receive salvation would arise among the people of Israel. He said that although they, too, like the disciples of the early Church, would be hated and would suffer in the future, the Lord would come before they had gone through all the cities. In this way the Lord spoke of the things we will suffer in the end time.

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A life of faith is not theory but reality

So we must think about this. Is a life of faith theory, is it the head, or is it reality? The answer is “reality.” A life of faith is not something done with the head. Having a slightly better head or slightly better talent is not what matters. When we see that what the Lord said to the disciples was actually fulfilled for the disciples of the early Church, we can know that what the Lord has said to us will also actually be fulfilled. The disciples of the early Church were seized by the governors of the world, stood before the kings of the world to be tried, and were martyred, and this was to reveal to the Gentiles the glory of God and what genuine faith is, what the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is.

Even now, if you go to Rome, the greatest sight to see is the amphitheater called the Colosseum. Though much of it has now collapsed, this place, which is still preserved, is the greatest sight. Just as the Lord told the disciples that it was like sending sheep into the midst of wolves and so to beware of men, those who believed in Jesus were taken to the amphitheaters of Rome and executed. They were falsely accused by people, were framed for having harmed Rome, and were sentenced to death without a proper trial, and as soon as they were sentenced, they became food for lions, or they were tortured by soldiers before their trial and died.

We can consider that a life of faith is not theory. Will there be no such things for you and me on the last day? It is the same. Just as the Lord was nailed to the Cross, died, and rose again, every one of us saints will suffer such things in the end time. I understand that anyone who is alive until then, without exception, will suffer things like what the Lord suffered. This is

because the Lord said, *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master" (Matthew 10:24)*.

It means that those who have truly received the remission of sins actually go through these things. When you and I actually go through these things, if our faith is a theoretical faith, a faith that does not really believe, and a faith that does not sincerely believe, it will all be revealed on that day. On the last day, what genuine faith is like will all be revealed.

At that time many people will hand us over to death, frame us, seize us, and kill us. At that time we may be nailed to a cross like Jesus and die, may become food for beasts, or may become subjects of human experiments and die. The born-again actually go through such things.

When you and I lead a life of faith, we must think about what would happen if such a situation actually came upon us. Such things will actually come upon those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and to think about such things now is truly horrifying. Just thinking that such things will actually come makes our hair stand on end. And we come to think at least once, "What will I do if such a thing actually comes upon me?"

When we think, "What will I do then?" the dregs of the heart are removed. When that time actually comes, regardless of our shortcomings, what is key is whether we actually believe in the Lord or not. We actually come to examine that first: whether the sin within us has disappeared through believing the gospel in which the Lord bore all our sins with the water and the Spirit. And when we actually examine our faith, we must gain strength through the faith that believes in the gospel. And by the faith that believes in the Lord, it becomes settled in our hearts that, just as the Lord rose again, we too gain the strength to overcome and the strength to endure, and rise again.

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Do such things not actually happen? Such things actually do happen. A life of faith is not false but real. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is also not false but real. Also, in following the Lord, denying oneself, taking up one's own cross, and following the Lord is also real. Even though they are hated by their parents, brothers, children, or families and are hated and forsaken in this world, it actually comes to be so for those who suffer all these things for the Lord, just as the word says, *"Who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:30)*. It means that a life of faith is real. It means that it is not theory. Therefore, we must think of everything realistically. There is a saying that in one's thoughts one can make rice cakes and hand them out to all the people of the whole country. In thought it is possible, but in reality there is something lacking. This is because human ability is lacking. We know that, unlike in our thoughts, in reality our ability is so very lacking.

If we do not think of a life of faith as real, there will be nothing to make us brace our hearts, and when that day comes upon us, we may stumble. Since the day of the Lord's coming is near, we, too, who have been born again and lead a life of faith, including me, may go through that day. Because it is something we may actually go through, we must think about it now. "Do I really believe this gospel? When I come to the point of being put to death because of this faith that believes in the Lord, can I actually die with the faith that believes in the Lord?" We must think about this now. We must confess our faith now and decide now. There is only a difference in time; just as it was actually fulfilled exactly for Jesus' disciples in the word, it will also happen to us in the future. Those among the people of Israel who are to receive the remission of sins will actually receive the

remission of sins, be hated by people in that country, and flee, and the Lord will surely come before they have gone through all those cities.

And since we Gentiles, too, have received the remission of sins, we, too, will actually suffer, just as Jesus' disciples went through these things. Just as our forerunners of faith were martyred in the amphitheaters, were persecuted by many people, and were also forsaken by unbelieving children or parents and delivered up to death, such things will actually happen to us as well. We must actually examine now by faith what your heart and mine would be like when we actually face that situation, what our hearts are like before God, as though we were going through that situation.

I, too, think about that as I read this word. Because the word is always the truth, this word actually comes upon us. "What would happen to me if I faced this situation? Can I endure it because the Lord has saved me and I actually believe? Yes. Because the Lord actually spoke of this and also said that He would raise us up again, those who actually believe can endure this. When they are actually put to death, they can go through it by faith. Since there is no longer any other choice in my heart, I go through it by faith in the Lord. I go through this not by my own will, but with the faith that it is right to go through it this way." This is the heart I have. So I think it is right to tell you of these things well in advance. And I want to tell you not to lead your life of faith theoretically.

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"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master"

The Lord spoke to the people of Israel and then spoke to us Gentiles. *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matthew 10:24–25)*. The people of the world slandered Jesus, who made this world, as Beelzebub, that is, the king of flies, drove Him into a corner, and killed Him. Concerning that, the Lord said that it is enough if a servant is like his master. Jesus came to this earth and actually did the truth, yet the reason He was hated by many people, heard strange things said about Him, and was delivered up to the Cross is that, although Jesus Himself did not commit sin, He had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. Of course, those who drove Jesus to death did not kill Him for that reason. Those people killed Him because Jesus was a thorn in their side. Jesus made this universe, yet they drove that Jesus into a corner, calling Him the king of flies and the king of demons and saying that He was demon-possessed. If Christ is our Master and we are His servants, what then? What if we actually go through what the Lord went through? Until now countless people have simply lived out their natural lifespans and died, but those who live in this end time actually go through the tribulation of the early Church or the tribulation Jesus went through, and go through death just as Jesus suffered it. If we die because of the Lord, if we are martyred by the faith that believes in the Lord, the Lord said of that, *"It is enough."*

Also, the Lord said, *"Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will*

not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops" (Matthew 10:26–27). He told us to spread the gospel. This gospel has been preached on this earth, but people all ignored it and hid it. Nevertheless, nothing is ever hidden. It means that before the Lord comes, this gospel will be fully revealed, fully spread abroad, and fully preached to the whole world.

Therefore, from now on there will be no one who dies without knowing this gospel. Whether they see it through the Internet, hear it through friends, or hear it when the confession of faith that you and I make as we are martyred on the last day becomes the focus of the news and is broadcast, they are bound to hear it one way or another.

"Now, amid the chaos on this earth, there is a very rebellious group, and that group is those who say they believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. They resist even as they die; just listen to what they say." This is what the broadcasts will say. Those who have received the remission of sins will make a confession of faith at that time. But those who believe half-heartedly now, those who do not truly accept this into their hearts and do not actually believe, will deny it at that time.

If we now actually believe in our hearts the truth of the water and the Spirit, "Jesus actually had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, went to the Cross and died in our place, rose again from death, and saved us," we, too, will be martyred just as we believe. But if we do not actually believe in our hearts and try merely to pretend to believe by vaguely and roughly fitting things together, we cannot be martyred. There will also be those who pretend to believe with the thought, "For now I should pretend to believe. Otherwise I may be ostracized and driven out from here. If I do not pretend to believe, I will be nothing but an outcast, like an

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acorn in a dog's food." But on that day everything will be revealed. Once it is revealed on that day, there is no way ever to turn back.

"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul"

On that day, without genuine faith, one cannot endure death. Will one endure it because one is stubborn and has strong grit? No. It is the one who actually believes who endures even death and also receives from the Lord the strength to endure it. If the Lord is with us and gives us strength, it is not impossible for us to die. It is in Him who gives us strength that we can die; with our own grit we could not but deny Him one hundred percent. How could we endure that? That is why the Lord said, *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28)*.

I believe that this word is a word the Lord spoke to His own disciples, to the people of Israel, to you and me who are Gentiles, and also to those who will believe in the future. The Lord told us not to fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Just because He told us not to fear, can we say that we are not afraid? When they actually kill us, will it hurt or not? Of course it hurts. But do we then simply surrender before it? No. If we do not actually believe, we kneel in the face of death, but if we believe, the Holy Spirit holds us up from within and gives us the strength to stand against them and the strength to resist, so we can oppose them from within, even at the cost of death. Though our bodies may not be able to move at all, our hearts can fully overcome them. It is because the Lord gives that strength that

we endure calamity. Otherwise, there is no one at all who could overcome it. In fact, it is because they kill the body but cannot kill the soul that we can endure it.

When one thinks of being tortured, one may think it would be better to take one's own life. But God wants to receive glory even through our death. That is why taking one's own life is a great wrong before God. Because life is something God has given, one cannot do with it as one pleases.

We must believe now. And we must actually believe. At that time, do you think you can keep your faith by anything other than the faith that believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit? Do you think that one is martyred only when one has grit, is good at martial arts, and has a strong will like a fighter who did not bend his will until the moment of death? In fact, people with strong wills of their own all surrender, and only those who actually believe in the Lord can be martyred. They can be martyred by the power the Lord has given. That is why He told us not to fear, and because we believe, we are bold.

The Bible says, *"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:29–30)*. The copper coin here is an assarion, a single, very cheap coin. It means that even for one sparrow as cheap as that to fall, God must permit it. If God does not permit it, not even a sparrow falls to the ground. Only when God permits it does even a sparrow fall to the ground and die. In the same way, our lives also depend on God. It means that since God has numbered even the hairs of our heads, we should not fear.

On that day, those who actually believe will not deny the Lord, and those who do not actually believe now will deny the Lord on that day. *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But*

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whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32–33). No matter how much one says now that one believes, if one does not actually believe in one's heart, it is not believing. I hope you will examine now through the word what your faith would be like when this situation actually comes.

"I have no other faith, no will, and no great ability, but the Lord has actually saved me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. So I have actually received the remission of sins. I have actually become one of God's people and have actually become a servant of God. And I do not know anything else."

It means that this actual faith causes you and me to be martyred. It means that you and I do so for the glory of God. If those people kill us, will they themselves not die? God will make hail come down from heaven and strike their heads, or make the earth split open and fire come out and burn them up, or make them catch a disease stronger than a terrible epidemic and die. Also, the book of Revelation says that the calamity of foul and malignant sores that break out and keep tormenting people, not healing however much they scratch (Revelation 16:2), and the calamity in which people seek death but cannot die and suffer torment for five months (Revelation 9:5–6), will actually come upon those who do not believe this gospel.

The faith that actually believes overcomes the world

All of this is real. Everything revealed in Revelation is real, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is also real, our leading a life of faith is also real, and your coming here and sitting here is also real. One must not pretend to believe. Those who pretend to

believe will grow tense when they hear the word of Revelation, but if we actually believe, what is there to be tense about? The Lord received baptism from John for us, bore our sins, and died for us; do we have any qualification at all to be saved because we have some great ability? We have nothing at all. There is no way to be saved except by faith. Everything is real, and pretending to believe is bound to be revealed. We actually believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, actually serve the gospel, actually do missionary work overseas, and are actually doing the work of serving the Lord. Since a life of faith is real and not theory, we must think of everything realistically. Eating and living are real, and sleeping and dressing are real, so we must think of everything realistically.

"When that day comes, whatever I am like now, won't it be enough if I just do well for a moment on that day?" Those who do not actually lead a life of faith now may think so, but they will surely turn traitor at that time. "Oh, at that time I will do well." Dear fellow believers, if we do not have the faith that believes in ordinary times, when that day comes upon us, we will be more anxious and more flustered. And if our hearts are not prepared, we will end up being overcome by the other side. Therefore, right now we must know that faith is real and actually lead a life of faith.

In the past, most of the apostles such as Peter and Paul were martyred while serving the gospel, but among the Church Fathers after them there were also those who compromised with the powerful of the world so as not to die. When freedom of religion was granted in Rome and the world became a little better, they abandoned this gospel of the water and the Spirit, perhaps because they did not want to lose many things because of their faith as the forerunners of faith of old had done.

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In the Middle Ages there was something called the Inquisition, so that if someone made an accusation, the accused person was branded as one in error, had his property taken away, and was sometimes put to death after horrific torture. Those records still remain in old documents today, and they are so gruesome that I can hardly bring myself to repeat them.

If we do not actually believe, we are quickly overturned when such things come upon us. It is the faith we believe with that overcomes the world and overcomes ourselves; if it is not the faith that actually believes, we can never overcome. It means that a life of faith is real. Dear fellow believers, are you now leading your life of faith in outward form, or in reality? It is in reality. Dear fellow believers, pain is real, living for the Lord is real, what is rewarding in living for the Lord is real, what is painful is real; is not all of this life of faith real? A life of faith is reality for the born-again, but for those who are not born again it is religion. In religion, one only has to set up a framework oneself and pretend to do it. But a life of faith must be led with actual faith.

The Lord says, *"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 10:38–39),* and in saying this He says that we must actually lead a life of faith. I tell you clearly that a life of faith is not theory. When such things come upon you and me before long, you must examine whether you can be victorious with the faith that actually believes this gospel. You must examine your hearts now. If you truly believe this, you can overcome by dying even when that time actually arrives. It is not that you die by your own hand. It is that you are put to death. Therefore, if you do not actually believe in the Lord and actually follow the Lord now, when that day comes you may become someone who delivers up

your children or parents to death. That is why those who now believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit must believe properly. They must not pretend to believe but must actually believe.

A sense of inferiority must be shaken off in Christ

Someone may say, “Why do you talk about that every day when we believe? Is that all you know?” But I emphasize it this much because this is the most important. In fact, apart from this, what is there to offer? There is nothing. Dear fellow believers, will you boast of strong arms, or will you boast of having a lot of money? Will you boast of being stubborn? Will you boast of being excellent in something, or will you boast of your own shortcomings? There is nothing at all to boast of.

In fact, boasting about anything comes from having a strong sense of inferiority. In the past, when young brothers showed off their strength, I, too, always put in a word, saying, “When I was your age, I did even more than that,” and all of this comes from a sense of inferiority. In fact, it is because I could not do it then that I now say it as wishful thinking. Those who have no sense of inferiority just say, “I was like that too in the old days,” and leave it at that, but those who have a sense of inferiority reminisce about the past and show off. Opening the Bible and going on about worldly stories, philosophy, or science may also come from a desire to cover with these the lack of knowing the Bible deeply.

A sense of inferiority must be shaken off in Christ. Our Lord has saved us, so do we need a sense of inferiority? Do we need an academic background to serve the Lord? Such things are not needed. You do not need to know difficult writing; it is enough

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if you can read the Bible and talk about it. A life of faith is not led by a sense of inferiority. It is led with actual faith. Dear fellow believers, if you are perhaps caught in a sense of inferiority, know that it is a sense of inferiority, and if you have a compensatory mentality that tries to fill it up by doing something well, acknowledge it. And I hope you will become free in that area by faith.

You and I are now preaching the gospel. Because people do not know much about faith, we actually make literature with this and give it to them, and we pray. We pray with what is real and receive answers. Is serving the Lord real or not? It is real. Is following the Lord real or not? It is real. Serving the gospel is also real, and even eating a meal is real. Therefore, you and I must not lead a life of faith with an illusion. If this is what we are like now, we acknowledge, "So this is what I am like," and live before God by faith in the Lord. That is faith, and that is reality. We must not think our dreams are reality, but must realize and know that what we are now, not our dreams, is what we truly are.

I always know that there is not a single word among the words of God that is not an actual word, yet I always stand before this word, before the actual truth, and ask myself, "What will I do if such things come upon me?" and so I refine my present faith and live my life of faith. Only by actually serving the Lord do we know what serving the Lord is like, and only by actually preaching the gospel do we know what preaching the gospel is like. Only by actually living for the Lord do we actually know what living for the Lord is like, come to actually believe it in our hearts, and actually fellowship and lead others. That is why there is no skipping grades in faith, and we must go through everything. Whatever the process, when we go through all of it and actually see ourselves, we cannot say that we are great. If

we boast, we can boast only of the Lord, and all the rest are merely attendants.

Prepare for the end time with actual faith

I want to preach the gospel, but I think, "When such things happen before long, will I actually believe as the Lord has said, and will I turn out as the word says? Am I not someone who will betray?" If I think in fleshly terms, I am someone who would betray a hundred times over. I cannot stand pain, and I am also impatient, so I cannot be patient for long. I even want to avoid getting a single injection. The fleshly me is one who cannot stand even being pricked a little with a needle.

How much I cherish my own body! In the flesh I am someone who could not endure it. It is the same with you. But because we believe that the Lord has actually saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and because the Lord has actually become our Savior, we cannot betray our faith. Because we cannot betray what the Lord has actually accomplished in saving us this way, if unbelievers should kill us, we have no choice but to be put to death. Because we cannot betray this, because this is real, we accept it all by faith.

I hope you will have actual faith. The Lord will come before long, and the closer the end time draws, the more terribly people's hearts are growing worse. Pure hearts are disappearing, and people think only of themselves. Is it not the same with animals? Though we do not see it, before a typhoon sweeps over the sea, sea creatures such as sea slaters come up onto land, and crabs, too, walk sideways and sideways and crawl up into the fields. When people see them come up so far that crabs can be caught easily in the fields, they say, "Have these gone crazy?"

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but in a few days a tidal wave rises and the waves pound in. Just as animals sense such danger and look for a way to survive, people, too, the closer the end draws, instinctively feel, “I must survive.” So they instinctively look for a way to save themselves. But we the righteous, the closer the end draws, must live preparing the faith that actually believes. And we must live for the gospel. And believing that when the Lord comes He will give us the strength to endure, we must live without fear, being faithful from now until that day in the work entrusted to us. I desire that God will give you such strength to endure, and I hope He will give it to me as well. Let us live with actual faith. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Within the Father's care, confess the Savior

< Matthew 10:24–33 >

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

Where is the recognition a disciple seeks?

The desire to look good to people sometimes changes our words and sometimes makes us shut our mouths altogether.

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Even while saying that we believe in Jesus, we can worry about what people will think if we reveal that faith. In today's passage, Jesus makes clear whom the disciple is with, whom he must fear, and before whom he is to be recognized.

Let us read verse 24. *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master" (Matthew 10:24)*. Jesus spoke by taking up the relationship between a disciple and his teacher, and between a servant and his master. One cannot claim to follow one's teacher and yet simply expect treatment entirely different from the teacher's. So if we know whose disciples we are, the standard by which we look at people's reactions must also change.

The word that a disciple is not above his teacher makes us think about the place where a disciple stands. We are people who learn from Jesus and follow His will. So we cannot set up the way of being recognized more highly than Jesus as a condition for following Him. Rather, by looking at the opposition the Teacher received, we come to understand the way of a disciple.

Let us read verse 25. *"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matthew 10:25)*. Jesus said that if the master of the house had been slandered, those of his household would be too. It means that the insults that would come upon the disciples could be, not something unexpected and unrelated to their Teacher, but something they go through because they are people who belong to Him.

Look at the word that says, *"If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub" (Matthew 10:25)*. Even though Jesus healed people and cast out demons, there was wicked criticism directed at Him. People's evaluations do not always follow the truth. Therefore, make the word of the Lord the final standard of

your faith, rather than whether many people say that something is good.

The word *"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master" (Matthew 10:25)* makes clear to whom a disciple belongs. On the way of following the Lord's will, we must know how to be content with being with Him. Do not think as though even the meaning of faith disappears when there is no praise from people. The One whom a disciple follows is the living Savior.

That does not mean that this word is a teaching to deliberately draw hatred upon ourselves. Our faults must be corrected, and we must fulfill the duties we owe to people. It is only that, when we receive unjust criticism because we believe in Jesus, we cannot deny the Savior in order to avoid that criticism. Whom we belong to comes before people's evaluations.

God, who will reveal what is covered

Let us read verse 26. *"Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known" (Matthew 10:26)*. Jesus told them not to fear and said that what is covered would be revealed. Even if people's words now seem to cover the truth, that is not the end. If we know that there is a time when even what is hidden will be revealed, we can keep from giving our hearts over entirely to the evaluations of the present.

The command *"Therefore do not fear them" (Matthew 10:26)* is connected to the relationship between the teacher and the disciple that He spoke of before. The disciples may receive the criticism the Lord received, but those who criticize cannot

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finally determine the truth about a disciple. Jesus makes His disciples look beyond the voices of those who criticize.

The word *"there is nothing covered that will not be revealed" (Matthew 10:26)* gives strength to a disciple who fears false evaluations. This is because the truth does not disappear before God. But at the same time, this word also makes us honestly examine our own hidden hearts. Even the sins that people have covered deep in their hearts are revealed before God without a single one missing, and people receive judgment for them. So the way to live is not to look for a place to cover our sins, but to come to the Savior, who had those sins passed on to Him.

Those who believe the word *"hidden that will not be known" (Matthew 10:26)* do not try to protect themselves by leaning on lies. This is because if one makes up yet another lie to get out of an immediate misunderstanding, one ends up abandoning the truth. Make known the facts that you can make known, and entrust the parts you cannot fully explain to God, who knows all things.

Even when it feels as if we are safe only if we hide the fact that we believe in the Savior, we can remember this word. Even if those who have received the remission of sins try to blend into the world and not show any sign of it, in the end it is revealed that they are God's people. If faith cannot be kept by hiding, the Lord leads the disciples rather toward clearly preaching the truth they have heard from Him.

Those who believe that the truth will be revealed can also be freed from the impatience of thinking that they must immediately confront every criticism with equal force. We should give the necessary explanations honestly, but we must not let the fight to protect our own honor become bigger than the gospel. The purpose of a disciple does not lie in dressing himself up as a blameless person.

So set your heart on the facts the Lord knows. People may misunderstand our words, and they may not appreciate our labor. But the salvation we have received before God and our confession of faith are not determined by people's rumors. Living honestly according to the word—that is the way entrusted to us today.

Preach clearly the word you have heard

Let us read verse 27. *"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops" (Matthew 10:27)*. Jesus told them to speak in the light what they had heard in the dark, and to preach on the housetops what they had heard in the ear. The word the disciples had heard was not something to be kept only among themselves, but the truth they had to let others hear as well.

In the word *"Whatever I tell you in the dark" (Matthew 10:27)* there is first the place of the disciple who listens. Before preaching, we must first know what the Lord has said. We cannot fill in what we have not heard with our own thoughts and preach it as the word of Jesus. Listening faithfully becomes the foundation for speaking boldly.

The command *"speak in the light" (Matthew 10:27)* means to bring to light the truth one has heard. Its content must not change according to people's reactions. We must say accurately who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. If we leave out the core of salvation in order to please those who hear, we move away from the intent of preaching clearly.

The word *"preach on the housetops" (Matthew 10:27)* means to make it widely known. We must not be satisfied with words that make sense only among disciples, but must preach so

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that others, too, can understand. What the speaker knows and what the hearer understands do not automatically become the same. That is why the labor of explaining step by step is needed.

Then what is the news to be preached on the housetops? By receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, passed on to Him once and for all. And as the price for those sins that had been passed on to Him, He was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died in our place, and He rose again from death. Whatever people may say, this is the very news we are to make known. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So confessing the salvation of the Savior does not stop at merely calling His name. It is knowing how Jesus removed our sins and believing that work. And we must also be able to speak of that content clearly to others. Rather than explaining at length how moved we were, it is important to let those who hear come to know what the Savior has done.

There is no need to always wait for a special occasion in order to preach the word. We can share what we believe when someone asks about salvation, during a time of reading the Bible together, or while talking with someone who needs help. Rather than raising a loud voice, what comes first is a heart that seeks to make the Savior known truthfully without hiding Him.

The One who has sovereignty over body and soul

Let us read verse 28. *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28)*. Jesus

spoke by distinguishing between the threats that come from people and the authority of God. People can kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul. The One who will judge both body and soul is God. So a disciple must not regard the threat before his eyes as the greatest authority.

The word *"those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28)* makes clear that there is a limit to the suffering people can inflict. That does not mean that the suffering is light. It is only that it is not the final authority that determines a disciple's eternal life. Because there is this distinction, we can look to God even in the midst of fear.

And He said, *"But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28)*. It means that the heart that fears God must take root more deeply than the heart that fears people. Even at times when it seems that you will survive only if you say what people like to hear, think first about what is true before God.

What people fear most is usually death. But the passage places the death of the body and the destruction of the soul side by side, and it makes us consider that the death of the body is for a moment, but being destroyed in hell, body and soul together, is eternal. When we know this difference, what we should worry about first changes. Those whose souls belong to God, having received the remission of sins, can lay down their worry about death and devote their hearts to the work entrusted to them while they are alive.

Fearing God is different from hiding to avoid Him. It is accepting His word as truth and not taking judgment and salvation lightly. Because we believe in the grace of the Savior, who has given us the remission of sins, we rather draw near to God. Grace and reverent fear do not erase each other, but together they set our hearts upright.

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There are times when people's evaluations sound near and the word of God feels far away. At such times all the more, keep the Bible close and learn again whose judgment is eternal. If you abandon the truth you believe in order to avoid present discomfort, you will lose something more important. Keep in your heart this difference in authority that the Lord has made clear.

Yet there is no reason to take our own bodies lightly on the basis of this word. Just before this, Jesus also said that if they were persecuted, they should flee to another city. It is acknowledging that God is the Lord of that life while treating life as precious. Caring for oneself wisely and the faith that does not deny the Savior must go together.

The care made known through sparrows and hairs

Let us read verse 29. *"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will" (Matthew 10:29)*. After speaking of the price of two sparrows, Jesus spoke of the Father's permission. It means that even a small life that looks insignificant in people's eyes is not outside the rule of God.

In the question *"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin?" (Matthew 10:29)* there appears a being regarded as very small. The value that God knows cannot be fully explained by the price people set. That is why the word that the disciples are of more value than many sparrows follows. God does not forget His own people.

Listen also to the words *"apart from your Father's will" (Matthew 10:29)*. Jesus did not call God only a Judge who is far away, but called Him the disciples' Father. His authority and His

care are together. Since in the verse just before He spoke of those who kill the body, this permission extends even to the matter of whether a disciple lives or dies. Just because someone who wants to do harm rushes at a disciple, things do not go as that person intends; everything depends on the Father. So live acknowledging God in all things, beginning with small things.

Let us read verse 30. *"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30)*. The word that He has numbered even the hairs shows how thoroughly God knows the disciples. A person does not fully know even his own circumstances, but the Father knows all about His children. And that knowledge is not indifferent watching but, as the words before and after it show, a knowledge that cares.

When we believe this promise, we no longer think that there is no way to make our situation known to God. Even if we are not good at speaking, we can present to the Father what we need. It is bringing even the labor and fears that others do not appreciate to the Lord and relying on Him.

Let us read verse 31. *"Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31)*. Jesus again tells them not to fear, and this time He makes clear that the reason is that the disciples are of value. Those who have heard the word to fear God hear right after it of the Father's care. The God whom we fear is the very Father who regards us as precious.

The word *"you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31)* holds fast the worth of a disciple even amid people's contempt. Just because people rate someone low does not mean that he becomes one forsaken by God as well. Of course, this word is not a promise that there will be no suffering at all, but the assurance He has given that even in the midst of difficulties the Father knows and cares.

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The faith that confesses the Savior before men

Let us read verse 32. *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32)*. Jesus said that He would confess before the Father those who confess Him before men. He led hearts that had thought only of how they would look to people toward the Father in heaven. Behind a disciple's confession there is the Savior's promise to receive that confession.

The word *"whoever confesses Me before men" (Matthew 10:32)* makes us reveal the One toward whom faith is directed. It is not confessing our own courage, but acknowledging that Jesus is the Savior and that the salvation He accomplished is true. So the value of a confession lies not so much in how strong the one confessing is as in Jesus, in whom he believes. For those who have received the remission of sins, confessing the Lord is not a test endured by force but a joyful thing. This is because they are calling the One who removed their sins their Savior.

The promise that He will confess us *"before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32)* is greater than people's evaluations. Even if the people before our eyes do not acknowledge us, the Savior receives us before the Father. So a disciple must not weigh a moment's reputation and eternal recognition as having the same weight, but must make clear whose recognition he will look to.

Let us read verse 33. *"But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33)*. Conversely, He gave a solemn word concerning those who deny Jesus. It means that one cannot take lightly keeping the claim to believe in the Lord only inside one's heart while continuing to deny Him before men. Denial lies not only in words saying that one does not know Him, but also in

belittling the work He accomplished by saying that He is not the Savior or that He could not remove all our sins.

The word *"him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33)* must be received just as it is. There is no one who can say that he does not need the Lord's recognition. The Lord has made clear where the way of rejecting the Savior in order to be accepted by people ends. So respond truthfully to the word you have heard today.

On the other hand, if we have fallen because of weakness, we must not hold out while hiding that fault, but must return to the Lord. Peter also denied the Lord, but the risen Jesus came to him again. Just like his confession, *"You know that I love You" (John 21:17)*, we must come honestly to the Lord, who knows all our weakness.

A life of confessing the Lord leads to a life of believing in Jesus, who accomplished salvation, and asking Him for help. Do not push your relationship with the Savior out of your life because difficulties have arisen. Make your choices with the word you have received as the standard, and ask for the strength you need. Acknowledging that the One who saved us is the Lord on whom we will rely today as well—that is a life of confession.

Look to the recognition before the Father

In verses 26, 28, and 31 the Lord repeatedly says not to fear, and in verse 28 He makes clear the only One to be feared. This is because the disciple belongs to the Lord, what is covered will be revealed, and the Father knows the disciple and regards him as precious. The Lord did not tell them to steel their hearts without any basis. By letting them know Himself and the Father, He gave them a basis for being bold.

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Confirm your place again in the word *"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher" (Matthew 10:25)*. While following the Lord, you cannot demand from the world a full welcome that even the Lord did not receive. Even if there is opposition, do not be ashamed of being a disciple of the Savior.

Preach the gospel you have heard accurately so that others can understand it. When you are asked what you believe, do not explain only how big our gathering is or what activities we do, but speak of the salvation Jesus accomplished. The clearer the center of the confession that confesses the Savior is, the more you can be freed from the desire to change the gospel, shaken by people's reactions.

Set the standard of your heart right with the word *"But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28)*. The louder people's threats sound, the more we must listen to God. Do not accept your present circumstances as if they were an eternal verdict, but entrust yourself to God, the Lord of life.

And receive comfort through the word *"you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31)*. The God whom we fear is the Father who knows all about us. Having fear does not mean losing the right to pray. We can speak to Him with our fearful hearts just as they are and ask for the strength to follow the word.

Even when someone else finds it hard to confess his faith, do not readily condemn and press him. Confirm together with the word what he believes, and help him remember the grace the Savior has accomplished. What is needed is not making him speak strong words outwardly, but letting him know and rely on Jesus in his heart.

We have reason to confess the Savior before men. This is because He saved us from sin and promised to confess us before

the Father. So do not hide the Savior in order to protect your own name, but, believing in the name of the Savior, build up your words and choices today honestly.

Jesus said that He would confess us before the Father. Treasuring this promise, set your hearts on the word of the Savior rather than on people's evaluations. Within the care of the Father, who knows all about us, I hope that you will live joyfully confessing that Jesus is our Savior. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Take up your own cross and follow the Lord

< Matthew 10:34–39 >

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

"I did not come to bring peace but a sword"

The Lord said, *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34)*. And He said, *"For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household'" (Matthew 10:35–36)*. If we look at this word from a religious point of view, the founders of all religions say that families must be in harmony, that people must be loyal to their country, and that there must be friendship between friends, but what the Lord said is different. He said that He came

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to this earth not to bring peace to the world but to bring a sword. It means that strife will arise, and also the sword is not something He spoke of in a bad sense; it means that He came to give God's word of life.

The Lord said that He came to this earth to set the members of a household against one another, and that a man's enemies are the members of his own household. From a religious point of view, this is a greatly contradictory word. People should be in harmony; how can He make them fight and make the members of a household enemies of one another? But everything the Lord has said is the truth. Because He seeks to save the wicked, those who have fallen into destruction, strife arises with the wicked, and the members of a household become enemies of one another. Also He said, *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37)*. And He said, *"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:38)*. He said that if one wants to live as the Lord's disciple, one must fight even with the members of one's own household and must fight with the world as well, and that one who loves father or mother more than the Lord is not worthy, and one who loves son or daughter more is not worthy either. So receiving the remission of sins may be easy, but following the Lord is not an easy thing. If we do it by faith, it is easy, and if we do not do it by faith, it is tremendously hard.

There is no one who can follow faith while being at peace with the world and at peace with the members of his household as well. If one tries to follow the Lord properly, it cannot but turn out this way. This is because we try to follow what is right, but the unbelieving members of our households, even if they are our brothers, consider what we do not right. People who want to

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become the Lord's disciples and want to follow the Lord truly go through pain. They have much pain within themselves as well.

As the Lord said in this word, there is much pain in following the Lord. He said that one who loves parents or children more than the Lord, and one who does not take up his own cross and follow the Lord, are not worthy of the Lord.

There is no one who does not have a cross of his own

The cross refers to hardship. He said that those who throw off such things, cast them aside, and follow are not worthy either. It is an exceedingly hard thing. Becoming the Lord's disciple and following the Lord is no easy matter. When we look at our saints and ministers, at me and at you, one person at a time, everyone has hardships. Everyone has suffering, and everyone has quarrels among the members of his household. People say that one gets past most things, but for some people a certain thing can be painful, and for other people a certain thing can be very easy. But in any case, He said that one who does not take up his own cross and follow the Lord is not worthy of the Lord either. To our way of thinking, merely believing in the Lord and following Him is hard enough, and if there are many personal hardships, we become irritated and worn out, so that if we could, we would want to throw them off. We call it one's own cross, but when we think of that cross, sometimes tears even come. Everyone has such things, and since He said that those who throw these off and follow are not worthy, we must simply take it as a matter of course and follow the Lord, believing, enduring, and asking. There is no other way. So it seems that we comfort one another and, because we cannot endure the pain alone,

follow the Lord with all our heart and all our strength. It seems that only then can we follow the Lord.

There is no one at all who does not have a cross of his own. There is no one who can say, "I have none." Earlier He said that one who loves his parents more than the Lord is not worthy, and in fact this, too, is a tremendously hard thing. When we try to obey our parents' words, we grow distant from the Lord, and when we try to follow the Lord, we become enemies of our parents. When we stand at such a crossroads, we follow the Lord, and that is why we become the Lord's disciples today. The reason we must do so is that the Lord's word is right. In fact, it is not that we defy our parents on purpose; but if our parents in the flesh hinder the way of following the Lord and oppose God, how can we obey them, even if they are our parents in the flesh? If we obey that, what results will follow? It means that countless people will no longer be saved through you and me. And it means that you and I will not be able to follow the Lord of life. So although our hearts ache, we cannot but follow the Lord, and because that is right, we must follow by faith.

He said that one who loves son or daughter more than the Lord is not worthy either, and I cannot tell you how much there is that is not worthy. He said that we must not love more than the Lord our children, who are the apple of our eye, but if those children go against us and interfere, do not follow the Lord's will, and do not follow the right word of God, we cannot love them more than the Lord, can we? If they follow the Lord's will in a precious way, we ought to love them, but if they do not, how can we love them? The Lord has made you and me go through such processes. And He has made us overcome.

People hold fixed ideas and want things to turn out so that they believe in and follow the Lord well, treat people well, get along well with their families, and build a harmonious home, as

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if gaining both this and that, but it means that this cannot be. It means that if we please the Lord, we end up disappointing our families, and if we try to keep things smooth with our families, we cannot but disappoint the Lord. That is why the Lord 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" (Matthew 6:24)*. We cannot do well at both. We cannot but regard one side as important and regard the other side lightly. So it cannot but be hard. Some people are caught up with their children, some are caught up with their parents, and some are caught up with themselves. Everyone has something.

If there is someone who says he lives the life of the Lord's disciple and yet follows the Lord lightheartedly without any hardship, that person is a liar. Everyone has pain. Everyone has pain in the flesh. Because the Lord told us to follow Him while enduring it well, we cannot but do so, and we cannot but endure it well by faith and live well. Since we try to live forgetting all these things, we must live with our whole heart set on one place. Elsewhere there is no comfort, and we cannot be compensated. Taking up one's own cross and following the Lord even in the midst of hardship is the life of the disciples. So there is also pain. Everyone has pain. In the midst of hardship we must not throw this off. We simply live this way all our lives.

I understand that because there would be a problem with following the Lord if we had no hardship at all in living, the Lord spoke in this way and gave us hardships in this way. If we had no hardship at all, would we not become puffed up with pride? Everyone has hardships. He has given us hardships because it is fitting. Just as, when the apostle Paul was ill in body and asked that his thorn be removed, the Lord said, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9)*, I understand that what He has done to you

and me is also fitting and proper. Because it is what the Lord has done, I understand that all of it is right.

As I look at the saints and the workers, I see that everyone has hardships. It would be good if there were no hardships, but everyone has them. Among those who follow the Lord, among those who live the life of the Lord's disciple, there is no one who does not have such a cross. Everyone goes through such processes, and having overcome them all, they are now coming forth as they are. We must not disregard this. The Lord came not to bring peace but to bring a sword, and He came to give God's word of life, save you and me from sin, and give us everlasting life. It was not simply to make us live in harmony in the flesh; rather, He came to this earth to save us from sin and from destruction, and saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. With the baptism He received from John, the Lord had all our sins transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us. Then how can we not believe in the Lord? Even if the whole world says no, we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

After receiving the remission of sins, we come into conflict with our families in order to follow the Lord, and we must stand on God's side and follow God. Only then can we live. Only then can we follow the Lord. We have gone through all these processes. Do you have hardships, or not? Yes, you do. Everyone has pain in the heart. It means that if one is the Lord's disciple, one goes through all these processes and has all these pains. This word is saying that the one who follows the Lord even in the midst of such things is the Lord's disciple.

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A disciple is one who follows the Lord even in the midst of hardship

I have things about which I say, “I want to avoid just this one thing. Even if I suffer hardship through other things, I do not want this one,” and all of you have such things, too. But among those who want the life of the Lord’s disciple, there are people who hope that, though such things may happen to other workers or other ministers, they will not happen to themselves, and who do not want to allow them. It means that such people are not worthy as the Lord’s disciples. It means that if one wants to live as the Lord’s disciple, the one who goes through and endures hardships and, while asking for the Lord’s help, lives following the Lord even in the midst of such things is exactly the Lord’s disciple. It means that the Lord’s will is not that we avoid all hardship and suffering, cast them aside, and live, but that we follow the Lord’s will and live standing on the Lord’s side even in the midst of hardship.

It is easy to say, but the Lord allows us all these processes, and in fact it is hard. Shrewd people, people who think they are smart, say, “Only foolish people live that way; this is the way to live life,” but such people are already not disciples. In fact, there is no one at all who has no hardship in following the Lord. Even so, following the Lord’s will is what the Lord’s disciple is. We must follow by faith. Our family members, too, are all souls who must be saved. The purpose for which we, having received the remission of sins, are on this earth is to preach the gospel to this world. If not for this, what value is there in living? In order to fulfill this, we must also endure the rest of the hardships, and it means that this is tremendously hard because human beings have flesh. Faith is needed, and devoting all our strength to the work of God is needed.

People of faith all have hardships. It would be good if there were no hardships, but what can we do when there are? We must endure them. Trying to follow without hardship while serving and following the Lord's gospel is a great delusion. It is wrong. In the hardships God has allowed, we must look to the Lord, overcome the world, and follow. Those who actually go through it find it hard. Those who have not yet lived this way have much to say, this and that, but those who follow this way find it extremely hard, and each of them has pain. It means that the person who follows the Lord in the midst of such things is the Lord's disciple.

It is not throwing off all suffering and then following; following the Lord even in the midst of such things is what the Lord's disciple is. And we must endure by faith. Because it is hard, the righteous comfort one another and eat delicious food, too, and how much comfort we receive because of the Lord! We must live that way, receiving comfort. In fact, where else would we receive comfort if not from the Lord? Could we receive comfort from people who do not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, or from people who believe but do not live the life of disciples? We are treated as fools and called fanatics. We are perfectly normal people.

All of us—God's servants, workers, and saints—must regard one another as precious, love one another, and comfort one another, and at the same time we must think of the Lord's will first, and must receive comfort, receive new strength, and receive blessings in the righteousness of God, in that service of serving God, in the Holy Spirit, and in the word. Otherwise we cannot possibly live. It is not that we follow the Lord because we are perfect in human terms.

You and I both have pain. If we try not to go through pain, even more pain comes to us. If it is something the Lord has

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allowed, and we follow the Lord while going through the pain and follow Him looking only ahead, then the Lord, in His embrace, makes us forget our suffering moment by moment, makes us worthy, and makes us live well.

I have nothing else to tell you. I only tell you this part—that since this is the Lord's word, let us live well by faith—and I cannot speak to you with human means and methods. Since this is the Lord's word, there is no other way. Dear fellow believers, have you ever cried, not because of your own wrongdoing, but because of the pain that comes from following the Lord? Many times, have you not? There have been many times of weeping and wailing because of pain the Lord has allowed. Yet because we follow the Lord, does the Lord not give us new strength, give us comfort, and hold us up? So for Christians, that is, people of faith who believe in Jesus Christ, throwing off hardship is not the best course; rather, they must follow along according to the Lord's will even in the midst of such things.

The persecution we receive because of the Lord is blessed

Our young people, too, are following the Lord well now, and even if, while following, they run into hardships, are led astray by their friends, and want to imitate the things of the world, they must go through any amount of such pain because they believe in the Lord. The prophets, too, went through pain because of the Lord's name, because of following the Lord. But the Lord said, *"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 5:11–*

12). If we are persecuted because of the Lord, that is a blessed thing. We must endure it. It is natural to be told that we are foolish because we do not follow the current of the world. If you are people of God and those who have to do with Jesus Christ, you must naturally hear it. If you never hear such words even once, you must look back on your own faith. One should be hated even by one's own family because one follows Christ; to follow the Lord without being hated is not following the Lord. It is greatly wrong. The Bible says, *"Woe to you when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26)*. It is wrong for Christians to be hated by the people of the world because they steal, but to get along too well with them in the flesh and be praised by them is a sign of coming woe. It is not knowing where one belongs. It is wrong not to know which kingdom one belongs to or which kingdom's law one must follow, and, while being God's worker and one of His people, to conform to the people of the devil's kingdom and follow its law.

The person who is persecuted because of the Lord obtains comfort and is filled with righteousness. All those who live the life of disciples have such pain, but the comfort and blessing that come through the Lord are greater. The word says that their reward in heaven is great and that they receive a hundredfold even in this world. It is truly so. You and I both have such pain, but I hope that we will comfort one another and live well. I hope that you will endure it well by faith. The word says that if we are truly disciples, we must live this way. So, whether we die or live, we follow the Lord's will and do the work. Like the old saying that if one does not read a book for even a single day, thorns grow in one's mouth, we cannot live if we do not work even for a little while on any single day, because it is so hard and distressing. Our being persecuted by our children, our families, or the world is because we follow the truth, not because we have

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done wrong; therefore we must endure it well by faith and draw a clear line in our hearts. We must live by faith. We must live the life of disciples. No words are needed. Everyone probably has at least one thing about which they say, "I have this hardship, and it would be so good if only this were resolved." But if we live looking to the Lord, every problem is resolved when the Lord allows it, and even so, there will be hardships anyway. In pain there is comfort, there is reward, and we can also follow the Lord.

All we can do is pray to God, follow God's will, and serve God. We cannot but make that our refuge, and we must live that way. That is exactly what the Lord's disciple is. When one disciple said, *"Lord, let me first go and bury my father" (Matthew 8:21)*, the Lord said, *"Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead" (Matthew 8:22)*. In fact, whatever happens with the affairs of the world, following the Lord comes before that. Then does it mean that we should not even go to a funeral home? That is not what it means; it means that we should not do dead works. It means that we should not do things that are useless and without worth.

You and I have received the remission of sins before the Lord and have become people who have to do with God. I understand that God has also allowed many hardships. I hope that you will endure them well by faith and live well by faith. There is nothing more to it. For you and me, the very attempt not to have pain is itself wrong. We want to throw it all off at once, but the Lord is One who is jealous. He wants us to love Him most and follow Him above anything else. That Lord becomes a great comfort and a shield to those who live that way.

Serving the gospel is our comfort

I have nothing else to tell you. I have nothing to tell you except to live by faith. If you and I truly want to live the life of disciples, we must live quietly. When it is hard, the righteous should gather and comfort one another, unite to do the work of God together, and serve the Lord well, so that we receive comfort from many people's receiving the remission of sins. Since the Holy Spirit holds our hearts, comforts us, and gives us new strength, we must live that way, looking to the life to come and looking to everlasting life, living forever. Whoever you are—young people, adults, and children, those who have just received the remission of sins, and those who received the remission of sins long ago—if you want to live the life of the Lord's disciple, I hope that you will know and keep in mind that you must follow the Lord by faith as it is written in the Bible. Whoever does not do so cannot follow the Lord.

Each of you must think about this. That is why I love the church. I love the work of God. If I had nothing to do, even though I have received the remission of sins, I would probably die. I love the work of God. It is also hard and difficult, but if there were no work of God, I could not live. When there is too much of God's work, I also get worn out, but if there is no work, I cannot live. We all have many pains in our hearts; how could we live just holding those pains in our hearts? We live receiving comfort and forgetting them while doing the work of the gospel. This is the proper way.

Those who have gone ahead keep making work and following, yet at times the desire to simply sit down and give up creeps up in us. There is a desire to settle down, a desire to stay at this level and live there. But if we live that way, we all die. We cannot keep our faith. That is why the Lord gives us much

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work. He tells us to make many people throughout the world disciples and preach the gospel. How hard it is to try to make many people throughout the world disciples! They must follow us for us to make them disciples, but they do not even acknowledge us as teachers and they talk back; even one or two people in our own neighborhood are hard, yet He tells us to make the people of the whole world disciples. He said so because He is the Lord. It is because He has great power. But if the Lord makes it happen, it happens. What is there that cannot be done? It can be done.

We must keep running forward by faith without ceasing. When flowing water stops, it rots. We, too, must continue the life of serving. Otherwise each of your hearts will rot. It will die. Even if you have received the remission of sins, it will die. We must do it without ceasing. We must keep starting works, serving the gospel of the Lord's kingdom, and expanding the Lord's kingdom. All of us must continue. We have a desire to settle down, but if we do, we die. Because we have the same flesh, our desire to settle down is intense. But if we do that, it is the end; if we go off on our own, it is the end; so we gather together, hold prayer meetings, and eat delicious food, too. Doing this, we must comfort one another and keep running forward in the spread of the gospel and the work of serving. We must not sit down and give up. We would die. In one month the outcome is decided. If we do not do the work of serving the gospel for just one month, everything is over—the heart, the thoughts, and the body. I hope that we will know this and live by faith.

We must know that the Lord's word is the truth and live by faith. I am happy living this way.

We cannot do everything the flesh wants, but we do even a small part of it and receive comfort from that. The Bible says,

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). I believe that if we first please the Lord, the Lord also comforts us and blesses us both in spirit and in body. It is certain that He does so.

The blessing of living as the Lord's disciples

Once, some elderly people received the remission of sins. First, an elderly sister testified, "Through John the Baptist, my sins have safely passed on to Jesus." She must have been anxious, wondering what would happen if they did not pass on. She said they had passed on safely and stepped down, and the other elderly women also testified in the same way that through John the Baptist their sins had safely passed on to Jesus. How good and comforting it is to hear such testimonies!

I hope that you will keep your faith well and live as disciples, though you are lacking as disciples. Let us live doing what pleases the Lord, our Teacher, believing the word of God, going along with the flow of the church and uniting with it, and serving the Lord, though we are lacking, in Him who gives us strength, as much as we have and as much as pleases the Lord. Let us live that way and then meet the Lord. Do not be here for a while and then disappear. Those who have left that way are truly pitiful. We also scold them, but in fact they are pitiful. If any of you happen to be harboring the thought of leaving, my heart aches. Is living the life of a disciple only hard and difficult? It is hard and difficult, but it is also a comfort and a blessing. It is what the Lord has prepared in order to bless us. It is by no means something forced. Only when we live that way can other souls receive the remission of sins, and only when we live that way can we receive rewards in the kingdom of heaven and live in

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God's blessing on this earth as well. That is the Lord's will. It is what the Lord does to bless us. So I hope that, so that you never fail to overcome hardship and fall back, you will unite with the church all the more as hardships increase and follow the Lord's will well. Then the Lord will repay you with more comfort and more blessings. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who remembers even small acts of service

< Matthew 10:40–42 >

“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”

The place of welcoming those who have been sent

Jesus sent out His disciples and spoke of the hardships they would face on the road and the faith they had to keep. But now the gaze of the word turns to the person who welcomes those disciples. If there is the labor of going out to preach the gospel, there are also the hands that value that labor and receive it. The Lord looks at these two places together and gives a promise even for small acts of service.

Let us read verse 40. *“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (Matthew 10:40)*. Receiving a disciple is connected with receiving Jesus. Jesus does not look at the act of taking one person into one’s house in isolation, but makes us see together the One who sent

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him and the word he preaches. So when we know whose disciple he is, the meaning of receiving him becomes clear.

The word *"He who receives you" (Matthew 10:40)* is also a strength to the disciples who are being sent. They were not people who wandered about without belonging anywhere, but people whom Jesus had sent. Receiving them does not stop at giving them a room; it embraces even accepting the words they preach and joining in heart with the work they do. In some places they will be rejected, but the Lord Himself will value the actions of the person who receives them in this way.

The person who receives needs the faith that sees, beyond the person before his eyes, the Lord who sent him. If we respond by weighing only whether someone's outward appearance is familiar or whether he is a person who will be of help to us, we can miss the labor of the gospel. Examine whose word he preaches and what grace he believes in. The gospel we have received also renews the standard by which we treat people.

Earlier, Jesus told the disciples to *"inquire who in it is worthy" (Matthew 10:11)* and stay. And now He reveals how precious such receiving is. The one who preached needed a place to stay, and the one who welcomed him met that need. In this way, the gospel is preached in the midst of real relationships and service.

It is easy for us to narrow faith down to merely a matter of what we say. But the Lord also sees what kind of people we receive and how we reach out our hands to them. If we confess that we love the Savior, that confession must also be revealed in our attitude toward those who labor in preaching His word.

The faith that recognizes in the disciple the One who sent him

By saying *"receives Me" (Matthew 10:40)*, Jesus connected the receiving of His disciples with Himself. This means that He values the labor of the people He has sent that much. So when we treat a person who preaches the gospel, we cannot regard it merely as the matter of one person who has nothing to do with the Lord.

But this connection is not an authority that the disciple has made up for himself. The Lord sent him, and the Lord said so. Therefore, the disciple, too, has a responsibility. He must not put forward his own will as though it were the Lord's will, but must faithfully preach the word the Lord has sent. The place of being received is not a place for exalting himself, but a place for serving the gospel entrusted to him.

Next He said, *"He who receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (Matthew 10:40)*. The connection runs from the disciple to Jesus, and from Jesus to the Father who sent Him. This means that a response toward God can be contained in the act of receiving one person. The Lord lets us know this relationship and values our service.

The word *"Him who sent Me"* shows that the disciple's work is within the will of God. Therefore, both the one who preaches and the one who welcomes must keep their eyes on God. It is going beyond a relationship in which people meet only out of liking for each other or for profit, and taking part together in the work of the gospel that God accomplishes.

But this does not mean raising the disciple to the same place as God. What Jesus connected is the response of faith that welcomes the disciple who has been sent. If we read it as a word telling us to take even all of that person's opinions and actions

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as the will of God, we go beyond the passage. People must be examined in the light of the word, and respect, too, must be given rightly within the truth.

When we treat people while thinking of the Lord, outwardly visible status cannot monopolize the standard of our hearts. We come to value those who believe the gospel and serve faithfully, even though they are not well known in the world. It means giving thanks that the Lord's word is preached through such a person and joining in that labor with whatever help we can give.

Receiving a prophet and a righteous man in their name

Let us read verse 41. *"He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matthew 10:41)*. Taking up the prophet and the righteous man, Jesus promised a reward to those who receive them in their name. What is important here is the faith that knows whom we are welcoming. Weighing only the profit to be gained from a person is different from recognizing a person who belongs to God.

A person who receives a prophet *"in the name of a prophet"* is one who receives him knowing that he is a person who preaches the word of God. It is not responding because his name is known or because he is popular, but welcoming the one who preaches the word with a heart that values the word God has entrusted.

The promise *"shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10:41)* tells us that the labor of welcoming, too, is taking part in the Lord's work. Think of Joshua, who attended Moses at his

side. He recognized the servant of God as God's servant and served him closely, running his errands, and the man who had learned in this way, seeing and hearing at his side, was later appointed by God. Those who recognize and receive a servant of God grow in faith at his side and are shaped into people who are themselves entrusted with the work of God.

Jesus also spoke of the person who receives a righteous man *"in the name of a righteous man."* It means knowing a righteous person as a righteous person and treating him so. It is not respecting that person because he looks flawless on the outside, but receiving him because we know that he is a person who believes in the righteousness the Savior has given and that he is one of God's people.

Those who have received the remission of sins also each differ in personality, experience, and circumstances. They may not have only the sides that are comfortable for us. Even so, the person who receives a righteous person as a righteous person hears the word that righteous person preaches and comes to know how the Lord removed our sins. Rather than whether he suits you well, first remember the identity he has received from the Lord, and respect him.

The word *"shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matthew 10:41)* is a promise that the Lord knows all such receiving. So we do not have to concern ourselves only with whether the other person is grateful right away. This is because God remembers the labor of valuing a person who belongs to God. This promise lets us entrust the final judgment of our service to the Lord.

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Valuing a small person because he is a disciple

Let us read verse 42. *"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42)*. The word moves on from the prophet and the righteous man to *"one of these little ones."* Jesus does not have us pay attention only to those who stand out greatly, but also values the work of serving a small person for the reason that he is a disciple. So this is a place where it is revealed whom we regard as precious.

Read the words *"in the name of a disciple"* carefully. It means helping someone knowing that he is a disciple who belongs to the Lord. It is treating him that way not because he has influence and so we can receive back as much as we have helped, but because of the fact that he is a person who follows Jesus. The faith that knows the Savior changes the eyes with which we see people.

The word *"one of these little ones"* contains concern for one person. It is not only great labor known to many people that is meaningful to the Lord. It is also important to attend to the needs of the one person who is in front of us now. We must not erase the value of that service on the grounds that the number of people is small and the work is not noticeable.

When we hear that a well-known person is coming, we make preparations, yet we can miss the needs of those who labor quietly in ordinary times. It is the same when we treat a worker who is young in age. We treat him as precious not only because he works hard but because he is the Lord's disciple who does the work of God. Attend to the one person who is helping with the word in a place where no one recognizes him, and recognize the fact that he is living the life of a disciple.

Also, even when we feel like small people, we can receive comfort from this word. Even if one is not widely known, the fact that one is a disciple who belongs to the Lord is by no means light. The Lord remembers even the help given to such a disciple. So do not measure your worth only by the size of the attention people give you.

Respect among those who believe in Jesus does not arise only when they do the same work. Even if the tasks entrusted to us differ, we can recognize and value the desire to serve the gospel. Give thanks that others are fulfilling roles that you do not have. Faith toward the Lord can be contained even in one person's small labor.

The heart revealed through a cup of cold water

Jesus spoke of *"whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water" (Matthew 10:42)*. He gave as an example not a great gift that anyone would admire, but a cup of water that a thirsty person actually needs. If we value someone in our hearts, that heart is revealed in the action of moving our hands to give what is needed.

The phrase *"only a cup"* keeps us from regarding small help as trivial. Even if we do not have the ability to meet every need at once, there is something we can give now. We must not pass by today's small needs while waiting only for the day when we can give great help. Service can begin with what we have now.

The value of a cup of water becomes clearer when it meets the need of a thirsty person. This is because it is not an object meant to show off our abundance, but a hand that helps that person. So when we think about helping, too, we must not look only at the satisfaction of the giver, but must listen to what the

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receiver actually needs. Interest in getting to know the other person makes service concrete.

The Gospel of Mark also has the word *"whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ" (Mark 9:41)*. It means help given knowing that the person belongs to Christ. So rather than weighing only the amount of water, we must see whom that heart is valuing. Faith toward Christ is contained in this small act.

The help we can give may take various forms depending on the need. We can let a weary person rest, prepare a place for preaching the word, and help at someone's side so that he can finish the work entrusted to him. It means listening to the circumstances of the person being helped and doing the share that we can do. If we look only for things that seem great, we easily miss the needs that are close at hand.

But this does not mean that while doing small service we must keep our hearts small, too. We can give our utmost with a heart that offers it to the Lord. Conversely, even when we give great help, we must separately examine whether our hearts are right. Whatever we give, what must be at the center is the fact that we value the disciple and join in the will of the Lord who sent him.

Labor that is by no means forgotten

Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you" (Matthew 10:42)*, and so firmly confirmed this promise. He did not leave to the disciples' guesswork how precious small service is, but spoke clearly Himself. So there is a promise to believe and hold on to even in labor that no one seems to recognize.

That promise is that *"he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42)*. The world evaluates work by its visible size, but the Lord knows all the help given out of valuing His own disciples. Even though we cannot determine in what form and when that reward will be given, we can believe that the Lord who promised is true.

Keep in your heart the certainty that the words *"by no means"* give. Even if you do not strive to make your labor known, the Lord knows it. Do not lose your good heart because few people recognize it. But neither must you turn your help into a debt by continually demanding words of thanks from the other person.

The Book of Hebrews says, *"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10)*. It means that God remembers service done for the sake of God's name. Today's small labor may vanish from people's memories, but it is not hidden from God.

Of course, this reward is not a transaction in which we pay the price with good deeds and buy the remission of sins. Jesus has already accomplished the remission of sins. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and among them are all the sins of our entire lives, without a single one left out. And as the price of that sin, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death. It is to those who have believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit, freely received the remission of sins, and received the Holy Spirit as a gift that the Lord has promised even a reward when they serve with the grace they have received.

When we know both the thankfulness of having been saved and the promise of the reward, we come not to regard service merely as something we do reluctantly. We, too, come to value

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what the Lord values and join in it. Instead of reaching out our hands while calculating how much we will get back, we help, believing that it is work fitting the Lord's will. The hope that believes the promise upholds such quiet labor.

The church that supports one another's labor

The phrase *"He who receives you" (Matthew 10:40)* in verse 40 continues in verse 42 as the person who gives small help. The word *"receives,"* which appeared repeatedly in verses 40 and 41, changes in verse 42 to the word *"gives."* Receiving does not remain a feeling of goodwill in the heart, but goes as far as giving the actual room needed for the labor of the gospel. That is why, when we serve together in the church, it is important to attend to one another's needs.

Those who preach the gospel must not take other people's small help for granted. They must give thanks, knowing that it is thanks to those helping hands that their labor can continue. Being entrusted with the work of teaching does not mean one can look down on those who help. The Lord promised a reward also to those who welcome a disciple and give him cold water.

You who help, too, do not regard your own share as trivial. Not being able to step forward and preach the word does not mean that there is no way to take part in the work of the gospel. As in the promise *"shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10:41)*, the Lord values the labor of receiving and helping, too. You only need to do your share with a heart that believes in the Lord.

Relationships of mutual respect also need honest words. There may be things that you want to help with but cannot do right now. Rather than hiding that limit or making exaggerated

promises, clearly state the help you are able to give, and share it. Serving truthfully, even in something small, sets the relationship up rightly.

Take care that your standard for valuing people does not stop only at how close they are to you. It is easy to know well the needs of those you talk with often while passing by those who labor quietly. When you remember the word *"one of these little ones,"* you can widen the scope of your concern, and you come to look anew at a person who belongs to the Lord.

The One whom both the person who gives help and the person who receives it must look to together is Jesus. It is not a relationship in which one side puts forward its merit and the other side insists on its rights; rather, we must serve together as people who have received the Lord's grace. When we share together the joy of the gospel being preached and of the saints growing in the word, each person's labor, too, finds its proper place.

The small helping hand we can extend today

Jesus connected the receiving of His disciples with Himself and with the Father. He promised a reward to those who receive a prophet and a righteous man in their name, and He valued even a cup of cold water given to a little disciple. When we read following this flow, we come to know that how we treat the one person in front of us is by no means a light matter.

Treat those who serve the gospel while remembering the word *"receives Me" (Matthew 10:40)*. You must not determine a person's value only by his outward appearance or status. Examine whose word he preaches and what grace he believes in,

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and let your respect for the Savior be revealed in your actual attitude.

The word *"he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man" (Matthew 10:41)* makes us value together the salvation we have received. Go beyond the familiar habit of receiving only those who suit you well. You must treat those who have received the remission of sins through the same gospel as God's people. The grace we have received together is the basis for respecting one another.

Have a heart that helps *"in the name of a disciple."* It means not first weighing whether he will become famous or whether he will be of benefit to you, but looking together after the needs of a person who follows the Lord and serves the gospel. When there is such concern, the labor of the church does not remain a burden that one person bears alone.

Find what you should do today in the word that you can give *"only a cup of cold water."* Even if you cannot solve every problem, you can meet one small need. You can help someone finish his labor, and you can encourage a weary heart. Do not put off even the love you can show now on the grounds that you have little.

Also be a person who remembers the help you have received and gives thanks. Behind the labor you have done, there were hands that joined with you. Do not speak of what others quietly helped with as only your own achievement; give thanks to God and value that person, too. We must not lightly forget the service that the Lord remembers.

The promise *"by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42)* gives us hope to keep on continuing small service. Even if the reward does not appear before your eyes right away, the Lord's word is true. Do not wear out your heart waiting for people's praise, but by faith keep on doing the work the Lord values.

Today we have small help to give to a disciple of the Lord. Value that person and extend the helping hand he needs. Jesus receives that service as a response toward Himself and remembers it. Within the promise of the Lord, who knows even a cup of cold water, I hope that we will receive one another and serve with joy. ✉

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CHAPTER

11

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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

Do not reject the true love of the Lord

< Matthew 11:1–14 >

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which 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. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.' As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 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. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until

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John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.'"

The word of God is the word of God and the truth whenever we look at it. Let us look at the word of Matthew chapter 11 with a heart that ruminates on it.

In this chapter, Jesus spoke about John the Baptist. *"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities" (Matthew 11:1)*. Jesus appointed the twelve disciples, and after He had fully spoken to those disciples in chapter 10, He went around to various towns and taught the word of God. Not only that, it says that He left that town and went to other towns to preach the gospel.

Jesus preached the kingdom of God

After that, Jesus gathered the twelve disciples, and together with those disciples He went around from this town to that town and preached the gospel. Dear fellow believers, what did Jesus preach? The kingdom of God. The people of Israel were waiting for the kingdom of God. They were waiting for the Son of God, the Savior of mankind, the Savior of their own nation, to come. That is why Jesus preached the kingdom of God. If it were us, we would preach, "Jesus came to this earth, had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross and died, rose again, and saved us." But how did Jesus preach about Himself? If you ask whether He said, "I am Jesus. I am your Savior," that is not so. When we look at the word the Lord taught on the mountain, He said, *"Blessed are*

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the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

It means that, though people are born and live on this earth, those who are not satisfied with the world and material things but wait for God and God's world are blessed. In this way, Jesus spoke about eight kinds of blessings. The Lord also came to this earth and healed many people. Going around to this town today and to that town tomorrow, He taught the word of God and preached the kingdom of God. While doing so, in Matthew chapter 11 He spoke about John the Baptist. We read up to verse 14, and all of this is a record about John the Baptist. In many other places as well, the Bible records things about John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was born on this earth six months before Jesus. And when Jesus was carrying out His public ministry, John the Baptist was put in prison while rebuking the sin of King Herod. It was because he had rebuked him, saying, "King Herod, is it right for you to take your younger brother's wife as your own wife?" Herodias, who had been the wife of King Herod's younger brother, had abandoned her own husband and was living with King Herod, her husband's older brother. She hated John the Baptist, who had rebuked that sin, and so she had her daughter ask King Herod for the head of John the Baptist. In the end, King Herod had soldiers behead John the Baptist and kill him. The point in time of today's word is when John the Baptist was imprisoned.

"Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me"

As Jesus went around preaching the kingdom of God, rumors about Jesus spread throughout the whole land of Israel. Because

Jesus both healed diseases and spoke about the kingdom of God, by word of mouth the attention of the people of the whole nation all turned to Jesus. John the Baptist, who was imprisoned, also heard the stories about the work of Jesus. So he sent his disciples who had come to see him to Jesus to ask whether He was the Coming One or whether they should wait for another. When the disciples of John the Baptist came and asked this, Jesus answered. *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which 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. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me'" (Matthew 11:4–6).*

Dear fellow believers, whom were the people of Israel of this time waiting for? At that time, the people of Israel were living under the rule of Rome, no different from slaves. So they were waiting for a new political leader who would save Israel, or for the Messiah, the Son of God the Father, that is, the Savior, to appear. But it says that when people meet Jesus, the deaf hear and the lame walk. He said that this is what actually happens to the people who meet Jesus. The blind meet Jesus and have their eyes opened. This word is spoken about you and me. We, too, did not know the kingdom of God. Even when we looked at the Bible, we did not know what it was saying, and no matter how many commentaries we brought and set before us, we did not rightly understand that word. But the people who have met the Lord truly have their eyes opened. Those who had lived a life of faith like that of the lame become able to live a right life of faith; those who had sin, as if they had contracted leprosy, are cleanly healed and become people who have no sin at all; and those who could not understand come to understand. He also said that the dead are raised, and we have met the Lord and become people

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who were dead and have come back to life. And through us, who have come back to life, the poor in spirit on this earth hear the gospel and are saved. All this is the word the Lord speaks to us. The Lord told the disciples of John the Baptist to go and convey these things.

Those who do not believe in the Lord stumble

Dear fellow believers, the Lord said that he who does not stumble is blessed. The Lord came to this earth as the Savior. He came as the Savior of mankind, had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, rose again from death, and became our true Savior. It means that those who say they believe in the Lord and say they know the Lord, yet do not believe in this perfect salvation of the Lord, stumble. To stumble means to miss one's footing and fall off a cliff. While carrying salt along rugged mountain paths, people and animals sometimes fall off a cliff and die, and that is what is called stumbling. There are many people who stumble even while saying that they believe in the Lord. Those who have heard about the Lord and yet do not believe are like people who fall off a cliff and die. Dear fellow believers, if you have heard about the Lord, you must believe. You must believe what you have heard and have your spiritual eyes opened, you must die and come back to life, and you must receive the remission of sins. Those who used to live a religious life must come to live a proper life of faith, and must obtain new life, become people who have obtained everlasting life, and live well.

Among those who say they believe in Jesus, there are people who stumble and there are also people who have been saved.

Jesus is the Savior of mankind, who removed all our sins and gave us new life. Those who meet that Jesus and believe rightly obtain everlasting life and also receive blessings, but those who do not believe even though they have met Jesus are like those who have stumbled. Under heaven there is no Savior but Jesus. There is no one but Jesus who removes the sins of all the people of this world. He is the Son of God the Father, and He came to this earth as the Savior of mankind, had the sin of mankind transferred onto His body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, thereby receiving in mankind's place the judgment mankind was to receive, died in place of mankind's death, rose again from death, and became the true Savior of mankind. Jesus is God, who removed all our sins, and He is the One who makes our lives whole. He is the One who gives us new life, a whole life, and happiness, and who gives us the blessing of everlasting life so that we can live forever. Therefore, if someone has met that Lord and yet does not believe, that person has no way to receive the remission of sins. He is like a person who, while making his way along a cliff thousands of fathoms high, falls and dies. Those who hear and believe the word that Jesus has saved us from all sins with the water, the blood, and the Spirit and given us new life obtain everlasting life, and those who do not believe are like people who have stumbled.

When a man of God opens the word and preaches it, it is all the word of God

Dear fellow believers, those who do not stumble are blessed people. This word that is being preached to you now is the word of God. If you hear and believe this word, you will receive all

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these blessings that God has promised to mankind: the remission of sins and everlasting life, becoming children of God, living forever in the kingdom of God, and not entering the fire of hell and not being judged. But those who hear yet do not believe, even though God preaches to them through His servants what Jesus has done, are like those who stumble. Those who do not stumble are blessed people, and those who stumble are pitiful people. Before God, what is the difference between those who have stumbled and those who have not? It is the difference of whether or not they believe it in their hearts when the word of God, that is, the word of salvation, is preached to them. They hear the word of God in the same way, but whether they believe that word in their hearts or not depends on themselves. This is your own sovereign right. No one can interfere with it.

Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will become blessed people. It is better to be blessed than to be without blessing, and it is good to live with blessed people. If you become one in heart with those who do not believe the gospel, you lose blessing, and if you are together with blessed people, you enjoy blessing. Dear fellow believers, do you experience this? Yes, you do. Those who have the Holy Spirit in their hearts cannot stay in that place when they hear a sermon without the gospel, but those who do not have the Holy Spirit rather like such sermons. It is because such sermons suit their nature exactly.

Do you think that only the words written in the Bible are the word of God and that the word God's servants preach is not the word of God? When I joke and jest with you in a fleshly way, that is clearly the word of man. But at least when I open the word of the Bible and preach about spiritual things, I am preaching not my word but the word of God, not my will but the will of God. The Lord said that those who hear are blessed. That the deaf hear means that they understand what is said. Such people are blessed

people. If someone hears the word of God yet does not understand what is said, that person is deaf. Those who hear and believe the word that preachers preach to them as the word of God are blessed people, but people without blessing stumble. It means that they fall off a cliff.

To avoid stumbling, you must hear and believe the word of Jesus

Jesus then spoke to the crowds about John the Baptist. *"As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet'" (Matthew 11:7–9).* Jesus went around to each town teaching and preaching the kingdom of God, and at this time, in whom was Jesus' interest? It was in John the Baptist. Jesus Himself preached the kingdom of God while speaking about John the Baptist. Although many things have been spoken since the Old Testament, the gospel of the kingdom of God must begin right here, from John the Baptist.

He is asking whether they went out to see a reed, to enjoy the atmosphere, or to take pictures. The sight of reeds shaken by the wind is very pleasant to see. I like nature very much. When I am riding in a car in the fall and see reeds in bloom, it is very nice. But Jesus asked the crowds following Him whether they had gone out into the wilderness to see a man clothed in soft garments. People who wear soft garments are in a king's palace. The people in a king's palace have their clothes made of beautiful fabric that glistens like silk. Even today, very

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expensive clothes have a glossy sheen. At the time when Jesus was doing His work, there were many scenes of people flocking noisily to the wilderness to see John the Baptist. “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? Did you go out to sightsee? Did you go out to get some fresh air? Did someone say there was a feast in the wilderness with meat being grilled for you? Did you go out to get something to eat?” This is what He is asking. “I know that is not so. You went out to the wilderness in crowds not to see some high-ranking person, nor to get something to eat, nor to lose yourselves in nature. You went out to see a prophet.” John the Baptist cried out in the wilderness, *“Brood of vipers!” (Matthew 3:7)*. So the people said, “If that man is not out of his mind, he is a servant of God,” and knowing that a servant of God had appeared, they went out into the wilderness to see that servant.

The appearance of John the Baptist was just as it was, that of a man of nature

For four hundred years before John the Baptist and Jesus appeared, there was no servant of God in Israel. Until then, there had been servants of God in every generation, in the time of every king. But for four hundred years, no servant of God appeared. So the people of Israel longed for a servant of God who would convey the will of God to them. One generation passed and another generation passed, and many generations went by without a servant of God. If we count a person’s whole lifetime as one generation, it is sixty or seventy years. Then how many generations would have passed in four hundred years? Each time, the elders died saying, “God must have abandoned this nation. No servant of God appeared in my grandfather’s time,

and none appears in my time either. I am just going to die without hearing the will of God conveyed by a servant of God." From generation to generation, there were people who died without hearing the voice of a servant of God conveying the will of God. But at last, John the Baptist appeared before such people of Israel. Yet as soon as this servant of God appeared, he rebuked the people of Israel, calling them a brood of vipers.

Dear fellow believers, in what appearance did John the Baptist appear? Did he appear wearing a gentleman's suit? He wore a garment of camel's hair and lived eating locusts of the field and wild honey. I do not know well whether he roasted the locusts or ate them raw, but they must have tasted good. When I was young and hungry, I also went to the mountains, caught locusts, and roasted and ate them, and they were very tasty. Wild honey is natural honey. It sometimes hangs from big trees and is sometimes in the ground, and John the Baptist lived by gathering and eating that honey. John the Baptist did not come to live inside the towns of the Jews but lived in the wilderness. Since it must have been cold at night, he always wore the garment of camel's hair. In this way, the appearance of John the Baptist was just as it was, that of an unadorned man of nature.

Jesus testified of John the Baptist while preaching the kingdom of God

But Jesus said that the people had gone out into the wilderness to see a prophet called John the Baptist, to see a servant of God. "Did you go out into the wilderness to see a prophet? That is right. He is a prophet. He is a servant of God. But he is more than a prophet." In this way, He testified of John the Baptist. Until that time there had been major prophets such

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as Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, as well as minor prophets, but Jesus testified that John the Baptist was greater than all those prophets and servants of God in Israel. John the Baptist is the representative of mankind and the representative of the prophets. John the Baptist was born on this earth, gave baptism to Jesus, and by passing the sin of mankind on to Jesus, fulfilled all the words promised in the Old Testament. And he testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, and He is the sacrificial lamb of God, that is, the Savior of mankind, who had the sin of mankind transferred onto His body through the baptism He received from John and bore it, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved mankind from all sins. The one who testified of this was John the Baptist. That is why Jesus said that John the Baptist was more than a prophet.

Therefore, for mankind to be saved from all sins, there is no other way than to be saved by believing that testimony, that is, that truth of salvation. We cannot be saved from sin by our deeds. For us to be saved, we need a Savior who bears our sins in our place, dies on the Cross for us, and saves us. That Savior is none other than Jesus. The one who passed the sin of the world on to that Jesus was John the Baptist, and the one who testified that that Jesus is the Savior was also John the Baptist.

This is preaching the gospel. So when we preach the gospel, we too must preach the role of Jesus and the role of John the Baptist, and we must also believe them. Do you believe the role of John the Baptist? Do you believe that Jesus said, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and had all the sins of you and me, that is, of all mankind, transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John? Do you believe that all the sins of you and me were passed on to Jesus through the baptism John the Baptist gave? To believe this is

faith, and those who believe are blessed people. If you do not believe, you will stumble. You will fall off a cliff and die and be cursed. If you believe, you will obtain blessing, life, and happiness, and if you do not believe, you will be cursed and enter a pit of fire and suffer torment. This is how faith and blessing are connected. So those who believe are blessed. Those who are poor in spirit are blessed. Those who, on this earth, hear, know, and believe the voice of the Lord through the servants of God have become blessed people.

Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will become people who believe. Jesus came to this earth and saved you and me from sin through the baptism He received from John, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection, so does this feel like nothing to you? Will you say, "I have no interest at all. That is something Jesus did"? Is it not what Jesus has done for each and every one of you? There is not a single person excluded from this work of salvation that Jesus accomplished through His baptism and the Cross. The baptism Jesus received from John, that is, the baptism John the Baptist gave to Jesus, is for the salvation of all of us, all mankind. The reason Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through that baptism was to remove the sins of you and me. Even so, does this have nothing to do with you? Those who say it has nothing to do with them do not believe this gospel of truth in their hearts and have no interest in it. We must take interest in the One in whom we ought to take interest.

If you do not take interest in Jesus, in whom will you take interest?

There are many things in this world to take interest in, but above all, Jesus loved you, received baptism from John to

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remove your sins, was hung on the Cross and died to receive the judgment for your sins, rose again from death, and saved you. Does your interest not go to Jesus, who loved you in this way? Taking interest in Jesus is beneficial to you. Not taking interest in Jesus is a loss to you. Everyone who takes interest in Jesus gains benefit. Jesus is the One who blesses us. He is truly a good God, not just in words. Jesus did good things for you and me. Dear fellow believers, let us take interest in Jesus. I hope that each of you will believe in your heart. To believe means to accept the word of Jesus personally in one's own heart. "I believe that You loved me so." To accept Him in the heart in this way is receiving Him, and it is personal fellowship with Him. "You truly loved me. I did not know that You loved me, but because You loved me, I have become a person who is related to You."

Dear fellow believers, because Jesus is God, He could not just stand by and watch you and me go to hell. Because He is the One who knows all our future, blesses our present and future, and truly loves us, He is related to us. Jesus came to this earth for you and me, and to save us, He had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross, died, and rose again. Dear fellow believers, even so, are you not grateful for His love? Is the Lord's love worth less than receiving a large sum of money? To be loved by God is an amazing blessing. Jesus, who is God, has the authority over all blessing and cursing. Jesus is the King and the Judge, who has all authority. Jesus removed our sins and made us His children. And on the last day He will judge those who do not believe the work of salvation that He Himself did. There is no jury in Jesus' court. Jesus' judgment is fair, righteous, and just. If, even though Jesus came to this earth and removed all our sins, people do not

believe that fact and do not accept it in their hearts and so are cursed and judged, that judgment is entirely right.

Do not refuse the love with which God has loved us

I ask this of you. Do not reject the love of God that is conveyed through the church. Even if you push away everything else, the love with which God has loved you is true love. The love with which He loved me and loved mankind is true love. There is no greater love than this love. Even your parents cannot love you as much as Jesus does. There would be few parents who would be nailed to an execution frame in their children's place because of their children's sins. Many people say, "Hold my child responsible for my child's sins." But our Lord did not do so. Are you not grateful? Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will believe. Does such love of Jesus not move your heart? Those who refuse such love will suffer a great loss.

Dear fellow believers, believing in Jesus is a far greater thing than winning the lottery. If you do not believe what Jesus has done to remove your sins, you become a person who refuses the love of Jesus, that is, a traitor. Dear fellow believers, God loves us, so would it be all right for us not to love that God? If we do not believe that love and refuse it, we become traitors. God will sit on the judgment seat and say, "You traitor, go into the fire of hell." Jesus loved us because He had pity on you and me and could not help but love us.

Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will not refuse the love of God, the love with which God has loved us. God has loved us whether we believe or not. Even if we turn our backs because we do not want to see the sun, the sun shines on our backs. Even if we do not believe, the love of God still embraces us. But if we

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betray Him to the end and do not believe, we will go to hell and be cursed because of that sin of unbelief. I hope that you will accept the love of God. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence

< Matthew 11:1–15 >

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which 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. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.' As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 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

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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. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

Today we have looked at the word of Matthew chapter 11 up to verse 15. Here Jesus testifies of John the Baptist, and He testifies of how great a figure John the Baptist is. He said that John the Baptist is more than a prophet and that *"among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*. This is how He testifies of him.

John the Baptist is the greatest among those born of women

In the Old Testament times there were leaders such as Moses, Joshua, and the judges, and there were prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Malachi, who left behind the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. But the point is that John the Baptist is above all those prophets. It is not that we exalt John the Baptist; it is Jesus who speaks of the greatness of John the Baptist.

He also said that John the Baptist is the greatest among those born of women. Since Adam and Eve, all mankind has been born through the body of a woman, and the point is that among them John the Baptist is the greatest. Why is that? It is because God specially prepared John the Baptist in advance for that work of

God Himself coming to this earth and removing our sins. God caused Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, that is, an old woman who could not have a child, to conceive John. When Zacharias went into the temple and burned incense, an angel of the Lord appeared and conveyed to him that his wife would bear a son and that he was to call his name John. It means that he was a person whom God specially prepared in this way. In this way the Bible exalts John the Baptist, testifies of him, and tells us why He had to send him.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:12–14). Jesus speaks about John the Baptist in many places in the Bible, and the Old Testament also testifies of John the Baptist. How important the work of John the Baptist is can be seen from the fact that all four Gospels bring John the Baptist onto the scene before they present the work of Jesus. They bring John the Baptist onto the scene before Jesus and introduce his work. And that John the Baptist gives baptism to Jesus. Also, the one who testifies that Jesus is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world is John the Baptist. When Jesus Christ came to this earth and saved us from sin, He first sent John the Baptist and had him prepare, and He had the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. Not only that, John the Baptist was indispensable for fulfilling all the words prophesied in the Old Testament. That is why God had John the Baptist born into a priestly family six months before Jesus. He did all this in order to fulfill the words of prophecy.

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John the Baptist is not a failure

But the people of the world do not accept this word as we do, and they often say that John the Baptist is one who failed. Some people say that John the Baptist is one who failed in faith. They say that because he was imprisoned and asked, *"Are You the Coming One?" (Matthew 11:3)*, he had fallen into temptation. They also say that it is because Jesus told the disciples of John the Baptist that whoever does not stumble because of Him is blessed. When John the Baptist was imprisoned, his disciples came to visit him. Then John the Baptist sent his disciples, saying, "Go to Jesus and ask Him. God said that He would send the Messiah, so ask Him directly whether that One is He. Or ask whether we must wait longer for another." When the disciples of John the Baptist went to Jesus in a crowd and asked, Jesus answered. *"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 11:5)*. He told them to go and convey that to their teacher, and He said that whoever does not stumble because of Him is blessed.

What Jesus said is that by coming to this earth, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, making the blind see, making the lame walk, making the deaf hear, and preaching the gospel to the poor, He testified that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Savior, and that if one believes in Jesus, one obtains salvation. But people read only up to verse 6 and say that John the Baptist failed. Even while reading the Bible, they keep forgetting that chapter 11 does not end at verse 6 but continues in one flow. Chapter 11 unfolds in this way, and it is all connected throughout the whole chapter. When John the Baptist was imprisoned, he told his disciples who had come to visit him to go to Christ and ask Him this, and after that Jesus testified of John the Baptist.

"He is the greatest among those born of women. What did you go out into the wilderness for? Did you go out to see a man clothed in soft garments? A man clothed in soft garments is in the king's palace. Go to the king's palace. He walks around with silk garments draped over his whole body, trailing them along the floor. Then what did you go out for? Did you go out to see a prophet? Yes. He is a true prophet, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and the greatest among those born of women." That is, it means that he is the representative of mankind. This is how Jesus testified of John the Baptist. The point is how great John the Baptist is: no prophet can surpass John the Baptist, and no one in the Old Testament can be more outstanding than John the Baptist.

Because I call John the Baptist the representative of mankind, people think that I am interpreting it as I please and saying so. John the Baptist told his disciples to go to Jesus and ask whether He was the One who was to come, and Jesus told them the whole story from beginning to end. And after sending them away, He spoke about John the Baptist, and its meaning is as follows: the people went out into the wilderness in order to meet a true prophet, that is, the representative of mankind; he is truly a servant of the Lord; and the Lord opens the gate of the kingdom of heaven through him. Anyone who believes the fact that all sins have been completely removed by what John the Baptist and Jesus did comes to enter the kingdom of heaven by faith. It means that if it is hard to believe, you should seize hold of it as if snatching it, saying, "I believe." Then you come to enter the kingdom of heaven. In this way He spoke about the role and the greatness of John the Baptist.

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The Bible was written by people who were moved by the Holy Spirit

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities" (Matthew 11:1). Jesus taught and preached. Then what does He teach us now through this word? He teaches who John the Baptist is. We must not interpret the Bible according to our own thoughts but must follow what the word says. We must cast away our thoughts and follow the word. A train does not fly through the sky to come to its destination. It sets its wheels on the railroad rails and reaches its destination by following the rails. We, too, must go straight along this word if we are to know the will of God. Then we can know, saying, "Ah, this is what He did." The Lord is teaching us what kind of work John the Baptist did. He is teaching us what the Lord did together with John the Baptist, that is, that He had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment, rose again from death, and opened the gate of the kingdom of heaven, and that He thus made it possible for anyone to enter by faith.

Dear fellow believers, the Bible we have is not a novel. The Bible was recorded by people who received the inspiration of God. Having received inspiration means that people who were moved in their hearts by the Holy Spirit recorded it. The Bible was recorded by some forty people over 1,600 years. It is an appointed principle that a person is born once and dies once, and there is no one who can live 1,600 years. It was not that forty people gathered in one place, recorded and edited it, and published a book; rather, the point is that some forty people recorded it with time gaps of hundreds of years, even a thousand years. And yet whom do they consistently record? They

prophesied that Jesus Christ would come in the future and that He would come in this way and do this. And in the New Testament times, the writer of the Gospel of Matthew was moved in his heart and recorded, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. It means that a person who was moved by the Spirit of God recorded it. That is why the Bible is the holy word. We must be taught by this word, and we are being taught by it now.

The reason Jesus exalts John the Baptist in this way is that He can open the gate of the kingdom of heaven through him. It is not John the Baptist who opens the gate of the kingdom of heaven. It is because John the Baptist passed the sin of mankind on to Jesus, and Jesus had the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, rose again, became our Savior, and could open the gate of the kingdom of heaven. That is what He is teaching us.

Dear fellow believers, because there are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, one might think that someone just brought in anyone and had him write a novel. But the one who recorded the Gospel of Matthew was a disciple of Jesus who had originally worked at the tax office. Jesus saw him sitting at the tax office and called him to follow Him, and he followed Jesus around and saw and heard. He also saw Jesus die and come back to life, and he also saw Him go up into heaven. The Holy Spirit was in his heart, and being moved, he recorded what he had seen while following Jesus around. Since that Bible testifies in this way, John the Baptist is not a failure. John the Baptist told his disciples to go to Jesus and ask Him in order to hand his disciples over to Jesus. A person such as Andrew, too, was originally a disciple of John the Baptist.

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After sending away the disciples of John the Baptist, Jesus asked what they had gone out into the wilderness to see. The people of Israel used to go out into the wilderness to see. It was because when they went out into the wilderness, there was a servant of God crying out the word of God. At that time people went out into the wilderness, heard the word of God that John the Baptist cried out, confessed their sins, repented, and returned to God. The point is this: did they go out to see a man clothed in soft garments? There are many such people if one goes to the king's palace. Then did they go out to see a prophet? Yes, he is the foremost and the representative among the prophets. John the Baptist is the greatest among those born of women. He is the one who passes sin on to Jesus. But since He said that he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he, the person who has been born again and has become one of the people of the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The messenger God sent, John the Baptist

The writer of the Gospel of Matthew, who was moved by the Holy Spirit, recorded in this way the words that Jesus Himself spoke about John the Baptist. Dear fellow believers, what did John the Baptist do that He would say that from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and that what the prophets and the law prophesied was until John? It means that what God had prophesied in the Old Testament was until the days of John the Baptist. It means that the prophecy of the Old Testament extends up to the time when John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed on the sin of mankind. When the days of John the Baptist came, all of the Old Testament was fulfilled. And He said that Elijah who was to come is this very

man. What does it mean that Elijah is this man? *"For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You'" (Matthew 11:10)*. This is a quotation of the word of Malachi in the Old Testament. Let us look it up together. *"'Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' Says the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:1)*.

In Malachi it said that he prepares the way *"before Me,"* and in Matthew it said that he prepares it *"before You."* There is a difference between 'Me' and 'You,' that is, between the first person and the second person. That God sends His messenger is like one nation sending an ambassador to another nation. It means that God sends a messenger and that he prepares the way before God. It means that when the Savior comes to this earth and saves mankind, he prepares that way. John the Baptist cried out, *"Brood of vipers!" (Matthew 3:7)*, made people repent, and did the work of turning back those who had been going the wrong way and making them return to God. Also, the word that the Lord will suddenly come to His temple and that the Messenger of the covenant will come means that Jesus Christ comes to this earth, to the temple in Jerusalem in the nation of Israel.

God said that He sends His messenger before us, that is, before the people of Israel. He said that he prepares our way, and this way is the way by which we go to the kingdom of heaven, the way by which we receive the remission of sins. To prepare means to make ready. Who prepares it? John the Baptist prepares it. John the Baptist cried out for repentance, and when Jesus came to him and told him to give Him baptism, he tried to prevent Him, saying, "How can I, a man, give baptism to You,

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the Son of God?" But when Jesus told him to permit it, he gave Him baptism. He prepared for us the way of receiving the remission of sins. John the Baptist did only as far as the work of passing sin on to Jesus, and by that work he let us know the fact that Jesus is the Savior and that our sins were passed on to Jesus. That is how we receive salvation.

The Bible was recorded by people who were moved by the Holy Spirit. Even today, a person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is moved by the Holy Spirit and can know everything this word says, down to every last particle. Because the Holy Spirit who is in us is God, He knows everything, even the deep things of God the Father, and He knows everything about what work Jesus Christ came to this earth and did, and how He did it. Because that Holy Spirit is in the heart of the one who preaches the word and moves him and gives him understanding, he can preach this.

Who is that messenger whom God sends? It is John the Baptist. *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. Who is this man? It is John the Baptist. It means that John the Baptist prepares the way by which we receive the remission of sins. Many people think that if they just know the letters, they know the Bible, but the Bible was recorded by people who were moved by the Spirit of God. Moses, too, was moved by the Spirit of God and recorded from Genesis through Deuteronomy. When God created the heavens and the earth, was Moses there? It was not that he saw it; rather, when Moses carried out the command of God, the Holy Spirit moved the heart of Moses and made him record it, and made him go to Pharaoh the king and speak. Returning to the text, Elijah who was to come in the Old Testament is this very man. God sent this man and made him do the work of giving baptism to Jesus.

Jesus had the sin of mankind transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John

Jesus is our Savior. Malachi said that the Lord would suddenly come to His temple and that the longed-for Messenger of the covenant would come. It means that our Lord comes to this earth. Jesus also comes to this earth, and John the Baptist, Elijah who was to come, also comes to this earth. It is God the Father who sends them. What work do they do when they come to this earth? They do the work of fulfilling all righteousness. Let us look at that word together. *"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'" (Matthew 3:13–17).*

Here God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and John the Baptist appear at the same time. When Jesus came to the Jordan and asked John for baptism, John tried to prevent Him. Then Jesus told him to permit it now, and He said that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness in this way. Jesus had the sin of mankind transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received through the hands of John the Baptist.

God the Father sent John the Baptist, and He also sent His Son Jesus Christ for your salvation and mine. Having sent them in this way, what did He do? The Messenger of the covenant

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came, and from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven came to suffer violence. It is because John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed our sins on to Him, and Jesus had the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross and died, rose again, and became our Savior. God has opened the gate of the kingdom of heaven. Through the work Jesus did together with John the Baptist, He has removed our sins and opened the gate of the kingdom of heaven.

So that anyone who has the desire, "I want to go to the kingdom of heaven," may enter, the Lord had our sins transferred to Him and removed them perfectly, said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*, died, and rose again. "I want to believe and go to the kingdom of heaven. With that one desire, I believe it all: that the Lord had the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, and that John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed on the sin of mankind. I acknowledge it all. I believe what You have done." He has made it so that if one believes in this way, one enters the kingdom of heaven. This is the will of God, and this is what God has done. The Holy Spirit moved people and made them record it, and even now the Holy Spirit moves people and makes them testify of this.

The kingdom we go to by faith is the kingdom of God

To summarize the content like a novel and speak smoothly is nothing. But because I speak by the Holy Spirit, I come to speak in this way. Were your sins passed on when John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus, or were they not passed on? They

were passed on. Jesus said that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness in this way, and this means that all sins were passed on. So righteousness was fulfilled. What is right was accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had your sins and mine, that is, the sin of the world, transferred to Him once and for all, died on the Cross, rose again, saved us, and entered the kingdom of heaven. That kingdom of heaven where Jesus is, is the place one enters if one believes in the work that Jesus came to this earth and did together with John the Baptist.

Even if we have no merit, and even if we are weak, dirty, and selfish people, the kingdom we go to by faith is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven is entered only by faith. It has nothing to do with deeds. If you believe, you enter. "I am very timid. I am lacking. I have too many weaknesses. I have weaknesses I cannot tell people about." It does not matter at all. It is because the Lord has fulfilled all righteousness. It is because He had all sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. Dear fellow believers, do you think that only those who listen well to the word of God and live well go to the kingdom of heaven? On God's part, He has made it so that however lacking a person may be, whatever sinner he may be, he can enter the kingdom of heaven by faith. He has made it so that you, too, can enter the kingdom of heaven. Do you believe?

Because this is recorded by the Holy Spirit, a person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells has this much to say. But without the Holy Spirit, it is hard to preach the core of this word. To suffer violence means to be taken by force. It is wrong to take something by force because one wants to have it, but the kingdom of heaven is not like that. The kingdom of heaven belongs to the person who wants to take it by force, the person who wants to go there. The person who keeps his manners, is

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shy, and says, "I have so much sin that I cannot go. I am no good," is eliminated. The person who says, "I want to go to the kingdom of heaven. I really want to go," passes. One goes by faith. The kingdom we go to by faith is the kingdom of God. By faith we receive the remission of sins, by faith our sins are removed, and by faith we become righteous. By faith we can serve the righteousness of God and preach the gospel to all mankind. This is what being born again is.

The Lord is like launderers' soap

Dear fellow believers, do you know bleach? Blood has gotten on a piece of clothing, ink has gotten on it, filth has gotten on it, and sweat, dirt, and germs have gotten on it, but if you soak that clothing in water and put in bleach, it becomes white after an hour or two. That is bleach. What John the Baptist and Jesus did is like the bleach of the remission of sins.

"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:2–3).

The words "who can endure the day of His coming" mean "who can withstand it," that is, who can stop it. God the Father first sent John the Baptist to this earth, and six months later He sent His Son. And when the Son turned thirty, that Son, Jesus, said, "Baptize Me," at the place where John the Baptist was giving baptism, and He had the sin of mankind transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John. And He was hung on the Cross and died, rose again from death, and saved us.

Who can stop this work? It is the will of God the Father, so who would stop it? Would the devil stop it? No one can stop it.

The words "who can stand when He appears" mean this: when Jesus Christ stands as the Judge in the future, and a person dies and stands before Him, who would dare to stand in a state of having sin? It is all destruction and all hell. The only One, Jesus Christ, is like the fire that melts gold and like the soap that makes clothes white. To obtain pure gold, at a mine they drill into and dig out the rock in which gold is embedded along its veins, put it into a crusher and break it, and then dissolve it with chemicals. Then the pure gold collects, and when they put it in a vessel and apply fire from below, the gold melts completely and the impurities float to the top. They skim them all off. Soap, too, removes dirt in that way. The Lord came to this earth and completely and cleanly removed our sins through the baptism He received from John, the blood He shed on the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. He has removed your sins perfectly, like a white dress shirt washed with soap. He has saved you completely.

In the word that He purifies the sons of Levi, the words "the sons of Levi" refer to the people who believe in and serve God. It means that He has cleanly removed all the sins in your hearts and mine. It means that He refines them like gold and silver and makes them offer righteous offerings to the LORD. We have received the remission of sins by faith and have entered the kingdom of heaven by faith. It did not work by deeds, but by faith we took the kingdom of heaven by force. That is why we can offer righteous offerings before God and have come to serve the work of the gospel of God. This is what Malachi is saying.

Dear fellow believers, have your sins become white as snow? Have they been bleached? Do you have sin? No, you do not. Through the work that the Lord came to this earth and did

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together with John the Baptist, He bleached our hearts clean and removed our sins perfectly, and so made it possible for us to enter the kingdom of heaven by faith.

The kingdom of heaven belongs to those who take it by force

He said that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, so there is a time for it. Now is the time to receive grace, and in the New Testament times, even if our deeds are lacking, we can enter the kingdom of heaven by believing the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We have ample qualification to take the kingdom of heaven by force. Dear fellow believers, however lacking you may be, it does not matter. Therefore, wherever we preach the gospel, we must speak accurately about John the Baptist and Jesus. We must not say only that Jesus was hung on the Cross. Jesus exalts John the Baptist in this way, so why do they call John the Baptist a failure? To say so is to have failed to read the word rightly. Why do they say so even while reading the Bible? The Lord not only made it possible for you and me to enter the kingdom of heaven but also said that the violent take it by force. It is those who seize it by force who take it. I hope you will seize it by force. I hope you will believe. If you believe, you enter the kingdom of heaven, so why do you not believe? Why do you act prim, pretend to be humble, and hesitate? Are you that perfect, upright, and good?

To turn back, that is, repentance, is turning back in one matter. We were born as descendants of Adam, as sinners, in any case. Being a brood of evildoers, we commit sin until we die. “Even if I believe in this way and pray prayers of repentance in this way, I do not receive the remission of sins. Even if I pray

prayers of repentance, I will soon sin again, so no matter what I do, there is no end. If God has saved me, I receive salvation, and if He has not saved me, I go to hell. My salvation depends on God. Jesus Christ, how did You save me? Did You save me with water and blood? Did You save me with the baptism You received, the blood of the Cross, Your death, and Your resurrection, or did You save me only with the blood of the Cross? Is the role of John the Baptist unnecessary, or is it necessary? If the role of John the Baptist was necessary for You, if You had the sin of mankind transferred to You through the baptism You received from John, and if from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, then at that time our sins were passed on, and at that time, as with bleach, our sins were judged and cleanly removed. So we go by faith." In this way we can enter the kingdom of heaven by faith. There is only one thing: we just need to turn back, saying, "Ah, I believed wrongly. I did not know well. Lord, I believe what You have done. I believe that the Lord saved me in this way." Entering the kingdom of heaven by faith—this is what the Lord desires.

Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Do you want to go to the kingdom of heaven? You just need to believe unconditionally. Are you lacking? You just need to believe. Are you weak? You just need to believe. If you believe, you become whole, become strong, become righteous, and become a worker. If you believe, you become one of the people of God and a servant of God, better than the angels, and you become a person who will enter the kingdom of heaven in the future and reign with Jesus Christ. We must clearly know the fact that it is from the days of John the Baptist. If John the Baptist had not passed sin on to Jesus, we would have no hope at all. If one believes in Christianity leaving out the role of John the Baptist, that faith is

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nothing. People are ashamed to speak of this, but I speak of it clearly.

When a sermon is written down, whether or not the gospel is in it is revealed. That from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; that even though we are lacking, we can enter the kingdom of heaven by faith, and those who believe have already entered; that if you want to go to the kingdom of heaven, you should believe unconditionally—this is precisely the gospel.

We are already the people of the kingdom of heaven

John the Baptist is a man of two thousand years ago. At that time your sins were all passed on to Jesus. So if you believe now, you enter the kingdom of heaven because you have no sin. God is not ruled by time. It is because God is Spirit. While I am preaching here, I cannot work anywhere else. It is the same with the brothers sitting here. But God is the One who is everywhere. He is in my heart, in your hearts, here, out there, and everywhere in the whole world at the same time. Therefore, the whole world must keep silent before Him. Two thousand years ago the Lord already took away your sins and mine perfectly, received all the judgment, and made it so that we enter the kingdom of heaven. Those who went before us in faith have already entered the kingdom of heaven by faith. We are the people of the kingdom of heaven. Only time remains; we are the people of the kingdom of heaven.

Those who do not believe yet say, “I have such lacking parts that it will not work even if I believe. He will not overlook my faults.” Not at all. Whatever sin one has committed and whatever

lack one has, from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. Whoever wants to go to the kingdom of heaven just needs to believe. Then he enters the kingdom of heaven unconditionally. Because the Lord has removed sin, there is no sin. It is receiving the remission of sins. This is how the gospel is preached. Among the works of preaching the word of God, preaching the gospel is the hardest. But when we preach the gospel, the Holy Spirit works together with us, so that we do not even notice the time passing. We can preach it all day long.

The violent take it by force. What do they take by force? They take the kingdom of heaven, the remission of sins, and blessings by force. What is taking it by force? Its substance is faith. "I am not qualified, but since the Lord says that the work He did through John the Baptist was His labor for me, I believe." This is the power of taking it by force. One must be strong to take it by force. If a thief goes into a wrestler's house to steal something and is caught by the owner of the house, he runs away at the thunderous shout, "You, come here!" One must have power in order to take by force. That power is faith. If we have faith even as small as a mustard seed, we go to the kingdom of heaven. If there is faith even as tiny as a speck, it is the kingdom of heaven. And that faith grows by hearing the word. Faith renews our hearts. That faith not only makes us righteous and without sin but also enables us to serve God. God gives such blessings. By faith we truly give thanks to God.

I do not like to preach only the word of the judgment of the last days and give only fear. But it is necessary to tell the facts as they are. If only you have faith, if you believe that what John the Baptist and Jesus did is for you, you go to the kingdom of heaven however the events of the last days come about. And the Lord holds on to us and makes us more than conquerors and makes us victorious. Those who are written in the Book of Life

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do not yield to the events of the last days. Do you think you will yield? You will not be able to yield. When the spirit of the Antichrist enters people and threatens you, you will be afraid at first, but you will say, "Go ahead and try if you dare. I know everything." Even if our outer man shrinks back, our inner man never shrinks back, because the Holy Spirit gives it a strong and bold heart. Who can stop what the Lord does? The Lord lets us be martyred, makes us overcome by faith, and makes us enter the kingdom of heaven by faith.

Therefore, we must surely hold on to faith in the last days. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)*. And *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. If you believe with your heart, I hope you will confess with your mouth, "I believe." We believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, believe what John the Baptist and Jesus did, and believe the work by which He saved us. When faith takes hold of our thoughts and our weak hearts and rises up, a person changes. That is faith. I give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The people who stood before what they had heard and seen

< Matthew 11:1–19 >

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which 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. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.' As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 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. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until

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John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: "We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament." For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." (The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! And wisdom is justified by her works—ASV).'"

The disciples of John who came to Jesus

The disciples of John come to Jesus and ask a question. Their teacher is confined in prison, and Jesus is outside, healing people and preaching the gospel. What connected those who were in such different places was the news about what Christ had done. So the passage shows how the people who heard this news respond to Jesus.

Let us read verse 1 first. *"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities" (Matthew 11:1)*. With the word *"finished,"* the words He spoke in chapter 10 as He sent out the twelve disciples come to an end. Jesus, who had sent out the disciples, did not stay where He was either, but set out on the road again to teach and to preach in various towns. And at the very time when that journey was continuing, John, who was confined in prison, heard of the works of Christ and sent his disciples. The road of verse 1 leads into the question of verse 2.

Let us read verse 2. *"And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples" (Matthew 11:2)*. John the Baptist heard of what Jesus had done and sent his own disciples to Him. Thanks to this, the disciples did not stop at hearing secondhand the news their teacher had heard, but came to stand before Jesus in person. They had gained the opportunity to hear His words and to confirm with their own eyes the works He was doing.

The question they conveyed was clear. *"And said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" (Matthew 11:3)*. They asked who the Savior they had been waiting for was. The answer to this question was not something that could be decided by gathering people's expectations. They had to follow the answer that Jesus Himself gave them.

When we read of John the Baptist sending his disciples, we must also hear how Jesus then testifies of John. Jesus makes it known that he is more than a prophet and the promised messenger. John led his own disciples to Jesus, and Jesus made the crowds know John's mission.

In the work of teaching people rightly lies the intention of having those who have learned from us come to Jesus. Those who learn, too, must in the end come to know Jesus through the one who preached the word to them. The disciples of John had now come to a place where they could hear and see for themselves who Jesus is.

You, too, when you hear talk about salvation, turn your heart to what Jesus actually did. If you decide the content of your faith only because the one who preaches is familiar or likable, it is hard to come to know Christ. The ground on which our hearts rely lies in what the Savior did and said.

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The answer telling them to convey what they had heard and seen

Let us read verse 4. *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see'" (Matthew 11:4)*. Jesus made known to them things they could confirm. He told them to convey to John what they had heard and seen when they came to Him. So what those who had asked the question would go back and convey had to be the answer Jesus gave.

At the beginning of that answer is the word *"The blind see and the lame walk" (Matthew 11:5)*. It means that Jesus opens people's eyes and makes them walk. The fact that the Savior had come was revealed by the power He showed to people who had been suffering.

He then said, *"The lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear" (Matthew 11:5)*. The picture of the people being healed is very concrete. Jesus actually cared for their suffering, and as the disciples of John saw and heard such things, they received the answer to the question they had asked.

And Jesus said, *"The dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:5)*. At the end of the works of healing eyes, legs, skin, and ears is placed the work of raising the dead. Death is precisely the place where nothing can be done by human hands. Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb, and He also raised up the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain. This power by which He raised the dead is a sign that makes known that He is God, and it is also connected with Jesus' own rising again from death later on.

And this list does not end with the works of healing; it ends with the word *"the poor have the gospel preached to them."* The first five are things that happened to the body, and the last one is the word being heard. The news that the disciples of John would

go back and convey contained, together with what Jesus had done, the gospel that He preaches.

So the question here does not stop at how much Jesus fulfilled people's expectations. One must go on to know and believe who the One is who does these things. If one accepts in one's heart the answer He has already given, one comes to know that the Savior one has been waiting for is right before one's eyes.

The crowds who come to know John through the words of Jesus

Let us read verse 6. *"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me" (Matthew 11:6)*. This word comes right after the things He has just listed. Those who acknowledge in their hearts that the One who did these things is God do not stumble because of Jesus, and they also accept the salvation He has accomplished. So this blessing is given not to those who treat Jesus as one human teacher, but to those who believe in Him as God.

When the disciples of John depart, Jesus speaks to the crowds. Verse 7 records, *"As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John" (Matthew 11:7)*. When we distinguish between those who had come to convey the question and the crowds who now hear His words, it becomes clear to whom Jesus' teaching is directed.

Jesus asked the crowds, *"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" (Matthew 11:7)*. He made them call to mind again John, whom they had met in the wilderness. From verse 7 through verse 9, Jesus repeats the question with the words *"go out."* He is making the crowds trace back for themselves the reason they had gone out as far as the wilderness.

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Let us also read verse 8. *"But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses" (Matthew 11:8)*. The comfort of a king's palace and the figure of the man who preached the word in the wilderness stand in sharp contrast. Jesus, who asked why the crowds had gone out to John, made them know what mission he had received rather than what clothes he wore.

Matthew chapter 3 records that John wore a garment of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and that he ate locusts and wild honey. He was a man who, in the wilderness, pointed out the wrongs of the people and cried out to them to return to God. What the crowds saw in the wilderness was not a man of the palace, but this man crying out, whom God had sent.

The answer in verse 9 is clear. *"More than a prophet" (Matthew 11:9)*. This is how Jesus made John known. Just because he is now confined in prison, one cannot conclude that the mission God entrusted to him has failed. Jesus' testimony enables people to know that man rightly.

The man entrusted with the promised mission

Let us read verse 10. *"For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You'" (Matthew 11:10)*. Before John's mission, there was first the promise of God. By citing the word already written, Jesus made known who this man is. The crowds had to know John's mission according to the word *"My messenger."* The fact that God sent him makes clear the authority of the work he was entrusted with.

The word *"Who will prepare Your way before You" (Matthew 11:10)* contains the purpose for which God sent the

messenger. John prepared the way toward Jesus. So his mission does not end with keeping people's attention bound to himself. Through his testimony, people had to meet the Savior who had come.

In verse 11 Jesus says as follows: *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11)*. It means that the work God entrusted to him was this great. John the Baptist is the one who, on behalf of mankind, gave baptism to Jesus and testified that He is the Savior.

Look at the word in which God ordained that sin be passed on. *"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)*. After laying hands on the head of the offering, one kills that offering. In this way, the passing on of sin and the death of the offering are connected.

"Your way," which verse 10 says the messenger prepares, also lies on this connection. The mission God entrusted to John was the work of passing the sin of the world on to Jesus, and that work led directly to the work of Jesus saving sinners.

Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and among them are all the sins of your whole life as well. And just as the offering on which hands had been laid died, Jesus, too, as the price of those sins, shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place. But it did not end there; He rose again from death. God gives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Let us also look at the latter part of verse 11. *"But he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11)*. Within one verse, the words *"one greater"* and the words *"he who is least"* stand against each other. At the very

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place where He exalts John, Jesus moved the standard of comparison to the kingdom of heaven. What this contrast means must be read together with the word about the kingdom of heaven in verse 12, which follows.

The person who receives by faith the kingdom of heaven that has been given

Let us read verse 12. *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. Those who believe in Jesus by following the way of salvation that John prepared and testified of receive the kingdom of heaven. Even a person who has no power to remove his own sins enjoys this grace by believing in the righteousness that Christ has fulfilled.

What is needed by those who hear the word *"the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)* is to believe the salvation Jesus has given as our very own salvation. Even while knowing that we have no qualification, we can believe in the Savior. This is because the ground on which sinners are given life lies in the righteousness He has fulfilled.

Let us read verse 13. *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13)*. What the Old Testament has promised, having come to John, is pointing to Jesus. So those who have been hearing the promise must now know in whom that promise has been fulfilled. If one keeps looking only for reasons to go on waiting, one misses the grace of the Savior who has already come.

Verse 14 makes John known more clearly. *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. The man whom God had said He would send had already

come before them. Since they had now come to know the word they must receive, the crowds had to respond to that word. Here lies the purpose for which Jesus taught them whom God had sent.

Let us read verse 15. *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 11:15)*. This short word is attached right after verse 14, which says that John is Elijah who is to come. If verse 14 spoke of the heart that receives with the words *"if you are willing to receive it,"* verse 15 speaks of the ear that hears that word. This exhortation He gave to the crowds that day reaches you, too, who hear the word now.

So if you have heard the content of the gospel, accept in your heart that it is salvation that applies to you as well. There is no reason to think that others can be saved but that your sins alone are an exception. The salvation of Jesus, who had all the sins of the world transferred to Him, is also grace toward you. Those who have ears to hear believe that word in their hearts.

The generation that criticized works that differed from each other alike

Next, Jesus reveals the response of that generation. Let us read verse 16. *"But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions" (Matthew 11:16)*. With the picture of children sitting in the marketplace and calling to their companions, He shows a generation that does not respond even after hearing the word. The words with which He was answering the disciples of John now lead into words that examine the attitude of those who hear.

Listen to the words of verse 17. *"And saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And*

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you did not lament'" (Matthew 11:17). It is a picture of people who respond neither to a sound for rejoicing nor to a sound for grieving. Jesus cast out demons, healed the sick, and raised the dead, and He also spoke much about the kingdom of heaven. Yet the crowds only saw such things, thought, "So that is how it is," and passed by, remaining silent, and even when Jesus grieved over the people who were going to perish, they did not beat their breasts and turn back.

Then what did they say about John? Let us read verse 18. *"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'" (Matthew 11:18)*. They criticized John for neither eating nor drinking. They did not accept what word he preached and of whom he testified, but made his outward way of life a pretext for finding fault.

In verse 19 they criticize even the exact opposite. *"The Son of man came eating and drinking" (Matthew 11:19)*. When they saw Jesus being with people, they said that He was greedy for food. They rejected John's self-restraint and also rejected Jesus, who was with people; so from the beginning they had no heart to accept the word.

They also criticized Jesus, calling Him *"a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matthew 11:19)*. They made a fault of the work of Jesus drawing near to sinners and showing them the grace of salvation. Had they known the Lord's will in drawing near to those who need help, it would have been something to be thankful for, but the heart that refused made that very work a reason for attack.

The problem revealed here does not lie merely in a difference of taste. The problem was that they did not accept the word of the man God had sent and the work of salvation that Christ was doing. When one closes one's heart, one can turn even actions that differ from each other into pretexts for rejecting them all.

So we who hear the word, too, must look back to see whether there is such stubbornness in us.

The wisdom of God revealed through the works He has done

Let us read the last word of verse 19. *"Wisdom is justified by her works" (Matthew 11:19)*. Wisdom is the ability to bring a work to completion. Even work that was not understood while it was being done is, when seen after it has all been accomplished, revealed as something that had to be done that way, and so it is acknowledged as right. The work Jesus did to save sinners, too, is justified not by people's criticism but by that work which has been accomplished.

Call to mind the answer the disciples of John heard earlier. Jesus made known to them that people see, hear, and walk again, that the dead are raised, and that the poor hear the gospel. Even while the criticism of that generation went on, the work of Jesus giving life to people was actually being accomplished.

The crowds heard Jesus' testimony about who John was. The promised messenger had come and prepared the way, and the Savior was among them. So now they cannot stop at evaluating outward appearances and nitpicking words. They must recognize what the Lord has done and set their hearts on Him.

In the hearts of those who have been saved there is thankfulness for this wisdom. This is because, although we could not remove our sins by our own strength, we obtained the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If this fact is clear, there is no reason to be ashamed that Jesus came to find sinners. This is because we, too, are people who have received that grace.

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Those who preach the word, too, must not change the content of the truth according to the opinions of those who hear. Just like the generation that criticized John and Jesus, there are bound to be people who find fault no matter how it is done. So what is needed is not to cater to all their tastes, but to preach the word of salvation accurately and to stand in the faith that believes that word.

You need not judge the work of God by rumors alone. If you examine the work and the words of Jesus recorded in the Bible, you can know the grace He has given. The louder people's words sound, the more you should return to the testimony of the Savior. What God has done becomes clear through that word.

A heart that responds to the word it has heard

In this passage there appear the disciples who ask a question, the crowds who hear Jesus' explanation, and the generation that criticizes the work. Even while encountering the same works of Jesus, each responded differently. So we, too, must examine with what kind of heart we are hearing the word before Him.

Just as the word says, *"Go and tell John the things which you hear and see" (Matthew 11:4),* the disciples had to take back what they had heard just as it was. It is necessary not to lay our own thoughts over the answer Jesus gave. Those who have received the gospel, too, must keep in their hearts the content of the salvation Christ has accomplished just as it is.

Do not leave the word you have heard today merely as something to judge. Acknowledge in your heart what the Savior has done, and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as your own salvation. I hope that you will become people who hear Jesus' testimony and respond to that grace. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that John the Baptist testified of

< Matthew 11:12–19 >

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: ‘We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ (The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! And wisdom is justified by her works—ASV).”

The blessing of being born again of the water and the Spirit

I will preach the word on “the blessing of being born again of the water and the Spirit.” If you believe the word of God that

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I preach, you will believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and your soul will receive the remission of sins and be born again. But if you do not believe the word of the water and the Spirit, then no matter how hard you try to be born again, it will not happen. No matter how much you pray, how much you give in offerings, and how hard you try, you cannot be born again. Now I hope that you will listen well to the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, examine carefully whether I preach the word that is in the Bible or not, confirm the word you have heard and abide in what is certain, and truly be born again through the faith that believes the word of God. I believe that our God will bless you with the spiritual word of God.

An age in which sin is rampant, as in the days of Noah's flood

In Genesis there is a word that God *"was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:6)* and determined to destroy the people of this world. In the days of Noah's flood, this world was truly evil. And sin was very rampant. Sin was so rampant that God judged that He could by no means just leave it alone and came to have a mind to judge their sins—that is how rampant sin was in the world at that time. So when this world was filled with sin, the LORD God judged this world with the flood. So even now, if you climb some high mountain and look at a place where faults have formed in a cliff, folds have arisen, and the earth has collapsed, layers of shells that can only be seen in the sea come out. So even without scientists saying so, we can know, "Ah, Noah's flood in the Bible is not a made-up fairy tale but a historical fact."

Dear fellow believers, did someone pick mussels in the sea, carry them up to the top of a mountain, and eat them there, so that layers of shells keep appearing even now? That tells us that God judged this world with water. In the days of Noah's flood, sin was so rampant in the world that when God destroyed it, the water rose even up to the mountains. Originally all people are of one descent from Adam and Eve, and after the one judgment by water, all of mankind today spread out from the family of Noah.

This present age, too, is full of rampant sin, as in the days of Noah's flood. How rampant sin is in this world! Can you now say to a student passing by, "Why don't you greet your elders?" No one can say such a thing. If you say to a middle school student, "Hey, why are you walking with your head held up so stiffly? You should greet your elders when you see them," you might even get beaten up. And these days, they say that not only middle school students smoke, but even elementary school children smoke. That is not to set up some standard of good and evil based on smoking. But the fact that a decadent and pleasure-seeking culture is gradually coming down even to young children can be one sign that sin is all too rampant.

These days, it is not uncommon to see students who stop at a secluded place on their way to school, smoke, and then go on.

Some may say, "What is so wrong with smoking?" The point is that one should not smoke because it is harmful to the body, and that things like tobacco, alcohol, and drugs paralyze our nervous system and make us lose our reason, so they are not beneficial. And in fact, tobacco and alcohol are things one should be careful with, keeping proper manners in front of elders, but children these days do not care about such things at all; as long as they themselves are comfortable and happy, that is all that matters.

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Then are only the children of today wrong? Are adults not wrong? And how wrong adults are! If there were someone in this age who did not sin—even if there were someone who, setting the heart aside, did not sin in deeds alone—one might wonder whether that person had not reached the realm of a god; that is how much more severe the sins committed by adults are.

Whether one is a person who cultivates himself in the mountains or a religious person, no one is free from the sins of the secular world. All kinds of crimes take place even among religious people. The sins spoken of by every religion, whether Christianity or Buddhism, are rampant in the world.

Then do only those who believe in Christianity or Buddhism commit such sins? No. Among the people living in this world, there is no one who does not sin. It is by no means too harsh to say that you and I live buried in sin. Whether by one's own will or by the will of others, in this age everyone lives committing sin. Anyone who says he does not sin in this age is deceiving himself.

As we live in this world, there are so many obscene things that we cannot help seeing them. Even just now, on my way here by car, I came to see embarrassing sights. In the old days, when people saw such things, they would say, "Oh my goodness!" and look while covering their eyes, but these days what is there to say "Oh my goodness" about? People just look, and that is it. If you watch videos these days, they are worse than that, and not only in videos but in real life people are worse, and if one tried to say "Oh my goodness" at such things, one might breathe one's last. Because committing sin has become a culture for everyone, you and me alike, people do not feel the least bit ashamed or feel any sense of sin. Because sin has become a culture, people do not say "Oh my goodness" at most things they see, and if by chance someone says "Oh my goodness" and is embarrassed,

people say that he is pretending to be decent. That is what this age is like.

In this world there is no one who lives a good life, and no one who lives a godly life. When this whole world falls into sin, everyone, you and I alike, is swept away together into that sin. Just as all the garbage and filth are carried down to the sea together when a river swells in a flood, all mankind, without a single exception, is buried in sin; the only difference is being carried away a little earlier or a little later, and all are being carried away together in sin. All are the same. In the old days there were some godly people and also very polite people, but in this age such people cannot be found.

The world is a sin factory

Is there anyone among you who says, "I am truly good and hardly sin at all. At most, I sin once or twice a year"? Those who sin only to that extent will find it a little hard to be born again. They will find it a little hard to believe the word of God. This is because the word of God may be different from your thoughts. "I sin so much that I cannot even remember well whether I sin or not. It is impossible for me to hardly sin, like people who cultivate themselves in the mountains. I sin to such an extent that I wonder whether I am not playing the forerunner of sin, ahead of the people of the world. My heart is like that, my body is like that, everything is like that. I lament that I sin, but I do not know any other way not to sin." Such people will surely receive the blessing of being born again of the water and the Spirit when they hear this word of God.

Do you know why I am now speaking so quietly at first? I am saying this in the hope that you will be able to answer "Yes"

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for yourselves to the question of whether you need to be born again. We all need to be born again. Everyone who has sin needs to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

I do not even want to ask you whether you have sin or not. This is because this world itself is entirely a lump of sin. No, not a lump of sin but a sin factory. Because the world is a sin factory, it turns out the product called sin recklessly. Just as a factory produces new goods, the world keeps developing and producing new sins, and it produces new sins without rest for fear that your gaze might go outside of sin. The factory workers are the people of the world. How well people produce sin! They are capable workers of the production department.

Today this sin, tomorrow that sin, the same sin but a more stylish sin because it is wrapped well, a sin that is sin but a beautiful sin.

A very disgusting sin, a shameful sin, a pretty sin, a lovable sin—there are many kinds of sin, too. Because you and I are sin factories, we produce all these sins. That is why I do not want to ask you whether you have sin or not.

And I also do not want to say, "Repent," if you have sin. This is because everyone has the thought, "Repent yourself. Just do well yourself. Yes, I came to church because I have sin. If I did not sin and lived well, even if only by myself, why would I have come to church?" Therefore, today, instead of such words, I will preach first the word we read today.

Who is John the Baptist?

In the word we read today, it says, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. Dear

fellow believers, some of you know what this word means, and some of you do not.

If we have read this word clearly, we must first know about John the Baptist from this word. Only when we know about John the Baptist can we understand the sermon that follows. Now, the question is this: who on earth is John the Baptist, that the word says that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force? As this word says, John the Baptist and the kingdom of heaven are related. It means that the reason John the Baptist came to this earth is related to the kingdom of heaven. That is why it says that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

Then, since it says that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence from the days of John the Baptist, who is John the Baptist? Before we know about John the Baptist, we must know the promise of the Old Testament, that is, the promise God the Father made that He would send His Son Jesus to this earth as our Savior. This is what the prophet Isaiah of the Old Testament prophesied 700 years before Jesus came to this earth. Through the prophet Isaiah, God promised that He would send the Savior and save us from all sins.

God spoke to Isaiah 700 years before, and it is written in the Book of Isaiah as follows: *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14)*. The word "Immanuel" means 'God is with man.' It was a word that God dwells together with man. In other words, it was a word that God would become a man and come to this earth to dwell together with us human beings, that our God would become a man and come upon people.

Also, if we look at the Book of Malachi in the Old Testament, after God promised that He would send His Son, He also

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promised to send one more servant. He decided to send the messenger of God. Who was he? He was none other than John, John the Baptist. God prophesied and promised, several hundred years beforehand, John, who gave baptism to Jesus. Elijah who is to come is John. To accomplish the remission of our sins, God established John as the high priest, the representative of mankind, and had him lay his hands on the head of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and give Him baptism. The servant of God who would accomplish the remission of our sins was John.

We must first confirm with the Bible whether this is my own word or not. Let us look at the Gospel of John. *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:6–7).* This means that John testifies of the Light, that is, of Jesus. John testified of Jesus, preached that Jesus would have all sins transferred to Him through the baptism John would give, and actually accomplished that work, so that all people might receive the remission of sins. That is why it says, *"That all through him might believe" (John 1:7).* You may think, "The Church of God is a place that preaches Jesus, so why does it talk about John? This is very unfamiliar." But look at the four Gospels. At their very beginning, they always speak of John the Baptist one step ahead of the work of Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark speaks of John the Baptist as follows: *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."' John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from*

Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:1–5).

Mark said, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)*. If you ask where he placed the beginning of the gospel, he placed it in John the Baptist. He spoke by quoting the word in Isaiah chapter 40 verse 3. As Isaiah, the servant of God, prophesied 700 years before Jesus came, what God said—that before sending Jesus He would send a servant of God, that is, a messenger—pointed to John the Baptist, and he prepared the way ahead of Jesus. Therefore, when we believe in the salvation of Jesus, we must know John the Baptist, and must know and believe in the salvation of Christ that he prepared. The ministry of John gives us such great and important meaning that it would not be a big problem even to say that the remission of our sins begins from John the Baptist. This is because John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed on the sin of this world once and for all.

This John the Baptist was not an ordinary person. He was a man sent from God. When sin was rampant on this earth, God the Father clothed His own Son with human flesh and sent Him to this earth to save all the people of this world. He is none other than Jesus, the Savior of mankind. Six months before Jesus came to this earth, God sent John the Baptist to prepare His way and make His paths straight. Dear fellow believers, if you believe in Jesus but do not know about John the Baptist, believing in Jesus is of no benefit at all. In the Bible, if you ask who is conceived first and comes to this earth before Jesus comes, it is John the Baptist who comes first. Therefore, only when we know John in detail can we understand Jesus' coming. That is why I am speaking this word today.

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The servant of God sent after 400 years

John the Baptist was born on this earth six months ahead of Jesus Christ. His father was a priest of the priestly family of Aaron in the Old Testament. In Israel there were many prophets, such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Malachi, and God sent servants of God generation after generation. But for 400 years before John the Baptist was born, there was no servant of God. For 400 years there was no servant of God. Therefore, the people of Israel, while serving God, all became corrupt.

Outwardly they pretended to keep the law and the sacrifices, but their hearts had departed far from God. The priests were not ashamed even while offering blemished offerings, and the people, absorbed in a religious life in which only the form remained, offered only prayers such as, "Please make our farming go well. Please let the cow of our house bear many calves. Please keep my descendants healthy." Sin was so rampant that it became a nation in which all those who said they served God had departed from God.

Because there was no servant of God for 400 years, because there was no one crying out, the people of Israel had all fallen into sin and departed from God. But John the Baptist came to this earth, and as he grew up in the wilderness, he cried out. He was a wild man of the fields, shaggy with hair, wearing a garment of camel's hair. His food was not the meals ordinary people eat but locusts and wild honey. In the wilderness, whomever he met, whether Pharisee or Sadducee, he cried out, *"Repent,"* and rebuked them, saying, *"Brood of vipers!" (Matthew 3:7)*. He cried out without mercy, "Turn back and return to God. If you do not return to God, you will all suffer woe from God."

Only after hearing the cry of John the Baptist, the rebuke to repent, did the people of Israel realize that they had departed from God, and they began to return to God. They returned and received baptism from John the Baptist. Those who had departed from God returned to God and received the baptism of repentance. And when John the Baptist was thirty years old, he was at the Jordan River, and Jesus came before him. John gave baptism to that Jesus. Therefore, John the Baptist was the ambassador of God. He was the one who cried out to those who had departed from God and made them return to God, and he was the representative of mankind, because he was the greatest among those born of women. And he cried out to all people, "Believe in Jesus. Return to Jesus the Savior. Believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sins. Be born again of the water and the Spirit before God. Become children of God. Receive the blessing that God gives."

Baptism is baptisma (βάπτισμα) in Greek, which means 'to be immersed in water' and 'to be buried,' and it includes the meaning of the laying on of hands in the Old Testament. It implies the meaning 'to be passed on,' 'to be transferred.' The baptism John the Baptist gave was of two kinds. One was the baptism of repentance, calling people to turn back and come to the Messiah, the Christ, who is the offering of the eternal sacrifice of atonement in heaven, and the other was the baptism given to Jesus, which passed all the sins of the world on to the body of Jesus. Therefore, it meant that all people were to turn back from sin and believe in Jesus, who took away all the sins of the world. The baptism John the Baptist gave to people meant to turn back to God, and as a prophet he pointed out that they were sinners before God. People returned before John the Baptist, admitted that they themselves were sinners before God, and took part in the baptism of repentance.

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Also, John the Baptist is the mediator who did the work of passing on the sins of all the people of this world to Jesus through baptism, so that all the people of this world might believe in Jesus with their hearts and receive the remission of sins. Jesus came to this earth, but He was the Son of God and the One who came to bear the sin of this world. Nevertheless, the one who stood as a mediator between man and God and passed on the sins of all the people of the world to Jesus, the Son of God, is John, that is, John the Baptist. That is why God called him a messenger, that is, a servant of God.

The Gospel of Luke explains the birth of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was born through Zacharias the priest and Elizabeth. Zacharias was a descendant of Aaron. But although he was an old priest, he had no children. Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were always praying to God, saying, "If we have no children, our line will be cut off; even the line of the priesthood is being cut off." Then, when Zacharias went into the sanctuary to burn incense according to the duty of a priest, the angel Gabriel appeared and said, *"Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John" (Luke 1:13)*. But Zacharias did not believe those words, and because of that he became unable to speak until the baby was born and named.

When Zacharias came out of the sanctuary unable to speak, people knew, "Something happened inside the sanctuary." From then on, Elizabeth's belly began to grow, and when her time was full, she gave birth to a baby. When people tried to name him after his father, Zacharias wrote *"John"* on a writing tablet. After he had named him, his mouth was opened. When his mouth was opened, he praised God and said as follows: *"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give*

knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:76–79). This John was none other than the messenger of God and the Elijah whom God said in the Book of Malachi He would send.

Where in the Bible does the division of Abijah, to which Zacharias belonged, appear? It is 1 Chronicles chapter 24 verse 10. *"The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah" (1 Chronicles 24:10)*. In this way David set the order in which the priests, the descendants of Aaron, offered sacrifices. Aaron is the older brother of Moses. God established Moses as His representative and established Moses' older brother Aaron as the high priest who served God before the people of Israel. Aaron's two sons died while offering a different fire to God, and after that Eleazar and Ithamar remained as the descendants of Aaron. God had all the sacrifices in the Tabernacle offered through the descendants of Aaron. The order of sacrifices David set is what appears in Luke chapter 1, and Zacharias cast lots according to the order of the division thus set, went into the sanctuary of the Lord, and served.

Among the orders David set, the eighth was said to be Abijah, and the Gospel of Luke says, *"A certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah" (Luke 1:5)*. This word proves that Zacharias was of the division of Abijah, that is, a descendant of the priests. And it says that Elizabeth, too, was a descendant of Aaron. Therefore, it means that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was a priest of the division of Abijah and a descendant of the high priest Aaron.

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"I will send you Elijah the prophet"

Before the end of this world comes, before the judgment of God, like a blazing furnace, covers this sinful world, God said that He would send a messenger, that He would send Elijah, that Elijah would do this work. Let us look up the Book of Malachi. It says, *"'Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' Says the LORD of hosts. 'But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness'" (Malachi 3:1–3)*.

Here it says, *"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me" (Malachi 3:1)*. God said that He would first send a messenger, that is, a servant of God, and second, after that, send Jesus Christ. What it says, *"And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple,"* means that our Lord would come to Israel. In other words, it means that two persons would come. It means that first John, the servant of God, would come, and then, right after him, Jesus would come.

Let us look at the Book of Malachi again. It says, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:5–6)*. What is meant here by before the great and dreadful day of the LORD comes? It means that He will send Elijah the prophet before the judgment comes, before destruction comes upon this world. Then what does it mean that

He will send Elijah? Elijah already went up to heaven in Old Testament times, so what Elijah would He send again? It does not mean that He would bring Elijah back to life and send him. In the Book of Isaiah, He said that there would be the voice of one crying out who would prepare the way of the Lord, and in the Book of Malachi, He said that He would send His messenger and that the Lord would suddenly come to His temple. In other words, He would send two servants. God promised that He would send John the Baptist and Jesus to this earth.

Then the question is this: Elijah was a man who lived about a thousand years before Jesus Christ came, so how could Elijah come? When God said that He would send Elijah, it meant the following. Elijah was the most powerful servant of God in the Old Testament, who led the people of Israel to God. Elijah was a servant of power who made all the people of Israel return to God. The prophet Isaiah cried out at the top of his lungs, but only a few people returned. The prophet Jeremiah wept day and night and cried out, "O people, return to God. If you do not return, you will be beaten," but only a few returned. The prophet Ezekiel also cried out among the captive people, "Cast away your idols and return to God," but the people of Israel stubbornly persisted to the end, and the nation fell, and they suffered as captives in Babylon for 70 years.

But what about the prophet Elijah? In the time of King Ahab, the people of Israel, except for a few, were all serving Baal as God. When Elijah prayed, no rain fell for three and a half years. Then Elijah appeared and said to King Ahab, "Let us compete to see whether the LORD is the true God or Baal is the true God. Gather all the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel." So Elijah, one man, and the 450 prophets of Baal competed on Mount Carmel. It was not a fight of flesh and blood but a fight of power and faith. They dug a trench around the altar, piled up dry wood,

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slaughtered a bull, cut it in pieces, and laid it on top, and then poured water and filled the trench. And they made a wager that the god who sent down fire from heaven and burned this offering was the true God.

First, the prophets of Baal cried out from morning until evening, "O Baal, O Baal," and even cut their own bodies with knives, but no fire came down from heaven. Elijah mocked them, saying, "Your god must have fallen asleep." Now Elijah knelt down and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, show that You, LORD, are the God of Israel and the true God. Come down with fire." As soon as the prayer ended, fire came down from heaven, burned up all the offering and the wood, and even licked up the water in the trench. Before the people of Israel and the king who saw it, the verdict was given that the LORD God in whom Elijah believed is the true God. So the prophet Elijah told the people to seize all these false prophets and not to let even one escape. And they bound them tightly, brought them down to the Brook Kishon, and killed them all there. So the nation of Israel came to return completely into the faith that believes in the LORD God. The prophet Elijah was such a servant of power.

The prophet Elijah later went up to heaven. Then the question is this: why did God say in the Book of Malachi, several hundred years before Jesus Christ came, that before destruction came He would send His servant Elijah to you, and that whoever did not believe him would be judged? There was a reason for it.

It means that, just as the prophet Elijah made all the people of Israel return to God, God sent John the Baptist to this earth together with His Son Jesus, six months ahead of Him, when He sent His Son Jesus, because we can be saved only if God sends a servant who passes on all the sin of mankind to Jesus, the Son of God, so that by that servant His Son has all the sins of you

and me in this world transferred to Him, and Jesus dies on the Cross for us and saves us. Moreover, He sent him as a son of the high priest's family in order to fulfill the word of the Old Testament. A son of the high priest's family can carry out the duties of the high priest when he turns thirty. This is because the high priest has the qualification to represent the people of Israel, to represent all the people of the world, and before God to lay his hands on the Lamb of God, give baptism, and pass on sin. That is why God sent two servants.

"John came to you in the way of righteousness"

Let us read the Gospel of Matthew. *"For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him" (Matthew 21:32)*.

Who is John here? He is John the Baptist. In the phrase "the way of righteousness," the word "way" means a road. To say that he came in the right way means that he came to pave the way to the kingdom of heaven, that he came to show the way to the kingdom of heaven and to lead people on that way. It means that John came in the way of righteousness, but the religious leaders of that time, such as the Pharisees and the high priests, did not believe. But who believed? It means that the harlots and tax collectors believed. Who are harlots? They are people who eat and drink and sin as the flesh desires. In fact, strictly speaking, there is not a single person before God who is not a harlot. Whether man or woman, all are sinners like harlots before God. And tax collectors were people who collected taxes from the people of their own nation and paid them to Rome, while pocketing a considerable part of them. They were people who

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were pointed at as those who made their living by swindling the people of their own nation. Yet it means that these tax collectors and harlots believed that John had come with the way of righteousness. But the high priests of that time did not believe to the end. While living an outward-shell life of faith, standing on the streets where others could see them and raising their hands to pray, they did not believe that John had passed on sin to Jesus through baptism.

That John came with the way of righteousness, that is, the work of passing on the sins of all people to Jesus and making all people sinless, was the right thing. And Jesus received baptism from John, had all the sin of mankind, the sins of you and me, transferred to Him, bore the sin of the world, died in our place on the Cross, rose again three days after He died, and saved us. It means that they did not believe this way of receiving the remission of sins by believing in that Jesus—the way to the kingdom of heaven, the way to be saved, this way, knowledge, and faith of salvation by which we are born again of the water and the Spirit—but rather hindered it. John appeared before us with the way of righteousness. Before whom did he appear? He appeared before you and me with the way of righteousness.

Dear fellow believers, as we read in the Gospel of John, it says, *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:6–7).* In fact, without this John, how could we believe in Jesus? Did you see Jesus come to this earth? You did not, did you? And what does Jesus' death on the Cross have to do with you? How can it have anything to do with you when you do not know that your sins were passed on? What does it matter whether He died a hundred times on the Cross or came back to life a hundred times? Your being a sinner remains just as it is in your heart. Only when John

the Baptist passes on all our sins to Jesus through baptism, and Jesus has all the sins of you and me transferred to Him through John the Baptist, does Jesus' death on the Cross have something to do with you and me, and does Jesus' coming to this earth have something to do with us. Isn't that so?

That is why, without John the Baptist, we cannot rightly believe even in Jesus. That is why the Bible—all four Gospels, and from the Old Testament to the New Testament—says that Elijah who is to come is this very man. Let us return to Matthew chapter 11, which we read today. *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 11:13–15).* Dear fellow believers, who is John the Baptist, again? He is Elijah, the servant of God, whom God said in the Old Testament He would send.

The name Elijah means 'my God is the LORD.' In Hebrew, "Eli" represents God and represents power. That is why the servant of God was named Elijah. God said that before the great and dreadful judgment came, He would send His servant Elijah, and that if people did not believe him, they would be judged. That is why we have spoken until now about who John the Baptist is. Who is John the Baptist? He is the messenger of God, the servant of God, Elijah, whom God said in the Old Testament He would send. In the New Testament he was called John the Baptist, because he was John, who gave baptism to Jesus.

Passing on sin through the sacrifices of the Old Testament

Then what did John the Baptist do, that it says the kingdom of heaven suffers violence from the days of John the Baptist?

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Look at the next verse. *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13)*. The Old Testament is from Genesis until before Jesus came. The Old Testament is the promise of God. It means that from Adam to John the Baptist is the Old Testament. What God promised in the Old Testament was that Jesus would come to this earth and have all the sins of man transferred to Him through a servant of God, that is, through a servant of the high priest's family, the representative on this earth.

The people of the Old Testament offered sacrifices to receive the remission of the sins they had committed before God. They offered sacrifices to have their sins washed away. They brought an unblemished offering such as a sheep, a goat, or a bull, laid their own hands on its head, and passed on their sins. When they laid their hands on it and confessed their sins, saying, "God, I have committed such and such sins," He made sure that the sins were passed on. The term "laying on of hands" means 'to be passed on.' So in Leviticus it says, *"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 means that God accepts it gladly. God must kill all people, beginning with Adam and Eve, who could not keep the law of God and committed sin. Since it says, *"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*, He must kill them all, but it means that it was too pitiful for Him to kill people.

This is because, from the time God first made us human beings, He made us in order to make us His children. He made us so that He might bless us, make us His children, and live well together with us forever. Therefore, although man sins before God, breaks the Ten Commandments, and sins morning and evening, God could not kill this person, even though He had to pass righteous judgment on sin. It was because He had decided

to make him His child. So, to save the people who would become His children, God prepared an unblemished offering in advance as a substitute, and then passed this person's sin on to that animal through the laying on of hands and killed that animal in his place, thereby making this person sinless. In order to make us the people of God and dwell with us, He prepared the sacrificial offering as the way to remove our sins.

When a person with sin laid his hands on an unblemished sheep or goat—that is, an unblemished offering, not one that was lame or injured—passed on his sin, and slit its throat and killed it, the priest received its blood, put it on the four horns of the altar of burnt offering, and poured out the remaining blood on the ground. Then they cut it in pieces, placed all the meat on the altar of burnt offering, and burned it. When you go into the Tabernacle, opening the gate and entering, the first thing you see is this altar of burnt offering. The altar of burnt offering is about 1.5 meters high and has horns attached at its four corners.

If a sinner had committed sin, he laid his hands on the head of the animal before that altar of burnt offering, confessed his sins, saying, "God, I have committed such and such sins. I have stolen. I have murdered," and passed them on. After that, they slit the animal's throat, received its blood, cut it in pieces, laid it on the grate on the wood of the altar of burnt offering, lit a fire beneath it, and burned it all. What did I say the laying on of hands means here? It meant that sin is passed on. The people of the Old Testament received the remission of sins in this way. They passed on their sins by the laying on of hands. Then, second, they slit its throat and received the blood. They received the blood, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and poured it out on the ground.

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Sin written in two places

Man's sin is written in two places. In the Book of Jeremiah it says, *"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars" (Jeremiah 17:1)*. Judah is mentioned here as representing man. When a person sins, the sin is written on the tablet of his heart, that is, the tablet of his conscience. Even if he sinned where no one knows, the sin is written in his conscience. What do we say when we see a person who is shameless even after committing some sin? We say, "That person has no conscience." But there is not a single person without a conscience. Everyone has a conscience. He just turns away from it. In this way sin is written on the tablet of the heart, and in one more place it is written in the book of God's judgment.

For there to be a witness, there must be two testimonies. Among people, too, it takes two or more people seeing something for them to be witnesses. God writes man's sin on the tablet of the heart, that is, the conscience, and in one more place, the court of judgment. Therefore, God can unconditionally send to hell anyone who comes before God without having received the remission of sins, because while living on this earth he did not believe in Jesus Christ as his Savior and did not believe that John the Baptist came with the way of righteousness. He cannot come before Him and throw a tantrum, saying, "I did not sin. God, did You see it? You did not see it. Why do You say I have sin when You do not even know?"

God knew that people would throw tantrums like this, and so that they could not throw tantrums, He wrote sin on the tablet of man's heart. When God tells the conscience, "Confess your sins directly," the conscience testifies of it all: "When I was young, I thought I was a human being who did not sin, but from the time

I was past fifteen, the fruits of sin began to form in earnest, and after I was past twenty, I gave up on myself. Whatever I was told not to do, I wanted to do without question, and I sinned until I grew old and died." Then, when God says, "Is it all right for you to go to hell?" even if he protests that it is utterly out of the question, it means that God will say, "Then go."

Therefore, if a person lives on this earth and the sin on the tablet of his heart is not removed, he goes to hell no matter how much he believes in Jesus. And second, even if there are people who deceive their conscience, there is the book of God's judgment. If we look at the Book of Revelation, when we go before God, there are two kinds of books. *"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (Revelation 20:12)*. One is the Book of Life, and the other is the book that records deeds. In the book that records deeds there are so many sins that the books are piled up like a mountain. The Book of Life only needs to have a list of names, so a small storehouse or so is enough. The word says that every person has an angel.

As it says in the Gospel of Matthew, *"In heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10)*, God has attached an angel to each person and has them record everything. So no one can deceive Him. Dear fellow believers, can you deceive Him? You cannot. That is why the people of the Old Testament laid their hands on the offering to pass on their own sins, killed that offering, and offered sacrifices. As they burned the meat, whenever a sheep or a goat died, they said, "I am sorry. If you do not die in my place, I must die. I did not raise you because I wanted to eat meat, but because of my sins." The people of Israel raised sheep and goats in order to

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receive the remission of their own sins before God. They also ate them, but they ate them only after first offering sacrifices.

The sins committed every day cannot be paid for every day

But suppose one sins today, lays his hands on an offering to pass on the sin, puts the blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, burns up the whole offering, and goes home thinking, "Now it is finished." But on the way home, if he meets someone he hates, he curses and fights again. Then is sin written on his conscience again or not? It is. Then he must bring another sheep. The priest of the Old Testament was always standing. He had no time to rest. The person who had come a little while ago came again. Are there not times when we commit the same sin three or four times even in a single day? As it goes on like that, eventually people become so ashamed that they just throw down a sheep, say, "Priest, please take care of it all for me," and go back home. That only sacrifices one sheep; it is all in vain.

One must lay his hands on it and pass on his own sins without fail. The wages of sin is death. Sin is in man; does an animal know sin? Does an animal have ethics, morals, or the law? It has nothing. God merely uses the animal as a substitute for sin in place of man in order to save man; that animal does not know sin. Therefore, one must without fail lay his hands on that animal, pass on the sin, and then kill that animal. To receive the remission of sins in the Old Testament, there had to be, first, an unblemished offering, second, the laying on of hands, and then without fail its blood had to be shed, put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and poured out on the ground, and the meat had to be burned and offered before God. One laid his hands on

it and slit its throat to kill it himself, but from then on the priest had to do all the work for him.

But because people sin every day, sins pile up over a year. Yesterday one brought three sheep or goats and offered sacrifices, but today he sinned again; how could he bring an offering again today? He becomes disappointed and gives up, saying, "I cannot do it. I cannot do it anymore. I will sin again tomorrow anyway."

The sacrifice of the Day of Atonement

God knew such people well, and He had a year's worth of sins of the people of Israel passed on with two goats. This time, it was not that each person who had sinned laid his hands on it individually; rather, the high priest, representing the people of Israel, laid his hands on it before God and confessed, "God, the people of Israel have served idols, have not honored their parents, have murdered, have committed adultery, have stolen, and have committed all kinds of sins." Then all the sins of the people of Israel were passed on. After that, he slit the throat of that offering, received the blood, and went into the sanctuary. He went into the Most Holy Place, where the ark of God was, and sprinkled the blood seven times on and before the mercy seat covered by the cherubim, saying, "God, look at this blood."

"This sacrificial offering, in place of Your people who should have died, had all the sins of Your people transferred to it through the high priest and has thus died. It has thus been judged," he confessed. And the other one was offered in front of the people of Israel. Let us look at Leviticus. It says, *"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their*

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transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:21–22). They did this on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement. They passed on all the sins of the people of Israel completely.

Aaron passed on all the sins of the people of Israel completely in front of the people of Israel. He confessed all the sins one by one, saying, "God, the people of Israel have served idols, have served other gods, have taken the name of God in vain, have not kept the Sabbath, have not honored their parents, have murdered, have committed adultery, and have stolen." He confessed all the sins of breaking as many as 613 laws and commandments and then took his hands off. Then where were the sins passed on to? The sins of the people of Israel were passed on to the goat, the sacrificial offering. The first goat was killed, and its blood was taken into the sanctuary, but on this one he laid his hands in front of the people, entrusted it to a man appointed beforehand, and released it into the wilderness. Then it wandered in the wilderness, where there was neither water nor grass, and, bearing all the sins of the people of Israel, died of thirst. That was the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement. By the offering of such sacrifices, the righteous judgment of God was fulfilled.

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

All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. Now, is John the Baptist not only the representative of the nation of Israel but also the representative of all mankind, or not? The Lord said,

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). Why does the kingdom of heaven suffer violence from the days of John the Baptist? Up to the days of John the Baptist is the Old Testament. And the age of Jesus is the New Testament. It is because John the Baptist is the very one who stood on the boundary line between the Old Testament and the New Testament, gave baptism to Jesus, and passed on sin that it says that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. It says that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence because John the Baptist passed on all the sin of mankind to Jesus.

Let us look at the Gospel of Matthew. *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, 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 3:13–16)*. Jesus received baptism. Where did He receive it? He received it at the Jordan River. Why did He receive it? He received it to fulfill all righteousness. It means that John the Baptist came in the way of righteousness, and Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist to fulfill all righteousness. People say that when one dies, one crosses the Jordan River. One crosses the river of death and meets God.

What was the first thing Jesus began in this work of removing the sin of mankind? It was receiving baptism. Jesus' receiving baptism was the work of having the sins of you and me, the sins of all the people of mankind, transferred to Him. In

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the same way as the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, Jesus had sin transferred to Him by receiving baptism. From whom did He receive it? He received it from John, the representative of mankind, the greatest among those born of women. When John the Baptist turned thirty, Jesus also turned thirty. Jesus was born six months later than John the Baptist, so in the flesh He is the younger one. Since there was a six-month difference, they could be the same age.

When He turned thirty, Jesus finished His private life and began His public ministry, that is, the work of saving all mankind from sin, and if you ask to whom He went first, He went to John the Baptist, who at the Jordan River was crying out, *"Repent,"* and crying out to people to receive washing with water and to believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus walked up before John the Baptist, bowed His head, and said, "Give Me baptism. In this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

"You pass on the sins of all people to Me through baptism, and I have the sins of all the people of the world transferred to Me through you and die on the Cross, so that all who believe in Me may be saved—this is the love of God and the salvation of God. God the Father sent Me to this earth to make Me bear the sins of all people and to be judged in place of all people. Therefore, you must give Me baptism." The word "baptism" means 'to be washed.' And it means 'to be buried,' 'sin is passed on,' that is, 'to be transferred.' The term "laying on of hands" in the Old Testament also means 'sin is passed on.' It is the same word. Did it say that when hands are laid on, sin is passed on, or not? It means that because sin is passed on, God accepts that offering and receives it gladly.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God loves us, but because He

cannot make a person who has sin His people, He moved the place of sin. Moving sin to make us sinless people, and offering this sacrifice to make sinless people the people of God, was the love of God, the holiness of God, and the righteousness of God. That is why God did this work. John the Baptist was giving baptism at the Jordan River, and Jesus walked up and said, "Allow it now. Give Me baptism."

Then John said, "How can I give You baptism? I am the greatest among those born of women, and God has entrusted this duty to me, but are You not the Son of God? Are You not my Creator? How can I give You baptism?" Jesus answered and said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. It means that He said that it was fitting for Him to receive baptism from John and for John to give Him baptism, and in this way to remove the sins of all people. John the Baptist is the representative of mankind, the high priest of mankind, and the last high priest of the Old Testament.

Jesus, the Son of God, was the Lamb of God who came to remove all the sins of this world, that is, God's offering of atonement. "The very one who will pass on the sins of all people to that offering is you. Give Me baptism. Allow it now." This is what He commanded. "In this way, it is fitting that you give Me baptism and pass on all sins to Me, and that I receive baptism through you, have all the sin of mankind transferred to Me, and wash the sin of people's hearts clean. It is the love of God and the salvation of God that, because of the sin transferred to Me through you, I receive the judgment for sin in place of all mankind and save you." This is what He said. That is why it says that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

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Jesus' baptism is the most just method of salvation

"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). If we look at this word in the original language, we find that *"thus"* is houtōs in Greek, which means 'in this way,' 'most appropriately,' 'in a way without which it cannot be done.' And *"all righteousness"* is dikaiosynē in Greek, which means the most just salvation.

To save from sin human lives that, having inherited the sin of Adam and Eve from their mothers' wombs, are born on this earth and commit countless sins, great and small, from the cradle to the grave—human beings who are sin factories and lumps of sin—our Lord said that removing sin by this method, receiving baptism and having all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, is the most just method, the most just salvation, and the most appropriate and fitting method. He said that this method—John passing on all the sin of mankind to the Lord, and the Lord receiving baptism from John and having all the sin of mankind transferred onto His own flesh—is the most fitting and most right method. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? That is why He said that John came in the way of righteousness.

He said that John came in the way of righteousness, and the tax collectors and harlots believed, but you did not believe to the end. That is why Jesus said that the tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before them. Then what about you and me? You and I are people who sin until we die. As John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus at the Jordan River, that is, the river of death, our sins were all passed on to Jesus. They were passed on in this way. Baptism and immersion mean the same thing: 'to be washed' and 'to be buried.' In the original language it is baptisma. Jesus came to this earth about 2,000 years ago.

Before you and I were born, before we were even in the loins of our mothers and fathers, our Lord came to this earth to save from sin all the people who are born, sin, and die until the day this earth ceases to exist. He came and received baptism from John. Jesus' receiving baptism from John was to save you and me. That is how He fulfilled all righteousness. That is how He accomplished the remission of all sins. He bore all the sins of you and me. It says, *"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)*.

As the door of heaven opened, God the Father said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. "It was the will of the Father to send My Son and remove the sins of all the people of this world, and My Son has obeyed this will, borrowed the body of Mary, put on human flesh, and been born on this earth, and He has now received baptism in order to have all the sin of mankind transferred to Him through John, bear the sin of the world, go to the Cross, receive the judgment for sin in place of mankind on the Cross, and save them. This is My beloved Son. He is the One in whom I delight. My Son will bear all the sin of mankind and make you sinless." This is what He said.

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Taking it by force is faith

Dear fellow believers, it says, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. It says that the violent take it by force; then how does one take it by force? It is by believing. Taking it by force is believing.

Let us suppose there is a watch here. A certain teacher wanted to give this watch as a present to three third-grade elementary school children, and said, "I want to give you this watch; whoever wants it, raise your hand." The first child said, "The teacher is teasing us. It is a lie," and did not take it. When the teacher said to the second child, "Take this watch," he did take it, but after thinking quietly for a while, he said it seemed the teacher would ask for it back, and he returned it. So the teacher said to the third child, "Here, you take this." The third child checked, saying, "Really? It is not a lie, is it? You can't give it and then take it back," and then took it and put it into his pocket. The teacher really wanted to give it, and compared to the two children before, this child was truly admirable. "This child truly believes what the teacher says. Because the teacher said he would give it, he truly believes it, takes it, and keeps it." The teacher was very glad. This is exactly what faith is. This is exactly what taking it by force is.

It is taking it by force through faith. It is taking hold of it through faith. Taking hold of it through faith—this is exactly taking it by force. It says, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)*. No one can be saved by his own deeds. There is no one who has sinned less. All sin alike. But going to the kingdom of heaven and receiving the remission of sins is taking hold of it through faith. It is believing that our Lord came to this earth to save us sinners, received baptism from

John the Baptist, and had all our sins transferred to Him. The Lord came to this earth and did this; what reason is there for me not to believe this? Lord, I believe. This Bible is absolutely not a lie. It has been handed down just as it is from long ago until now. Do you believe that this Bible is the word of God?

Even if we do not know anything else, here, when Jesus was to receive baptism, He clearly said that all righteousness would be fulfilled. It meant that although all people were destined to go to hell because they had sin, by receiving baptism from John, Jesus would make all people sinless. And Jesus actually received baptism. His receiving the baptism that is like the laying on of hands was having sin transferred to Him; His going into the water was His dying the death that is the wages of sin, because He had sin transferred to Him; and His coming up out of the water speaks of the resurrection.

One becomes righteous by faith

According to the Scriptures, that is, according to the word of the Old Testament long ago, Jesus had our sins transferred to Him in our place, died on the Cross, rose again three days after He died and came back to life, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. And He says that anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior has no sin. This is because Jesus came to this earth and made us sinless. This is the righteousness of God. This is the salvation of God. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Do you take it by force? Dear fellow believers, do you want to go to the kingdom of heaven? Do you want to be born again of the water and the Spirit? In the blessing of being born again of the water and the Spirit, the water means that Jesus

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came to this earth, received baptism from John, and bore all our sins, and the Spirit means that that Jesus is God.

God became a man, received baptism from John, bore all sins, made us sinless, and washed us clean. And He was nailed to the Cross in place of you and me, received the judgment for sin, rose again three days after He died, and is alive now. God says that those who believe with their hearts in this salvation by which Jesus saved you are His people, and He makes them His people. Whether one believes or not depends on each person's heart. Dear fellow believers, do you believe this word of the Bible that you have heard so far? Do you take it by force according to this word that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force? Do you want to take it by force?

Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Then your sins have all been passed on to Jesus Christ, and Jesus has received all the judgment for sin in your place. And He rose again three days after He died and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus is alive now. He came to this earth for a little while in the form of a man, and through His 33 years of life He received baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again in three days, testified for 40 days, and then sat at the right hand of God the Father, and even now He says to those who believe in Him with their hearts according to this word, "Your faith is right. You are My people. Enter the kingdom of heaven." Dear fellow believers, do you believe that our sins have all been passed on to Jesus Christ? Do you believe that your own sins have all been passed on? Have they been passed on, or not?

That is why it says here that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. It says that the violent take it by force. What do they take by force? They take the kingdom of heaven by force. It is becoming righteous through

faith. This is exactly faith. That a person goes to the kingdom of heaven only by not sinning or sinning a little, enduring and persevering, and becoming a person of much patience and goodness, is not the word of the Bible. That cannot be. Because you and I have flesh, even when we eat, we want to eat more; even when we see something tasty, we want to eat more; even when we want to become pretty, we want to become prettier; the desires of the flesh are endless. Then how can we be changed by not sinning? That is impossible.

It comes about by faith. By faith one becomes righteous, by faith one becomes a child of God, by faith one takes hold of everlasting life, and by faith one goes to the kingdom of heaven. As it says, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10),* one becomes righteous by believing in the heart. Do you believe in your heart? If you believe with your heart, are you righteous or a sinner? Do you have sin or not? You have no sin. You cannot have sin. Jesus came to this earth once and for all, received baptism from John once and for all, and took it all away once and for all. Elijah who is to come is none other than John the Baptist. Just as there was Elijah in the Old Testament as the representative prophet of the people of Israel, who is the servant of God who represents all the people of this world? It is none other than John the Baptist.

The sin of the world was all passed on to Jesus

About 2,000 years ago, John the Baptist, in place of you and me, gave baptism to Jesus and passed on all our sins. Your children, your parents, and you are all people of the world. You were born with sin from the time you were in your mother's

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womb, and after you were born you sinned until you were ten years old. Were those sins passed on to Jesus or not? They were passed on. Jesus became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Jesus took away the sin of the world.

Was the sin you had when you were in your mother's womb the sin of the world or not? Was the sin you committed knowingly and unknowingly, because you were immature, from your birth until you were ten, the sin of the world or not? It is sin committed in the world. The sins committed out of immaturity, out of ignorance, knowingly, and in hiding are all the sin of the world. They were passed on to Jesus. Then are the sins committed from age eleven to age twenty the sin of the world or not? The Bible says, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* Then do you believe that the sins up to age twenty were passed on? Do you believe? I believe too.

Then what about the sins committed in the world from age twenty-one to age thirty-five? This is the prime of life. Were those sins also passed on to Jesus or not? They were passed on. Then were the sins committed until death passed on or not? They were passed on. Were your children's sins passed on? Were your parents' sins passed on? They were passed on. If we go too far, it will give us a headache tracing the genealogy, so let us stop here. They were all passed on.

From the time of Adam and Eve until the day this earth ends—we do not know when it will end. Who knows? Some people have set the day the world ends and spoken of it, but the world God made ends only when the Lord comes. Suppose a woman gave birth to a baby just before the Lord comes. Did Jesus bear even that little child's sin or not? Because He bore it, anyone who knows this truth and believes it with the heart

receives the remission of sins. One believes in the heart and attains righteousness, and confesses with the mouth and attains salvation. Then are all the people of this world righteous or sinners? Do they have sin or not?

On God's side, they have none. It says, *"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)*. He made it so that no one would be judged. He saved everyone. But on man's side, do people know it or not? There are so many people who do not know it. Today, even among those who believe in Jesus, there are many who do not know what the water is. So they are sinners every day.

If you do not believe in the baptism John gave, it is vain faith

Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will believe in your hearts. It says, *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:13–14)*. Dear fellow believers, it means that Elijah is none other than John the Baptist, and since he is the greatest among those born of women, the representative of mankind is none other than John the Baptist.

John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus. From then on, God gave salvation to anyone among all people who believes with the heart this fact: "Jesus is my Savior. Jesus received baptism from John, had all my sins transferred to Him, received the judgment for all my sins on the Cross, died, rose again in three days, and is alive now. That Jesus has removed all my sins. He has taken away all my sins. Even though I am so lacking and am a person who sins until I die, He has made me a sinless person."

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This is the promise of God, and this is the salvation of God. Anyone who hears this word and believes with the heart becomes righteous. God said, *"He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)*. Dear fellow believers, I hope that you will believe in your hearts. I hope that you will take hold of the kingdom of heaven through faith and become children of God through faith. It is not that you become righteous by living a good life.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But through the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, He made you and me sinless people and saved us. So you and I actually have no sin in our hearts. I believe in my heart the fact that when Jesus received baptism, my sins were passed on to Jesus together with the sin of the world. Do you also believe with your hearts? Let us suppose that all the sins you commit throughout your lives were in your hearts. Before Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, these sins were in your and my hearts. All the sins we commit until we die were there.

But all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus completely through the laying on of hands of John the Baptist, through the arms of John the Baptist. They were passed on once and for all. Then is there sin in your hearts or not? There is not. Jesus is the One without sin, and He, who had never once sinned, received baptism from John to save us and bore the sins of you and me. And He bore our sins, was nailed to the Cross with great nails, poured out all the blood in His veins, and died. Blood is the life of man. Because He had all the sins of you and me transferred to Him, Jesus hung on the Cross and shed His blood. It says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*.

Our Lord bore all our sins and received the judgment. And as He died, He said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. And three

days after He was in the tomb, God the Father raised His Son. Jesus testified for 40 days and went up to heaven while His disciples watched. And the word says that He will come again just as He went up. Our Lord has saved those who believe in their hearts this fact that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. He has made it so that we are saved not by deeds but by believing with the heart. This is how I received the remission of sins. How can you receive the remission of sins? Can you receive the remission of sins by living a good life? You cannot.

I, too, tried to be dutiful to my parents, but that does not help at all in receiving the remission of sins. It ends with having been dutiful to one's parents; it does not help at all in the remission of sins. In my school days I also caused a lot of trouble and committed many sins. After I grew up I did not do such things, but I committed the very same sins that you commit.

Jesus received baptism in this way and removed all my sins. If one does not believe in John the Baptist's giving baptism to Jesus, the baptism Jesus received from John, then even if one believes in Jesus, it is vain faith. All four Gospels say that Jesus did this. I believe. I believe that you also believe. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The responsibility of the cities that received much

< Matthew 11:20–24 >

"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. (And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day –ASV). But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.'"

The rebuke of the One who performed mighty works

The cities in which Jesus did many works are, on the contrary, rebuked. The experience that people would have regarded as something to boast about became, in the face of judgment, the grounds for holding them responsible. The fact alone that Jesus came near and performed many mighty works did not prove the

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faith of those cities. The Lord asks how they responded to the grace they had received.

Let us read verse 20. *"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent" (Matthew 11:20)*. The One who rebukes is none other than Jesus, who performed mighty works among them. The Lord knows what He did in those cities, and He also knows how they responded. So the fact that they received much and the fact that they did not turn back are revealed together.

The passage calls these cities *"the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done."* They were not places that had merely glimpsed a few works in passing, but places that had been given the opportunity to encounter Jesus' mighty works overflowingly. Even compared with other places, they were cities that had received much.

People easily regard it as something to boast about that they have experienced many special things. However, Jesus' performing mighty works in those cities was in order to testify that He Himself is the Son of God. So encountering those works and believing in Him are different. Even if we have seen amazing things up close, if we hold on to our own thoughts, we may not accept the Savior to whom those works point.

If you have often heard the gospel and have become familiar with the word of the Bible, that is precious grace. But that grace at the same time also becomes a reason to examine your heart. Each time you hear a familiar word, before you consider that you already know it all, confirm what you are relying on and how you are responding before that word.

Jesus rebuked the people who did not turn back even after seeing many mighty works. By making known side by side the grace they had received and their response, He revealed the reason for the rebuke. The problem lay in the fact that even

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though the Lord had revealed Himself, the people did not turn their hearts back before that word.

So those who read this rebuke cannot feel at ease by reckoning only what they have experienced in the past. They must examine how they are now receiving the Lord's word. What those who have encountered much grace need is not self-confident boasting, but a heart that believes and follows the One who gave the grace.

The heart that did not turn back

Let us look again at the reason for the rebuke in verse 20. The passage records that it was *"because they did not repent."* It means that the cities that had seen Jesus' mighty works did not return to God. Jesus clearly made known to them in this way what had gone wrong.

Repentance is not something that ends with a few words saying we did wrong or with a feeling of momentary sorrow. It is turning back from the heart that relied on our own judgment and our own righteousness, and believing in what the Lord has done. So if Jesus came as the Savior, acknowledge that you are a person who needs His salvation, and believe in that grace.

In verse 21, Jesus speaks of how they would have responded if it had been the people of other cities. *"They would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matthew 11:21)*. With the words *"long ago,"* the Lord says that if it had been them, they would have turned back at once without putting it off. The cities that hesitated even after seeing much and the cities that would have turned back without delay if they had seen are set against each other by this one word.

But in this comparison, what the Lord asks about is not the outward appearance but the heart that responds to the Lord's work. Even if one imitates the outward appearance, that does not become a merit that removes sin. Acknowledging our sins and wrongs and believing in the salvation Jesus has given is the direction of turning back.

Those who keep holding on only to their own resolutions in order to remove their sins end up pouring their whole hearts into confirming whether they have changed enough. The word of Jesus turns such a heart back toward the Savior. When we know what the Lord has accomplished and believe that truth, we come to lay down the toil of seeking the grounds for the remission of sins in our own deeds.

So the word that makes us realize our sin is also grace. It is because the heart that had considered itself fine comes to know its own true state before the word. When you hear a rebuke, do not strive to dress yourself up, but acknowledge the wrongs the Lord has pointed out and accept His salvation.

If you have already believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you can also correct, before the word, the attitude of taking lightly the grace you have received. It is laying down the heart that insisted that your thoughts were always right, and learning from the Lord. Obey the word so that the grace of the salvation you have received may lead even the direction of your life anew.

The opportunity given to Chorazin and Bethsaida

Let us read all of verse 21. *"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long*

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ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matthew 11:21). Jesus calls the names of the cities one by one. This rebuke is not a lament He makes vaguely over the evil world, but is directed at those very cities that did not turn back even after seeing His mighty works.

The word *"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!" (Matthew 11:21)* is not a word to be heard lightly. It is a warning that Jesus gives, knowing their condition fully. And because these were places where many opportunities had been given, that warning is all the heavier.

The Lord says, *"The mighty works which were done in you."* Those cities had not merely heard rumors from afar, but had seen the works Jesus did right in their own midst. So the responsibility for taking lightly the grace given close at hand was theirs.

Near you, too, who hear the word today, there are opportunities that have been given. You can learn the gospel and ask about it, and you can open the Bible and confirm what you have heard. Just because you often gain such opportunities does not mean that their value decreases. Rather, they are grace given so that you may know and believe more clearly.

People sometimes put off the word they have already heard while waiting for some special experience far away. But Chorazin and Bethsaida had already seen sufficient mighty works. So instead of saying that we will believe only if something more appears, we must first accept the truth the Lord has already made known.

Jesus says that if He had performed those mighty works in Tyre and Sidon, they would have turned back. It is a comparison that tears down the pride of those who hear it. We cannot exalt ourselves above other cities by the fact that our city has received much grace. The issue is whether we have responded to the Lord's word.

So if you know more of the word or have heard it longer than others, do not look down on others with that knowledge, but examine your own heart. The more you come to know, the more thankful you can be for the grace of God. The fact that the Lord has spoken from close at hand becomes a reason to learn humbly.

The responsibility that Tyre and Sidon reveal

Let us read verse 22. *"But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:22)*. The standard of this comparison is not the condition of the cities as seen by people's eyes now. The day Jesus spoke of is the day of judgment. He made known what responsibility each city would bear before the Lord's word on that day.

Listen carefully to the words *"I say to you."* Jesus Himself is declaring it. This word about judgment is not a human guess or an exaggeration meant to frighten. The One who performed the mighty works of the Savior has made known the end that those who do not respond to that word will meet.

The passage makes a comparison, saying, *"It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."* Since He said that it would rather be less heavy for Tyre and Sidon, which had not seen the mighty works, the much grace that Chorazin and Bethsaida had received could not cover their unbelief. The fact that they had seen more and yet turned away made their responsibility heavier.

So this comparison of Jesus makes us weigh solemnly the opportunity that Chorazin and Bethsaida received. What Jesus pointed out was the stubbornness of the cities that had seen His

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mighty works the most. The heart that seeks to justify our own state by finding the faults of others must stop before this word.

The Lord is the One who does not change a word He has once spoken, but fulfills it just as it is. Before Him, if even a little sin remains, one cannot escape the judgment, and if one stands with the law as the measure, there is not a single person who can escape that judgment. That is why God prepared a way of salvation different from the law, and this warning becomes a word that calls people to that way.

Even so, we cannot take up this warning and stand in the place of judging others as we please. In the passage, the One who knows the condition of the cities precisely and declares the outcome of that day is Jesus. Those who preach the word need only warn faithfully according to the Lord's word and preach His salvation.

If we hear this word seriously, rather than guessing at the end of others, we come to treasure the truth that has come to us today. The Lord is speaking now. It is right not to make excuses to put off repentance, but to examine our hearts and accept His grace.

Capernaum, which sought to be exalted

Let us read verse 23. *"And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day" (Matthew 11:23)*. Jesus breaks down the thought that Capernaum would be exalted. Even if many mighty works were done in that city, if they do not believe in the Lord, that experience cannot let them escape judgment.

In the question *"thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven?" (Matthew 11:23)* is contained a rebuke toward the city that had regarded itself highly. How we view ourselves before God is what matters. If we make the opportunities we received the evidence that we are great, we come to turn away from the One who gave the grace.

The word that follows is *"thou shalt go down unto Hades" (Matthew 11:23)*. Hades is the place where the devil, who opposed God, goes, and those who did not accept the love and salvation of God are also brought down there. The thought of exalting themselves even to heaven and the outcome Jesus made known are exact opposites. A heart that seeks to be exalted while rejecting the Savior cannot stand before His judgment.

Even the experiences of faith become self-boasting if we hold on to them wrongly. It is because we can evaluate ourselves by the years we have heard the word or by the length of time we have done religious things. But the word of Jesus makes us examine the heart that lies beyond such a record. What we are now relying on for the remission of sins must be clear.

It is not because people are dull or weak that they come to judgment. It is because their hearts are proud and they do not believe in the work by which God saved them. Those who seek the mercy of God acknowledge that their hands are empty. They accept that the Savior must rescue them. Such a heart does not lower the grace of God, but rather treasures the righteousness Jesus has fulfilled, believes in that righteousness, and comes before God.

This grace is also revealed in the word of atonement that God gave. *"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)*. God ordained that when a person who had sinned laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, that

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offering would die in his place. It is not a way of salvation in which a sinner can boast of his own righteousness.

Jesus, the substance of that offering, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and at that time He also had all the sins of your entire lifetime passed on to Him. And just as the offering on which hands had been laid died, He shed His blood on the Cross as the price of that sin and died in our place, and He rose again from death. Those who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with their hearts receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become children of God.

In the face of the comparison with Sodom

God made known what kind of city Sodom was. *"And the LORD said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave'" (Genesis 18:20)*. God knew that sin and regarded it as heavy. So Jesus' comparing Capernaum with that city was not His taking sin lightly, but His revealing that the responsibility of rejecting the Savior is heavier than that of the city that had already been judged for great sin. Before this word, we cannot make the assessment that we are better than others the grounds of our salvation.

The judgment that Sodom received is also recorded in the Bible. "*Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens" (Genesis 19:24)*. It is an event in which God's warning appeared as actual judgment. Capernaum, hearing the name of this judgment, should have realized how great the grace given to it was. For Jesus Himself had come and performed mighty works, and had even given them the opportunity to hear His words. So we must

not let the warning that is now being preached slip by as just another familiar story, but must turn our hearts to the One who gives grace.

Jesus says that if the mighty works He performed in Capernaum had been performed in Sodom, that city would have remained. This is the end of verse 23. *"It would have remained until this day" (Matthew 11:23)*. The name of Sodom, which had already been judged, became a warning to Capernaum.

When we hear this word, we come to look back on the heart that felt at ease by comparing ourselves with those we considered more evil than ourselves. In Capernaum, Jesus' mighty works appeared overflowingly. Even so, the Lord did not reassure Capernaum by pointing to the evil of another city, but rather made known a responsibility heavier than that city's.

Let us read verse 24. *"But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:24)*. The judgment of that day belongs to Jesus. It is a declaration that Capernaum, which did not believe in what the Lord had done, stands before a heavier judgment than the people of Sodom, which was destroyed by fire. Even a position that looks high in people's eyes today cannot change the Lord's declaration. So we need a heart that hears the word before the One who knows our whole condition.

The words *"in the day of judgment"* do not allow us to think that the opportunity given now will continue forever. Today, when you can hear the word, make your faith clear. The attitude of pushing the gospel aside, saying you will think about it later, only reveals the illusion that you can control that time.

Even so, there is no reason to keep piling up only fear as we hear God's warning. That word is meant to make us turn back from the heart that rejected the Savior. The way to obtain the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the

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Spirit has already been preached to you. Accepting the salvation Jesus has given is the right response to offer in the face of this warning.

Those who have received the remission of sins by faith come to know more clearly how precious the grace of salvation is. It is because the Lord paid the price of that sin in place of us, who should have been judged, so that we can rely on His righteousness. So rather than the memory that we have done many things, gratitude for the salvation Jesus has given must hold our hearts.

This gratitude corrects the attitude of hearing the word lightly. It makes us receive even the word we used to pass over, saying we already knew its content, as teaching that the Lord gives to us. Those who exalted themselves come to exalt the grace of the Lord, and those who put their own judgment first come to fit themselves to the word.

A response worthy of the word received today

Jesus fully knows the grace He gave the cities and their response. The fact of having seen much does not replace faith, and the fact of having been near does not replace repentance. Those who have heard the word need the response of believing and accepting that word.

The gospel given to you, too, must be received in that way. If you keep it only as knowledge for evaluating others, your heart may rather drift away from the word. It is time to believe clearly that it is the grace of salvation Christ has given to you, and to humble yourself and follow His will.

Think again about the words *"Then He began to rebuke"* in verse 20. Jesus did not simply pass by the cities that did not turn

back, but revealed their stubbornness by His word. So now, as you hear this rebuke, is the very time to examine your heart and turn back.

The attitude that those who have heard the word for a long time should keep is not the conceit that there is nothing more to learn, but the humility of giving thanks for the grace already received and of listening also to the word that comes to them today. The faith that clearly knows the gospel and the heart that continually seeks to learn from the Lord can certainly go together.

Do not read the names of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum as merely someone else's story. Examine how you are responding to the grace Jesus has bestowed close at hand. This word makes known the reason why the more a person has received, the more he must rely on God with a lowlier heart.

Lay down the heart that boasted of your experiences, and give thanks for the remission of sins bestowed through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Believe in what the Lord has done, and accept into your heart the teaching you have heard today. In keeping with the great grace you have received, become people who humbly turn back before the word. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

You will find rest for your souls

< Matthew 11:25–30 >

“At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’”

Hiding and revealing

People respond differently even when they hear the same word. There are those who judge the word with the thought that they know a lot, while there are also those who gratefully receive the grace by which He teaches them. Today’s passage tells us where the knowledge of God comes from, and how those who learn from the Lord find rest for their hearts.

Let us read verse 25. *“At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have*

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hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes'" (Matthew 11:25). The words *"At that time"* tell us when this thanksgiving was offered. Just before this, Jesus rebuked the cities in which He had done the most mighty works for not repenting. In that very place, where many people rejected Jesus even after seeing right beside them the sick being healed and the dead coming back to life, the Lord gave thanks to the Father.

The name Jesus called upon, *"Father, Lord of heaven and earth,"* contains the authority by which He rules the whole world. So if we try to understand God by setting Him under human judgment, we are wrong from the start. The Father is not an object to be measured by our knowledge, but the Sovereign whom we must fear and learn from.

We cannot take the word *"You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent" (Matthew 11:25)* to mean that we should reject learning or scholarship itself. The people who at that time considered themselves wise prided themselves on keeping the Sabbath and the tradition of the elders well, and yet they belittled Jesus, calling Him *"a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners"* (Matthew 11:19). Because of that heart that considered their own judgment right, they could not accept the work of God being done before their very eyes.

Jesus, on the other hand, gave thanks with the words *"have revealed them to babes" (Matthew 11:25)*. A little child is not in a position to put himself forward as already knowing everything, but is someone who must receive what is given. In knowing God, too, we likewise need the attitude of receiving the word the Lord makes known to us rather than putting forward our own wisdom.

So there is no need for us to weigh only whether we have learned much or little. We must examine how we are hearing the word of God now. The fruit of our hearing differs depending on

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whether we are pushing the word away by putting forward what we already know, or receiving it as the word that teaches us.

The Son, who delighted in the Father's will

Let us read verse 26. *"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight" (Matthew 11:26)*. Within the three short verses from verse 25 to verse 27, the word *"Father"* appears again and again. Every time Jesus explains how this came about, He calls on the Father. Without being swayed by people's evaluations, He accepted what the Father had done just as it was, with the single phrase *"Even so."*

The confession *"for so it seemed good in Your sight" (Matthew 11:26)* teaches the fact that coming to know the truth is the grace of God. The less room there is for us to boast of ourselves, the clearer the grace we have received becomes. Conversely, if we think that we came to know the truth because we are better than others, then those who have received grace end up exalting their own wisdom again.

Knowing the word clearly and exalting ourselves are different things. Because God has made it known to us, we can be certain, and for that very reason we can also be humble. So the assurance of faith must not grow into the stubbornness that our own judgment is always right. It must deepen into a heart that relies on God, who taught us the truth.

Think about how you came to know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If you regard it merely as the result of your having picked out a good explanation, there is less reason to give thanks. But when you consider the grace by which the Lord made salvation clear through the word and caused you

to believe, you come to give thanks even for the help you received from people and to give glory to God.

This thanksgiving guards the heart of the one who learns. Those who have come to know by grace have no reason to dress themselves up just because there are parts they do not yet know. Where their understanding is lacking, they can simply learn again before the word. Rather than pretending to know and hiding one's questions, the proper attitude is to seek to receive the Lord's teaching accurately.

We come to know the Father through the Son

Let us read verse 27. *"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27)*. In speaking of the way to know the Father, Jesus placed the Son Himself at its center. So those who want to know God must listen closely to who the Son is and what the Son teaches.

The word *"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father" (Matthew 11:27)* shows what authority is contained in the invitation that follows. Included among those *"All things"* is the work of saving people from sin. The Lord who rose again also said, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18)*. Jesus is not One who merely expresses a wish to help. He is One who calls people with the authority He received from the Father and can actually give those He has called what they need.

Before the word *"no one knows the Son except the Father" (Matthew 11:27)*, we come to lay down the thought of trying to explain Jesus completely by human standards. We cannot know

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the Son by gathering people's rumors or evaluations. We must accept who the Son is and what He has done by following the word that the Father makes clear.

Jesus also said that no one knows the Father except the Son and those who receive revelation as the Son wills. Revelation is God's opening up and showing what had been covered. We cannot see God with our physical eyes, but when we read the word, we come to know who God is and how He has loved and saved us. It is not filling the unseen world with human imagination, but accepting, within the word, the will of the Father that has been revealed through Jesus.

So we cannot say that we know God better simply because we have a strong sense of the mysterious. The confession that we know God must be connected with the word that the Son taught. It is those who believe in the salvation He has given and come to know His will who also rightly realize the grace of the Father.

There is no reason to look for another way of drawing near to God apart from Jesus. For the Son, who knows the Father, makes the Father known to us. Therefore, when we approach the word, what we must hold on to first is not our own special experience, but the truth the Son has made clear and the faith that believes that truth.

The invitation to come and the promise to give

Let us read verse 28. *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. The Son, who makes the Father known, now calls those who labor. The revelation before this and this invitation are not separate

from each other. The grace of coming to know God through the Son leads to the way of coming to that Son and finding rest.

In the call *"all you who labor and are heavy laden"* is revealed the heart of the Lord, who knows that people are worn out. There is no condition that one must first become a person who does not grow weary in order to come before the Lord. It is the very person who is laboring while bearing a burden who hears this invitation.

Jesus says, *"Come to Me."* At the center of this invitation is Jesus Himself. So we must not stop at looking for ways to soothe our own hearts, but must believe and rely on Him who is speaking. Coming to the Savior goes together with the faith that truly accepts His word.

The words that follow, *"I will give you rest,"* make clear where rest comes from. The Lord did not shift the responsibility of obtaining rest back onto those who are weary, but He Himself made the promise. So we rely on the power and faithfulness of the One who made this promise, rather than on how hard we have tried.

Those who cling only to correcting their own conduct in order to resolve sin are weighed down by the sins that appear again even after they think they have corrected them. Even if they recall their past wrongs and try again and again to wash away their sins with prayers of repentance, they cannot take off the burden of their conscience by themselves. For the remission of sins is received by believing in the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

Concerning the offerings of the Old Testament, God said, *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4)*. The laying on of hands shows that sin is passed on to the offering. Those who know this meaning cannot dismiss

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the baptism Jesus received from John as a ritual that has nothing to do with sin. We must look, according to the word, at how our sins were dealt with.

Jesus, who called us who bear heavy burdens, had all the sins of the world, which include even the sins we would commit throughout our lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And as the price of those sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us completely. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. In this way the burden of our sins was passed on to the Lord.

Those who have believed in this salvation do not need to strive to complete the remission of sins by accumulating their own merits. They need only rely on the righteousness the Lord has given. Even the shortcomings that come to light after being saved should be corrected by receiving the teaching of the word, but they must not think that they make up the price of salvation by changing themselves.

The word telling us to take the yoke upon us and learn

Let us read verse 29. *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29)*. Along with the promise that He would give rest, Jesus also gave the word telling us to learn. Rest and learning do not hinder each other. It is as we come to know who the Lord is and follow His will that our hearts find their proper place.

A yoke is a piece of wood placed on the neck of an ox to make it walk together in the direction the owner points. The word *"Take My yoke upon you"* is a call to fit the steps we had taken following only our own thoughts to the word of the Lord. Those steps begin with acknowledging and receiving, just as it is, what the word says about us. If we look only at the single word "yoke" and think that He is placing more heavy duties on us, we miss the invitation and the promise He gave before.

What the Lord gives is the teaching *"learn from Me."* To learn from Him, the place where we hear the word and the life of actually following it must be connected. Learning begins with remembering the teaching, but it does not stop there; it goes on to conforming our judgment and attitude to the Lord's will.

If we do anything with a desire to look better than others, even a small mistake feels like something that brings us down. We also come to avoid receiving help, thinking it hurts our pride. But those who learn from the Lord examine the desire to exalt their own names, and look for ways to benefit others in the work entrusted to them.

The benefit here is not the same as a result for which the other person always praises us. Speaking the necessary words honestly or steadily helping where someone is lacking may not be recognized right away. But when we have the clear purpose of serving according to the Lord's will, we do not measure our work by people's reactions alone.

In this verse, the Lord did not tell us to become the most excellent person in everything. He told us to learn from Him first. Effort to do well is necessary too, but we must examine whom that effort is directed toward. Skills learned faithfully with a heart to help people become instruments of service.

Admitting that our skill is lacking is different from giving up on learning. We can simply receive teaching humbly and learn

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what is needed. A heart that learns from the Lord relieves us of the pressure to make ourselves look great, and helps us see clearly the work we must do responsibly today.

The Lord, who is gentle and lowly

Jesus made Himself known, saying, *"I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29)*. Those who are invited must know to whom they are coming. We are not coming to someone who uses our weakness to exalt himself, but to the Lord, who gives us life and teaches us to go the right way.

The word *"gentle"* does not mean an attitude that simply calls what is wrong right. Just before this, Jesus clearly rebuked the cities that did not repent. Yet the same Lord says here that His heart is gentle. In the teaching of the One who is gentle there is sincere rebuke, and there is also the benefit He gives through that rebuke.

Therefore, if you close your heart the moment you are scolded, learning is blocked. When the word exposes your pride, think about how the Lord is teaching you now. If you examine the thoughts you need to correct rather than looking for words that hurt your feelings, you will come to know the Lord's will to care for you even through rebuke.

The word *"lowly"* also does not mean that Jesus' authority is small. The One who has received all things from the Father calls people with a lowly heart. Since the Lord who has that authority teaches in this way, those who learn must not press others down with a little knowledge or office.

So when you help someone, strive so that the person can receive the help and stand again. It is more important to help that person know and believe the word than to make him keep

leaning on you. Service that has learned the heart of the Lord values the benefit of the one who is helped more than the name of the one who helps.

This learning is needed in close relationships, too. We tend to make light of the labor of people familiar to us and speak of only our own labor as great. It is in small practices—listening calmly to the needs of the other person and faithfully doing the work we are able to undertake—that the Lord's teaching is revealed in our lives.

The rest the heart finds

The Lord said, *"And you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29)*. Take note here of the words *"your souls."* He did not say that rest begins only when there is not a single thing left to do. It means that even while we learn from the Lord, there is work to do, but the soul, that is, the heart, with which we approach that work changes.

When we place the basis of the remission of sins not on our own deeds but on the Lord's salvation, we put down the burden of having to prove ourselves endlessly before God. And we can obey out of gratitude for the grace we have received. Even when doing the same labor, the anxiety that we can live only if we are recognized and the gratitude of serving after receiving grace differ in where the heart is directed.

If we value ourselves only when we are praised by people, our hearts are easily shaken when that praise disappears. But if we rely on the salvation the Lord has given and on His word, we can do what we must do even on days when no one recognizes us. In the rest of the heart there is, in this way, the stability of standing by faith.

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Remember the One who promised, *"I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. When your heart grows heavy again, you do not need to pretend to be a stronger person. You can simply examine before the word what you are clinging to and struggling with, rely on the Lord who called you, and humbly receive the help you need.

The word *"learn from Me"* does not allow the attitude that there is nothing more to learn because we have realized it once. Even those who have the assurance of salvation keep learning a serving heart and the wisdom for living. Because they learn on the foundation of the grace they have already received, they can return to the right way without hiding their failures.

Yet we must not turn this rest into a statement that it is all right to ignore the limits of the body. Resting when we are weary and sharing labor with one another are also truly necessary. The Lord's promise cannot become an excuse for wearing people out endlessly. Those who learn from the gentle Lord also come to consider the weaknesses of others.

Why it is easy and light

Let us read verse 30. *"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30)*. The Lord used two separate words, saying that the yoke is *"easy"* and the burden is *"light."* He spoke separately of the yoke not being hard and the burden not being heavy. Those who know the heart of the One who called them and learn from Him do not bear the life entrusted to them as a heavy burden for which they must pay the price of salvation alone.

Yet do not turn the word *"My yoke is easy"* into a guarantee that there will be no difficulty at all. The labor that disciples go

through is real. But the Master of that labor is Jesus, who is gentle and lowly. The fact that we can trust the Lord and follow His will holds our hearts steady.

The reason the burden the Lord has entrusted to us is light is that the Lord has already accomplished all the substance of that work. What we are to do is believe in the salvation the Lord has accomplished and preach it to others just as it is. That work, too, is accomplished not by our ability but by the Lord's power. When we know this, there is also less reason to dress up our labor in order to look like people who have accomplished much.

The thanksgiving at the beginning in the words *"have revealed them to babes" (Matthew 11:25)* continues all the way here. Those who have come to know by grace come to the One who calls them by grace, and learn from Him. The Son, who makes the Father known, also gives rest to the heart.

The learning we need today does not lie only in newly deciding on grand things. Learning begins with not putting forward our own wisdom when we receive the word, with looking out for the benefit of others when we do the work given to us, and with humbly receiving teaching when we have realized our shortcomings.

Those who believe in Jesus, who called them, also keep learning His heart. They know the grace the Son has made clear, rely on the salvation He has given, and entrust their lives to the gentle and lowly Lord. In the hearts of those who walk on, learning from the Lord in this way, there is the rest the Lord has promised. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

Become one whose debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled

< Matthew 11:20–30 >

"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day –ASV. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.' At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke

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upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'"

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden"

The more turbulent the world becomes, the more quickly the gospel must be preached, and if we preach the gospel, there will be no feeling of remorse in our hearts when God brings down judgment. So I hope that the gospel will quickly be spread throughout the world.

When we look at today's passage, the regions called Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum appear. In these regions our Lord showed signs and wonders and spoke, but the people of these regions did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and so they are rebuked by Jesus. The Lord said, *"It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:24)*. He said that if such mighty works had been done in Sodom of old, Sodom would have remained until today, but because they did not repent of their sins and did not believe the truth of salvation, He would surely judge them. But the Lord gave thanks that He had hidden the truth of salvation from those who are said to be wise and revealed it to those who are like little children. Concerning this truth of salvation, the Lord said, "*Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27)*. It means that God can be known only through the word of revelation that God has spoken. If we are to meet the God of salvation, we must receive the revelation of the truth. What revelation of the truth must we receive? It is

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not talking about receiving a revelation in a dream; it means that we must receive the revelation of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that is shown in the word of God. We must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit just as it shows salvation to us. Only then can we know God the Father, and also know the salvation that Jesus Christ has given.

When we look at the end of today's passage, it says, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30)*. He told those who labor and are heavy laden all to come to Jesus Christ. And He said that then Jesus would give rest to those who come to Him. What would this word be? Who would those who labor and are heavy laden be? Are they not those who agonize because of the problem of their own sins, because of the joys and sorrows of life, and because of the problem of their own life to come? And besides that, are they not those who try to solve everything themselves? In any case, life has labor and heavy burdens. Human beings are those who labor, and all human beings are those who bear heavy burdens. But the Lord told them all to come.

As I look at this word, I feel more keenly that when I have fallen into weakness and fallen into sin, I must go to the Lord. In the past, I looked at the word *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)* and believed in the Lord and gave thanks, thinking, "He truly bore our sins on the Cross, shed His precious blood on the Cross, saved me from sin, and told me to come to Him." At times, while singing praise, I also believed it by myself, held on to it, and praised Him, saying, "The Lord has truly saved me completely from sin and has taken my burden of sin upon Himself." But my

heart had no strength. There was sin in my heart, I could not be released from sin, and I had not been set free from the sins I had already committed, and so I was going through all kinds of difficulties. That is how I was before I knew the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and now that I have met that truth and put down the heavy burden, I know the meaning of praise, the joy of the remission of sins, and being saved from sin, and I have received them all and am enjoying them.

Today the Lord said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29–30)*. The yoke is the Lord's work, and it is the work by which the Lord removes all the sins of the people of the whole world. The Lord actually bore all your sins and mine, the sins of the people of the whole world, and removed them all. And He told us to take the Lord's yoke upon us and learn from the Lord. In fact, if we hold the gospel of God, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in our hearts and spread the gospel to the world, we come to know the heart of the Lord.

The Lord told us, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me" (Matthew 11:29)*, and when we obey the word in which the Lord told us to spread the gospel in this world and actually spread this gospel, we come to know His deep love—how much the Lord showed mercy to us and removed our sins. Because as we actually serve the gospel we come to know how lacking we are, we come to learn much in our hearts and to gain much strength as we take this yoke and spread the gospel. "So He Himself truly bore even the sins of all the parts in which you and I are lacking as we go on living. The Lord had those sins transferred to Him through baptism and washed them away." So when we know and learn the Lord through the gospel, we come to know more deeply what kind of Person the Lord is.

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We come to know what the word *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* means. As for what it is for us to enter into the Lord and rest, to be held in the Lord's embrace, for our hearts truly to rest because of the Lord, and for all our worries and anxieties and all these things to find rest—it is this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Through it we come to know the depth of how much the Lord removed the sin of this world, the sins of your whole lifetime and mine. Knowing that depth, we come to rest in it and to find rest, and we also come to know that the work of God is not heavy but light, that it is easy, and also that the Lord is truly gentle and humble. Truly God is gentle, humble, and merciful, so that He had compassion on us even though all mankind lives committing so many sins. When we did not know ourselves and did not know what we were like, and so judged God and the like, the Lord took pity on us, came to this earth Himself, had all these sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died for us on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us. It means that through that salvation we come to know how merciful God is, how gentle He is, how humble He is, how much He loves us, and how much He gives complete rest to our hearts.

The Lord lamented because the people in Capernaum, the people in many regions, did not repent, but if you and I truly take the Lord's yoke and learn from the Lord, we find rest in our hearts. When we take the yoke in this way, believe the gospel, and serve the gospel, we truly learn a great deal about what the gospel is and how the Lord saved us, mankind, from sin. Not as a theory and not as a doctrine, we come to know, "The Lord has actually removed the sin of all mankind." And we come to know, and to know more and more, that though you and I commit many sins like a fog, like dark clouds, throughout our whole lives, Jesus received baptism from John and had all those sins

transferred to Him, received the judgment on the Cross and received all the judgment for your sins and mine, and so saved you and me from sin.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me"

He said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29)*. The Lord told us to take the yoke and learn from the Lord. We must believe the gospel the Lord has given us, and also believe that He told us to spread it to people, and spread it. When we do so, we learn many things from the Lord, obtain much grace, and find much rest in our hearts. Do you understand the word?

He said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me."* When we actually believe the gospel and serve the gospel with the intention of obeying the word of God, we find rest in our hearts, and the gospel grows as it comes to be believed more deeply in our hearts, as an established fact, that though it is true that the Lord removed the sins of other people, He removed your sins too. No, rather than the gospel growing, this faith grows. It means that it becomes firm faith, so that we do not drink milk but can eat solid food, discern the word of God and believe the word, know for ourselves what is right and wrong, and later come to live by ourselves as God is pleased.

We truly must take the Lord's yoke. Also, as we take the Lord's yoke and serve the gospel, we learn many things from the Lord. While doing the work of God and serving the gospel, we come to know our own shortcomings, and we come to know how perfectly and cleanly the Lord removed those many sins of ours. As we come to know that, the word of God that we had only

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known we come to take as truly our own faith. It means that what we used to hear only with our ears in the past is now believed in our hearts. It means that it is experienced with our hearts and with our bodies. And as that happens, we come to find more rest in our hearts. He said, *"You will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29–30)*. As for the Lord's yoke, we only have to believe. It is easy. It is not difficult. And the Lord's burden is light. We only have to do it. We only have to do it by faith. There are many people who do the work of God with great difficulty, and it is because they have no faith and do not know this fact well or do not believe it.

Dear fellow believers, is there a burden in your heart, and do you have no strength? The Lord said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* The Lord removed your sins and mine and gave rest to your hearts and mine. Therefore we must learn from the Lord. We must take the Lord's yoke and learn. There is not a single person who learns without taking the yoke. Those who actually do the work of God come to enjoy deeply the deep truth of the gospel God has given. But a person who only knows the gospel of God for himself and does not serve the gospel does not enjoy that rest. Dear fellow believers, have you ever experienced finding strength and rest in your heart, even though your body was tired, while doing the work of God? Are you experiencing it even now?

The Lord told us, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me."* Even before, it was not that we did not know the word *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* But we did not know well what this word was talking about. So it means that it took a long time until *"the Word became flesh" (John 1:14)* and you felt it with your flesh and with your hearts. When we take the yoke, we come to know the gospel of God—that God removed the sins of all the people

of the world, that He washed away the sins of all the people of this world with the baptism and the blood of the Cross, received the judgment, and removed them—and as we serve the gospel we truly come to learn, and as we serve the gospel, it comes about in your hearts: "It truly is so. Ah, it really is so." Dear fellow believers, have you experienced such a thing?

"Who owed him ten thousand talents"

Let us look at the word of Matthew chapter 18. *"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay" (Matthew 18:23–25)*. Here a certain king wants to settle accounts with his servants. And the word appears in which this king canceled the entire debt of the servant who owed ten thousand talents. Let us examine this word together.

In the light of the word, you must think about whether or not you might be such a person. *"His master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made" (Matthew 18:25)*. The master said that if the servant had nothing to pay with, that man, his wife, and his children should all be sold to pay it. Then that servant of the king said, *"Have patience with me, and I will pay you all" (Matthew 18:26)*, and he fell flat on his face and begged him to be patient, saying that he would surely pay it all. Then it says, *"Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt" (Matthew 18:27)*. The king canceled that servant's debt.

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Dear fellow believers, you know the word cancellation, don't you? It is saying, "You have no ability at all to pay the debt. You must be sold, and your wife and children must be sold, and even if you sell all the property you have, how will you pay a debt of ten thousand talents? Rather than that, I will just cancel it for you. I will wipe it all out. Now you have no debt. You owed me a debt, so I had to collect it from you, but now there is nothing to collect. You do not owe me. I have canceled it all." The one who owed ten thousand talents had no ability at all to pay. After all, ten thousand talents is far too great an amount of money. He has no ability at all to pay. Even if his children were to earn it and pay it back over several generations, from generation to generation, they would have no ability to pay, so the master canceled it. "You owe me nothing, and I have nothing to collect from you. Now there is none." Since the master canceled all that great debt, would the servant have felt good, or would he not have felt good? He would have felt so very good. Is this not precisely the yoke of the Lord that the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives? *"God so loved the world" (John 3:16)*. Because God loved people, He could not but save people from sin. So Jesus, who is God, came to this earth Himself and saved these souls. The Lord bore all the sin of the world, received all the judgment, and saved all mankind. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It means that the Lord canceled all the debt.

What if we have sin? If we have sin, will we be judged or not? And with what will we pay off all our sins? Do we have the ability to pay? By doing what will we pay? Will we earn money and bring it and offer it? And how would we earn the money to pay? If you bring your life and offer it, will your sins disappear? Some people say, "By ending my life, I will pay for everything." Do one's sins disappear because one ends one's own life? Is the fact that one has committed sin erased? Can one pay for it? One

cannot pay. The Lord canceled your sins and mine. It is because only He has the ability to do so. Because He took pity on you and me, since we were going to hell because of sin, the Lord came to this earth, had the sins of you and me, who labored and were heavy laden, transferred to Him through baptism, died for us on the Cross, rose again from death, and canceled them all. He Himself received all the punishment for our sins and removed all our sins. In this way He brought us out of sin and made us children of God.

The one whose debt has been canceled can forgive

But what did that servant whose debt had been canceled do? It says, *"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'" (Matthew 18:28).* The one whose debt of ten thousand talents had been canceled met a man who had borrowed a hundred denarii, which could not even be compared with ten thousand talents. So he met this man who owed him a little and seized him by the throat, telling him to pay the debt and asking why he did not pay back the hundred denarii, which was about a hundred days' wages and nothing compared with ten thousand talents. Then that man fell flat on his face and said, "I will pay. Have patience with me. I will earn money and pay." But it says that the one whose debt of ten thousand talents had been canceled did not allow it and put him in prison. His fellow servants saw this, were grieved, and told their master, and what resulted next comes a little later.

Dear fellow believers, you and I have received the remission of sins through this gospel the Lord has given. The Lord had

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your sins and mine transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, died for us on the Cross, rose again from death, and removed them all. Did the Lord pay off all your sins and mine, or not? Did He cancel them all, or not? He canceled them all, yet as you and I go on living in this world, there are times when we wrong one another. Do you perhaps have a heart that can never tolerate in your heart the wrong someone has done to you? Do you have a heart that says, "It is absolutely not all right until that is paid back"? Do you have a heart that cannot forgive a small wrong in human terms? If one is a person with such a heart, one will end up being rebuked: "How is it that you do not remember and do not believe the remission of sins you have received?" A truly righteous person knows how to forgive with the faith that truly believes the gospel in his heart. Here it says that the man whose debt had been canceled did not forgive what his friend had done wrong to him and put him in prison. So as for what the master said when he called him in, he said, "You too, pay all that you owe me." He put him in prison, saying, "I will hand you over to the jailers until you too pay all your debt."

In the Lord's Prayer the Lord says, *"And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12)*. Dear fellow believers, we cannot tolerate those who hear the gospel and yet do not believe it and oppose it. It is because God does not tolerate them either, and so we cannot tolerate them either. But if, while saying that one believes this gospel, one does not tolerate things that are not unbelief in the gospel or opposition to the gospel but human shortcomings and human wrongs, what would that be? Would one not be a wicked person like that servant under the king?

If your heart and mine truly believe the gospel, then, just as the Lord said, *"And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors,"* it means that because our debt has been canceled, we

also cancel the debt of the other person. A person whose debt has not been canceled cannot cancel the debts of others. If one's soul has truly received the remission of sins through God, if one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit through which all one's sins have been canceled, what is there that one cannot forgive, other than opposition to the gospel? If one truly believes the gospel that the Lord bore every wrong and every shortcoming of ours, received all the judgment, and removed them, one can forgive even the wrong one's friend has done to one.

The Bible says that because God sent His Son, had Him receive baptism, had Him die on the Cross, raised Him from death, and canceled our sins through the sacrifice of His Son, you and I too must love one another. And it says to forgive from the heart. A person who truly believes this gospel forgives from the heart. Leaving aside special things, he forgives. Only, he cannot forgive a person who opposes the gospel. It is because a person who opposes the gospel stands on the side of the devil.

But if one has believed the gospel and believed this truth, believed also in the baptism Jesus received from John and in the Cross, and received from God the remission of all sins, it means that, having received the remission of all sins, if there is a shortcoming, one rebukes it, and if there is something for which one should be rebuked, one receives the rebuke and tolerates. It means that one forgives from the heart. One does not, unable to tolerate it, lock it tightly away in one's heart and act that way. A person who has received the remission of sins tolerates.

But a person who has not received the remission of sins cannot tolerate. He can never tolerate people doing wrong to him. Why is that? It is because he himself has never received such grace of cancellation from God. It is because one can give to others only as much as one has received. One cannot give what

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one does not have. “Since I too have had everything canceled by God, I cancel your debt too.” This is the truth, and this is the Lord’s yoke. Since God removed the sins of all the people of the world, and also removed our sins and told us to preach this, we preach it, and as we preach it, we come to learn much. “The Lord truly removed people’s sins too in this way. And He already knew even the sins of the righteous in their shortcomings and removed them all.” It means that in this way we come to enjoy rest in our hearts by faith.

But even if there may perhaps be among the righteous such a person as this servant, who, though he had had much canceled by his master, could not forgive the small wrong done to him, if one knows that one has had much canceled by God, everything can be forgiven. Can it, or can it not? But if one’s debt has not been canceled by the master, one cannot cancel the debts of others either.

Dear fellow believers, the Lord spoke in this way, and we must know well what this word is talking about. *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)*. We must know well what this word means. Are you not laboring and bearing a heavy burden? You must lay down all those burdens before the Lord and receive the remission of sins by believing in the baptism and the blood of the Cross by which the Lord canceled all sins. By believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you must first yourself be washed of all sins with the water and the blood of Jesus and receive the grace of cancellation by believing that Jesus canceled the judgment of all sins. It means that only after that can you be lenient toward what others do slightly wrong to you in human terms as you live in this world.

Dear fellow believers, can a small wrong that a person has done before you be forgiven, or not? But there is something that

cannot be forgiven, and what would that be? If a person opposes the gospel, makes light of the gospel, and does not believe the gospel, can it be forgiven or not? One can forgive him in one's heart. But just because one says, "Oh, I will forgive it all," that person's sins do not disappear. As long as he does not believe the gospel, those sins remain just as they are before God.

Why would God have made hell? What is not acceptable is not acceptable. Is a person left alone even as he becomes a child of the devil? It is not acceptable. *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* Who will give us comfortable rest? It is the Lord who gives rest; does rest come just because you and I look for rest? In this world there are sins that are remitted and sins that are not remitted, and the person who does not believe the gospel, the one who blasphemes the work the Holy Spirit does, the work God does, does not receive remission. There is exactly one way to receive remission. One only has to believe for oneself the truth that the Lord has removed each person's sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If one does not believe this, the very unbelief itself becomes the sin of blaspheming the Spirit, and so the Lord has firmly declared that it will not be remitted either in this age or in the age to come. So this is tremendously frightening.

The one who has received great grace can show great grace

Because he owed ten thousand talents and had no ability to pay, because even selling his children, himself, and his wife could not pay it, the master pitied him greatly and canceled it; yet if we, though we are those whose debt has been canceled in this way, say, as though we were those whose debt had not been

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canceled, “I can never forgive what others have done wrong to me,” then when we trace the problem back, the fault lies with ourselves. It means that it is because we have not met the master and received such great grace from that master. What about a person who has received great grace from God? He can show great grace. Then if you cannot forgive what another person has done wrong to you, if you want to forgive but simply cannot, I hope you will look back on whether you yourself are now truly believing in your heart the remission of sins you have received from God.

If serving the gospel is hard for you and me, if following the Lord is so very hard, and if what the church does is displeasing, we must think about it. “As I see it, that should not be done that way but must be done this way, and this is not how that should be done but it should be done that way; I have completely opposite thoughts, so I do not know why on earth this church does things this way. I cannot understand it at all. Even if I try to unite my heart, I simply cannot. Even if I try to mix in together, I cannot mix in.” If that is the case, the problem now is not with the church but in our own hearts. If we know that it is so because our hearts are not like the Lord’s, it will be a warning to our hearts. For if we hold such a heart, we may end up leaving the church.

Dear fellow believers, what kind of people are those who complain and leave the church? They have many complaints in their hearts. “I do not know why on earth this church is like this. It seems that every single day it has to be the gospel of the water and the Spirit or nothing. It says, *‘Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls’ (Matthew 11:29)*, but I have no idea at all why this church is like that. They should have fellowship in human terms, say hello in human ways and such, and put on a

little refinement in human terms, but this church has no refinement at all." Being displeased in this way, they end up leaving. Is there a problem with the gospel the Lord has given, or is there a problem with the church, or is there a problem with oneself? The problem is with oneself, who left, and with oneself, who complains.

It is because one has not received great grace from God, because one has not received great grace in one's heart, that such thoughts come now. "Though that person is so lacking, the Lord removed that person's sins too." Through whom does such faith come? Such a heart comes through that grace of salvation by which God has canceled our debt. It means that it is not because your character and mine are excellent that we forgive someone. Because the Lord canceled our sins, removed our many sins, and made us children of God, because He canceled the many sins of our souls, we, as those whose debt has been canceled, with hearts whose debt has been canceled, can forgive everything of people who are a little lacking.

Is there rest within your hearts? Are you still struggling because there is still sin in your hearts, and are you still striving to solve the problem of sin? Dear fellow believers, within this short word lies a tremendous truth. But unless we believe in the baptism and the Cross by which the Lord remitted our sins, we cannot hold that love in our hearts, and unless we hold it in our hearts, we cannot have all our sins canceled through it, and then we cannot know the greatness of God and the depth of the truth. That is, we cannot know the word of truth of God.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Lord told you and me, who are weighed down and struggling because of sin and struggling because of various problems as we live, to come, and how did He give us rest? Also the Lord said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn*

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from Me" (Matthew 11:29), but why did He say this? Even if it seems that we know it and seems that we believe it, if it is not truly applied in our daily lives, the gospel does not take root in our hearts, and so we will not know it.

In daily life we have our own shortcomings, and each time we bring these shortcomings out before God and say, "I have this shortcoming of not tolerating someone, and other faults as well. I commit such sins every day; what shall I do?" we come to chew over the gospel of the water and the Spirit again. *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized" (Matthew 3:15–16)*. At this time the Lord had all sins transferred to Him. It means that when we know that our sins were passed on at this time, know that the Lord bore the sin of the world, went, and was nailed to the Cross, and so know that when He hung on the Cross He said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*, we come to experience in our hearts, "The Lord washed away our sins with baptism, received all the judgment for all sins on the Cross, and canceled all sins." It means that we come to learn more deeply, more broadly, and more highly.

Dear fellow believers, as you lead a life of faith, you will know that the gospel becomes deeper, more complete, and firmer. As we serve the gospel, we become more thankful for the gospel; as we preach the gospel, the gospel deepens; as those who have received the remission of sins, because we have received the remission of sins, we can tolerate the shortcomings of others; and we come to experience that such things have come through the Lord. It must be experienced in our lives and in our hearts. This is not a theory. Though it is hard to express the faith of our hearts in writing, the practical faith built up in your souls and mine will tell everything. In your hearts and mine there is the experience of having our debt canceled, and because our debt

has been canceled, we can be lenient with and cancel the debts of those who have done wrong to one another, even among ourselves. We do not build walls in our hearts because of it, nor become enemies in our hearts because of it, nor sharpen knives in our hearts because of it, nor struggle because we cannot tolerate it. If we are those whose debt has been canceled, we are not like that.

If those whose debt has been canceled even now seize their friend and, saying, "Hand it over. Did you not do me wrong like this?" cannot tolerate the other person's faults, such people must think about what kind of people they themselves are before God now. You and I must think about what kind of people we are before God—whether we are truly those whose debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled, whether we are those who cannot forgive the one who owes a hundred denarii, or whether we are those who can never tolerate because our debt has not been canceled. Because those whose debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled have gathered in the Church of God, within it there are many people who look lacking from a worldly point of view. But rather, because so many of their sins have been canceled through God, they are thankful, by faith it does not become a problem, and they live better for the gospel. Is that so, or not? When that is not beneficial to the gospel, he is rebuked, but there is no heart of hating or judging him, and when the one who is rebuked acknowledges, "That is true," he still smiles. What are little children like? After being scolded, do they not turn around right away and, in less than a minute, call out "Mom" with a smile? It is just like that.

Because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, had Him receive baptism and shed blood, and canceled once and for all your sins and mine, red like crimson and black like ink, we received the remission of sins by faith

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once and for all. That is why it is not a problem. Rather, within it, not everyone is the same; individuality comes alive, each is accepted according to his individuality, and yet we take the yoke of living for the gospel, learn from the Lord, and live enjoying rest in our hearts.

The one who does not believe in the cancellation and tries to pay it back himself

What are your hearts and mine like? Are we truly enjoying rest in our hearts? The Lord has removed your sins and mine and tells us to lay down our heavy burdens and rest; is there peace in your hearts and mine? Is there perhaps someone who has peace in his own heart but can never tolerate the other person? As for me, if a person does not hinder or oppose the gospel but believes the gospel, there is nothing I cannot tolerate. I cherish and love whoever loves the gospel. A person who believes the gospel that canceled his heavy burden, his countless sins, and his overflowing debt, gives thanks for it while doing the work of the gospel, and, giving thanks that his debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled, does not try to cast off the yoke however lacking he may be but tries to take the yoke, lives enjoying rest within it, and lives seeking God's help—I love all such people. But there is one kind of person in whom God does not take pleasure. That person is one who hears the gospel and yet does not believe. And he is one who refuses to have his debt of ten thousand talents canceled. A person who pretends to be righteous—God does not take pleasure in the heart of such a person.

The Lord told you to forgive one another, but there is exactly one thing I do not forgive. It is exactly according to the word the

Lord spoke when He was on this earth, saying that He would judge. In the word we read today, the Lord said to Chorazin and Bethsaida, *"It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:22)*, and said to Capernaum, *"It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:24)*, and He said that however much mercy He shows, He does not remit the sins of those who do not believe but surely judges them.

Those who have believed the gospel before God and had their debt canceled are thankful for it, do not want to cast off the yoke but take the yoke, and want to live learning within it, finding rest, and receiving God's blessings, and I, in one heart with Jesus, love all such people. But a person who opposes the gospel, who does not know that he is one who owed ten thousand talents and thinks he is one who owed a thousand talents, who thinks he has already paid it off by his own effort, and a person who tries hard to pay it, a person who has a heart that tries to make some effort himself, and a person who does not believe that He canceled the debt of ten thousand talents—God does not take pleasure in such a person. Such people are precisely the people I cannot accept. Not believing even after hearing this gospel so many times, not believing even though it is said that He paid the debt of ten thousand talents, and striving to pay off that debt of hundreds of billions oneself is incurring hatred.

Dear fellow believers, do you have the ability to pay a hundred billion in your lifetime? I am asking whether, if you owed a debt of a hundred billion, you would have the ability to pay it. By doing what would you pay it? However much you may sell your children and sell your wife—try it. You cannot pay it. Even if you earn money all your life to pay it, you cannot even pay the interest. If it is a hundred billion, how much the interest alone would be! Then when the Lord says He will cancel it, you

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must say, “Thank you. How will You cancel it?” and learn, know, and believe. One must have one’s own debt canceled, give thanks, and live canceling even the wrongs one’s fellows have done; a person who does not try to have his debt canceled but tries to do something by his own effort is truly a pitiful person. There are those who still do not have the faith that receives cancellation, have not received grace and mercy, and try to do something by human effort, and I cannot tolerate the hearts of such people. I thought about it before God: “Is it right or not for me to think this way?” Even when I look at it in the light of the word of God, it is right.

The sin of mankind was passed on to Jesus through John the Baptist

Dear fellow believers, the person whose debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled is the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Is that so, or not? With what do you and I wash away all sins? We wash them away with the faith that believes in the baptism. If we do not believe in the baptism, we can never wash them away. The sin of mankind was passed on through John the Baptist, and if you do not believe it in your hearts, the sins within your hearts are not washed away.

Dear fellow believers, did the high priest wear red clothes? The high priest’s outer robe is a garment that comes down to the knees, and it is entirely blue. The undergarment is a white garment, and he wore a white turban, with a blue cord passed around to the back, and a gold plate attached to its front. And he wore, front and back, an ephod very skillfully woven with five kinds of thread—blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine woven linen thread, and gold thread—and on his breast he wore twelve

jewels. Only the breast part was made this way, and all the rest is blue. This blue shows the baptism Jesus received from John.

The Lord came to this earth, received baptism, and had your many sins and mine, which amount to ten thousand talents, transferred to Him. Jesus received baptism from John. *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Because Jesus received baptism and bore your sins and mine, so that your sins and mine were passed on, you and I are without sin by faith.

Dear fellow believers, the person whose debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled is the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those of you whose sins have been washed white as snow in your hearts are those who believe in the blue of Jesus, the baptism Jesus received from John. No one who does not believe in the baptism Jesus received can be saved from the sins he commits every day or be made clean. If you have not passed your sins on by the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received, no one can receive the remission of sins.

Dear fellow believers, the one who owed ten thousand talents is you. The Lord made those who owed ten thousand talents come to Him, washed away all our sins with the baptism and the blood of the Cross, and removed our sins. And so He gave rest. Is there rest in your hearts, or not? Then what about the sins we commit every day? *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized" (Matthew 3:15–16)*. At that time the sin of all mankind was passed on, and the sins we commit every day were passed on too. By confirming this, what is filthy in your hearts and mine is made clean.

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Become one whose debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled

Who would the people of Capernaum be? Who would the people of Bethsaida be? Who are the people who do not believe the work of God even more than the land of Sodom and Gomorrah? Who are those people? He said, *"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon" (Matthew 11:21)*. It means that those in Chorazin and Bethsaida here did not believe; though Jesus went there the most, performed signs and wonders, spoke the word of the kingdom of God, and revealed Himself, they did not believe. Even today, in the Church of God there are people who do not believe though they hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit until their ears are calloused, and these people are Chorazin and are the people of Bethsaida. They are people whose debt has not been canceled, people who disregard the grace of God; I do not know what blessing they expect to receive while disregarding the grace of God. What blessing do they expect to receive that they do not believe? To them the Lord said, *"Woe to you" (Matthew 11:21)*.

You and I must become people whose debt has been canceled by the Lord. We must become people whose debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled. We are not people who have had one denarius canceled, but people who have had ten thousand talents canceled—not a thousand denarii, nor a thousand talents. We are saved only when we believe that the master remitted our sins—what we could never pay, what we could not cope with. God has clothed you and me with the favor of salvation. Is that so, or not? That is why we work together, calling one another brother and sister; if it were not for that, how could we work together? How can we be reconciled without

believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit? How can we love? Without having had ten thousand talents canceled, without having received the remission of sins, how can we serve the Lord? How can we follow Him? How can we find rest in our hearts? How can we be in harmony? Those who do not believe can never be in harmony. But those who believe are all in harmony. Are they, or are they not? It is said that the tree is known by its fruit; if one is not in harmony, it means that the person himself is not believing now. That is the evidence that he does not believe that He granted him the remission of sins of ten thousand talents. Who does not believe? The person himself must know. Who must think about it? The person himself must think about it. They pretend not to be so, but there are many such people in the church as well. Do you think there are none? There are many people who have had not ten thousand talents but a thousand talents canceled. There are many who do not learn in their daily lives, and though He told us to take the yoke and learn from the Lord, there are many who cannot truly say, as they serve the gospel, "Truly this gospel is the truth. It truly is right." Among us too there are more than one or two people who simply know the gospel only in theory and do not try to serve it.

Dear fellow believers, will it do not to have your debt of ten thousand talents canceled? Are you confident that you will go to the kingdom of heaven even without having your debt canceled? Are you confident that you can forgive those who have done you wrong even without having your debt canceled? It is not because you have much patience and much ability that you forgive; only those whose debt of ten thousand talents has been canceled forgive. This too is something remarkable.

Dear fellow believers, you must not become Chorazin. And you must not become the region of Bethsaida. When God speaks even a few words, you must become people who accept all those

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words and accept all the words Jesus spoke; you must not become people who do not believe.

You must become people who believe. If you want to be in harmony, you must believe. If you want to join the congregation of the righteous, you must believe. *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. The Lord said that He gives us comfortable rest. Who is the One who gives rest, who is the one whose debt must be canceled, and who is the one who must receive the remission of sins and rest? You and I were those who had no rest. From birth until now we had no rest, but by believing in Jesus Christ, who canceled ten thousand talents, by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit He has given, we must now find rest in our hearts. Now we must live enjoying rest. We must go on living that way and then meet our Lord.

Dear fellow believers, are you still designing your lives by your own thoughts, trying to serve the Lord by your own thoughts, and trying to serve the Lord by your own will? Are you still bound to that? If so, you do not know that you are one who owes ten thousand talents. It means that you do not know that even if one has sin as small as a hair's breadth, one goes to hell. Dear fellow believers, you must know well what kind of people you and I are before God, know well what kind of salvation the salvation God has given you and me is, compare them, and quickly surrender, quickly believe, and quickly enjoy peace. I hope you will believe. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? I believe too. Even within our churches there are many who still do not believe. There are many in the world as well. Now we must change from the very foundation. We must start from nothing. We must start from where there is nothing at all. We must set out from the faith that acknowledges God and believes in Him. I give thanks to God. ✉

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CHAPTER

12

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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

Let us follow the Holy Spirit with one heart

< Matthew 12:1–8 >

“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’ But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’”

Both in the days when Jesus was on this earth and now, religious people have many problems. Religious people regard rituals as extremely weighty. They regard as extremely important such things as the order of worship, the doctrines, and the forms handed down in their denominations. That is why, from long ago until now, religious people have always opposed Jesus.

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The disciples who plucked and ate heads of grain on the Sabbath

When Jesus' disciples were passing through the grainfields, it was the Sabbath. On the Sabbath, Jesus' disciples plucked heads of grain and ate them. As Jesus' disciples were passing by, there happened to be heads of grain there. Since they had been hungry, they thought it was just the thing, and Jesus' disciples plucked the heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, blew away the husks, and ate only the kernels. Jesus' disciples usually did so. When they were hungry, they would pluck and eat anything without hesitation. Jesus' disciples did not have jobs as we do but only followed Jesus around, so when would they have eaten much of anything? It seems that when Jesus performed signs and miracles, they ate a lot then; when for some reason a lot of food came their way, they ate a lot; and when only a little came, there were also many times they went hungry. It was mealtime, and they were hungry, perhaps because they had not been able to eat, and the road they were passing along ran through the grainfields. What would Jesus' disciples have done? They were passing through the grainfields and were hungry, so they plucked the grain and ate it.

But the Pharisees happened to see it. The Pharisees who saw it would not have stayed still, would they? Since the teacher of those who had plucked and eaten heads of grain on the Sabbath was Jesus, the Pharisees reported it to Jesus, saying, *"Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:2)*. That is how they made their accusation. They said such things as, "Your disciples are truly hopeless. Your disciples have worked on the Sabbath. And seeing how hopeless Your disciples are, Your teaching is also truly hopeless. Therefore, You are a truly hopeless man." Jesus said, "Do you

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not know that David, when he and those who were with him were hungry, entered the house of God and ate the showbread? And do you not know that it is not sin for the priests to work in the temple on the Sabbath?" When Jesus asked them this in return, the Pharisees had nothing to say.

These Pharisees were legalists, and they were the representatives of religious people. The Pharisees, as representatives among religious people, were extremely holy in outward appearance. These people put forward the law and rebuked Jesus' disciples, but Jesus spoke of what David had done in the house of God and what the priests had done in the temple. With the word that what David and those who were with him did in eating the bread, and what the priests did in working in the temple on the Sabbath, were not the sin of breaking the Sabbath, Jesus gave them a stinging rebuke. That is, in this way Jesus both questioned them in return and rebuked them.

And referring to Himself, Jesus said, *"In this place there is One greater than the temple" (Matthew 12:6)*, and He spoke such words as these: all the things that those who followed Him did while working with Him were not sin; as long as He did not forbid them, they were not sin. Would the Pharisees have understood those words? When Jesus said that there was One greater than the temple here, the Pharisees, saying they were figuring it out, probably spent three years figuring. "What is He saying? Did I mishear Him? Is He saying that He is holier and greater than the temple of Israel? Surely He does not mean that." Then Jesus also spoke the word, *"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7)*.

"I desire mercy and not sacrifice"

Jesus' teaching was an astonishing word to the Pharisees and religious people. It was a word more astonishing than the Reformation that took place in the sixteenth century. "What the LORD God requires of you is mercy, and He does not desire sacrifice. How good it would be if you had known this meaning. You live a religious life in an empty shell and say that you must keep the Sabbath well, but that is hypocrisy and an empty shell." The Pharisees and religious people thought that since it had been said not even to heal the sick on the Sabbath and to rest on the Sabbath, keeping it all to the letter was living a good religious life. But the very basic and core word of the law of God was not such a thing. Then what word was it? "Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself." It was love. And what our God wanted from us was "to desire mercy." It means that God wanted us to seek the mercy of God. God did not want us to come before God and offer sacrifices well; rather, God wanted us to truly seek mercy before God.

"I am such a lacking person. Please remove my sin. And please save me from all sin and from destruction."

It means that God, on His part, wanted from us human beings such a heart that seeks the love of God in this way, seeks the compassion of God, and seeks to receive the remission of sins before God.

But these Pharisees were not like that. Instead, they would come before Jesus, before the LORD God, and boast that they kept the law well. So it seems we can understand how much of a thorn in His side the Pharisees were when Jesus was on this earth, and how much they grieved Him.

Because Jesus wanted to show mercy to us, He wanted us to seek mercy from God. What is that mercy? It means that He

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wanted such a soul, such a heart, and such faith that comes before our Lord wanting to receive the remission of all sins and seeking the remission of sins. God wanted mankind to come before God asking Him to remit their sins, and to come with such a heart and such faith that wants to receive the remission of all sins before God.

The great salvation of the remission of sins is the mercy of God

Our God truly came to us and gave us the remission of sins. Because the Lord loves us, He could not just leave us to go to hell, and in order not to send us to hell, He could not but solve the problem of that sin for us. So God clothed His own Son in human flesh and sent Him to this earth. Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth, received baptism from John, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore the sin of the world, went to the Cross, and shed His own blood for us. In that way, our Lord bore the judgment for sin and all the sins of this world. In that way, the Lord showed mercy to us. Because He had made it possible for us to receive the remission of sins, He hoped that we, on our part, would seek it. Our Lord bestowed great love and great salvation so that we would be saved and receive the remission of sins by believing in the mercy our Lord showed us, and that is the mercy of God. It is the mercy He hoped we would seek.

So we have received the remission of sins with the water and the Spirit by believing in that Jesus Christ. Now what God hopes for from all mankind is that they seek the love of God and accept the mercy of God into their hearts and believe. It means that He hopes they will believe that God has saved us mankind from all

sins. But religious people, rather than believing in the love of God and the salvation of the remission of sins and the great love God has given, have even come to mock and oppose them, and while saying that they believe in God, they wanted to offer many sacrifices. It means that they wanted to keep the law well before God by their own strength and to do many of the deeds God wants and requires. In fact, God did not give us the law solely so that we would do the law. Of course, after receiving the remission of sins, we come to live according to the will of God, but before we receive the remission of sins, God gave the law so that through the law we would realize and know our sins and acknowledge what kind of sinners we are, and so that He might give the remission of sins to those who seek mercy because they want to escape from the status of sinners bound for hell. So through this law we come to know sin and gain the opportunity to receive the remission of sins. God gave the law so that, because one is truly a person who has sin before God, a person bound for hell, and a person who will be destroyed unless one truly receives the remission of sins, one would go before Jesus Christ and receive the remission of sins by believing that He has remitted all our sins with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. But these religious people, on the contrary, put forward the law, rejected the love of God, rejected even the remission of sins God has given us mankind, and opposed both such righteous people who believe in God and follow God, and Jesus.

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Religious people who regard empty-shell rituals as important

God has told us how wrong religious people are. In this age, too, religious people behave in exactly the same way. If you go to a worldly church, what is the church's worship ritual like? First of all, they ring a bell for what is called silent prayer. Then there is an accompaniment. When pipe organ accompaniment flows in the background, someone says, "Let us have silent prayer," and they pray, "Merciful, omniscient, and omnipotent God the Father, we have all come before God on this holy Lord's Day." In this way, with accompaniment, they have silent prayer and a psalm reading, and someone prays before God on their behalf; then, as the second part of the order, they sing a hymn of praise; as the third part, they confess their sins, saying, "God, we have committed such sins"; as the fourth part, there is a representative prayer; as the fifth part, there is praise; and as the sixth part, the word is preached. There is such an order. Just as our worship has an order, they also have an order of service. At least we, since it would not do to have too little order in worship, keep a simple form, but I cannot tell you how much the world insists on formality. As they insist on formality, the time for actually preaching the word of God becomes shorter than the time for singing praise.

But the most important thing in worship is the word of God. When a minister preaches the word of God accurately, the listeners hear and learn the word of God, come to know and follow the will of God, and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive the remission of sins. So they give thanks before God, receive cleansing in their hearts, give glory, and also receive the blessings God gives, and so they gain faith, have their hearts renewed, and go back and do the work of God. This is the

purpose of worship. But because religious people regard rituals as important, they focus on what the order of worship is, and if it is not done, they think it strange.

Also, religious people who keep the Sabbath watch one another, even as to whether someone buys things or mends worn-out clothes to wear on the Sabbath. It means that, since they were told to keep the Sabbath holy, they look closely at whether one keeps it or not. Also, since the law says not to eat squid or things without scales, they watch one another over whether one eats such things or not, too. In doing so, it is easy to lean toward keeping outward appearances rather than the heart.

That is how important religious people think rituals are. After the service, whether there is a benediction or not; if there is no benediction, whether they say the Lord's Prayer or not; whether the service ends with the Lord's Prayer or not—they think these things are extremely important. For example, in Catholicism, one must make confession at least once a year, no matter what. They have set it down that it must be done at least once a year, no matter what, and they do so. When an announcement is made, "Today such-and-such a priest will come, and we will have this time," people who are especially weighed down by sin make confession, have their sins canceled, receive instructions to do something, and come back and do it. And they judge, "If one does not do such things, it is not a traditional denomination."

In reality, what our Lord wants is not that we keep such a law well, do deeds well, and perform rituals well. He does not want such things; rather, He hoped that people would ask God to save them. We must live a life of faith before God with this kind of heart. More than doing anything well, He wants us to seek mercy before God, receive the remission of sins in our hearts by believing in the merciful love and the merciful salvation God has given us, have love in our hearts by believing, and through that

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faith give thanks before God, and, because we like God and find God lovely, uphold, do, and follow the will that God desires. It means that God wants us to live in this way. *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice."* God wants it that way, but many religious people want sacrifice. It means that they themselves, on the contrary, try to show mercy before God or want to offer many sacrifices. Many people want to offer many sacrifices before God.

People who follow Confucianism think of offering ancestral rites to their ancestors as if they were offering sacrifices to a god, and people who serve the gods of the mountains or of nature all zealously offer sacrifices. It means that they pay no heed to what God wants and are interested in performing many rituals and offering sacrifices on their own. They should ask God to save them, but God dislikes it when they say they will do something for Him. "I am truly a hopeless and lacking person, but I hope that God will love me, bless me, and remove all my sins. I hope that God will give me blessings." They should desire it that way, know and believe what God has given, receive many blessings, follow God having received many blessings, and become such people who share blessings with many people, but it means that religious people today are not like that.

Jesus came to this earth, healed the sick, also healed the demon-possessed, and spoke the word of the truth of God to the Pharisees. *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice."* If this word were posted at all the places where religious people offer sacrifices, one could see how much the sacrifices of religious people oppose God and how wrong they are. What is it that God wants—what is it that the Deity truly wants? It is that He wants people to seek mercy before God. He does not want sacrifice; He wants people to seek mercy.

Our Lord came to this earth and healed diseases even on the Sabbath, and religious people picked on Him for having healed

on the Sabbath and made a great fuss. Isn't there a rule that says, "If you are a religious person, you must do this"? By their standard, He should have kept the Sabbath well and also pretended to be very humble before people, but Jesus healed the sick without any regard for the Sabbath. It means that Jesus and those who were with Him did good deeds without any hesitation regarding the law.

In the eyes of religious people, Jesus was One who was utterly wrong. So they slandered Him and tried to kill Jesus. Religious people tried to kill those who believed in Jesus and Jesus' disciples, such people. Unless people change their human thoughts, they do so.

Not knowing that God wants us to seek the mercy of God, and not knowing that He wants people who seek mercy from God, aren't religious people only offering sacrifices before God? Such people, who thought that only this was right, tried to seize and kill Jesus and Jesus' disciples. They were bent on seizing and killing them, with bloodshot eyes. "How can we catch them? Looked at this way, it is fine, and looked at that way, it is fine. There has to be something to find fault with." Seen by the law of religion, Jesus was not a religious person. He was a great sinner. That is why they found fault with Him and tried to kill Him.

"A bruised reed shall he not break"

This is what Jesus did. Jesus healed all the diseases of those who followed Jesus and avoided the Pharisees. And as in the word in the Old Testament, He told them not to make Him known. Jesus would give words of warning that they should not make known what His identity was.

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The word prophesied through Isaiah the prophet appears here. *"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets" (Matthew 12:18–21).*

It means that our Lord came to this earth, putting on human flesh by the Holy Spirit, and made known the judgment of God and the salvation of God to the Gentiles and all people. And Jesus, who is God, came to this earth and did not quarrel with any of the religious people but simply said, *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7)*, and spoke only the truth that God desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice. He spoke of the way to go to the kingdom of God and the way to receive the remission of sins. Having spoken in that way, He said that He would not break even a bruised reed and would not quench even smoking flax until He judges and prevails. It means that the Lord left these religious people alone until the day He judges.

To our Lord the Pharisees were nothing, yet they glared with fire in their eyes and rushed at Him to kill Him. No matter how they acted, in our Lord's sight they were nothing. They were hypocrites, people who regarded only the outer shell as important, people who regarded the law as more important than people's lives, and such people who, rather than receiving the remission of sins by believing in God, were interested only in performing worship rituals in a holy way, even if they did not receive the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, our Lord spoke words admonishing such people and left them as they were until that last day of this world, when He judges and

prevails. However, our Lord came to this earth and showed mercy to us, and Jesus saved us from all sins by receiving baptism from John and dying on the Cross. The Lord had all our sins transferred to Him and received the judgment for all our sins. In that way, He washed away all our sins clean. The Lord came to this earth, did all that He was to do, rose again, and went to heaven. And He gave the Holy Spirit to the disciples and had the work of God done through those disciples. So, though these religious people still opposed Him until the day the world ends, the day the Lord judges this world, even so, He did not judge such dying souls each time but left them until that last day. And hoping that they, too, would seek the mercy of God and seek to receive the remission of sins, He waited for them until the day they would seek the remission of sins. This is the love of God and the mercy of God.

Now many people slander Jesus and Jesus' disciples from a religious point of view. If one thinks religiously, that may be so, but the religions of this world are hypocrisy. Whether one is sharpening a knife in one's heart or not, it is enough just to smile outwardly and say, "How have you been?" Even if one hates that person in one's heart, it is enough to act well outwardly. It does not matter at all. Religion is by nature like a whitewashed tomb; it is what hypocrites do to cover themselves, who have many sins. That is what religion is.

Religion is something man has made. For what does man make it? It is making clothes out of fig leaves and putting them on to cover one's own shame. Because man did not believe the word of God and ate, by his own standard, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had told him not to eat, man came to have good and evil by his own standard. Because of that, when man looked at himself, he looked so ugly.

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So he came to make skirts out of fig leaves and put them on. That is religion. It is something made to cover one's own sins.

What is religion? It is covering one's own faults and one's own sins with hypocrisy and rituals. Covering them with good rituals, beautiful rituals, and holy rituals—this is religion. It means that God wanted those religious people to repent and receive the remission of sins.

If one looks at Jesus and Jesus' disciples with the eyes of religion, they are truly vile people. But if one knows the will of God and looks at Jesus and Jesus' disciples, there are no people better or more virtuous than they are.

There are countless religious people in this world. The religious people of this world regard rituals as weighty and regard the doctrines of their denominations as weighty. Whether they say the Lord's Prayer or not when ending a service, whether there is a benediction or not, whether there is silent prayer during the service or not, whether there is a psalm reading or not, whether there is a choir or not, whether there is a first-service choir, a second-service choir, and a third-service choir or not, whether the service is offered in a holy way or not, whether the pastor speaks in a holy manner or not—they are interested only in such rituals and outer shells. This is religion. That is why people who live religious lives are half dead.

At a certain church, when the service is over, the pastor's wife comes out, touches the backs of the saints, and pats them, saying, "Oh, my." "How can she have so much love? How little love we have. Even when saints fall into trials and stay at home, we do not often go to visit them, so we are really lacking." When such thoughts come, one repents, saying, "I have really been very wrong." "I, too, should have that much love. I, too, should do what I ought to do. I, too, have things to see and learn in that

area." Such thoughts come to mind. But love must come not from outward appearance but from the heart.

Jesus spoke much about religious people. He told religious people to seek mercy. Our Lord cast demons out of demon-possessed people. When He healed people who were suffering from being demon-possessed, what happened? The Pharisees said, "You cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." "Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons, has entered into You. You have become one with the ruler of the demons and are driving out the underling demons. Otherwise, how could You cast out demons?" That is what the Pharisees said. Jesus said, *"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house" (Matthew 12:28–29)*. If a person truly has the Holy Spirit come upon him and casts out demons by the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God has come into his heart. He is one who builds the kingdom of God. That is what this word says.

"He who is not with Me is against Me"

And our Lord said to religious people, *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matthew 12:30)*. Jesus wanted to embrace all people in His arms and give them salvation and the remission of sins. The Lord wanted it to be so and wanted to gather them, but the Pharisees did not gather; they scattered. They opposed the will of Jesus. And they did not do the work of gathering people according to the will of Jesus so that they would truly return to God and receive the remission of sins. Jesus said to them, "You

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are those who are against Me and those who oppose God. You are enemies." Dear fellow believers, not doing righteous work, the work of God, with hearts gathered together is opposing. Not cooperating together in and following God's good work, but keeping others from following God's good work and hindering it, is opposing God, and it is doing a cursed thing that makes one an enemy of God. We put up banners, hold meetings, and preach the gospel so that many people may receive the remission of sins. But countless people stop others from going to our meetings. Such things are also acts of opposing God. Also, in this church we gather our strength to serve the gospel of God, do this and that, make plans, train workers, and also pray. All of this is done for the spread of the gospel, but not joining together in these areas and opposing them, opposing first just for the sake of opposing, being unable to bear seeing the work of the church go well as if it stung one's eyes—all these acts harm God, and it means that God regards such people as enemies.

Therefore, those who oppose the works the Lord came to this earth and did through Jesus' disciples must know that they will be judged before God. If one cannot do it oneself, it is right to leave others alone and let them follow. If there are saints among the saints of this church here who follow the Lord, leave them alone. If one cannot follow oneself, one should at least leave alone the saints who do follow, but there are people who, on the contrary, trip them up, grab hold of them, and cling to them so that they cannot follow. Among the saints or the workers of God, those whose faith is wrong, though they themselves cannot do so, pull back from behind the servants and the brothers and sisters of God who follow the will of God, run forward for this gospel, and follow by faith. "Do you really have to do it that way? There is a trap in all of that. Let us go together. Do you think you are the only one who is so great? Is your life of faith better

than mine? Is your faith better?" Dear fellow believers, if you do so, you will be cursed. If, by any chance, such a thought has arisen in you because you have a jealous heart, I hope you will turn back. I hope you will acknowledge that you have sinned before God, confess it, and have your hearts renewed by believing in the baptism Jesus Christ received from John and the blood of the Cross.

You and I must take part together before God in the work that Jesus Christ is doing. Those who oppose the work Jesus is doing are those who harm the work of Jesus. If someone is such a person, is he an ally or an enemy? He is an enemy.

Such a crowd shouted at Pilate's trial to hang Jesus on the Cross. Even if they had not done so, Jesus would have voluntarily been hung on the Cross. Jesus had already planned all things and wanted all things to happen that way. They did not need to do so, yet that crowd, saying, "Crucify Jesus quickly! Crucify Him!" said, *"His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25)*. Even if they had not done so, Jesus, in order to save us from sin, intended to come to this earth, receive baptism from John and have all our sins transferred to Him, bear the sin of the world on His own body, be nailed to the Cross, and suffer the judgment for the sin of mankind in His own flesh. With the precious blood He shed when He was nailed to the Cross, the price for all sins was paid. Because it must be repaid life for life, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, instead of mankind dying, instead of all sinners dying, He bore the judgment for that sin in His flesh, was nailed to the Cross and died, and received all the judgment for sin. But that crowd hated Jesus and opposed Him, saying, "Release Barabbas, and crucify and kill the likes of Jesus!" If people who believed in Jesus had been there, they would have tried to seize and kill even them. It means that they opposed people who believe in God, follow God, receive the

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remission of sins before God, and try to live according to the will of God.

"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad." We must think carefully about this word that Jesus speaks. It is a word we must listen to closely and keep in mind. This means that, since God works through the church, if one cannot do it oneself, one should not hinder it but should at least stay still. If one hinders the work of God, one dies.

The sin of blaspheming the Spirit

The most frightening thing is the sin of blaspheming the Spirit. What is the sin of blaspheming the Spirit? The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of a person who has received the remission of sins. The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of the righteous, so they receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit and work. When we look at the word of God, the Holy Spirit reveals, according to the word of God, the will He wants to carry out in certain areas and has us carry out that will, and if what we have done is something that pleases God, the Holy Spirit rejoices in our hearts, is very glad, and is at ease. But if it is not something that pleases God, the Holy Spirit is uncomfortable, so our hearts are uncomfortable. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, our hearts also go back and forth because of Him. Because the Holy Spirit is God, the brightness and darkness of our hearts change depending on whether we follow God or not.

Those who blaspheme the Spirit cannot receive remission. Jesus came to this earth, putting on human flesh by the Holy Spirit, taught this truth to people, drew people together, taught them the truth by any means so that they would receive the remission of sins, and preached to them that He had remitted all

their sins and saved them all by receiving baptism from John and dying on the Cross, and made them believe it. So, even while Jesus Christ was alive, there were many who believed, and even after Jesus died, there were many among the people of Israel who believed in Jesus.

But many of the people of Israel opposed those people. God remits all sins, but there is only one sin He does not remit: the sin of blaspheming the Spirit. *"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:31–32)*. It means that even if someone who has not heard this gospel slanders, saying, "I don't like Jesus. I like Buddhism. I'm going to believe in Buddhism. Jesus was born later than Buddha, and He is no good," Jesus remits that sin. Because one does it out of ignorance, He gives one a chance. But if someone has received the Holy Spirit in his heart and still defies the Holy Spirit, He judges it as the sin of blaspheming the Spirit and puts him into the judgment of the fire that never goes out forever.

A person who has received the remission of sins casts out demons by the Holy Spirit and does good works before God by the Holy Spirit. One should not oppose those who do the work of saving souls by the Holy Spirit, and if one cannot unite one's heart with that will of God and obey it, one should at least stay still; do you know what happens if one hinders and blasphemes this? That person's heart becomes wicked; when the heart becomes wicked, one becomes a servant of the devil; and when one becomes a servant of the devil, one enters into the fire that never goes out. In this way, in this world all sins receive remission, but the sin of blaspheming the Spirit does not receive

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remission. Opposing this church as it goes forward for the gospel is asking for death. Know that if anyone obstructs or opposes the saints and the servants of God as they go forward together, gathering their strength for the gospel, that will not be tolerated.

Those who have not yet received the remission of sins, granting that they do so because they do not know Jesus, are all right, because they can believe and receive the remission of sins in the future. But if a person who has received the remission of sins opposes the Church of God, tears down the servants of God, tears down the saints, and, like a water ghost dragging others down with him so that they cannot live a life of faith, says, "It is unfair that only I should die; let us die together," and so obstructs and blocks the spread of the gospel and sows discord, a terrifying heart comes upon his heart. That is the sin of blaspheming the Spirit, and though the sins that people commit because they are personally lacking all receive remission, if one knowingly opposes the work of God—that is, the spread of the gospel and the work of expanding the kingdom of God—and attacks it, that is the end. Therefore, if one did such things without knowing, one can turn back. Because the Lord, too, knows that one did it without knowing, it is all right. One just needs to turn back. But if one did so knowingly, and if one keeps doing so knowingly, one is heaping up curses on oneself before God.

While running the church, if someone attacks me personally, my heart is all right. But if someone says, "Your church is wrong," my heart changes. My heart grows cold, and what happens then?

"So, is that what you think? Is that really how you feel in your heart? And you go around blabbing about it?" Because that is opposing not me personally but the Church of God, I cannot just let it pass.

"You had better think about what you are going to suffer from now on. You are opposing the church and the people of God and the servant of God, and that is not just opposing a person but opposing the Holy Spirit. Your human shortcomings are all right. But if you oppose the Church of God, you will be ruined in the end. I hope you will not oppose it, and I hope you will repent and come back."

Seen through the eyes of the religions of this world, one comes to oppose. Also, even a person who is born again comes to do so if he lives a life of faith with his own thoughts. Seen through the eyes of religion, the Church of God seems somehow not to fit. The worship ritual also seems not to fit. They sing praise, and then they do not even ring the bell for the time of worship; they just pray together once and immediately say, "Let us look at the word of God," and look at the word right away, so people ask how this can be. Seen through the eyes of religion, it will seem very strange to them that the psalm reading that goes, "Holy, merciful, omniscient, omnipotent, and gracious God," has gone somewhere and that it goes straight to the main point without any order. "A pastor should preach in a suit. Even if he is hot, why does he take off his suit jacket? Is he disregarding us? He is disregarding us, so he preaches in his shirtsleeves." Seen through the eyes of religion, every kind of thing is a speck. It means that if one looks by one's own standard, everything is wrong.

But, dear fellow believers, the Church of God is different from religion. In the Church of God there are people who have received the remission of sins, and they are to be guided by the servants of God who have received the remission of sins. This church lets God guide you in the best way. Also, to religious people who have not received the remission of sins, rather than teaching them other things, it lets them receive the blessing of

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obtaining mercy from God. We are people who have received the Holy Spirit. If, by any chance, we still have religious thoughts and standards even after receiving the remission of sins, shouldn't we throw such things away? Because the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts is uncomfortable with them, we must throw them away quickly. People who have just received the remission of sins have a great many religious eyes. They have a great many such religious eyes that say, "This must be done this way, and that must be done that way." So, if they are not careful, they may misunderstand, and their thoughts may go wrong. Therefore, if there are religious things, we must throw them away.

Also, we must give a chance to people who are still caught up in religion. And if there are people who are weak and do wrong and fall, we must wait for them. God waits for those who desire the mercy of God in their hearts. This is because God wants to give salvation, wants to raise up those who have fallen, and wants to give blessings.

Our God does not want us to perish. Knowing this heart of God and knowing the mercy of God, we should live our life of faith by faith. The saints come to the church, hear the word of God, grow in faith, and receive through this church the blessings God bestows. The servants of God and all the saints live receiving the blessings God gives through the church. We believe so.

We should truly keep religion far away and live a life of faith with faith. We should live a life of faith in that way, having the heart of God in our hearts and regarding the word of God as important. We should do so as people who have the Holy Spirit.

How frightening the religious people in Jesus' day were! They slandered Jesus and Jesus' disciples and always opposed

them. I cannot tell you how many Pharisees there were who picked quarrels over every little thing and harassed them.

We are one family and one body

Is there, by any chance, any part in your heart and mine that has not been united with the church? You have been saved and are living a life of faith in the church, but are you truly wholly united? Are there any who have not had such wholly united faith that says, "The Church of God is my home, this is the kingdom of God, and these are my people"? I hope such people will quickly have united faith. If they do not have such faith and such a heart, they will die. Dear fellow believers, when we actually come to know it, you and I here are brothers, sisters, and mothers to one another, and one family. This is the kingdom of God; through the kingdom of God we expand the kingdom of God, and through this kingdom of God we serve God by the Holy Spirit who is in you and me here, receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with one heart preach the gospel to the religious people of this world, and cause those people to obtain mercy from God.

"I am I, and you people are you people. You are you, and I am I." Do you, by any chance, have such a heart?

I saw on the news that a huge typhoon was coming up. I thought, "So what if a typhoon comes up? Let it come up if it wants to. So what if it is big? It does not matter at all. I will just tie the windows down with wire!" But they said the typhoon was coming straight up toward where we live. Suddenly the thought came to me, "Then what should I do? The Church of God is in many places, so I had better pray," and I became worried. So I thought, "Go somewhere else!" But then, when I thought about

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it quietly, one of our brothers was living over there, too, having barely managed to get a house. “It must not go that way either.” Because one of our family members was there, my heart changed. I have never even met that brother in the flesh. But he is my brother. I have such faith in my heart. He is a brother closer than a brother who shares my blood. So the thought came to me that it must not go there either.

What kind of heart is this? Isn’t it saying that he is our family? Isn’t it saying that we are of one heart? *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4–5).* It means that we believe in one God, are children of the one God, are the people of the one God, and are one people who do the work of God. That is the kind of relationship we have. When you come to know it, even if we act as if we would devour one another, in the end we are one family. If someone is hurting, my heart hurts. Even if I rebuke sternly outwardly, my heart hurts. “You must not do that. If you are cursed, what good would that do me? If you hurt, we hurt, too.” That is why you are my brother and sister and mother. We are one family. Among the saints and the workers in our church, are there any whose hearts have not become one, saying, “These are my people, this place is my kingdom, and these are my brothers and sisters”? Is there anything in you that says, “My life is my own”?

Dear fellow believers, we are each members. Jesus Christ is our head, the church is His body, and we are the arms and legs, that is, the members. We are one people of God, all connected as one. We are one body. Those of you whose hearts are not united, turn your hearts back. Repent. Being told to repent does not mean chattering with your mouth. You must acknowledge, “I have been wrong,” and ruminate on the gospel again. You must truly open your eyes wide, know rightly, believe rightly,

and unite rightly. You must throw away such religious faith and have the faith obtained by the Holy Spirit.

We must truly prosper together. We must prosper in God and in the Holy Spirit. United, we must serve the gospel until the day the Lord comes, and we, His disciples, must also do the kind of work Jesus Christ did when He gathered mankind, saved them, and showed mercy to them. I hope that we pray for our brothers and sisters and pray also for the spread of the gospel, and that by all means the righteous live with their hearts united, do not unite with worldly people but follow the Lord with hearts united with our brothers and sisters, and all become completely united members who believe and follow the word of God. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord of the Sabbath

< Matthew 12:1–8 >

"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!' But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'"

Dear fellow believers, if God does not bestow grace on us, no matter how hard we try and no matter how good a plan we make, we cannot accomplish anything. *"Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain" (Psalm 127:1)*. Also, *"A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9)*. This word is right. No matter how hard we try and how well we make our plans, how could things be accomplished graciously just because we do

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them according to plan? The One who directs our steps is the LORD God. Do you understand?

Salvation is none other than the remission of sins

Salvation is none other than the remission of sins. *"We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7)*. Though we heard this word so many times, we did not realize it. It was because we were blind. Just as the word says, *"Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive" (Isaiah 6:9)*, though we heard, we did not realize, and though we saw, we did not know. How important it is for us to receive salvation! Dear fellow believers, you come to church in order to receive salvation, do you not? The word says that the way of life is narrow and difficult, so few people go that way, and the way that leads to destruction is broad, so many people go that way. The word also asks whether, at the time of the end of the world, there will be anyone who has true faith. And the word says, "*When you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (Matthew 24:15)*, and this abomination standing in the holy place refers to pastors who only say, "Be blessed, receive blessings, receive the Holy Spirit." That such pastors stand in the holy place is precisely the abomination standing in the holy place. Because the pastors only say, "Be blessed, receive blessings, receive the Holy Spirit," they are popular.

The higher their popularity, the more they try to gain popularity, and so the merit of Christ ends up being hidden. As this goes on, they come to set their hearts on displaying their own names and honor. Dear fellow believers, when Jesus said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*, He solved the problem of sin and

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also fulfilled the law. *"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 fulfilled it all in our place. Also, the word says, *"What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did" (Romans 8:3)*, and it says, *"For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37)*. God has completely remitted our sins.

"Cast lots for the two goats"

"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!'" (Matthew 12:1–2). These are words that judge others. *"Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:4–5)*. Dear fellow believers, only when we receive the remission of sins do we remove the plank. There must be no sin. If there is even one layer of sin, one goes to hell. *"Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat" (Leviticus 16:8)*. Why is one lot cast for the LORD, and why is one lot cast for the scapegoat?

Also, the word says, *"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat*

shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:21–22). The goat is released in the wilderness. The word says that when it reaches a land where there are no people, it is to be released in the wilderness.

Also, 2 Samuel chapter 8 says that David struck Moab, made them lie down on the ground, measured them with a line, put to death all the people of two lines' length, and kept alive all the people of one line's length. The people of one line's length are those whom God loves. The word says that He hated Esau and loved Jacob. Jacob was a smooth-skinned man, and Esau was a hairy man. A smooth-skinned man is a person who cannot but depend on God. But Esau was a hairy man, that is, a sturdy man. God dislikes a person who trusts in his own strength and says, "I can do everything."

"Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat." There must not be even one sin on the tablet of our hearts either, and the LORD God, too, must acknowledge, "You have no sin." Do you understand? If there is sin on the tablet of our hearts, even as much as a speck of dust, we go to hell. And the LORD God, too, must acknowledge that there is no sin. Aaron laid his hands on the head of the goat, and to lay on hands means to be passed on, to be transferred. Aaron laid his hands on it, confessed all the sin of the people of Israel, and put that sin on the head of the goat. And he sent that goat into the wilderness, and when the goat, bearing all the sins, reached a land where there were no people, he released it in the wilderness so that it would never be seen again.

"I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 44:22). When God redeemed us, He removed our

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sins as a thick cloud vanishes, as a mist vanishes. How numerous our sins must have been for Him to compare them to a thick cloud! How black a thick cloud is! We cannot but commit sin until we die, and trying to wash away sin each time by saying, "Please forgive this sin," is a mistaken faith. *"And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!'" (Matthew 12:2)*. *"For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4)*. Dear fellow believers, they will not move them even with one finger. A Catholic Father (priest) goes about with a holy face and goes about with a peaceful face. But one cannot obtain the remission of sins with a face that looks holy. When a Father receives holy orders and becomes a Father, he thinks of himself as God's vicar. That is a great tragedy.

At confession, he says, "I remit your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." How can he remit any sin by doing so? The remission of sins is something God does. Only God thoroughly remits the sins of man. We will go to heaven. Since we hold citizenship in heaven, in this world ours is a sojourner's life. When we live a sojourner's life, it is enough just to live. Where is there a fool who rides a train and a ship to a faraway place, stays at an inn, and buys very expensive furniture? Dear fellow believers, the word says, *"Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17)*. One must live the time of one's stay as a sojourner in fear. God is One to be feared. If you have sin, even as much as a speck of dust, you go to hell. Do you understand? There must be no sin in your hearts either, and God, too, must acknowledge, "You have no sin."

Human righteousness and the garment of God's righteousness

"But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?'" (Matthew 12:3–4). There are people who regard it as righteousness to keep up appearances even if they starve for several days, and to take revenge on an enemy even if it is in their grandsons' generation. That is human will and human righteousness. But as the word says, *"All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6),* human righteousness is all like a filthy garment. A filthy garment is a beggar's garment. With such a garment one cannot cover one's transgressions.

"Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck" (Genesis 27:15–16). That Rebekah put Esau's good clothes on Jacob means clothing him with the garment of God's righteousness. When you put on the garment of God's righteousness, all your transgressions are covered. Also, she fitted the skins of young goats on the smooth parts of his hands and neck. Dear fellow believers, you must put on the garment of God's righteousness. The meaning of this word, that she fitted the skins of young goats on the smooth part of his neck and the smooth part of his hands, is that all your transgressions are covered.

If you put on the garment of God's righteousness, it covers all your transgressions so that they are not seen. That is why you go to heaven. Is it not in Matthew? At the wedding feast, the

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king saw a man who had not put on a wedding garment, and it is written, *"So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless" (Matthew 22:12)*. He could not but be speechless. It is because, though the gospel of God's remission of sins had been preached, he had not listened.

People who make excuses and refuse the feast

Let us look at the word of Luke. *"And sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come'" (Luke 14:17–20)*. This invitation to the feast is leading to heaven a body that cannot but go to hell. If one goes to hell, it continues forever, so that even when hundreds of millions of years have passed, it is as though only one hundredth of a second has passed. One goes into that place that seethes as if it were boiling hot, and it continues forever. Even so, people say it is fine with them to go to hell, and that is because the human heart is stubborn. Because God knows that human beings are stubborn, He has left them to refuse as they do.

The human heart is stubborn. The word that Pharaoh was stubborn, too, means that God allowed it because He knew that he would be stubborn. How glorious a thing it is that a body that cannot but go to hell is led to the kingdom of heaven! But they say, "I have bought a field," "I have bought five yoke of oxen,"

"I have married," and say that they cannot come. This word means that human beings make excuses. Though they are told that a body that cannot but go to hell will be led to the kingdom of heaven, they only make excuses. People can always make excuses. *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2)*. If people miss this time, they will only make excuses forever. Do not miss this time.

"I desire mercy and not sacrifice"

"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7). In Hosea, too, the word says, *"For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6)*, and it says, *"Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD" (Hosea 6:3)*. Also, it says, *"They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2)*. That it was not according to knowledge means that they did not know the gospel of the remission of sins. Salvation is none other than the remission of sins, yet they missed that important word. Though we heard, we did not understand, and though we saw, we did not realize.

This word is that important. Salvation is none other than the remission of sins. Yet though we see, we do not realize, and though we hear, we do not understand. It is because we were blind. You have read the word of Ephesians and the word that says, *"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14)*. But because we were blind, we did not realize it. When Jesus died, He cried out with a loud voice, *"It is finished!"* and what did He accomplish? First He solved the problem of sin, and then He fulfilled the law.

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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" (Matthew 5:18). Jesus fulfilled it all.

What the law could not do, God did. He completely remitted our sins, leaving not even as much as a speck of dust. Dear fellow believers, pastors who preach this word are rare. Words such as "Be blessed, receive blessings, receive the Holy Spirit" are heard more. Do you understand? The abomination of desolation has begun to stand in the holy place. The word says, *"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Matthew 24:16)*. Fleeing to the mountains does not mean to preach the gospel; it means that even if one preaches the gospel, there is no one who will listen. Such are the circumstances and conditions at the time of the end of the world. Even if one preaches the gospel, there is no one who will listen. Here, those who are in Judea are those who have received the remission of sins and become saints, that is, the born-again. It means that they are to flee to the mountains, sing praises to God with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and wait for the second coming of Jesus. If you just get on a vehicle going to a faraway city, you get to that city. Whether you sleep or stay awake inside it, you get there. If you get on a plane going to America, you get to America even without making an effort. Even if you just sit still, you get to America. If you get into the ark, you are saved. Do you understand? It is enough just to be inside the ark. We have been saved from sin. Enjoying true rest is indeed true faith. Dear fellow believers, enjoying true rest is true faith. Dear fellow believers, you must stop a life of faith that is like an ox being dragged to the slaughterhouse with its nose pierced. When you receive the remission of sins and are born again, there is nothing hard at all. Having received the remission of sins and been born again without hardship, you come to sing praises joyfully with

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in serving God. Dear fellow believers, when you receive the remission of sins and are born again, you can obtain true rest in Jesus. Since the problem of sin has been entirely solved and the law has been entirely fulfilled, we can lead a life of faith easily. Is that not so?

Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John

Jesus received sour wine on the Cross (John 19:29–30). Sour wine was what the soldiers drank while guarding a prisoner until he died. The soldiers drank that sour wine, and they also made sinners and those condemned to death drink it. But Jesus drank that sour wine.

Jesus drank all of what sinners drink. *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7–8).* As this word says, it is not easy for anyone to die for a righteous person, and perhaps someone would bravely die for a good person, but there is no one who dies for sinners. There is no one who dies for sinners.

But Jesus died for us sinners. He died for us sinners. He died in order to bear our sins. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus. Do you understand? That is why He died on the Cross while suffering for six hours. During these six hours, Jesus endured the pain of His nailed hands and feet and died. Even when we ride in a good car to a faraway city, if it takes six hours, how tedious it is! Is that not so? It is tedious.

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But when Jesus was nailed to the Cross, nails were driven into His hands and legs. He shed all His blood in that way, and later, when a soldier pierced His side with a spear, blood and water poured out. The last of the blood and water poured out. As the word says, *"Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22)*, Jesus shed every drop of His own blood and died. He did not say *"It is finished!"* quietly, but cried it out loudly and died. He died in order to solve the problem of our sins and to fulfill the law. And on the third day He rose again. Dear fellow believers, you must stop a life of faith that is like a bull being dragged to the slaughterhouse with a ring through its nose.

The command, "Do not commit sin; live according to the law," was not given to us so that we would keep the law; rather, He gave the law so that we would realize sin through the law. We cannot keep the law. The word says, "Do not commit adultery," but it says, *"Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28)*. Where is there a person who does not harbor lust in his heart? Therefore, man cannot but commit sin forever, but God has remitted sins forever. He remitted them, leaving not even as much as a speck of dust. That is why we can go to heaven. Is that not so? Why were lots cast, one goat for the scapegoat and one goat for the LORD? The meaning of this word is that God, too, must not acknowledge any sin in you, and that in your hearts, too, there must not be sin, even as much as a speck of dust. You must confess that in your hearts, too, there is not even a speck of sin. Do you understand? Jesus drank sour wine. He received all of what sinners receive.

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top

in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,' that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: 'They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.' Therefore the soldiers did these things" (John 19:23–24). The one who won Jesus' clothing by casting lots and took it whole could not perform the miracles Jesus performed. Is that not so? But the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years was healed of her disease just by touching the hem of Jesus' garment. It was not that there was power in the hem of Jesus' garment; rather, faith in Jesus healed her disease. East, west, south, and north; male and female, old and young; poor and rich, noble and lowly—people really like dividing things into four. But does this not refer to all people? "Male and female, old and young" refers to absolutely everyone, whether men or women, old people or young people or babies. "East, west, south, and north" refers to all people, whether people in the east or people in the west or people in the south or people in the north. Also, "Poor and rich, noble and lowly" refers to poor people or rich people or noble people or lowly people. That the garments were divided into four means that He covers the transgressions of all people. Where is there anyone who has no transgressions?

People hang up crosses and go about wearing crosses around their necks. Once, at a beach, I saw a tall, handsome man going about wearing a cross around his neck, and it looked very nice. But the word says, *"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7)*. Also, as the word says, *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7–8)*, he

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who sows to his own flesh reaps what will decay. Everything that is seen in the world decays. It will decay.

"While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Dear fellow believers, just as this word says, everything that is seen will decay. Dear fellow believers, it is said that in the land of Judea a lot of grass grows on the sides of the cliffs, and because sheep are nearsighted, they look only at the grass as they go and easily fall off the cliffs. As the word says, *"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)*, sheep cannot but struggle and wander. Dear fellow believers, if you do not receive the remission of sins, you cannot go to heaven no matter how hard you try. They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. No one can keep up with the zeal of those who have no assurance of salvation. How hard it must be not to miss even a single day of a prayer meeting held for a set period! Without even sleeping, as soon as their fatigue is relieved a little, they again go to pray on a mountain and weep, show contrition, and repent all night long.

True rest obtained in the Lord of the Sabbath

Doing so does not wash away sin. *"'For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me,' says the Lord GOD" (Jeremiah 2:22)*. As this word says, sin cannot be washed away with tears. How can sin be washed away with tears? People commit theft and then repent and pray all night long. But our iniquity cannot be washed away

with tears. Only when God washes away sin is it washed away. The word says, *"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8)*. He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law, leaving out not a single one. In the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the word keeps telling what Jesus did. It is not that it tells what man did; the word keeps telling what Jesus did. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? Instead of keeping the Sabbath, we obtain rest in Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath. Faith is believing that He has already made us holy, instead of trying to become holy. Let us look at the word of Hebrews. *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)*.

Instead of your trying to become holy, faith is believing that He has already made you holy. Do you understand? If you try to become holy in order to obtain salvation by keeping the law, do you become holy? Putting on a face that looks holy does not make one holy. You must know the real truth. *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*. The truth makes you free. Also, the word says, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*. It is God's will to give life to man. God is more concerned about man obtaining life than about man becoming rich or getting ahead in the world. The Lord said that He gives the sun and the rain to both the righteous and sinners. Therefore, the righteous live only by faith. Living by faith—do you understand this?

"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12). Do you understand this word? Dear fellow believers, you must obtain life. All the people of the world are people who will go to hell when they die, so they have no life. Dear fellow believers, the word says that when two people are sleeping, one will be taken and the other left, and when two women are grinding at the mill, one will be taken and

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the other left. What will happen if you are among those who will be left? Dear fellow believers, you must go to the kingdom of heaven.

"Boldly to the throne of grace"

Dear fellow believers, there are people who will be left even in this church. What happens if one is left? One ends up going to hell. One goes to hell. When Jesus said, *"It is finished!"* and died, what miracle took place? *"The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51)*. And the word says, *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16)*. We have come to approach boldly. Because the veil was torn in two from top to bottom, we can freely come before the throne of grace. We can freely come before the throne of grace. Do you understand?

You must boldly bring before the throne of grace even a small prayer, such as asking that you not cut your hand with the knife while sharpening a pencil. You may think, "Oh, is there any need to come before the throne of grace with such a tiny prayer?" but you must come boldly before the throne of grace. Dear fellow believers, it is said that the veil of the temple was so strong that even when two horses on each side pulled it, it did not tear in the middle. It was that tough. But it was torn in two from top to bottom. This is something God did. If a person had done it, one might think that he slit the bottom with a knife and tore it. But this is something God did. Therefore, we can come boldly before the throne of grace.

In the old days, once a year the high priest lifted the veil in front of the Most Holy Place and went in. He went in to remit

the sins of Israel. Having gone in, he sprinkled the blood before the mercy seat one, two, three, four, five, six, seven times. This is the gospel of the remission of sins. Do you understand? The Bible says that enjoying true rest not only from sin but also from the law is the way of believing in Jesus. Believing that Jesus solved the problem of sin and fulfilled the law—this is what the Bible teaches. When Jesus said, *"It is finished!"* and died, what was accomplished? First He solved the problem of sin, and He fulfilled the law. Jesus fulfilled the law. We must believe the word that says that until heaven and earth pass away, not even one jot or one tittle of the law will pass away, and all will be fulfilled. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The place where the hand of restoration continues

< Matthew 12:9–21 >

“Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’ Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: (Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets—ASV).”

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One man in the synagogue

In the synagogue that Jesus entered, there was a man whose hand was withered. People's eyes were fixed on whether Jesus would heal him, but the hearts behind those eyes differed from person to person. Some looked for a reason to accuse Jesus, and Jesus restored that man. Today's passage shows the Lord's work, which continues without being cut off even in a place where there is opposition.

Let us read verse 9. *"Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue" (Matthew 12:9)*. Jesus, who had earlier disputed over the disciples' actions in the grainfields, now goes into the synagogue. So the question of what is right on the Sabbath moves from the grainfields to the synagogue and continues into the matter of healing a sick man. In today's passage the words *"from there"* appear twice: in verse 9 He goes into the synagogue, and in verse 15 He leaves that synagogue. Between the two departures lies the restoration of one man's hand.

At the beginning of verse 10 it is written, *"And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand" (Matthew 12:10)*. The Bible does not explain how he had lived or when his hand withered, so we, too, have no need to make up a story that the Bible does not tell. We need only look first at the fact that a man who needed the restoration of his hand was there.

When one person's hardship becomes a subject of dispute, that very person is easily forgotten. Others put their own arguments first, but what a person going through hardship needs is real help. Yet even while answering the question, Jesus does not lose sight of His care for that man, so the Lord's words and actions are directed toward him together.

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You, too, when you hear of someone's hardship, can easily voice your own opinion first, right away. But first look at what that person needs right now. Even if one intends to say what is right, one's service can go astray if one fails to see the person. The passage sets before our eyes that one man who was in the synagogue.

The intent to accuse hidden in a question

Let us read verse 10. *"And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—that they might accuse Him" (Matthew 12:10)*. The Bible reveals even the purpose of the question. They did not ask because they wanted to know a way to help the sick man; they asked in order to accuse Jesus. Even the same words take on a different meaning depending on the heart with which they are spoken.

So only when we first read the record *"that they might accuse Him" (Matthew 12:10)* can we rightly understand the question they asked. Though the form of asking may look like seeking to learn, if one already harbors the intent to accuse, one ends up using even the answer one hears as material for attack rather than for learning.

The words they ask are *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (Matthew 12:10)*. On the surface it is a question that distinguishes right from wrong, but within it is hostility toward Jesus. Here the fact is revealed that speaking of a right principle and rejoicing in a right deed are two different things.

Jesus does not avoid that question; He answers by pointing to people's actual behavior and makes clear that it is right to heal a sick man. There was no reason for Him to acknowledge a good

deed as wrong just because there were people who opposed it. So the Lord's answer has the power to make those who asked look back on their own judgment.

When you learn the word, too, questions are precious, because you can ask about what you do not know and confirm the meaning. However, examine whether you are asking with the conclusion already settled that you will refuse. A heart that wants to learn is ready to correct its own judgment after hearing the answer.

The word they threw out was *"Is it lawful,"* and Jesus' last answer also concludes in verse 12 with *"it is lawful."* He answered with the same word with which they asked. If we turn this question toward ourselves today, we come to ask what is right in God's sight. Rather than our keeping the dates and forms that people have set up, God desires that we believe in Jesus, receive the remission of the sins in our hearts, and live as children of God.

He makes them think of a sheep that has fallen into a pit

Let us read verse 11. *"Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?'" (Matthew 12:11)*. Jesus does not bring up a distant and difficult story, but presents a situation in which they themselves know how they would actually act. He is telling them to think about what they would do when their own sheep was in danger.

In the words *"who has one sheep"* there is a concrete object of care. No one begins by calculating that it is only one among many sheep. If a sheep entrusted to oneself had fallen into a pit,

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one would try to pull out that one sheep; so when one actually pictures the one who needs help, what one must do becomes clear.

He also clearly states the day in question, saying, *"If it falls into a pit on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:11)*. He does not ask what they would do if it were another day, but asks what they would do if something dangerous happened on that very Sabbath that they had made an issue of. He has them apply the standard they themselves had set to their own affairs.

The question *"will not lay hold of it and lift it out?"* reaches the conscience of those who hear it. If they pull out their own precious sheep and yet raise objections to the restoration of a man, that judgment is inconsistent. Jesus brings that discrepancy to light and leads them to think about the will of God.

We easily explain the many circumstances of our own situation, while applying only one measuring stick to the situations of others. We feel our own needs keenly, while putting the needs of others off until later. Jesus' question makes us examine that double heart, so consider for others, too, the care that you would want to receive.

Let us read the first words of verse 12. *"Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep?" (Matthew 12:12)*. Here the Lord makes clear how precious man is. The man with the withered hand in the synagogue is not a means for an argument, but a person whom God sees as precious. Therefore, when thinking about healing him, this fact must be at the center.

He actually does a good deed

Jesus makes the conclusion clear: *"Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:12)*. He gave a clear

answer to those who had asked what was right. To help a sick man's restoration is not a sin to be avoided on that day, but a good deed that accords with the will of God.

One who has heard this answer cannot leave a person neglected on the grounds that he regards the Sabbath as precious. If one makes the will that God has given an excuse for blocking the work of helping people, one goes against that will. The good that Jesus made clear does not remain only in thought, but immediately appears as the restoration He grants to one man.

Let us read verse 13. *"Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other" (Matthew 12:13)*. Jesus spoke to him, and when he stretched out his hand, the restoration took place. Whether the people who were disputing approved is not the basis of this restoration. It was Jesus, who spoke, who had the power.

The word *"Stretch out your hand"* is directed toward that man. Even after exchanging words with the people who sought to accuse Him, Jesus does not forget the sick man, but gives him directly the word he needs. And the man does not stay in the place of calculating how people will look at him, but responds to the Lord's word.

The passage records, *"And he stretched it out."* This does not mean that the power of restoration was in the motion of stretching out the hand itself. He stretched out his hand in accordance with Jesus' word, and the Lord brought about the restoration. In this scene, faith is revealed as a response to the One who speaks.

The result is *"it was restored as whole as the other" (Matthew 12:13)*. The Bible does not say that the hand got better little by little over several days, but records that it became whole like the other hand right there as he stretched it out. The Lord's restoration took place all at once, and His good deed did not stop

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at gaining words that win an argument. For those who come before the Lord bringing the sin of their hearts, too, the Lord is the One who in this way cleanses them all at once.

You who read of this event can learn the Lord's intention in regarding people as precious. Do not see a person who has difficulties merely as an opportunity to display your own argument, but find the help you can give and serve him so that he may rely on the word. That is fitting for a heart that has learned from the Lord.

They plot to kill Him even after seeing the restoration

Let us read verse 14. *"Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Matthew 12:14)*. One man's hand has been made whole, yet the Pharisees plot to kill Jesus. In a place where they should have rejoiced at the restoration, their hostility becomes clearer, and the outcome reveals with what heart they had asked their question from the beginning.

Look at the movement in the words *"Then the Pharisees went out."* They leave the place where Jesus healed a man and hold a different discussion. Rather than accepting the good deed before their eyes, they hardened their opposition all the more. If one closes one's heart even after seeing something plain, one's judgment cannot move in the right direction.

That discussion was *"how they might destroy Him" (Matthew 12:14)*. Those who had asked whether it was right to heal on the Sabbath now look for a way to kill. If we set these two actions side by side, we can see where their zeal is directed.

The mouths that had put regulations forward and the actual purpose of their hearts were at odds with each other.

You, too, have moments when it is hard to admit that your argument was wrong. Even while knowing that the other person did what was right, you may not want to praise him because you opposed him first. At such times, look back to see whether a heart that wants to save face is not hiding the truth.

To rejoice in the good deeds that God has done, we must value the truth more than appearing right ourselves. If we opposed because we understood wrongly, it is fitting to turn back and admit it. A person who corrects his own judgment can receive the Lord's teaching, but one who tries only to save face can go on into a greater wrong.

He keeps on healing even as He departs

Let us read verse 15. *"But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all" (Matthew 12:15)*. Jesus knew of their plotting and departed; it was not that He avoided it because He did not know. Even as He departed from that place, He healed the diseases of the people who followed Him. The plans of those who opposed Him did not stop the Lord's merciful work.

The words *"when Jesus knew it"* help us understand the Lord's movements. He acts knowing the situation fully. So there is no reason to think that the Lord's will has failed just because opposition has arisen. Even in that situation, the Lord carries on the work He must do.

After the record *"And great multitudes followed Him" (Matthew 12:15)*, the word that He healed them follows. In that place there were not only those who were plotting to kill, but

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also those who followed the Lord and received help. So when you read the passage, do not let only the voices of opposition sound loud in your ears, but also see the grace that continues in their midst.

Let us read verse 16. *"Yet He warned them not to make Him known" (Matthew 12:16)*. Jesus governs even the manner in which He is made widely known. He did not take the path of using people's enthusiasm to exalt His own name just because He had healed their diseases; He had His own will to accomplish and His own way.

Matthew makes clear in the very next verse why He told them *"not to make Him known."* Verse 16 does not end with *"warned"* but continues into verse 17's *"that it might be fulfilled,"* saying that even this warning was the fulfilling of Isaiah's word. So those who have received grace, rather than putting their own zeal forward, come to listen to what the Lord has said and to follow that word.

When you do good deeds, too, you have no need to chase only results that catch the eye. It is enough to consider the needs of the person being helped and faithfully carry out the task entrusted to you. When you look at Jesus' work, you come to know how much more precious it is to restore one person than the clamor of the crowd.

The image of the Servant who was spoken of is fulfilled

Let us read verse 17. *"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying" (Matthew 12:17)*. Matthew connects Jesus' work with the word given through Isaiah. That is, in the way He healed the hand, withdrew, and

told them not to make Him known, there is the fulfillment of the will written in Scripture. So we come to understand the event before our eyes within God's promise.

Let us read verse 18. *"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles" (Matthew 12:18)*. While people are plotting to kill Jesus, God declares Him to be the One He loves and is pleased with. This is how different people's hostility and God's approval are. So we must be clear about by whose evaluation we will know the Lord.

The name *"my servant whom I have chosen"* carries the mission of accomplishing the will of the One who sent Him. Jesus does not decide His own work by being dragged along by people's demands, but accomplishes the will that God is pleased with. Those who read of His work come to remember that the One who leads that will is God.

Then He says, *"I will put my Spirit upon him" (Matthew 12:18)*. Within the single verse 18 the words *"whom I have chosen," "my soul," "My beloved," "I will put,"* and *"my Spirit"* appear one after another, so the One who speaks is God from beginning to end. The One who chose this Servant, the One who is pleased with Him, and the One who gives the Holy Spirit are all God, so the work the Lord does cannot be measured by people's evaluations or by the size of human success.

Let us read verse 19. *"He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets" (Matthew 12:19)*. Here the Lord's gentle manner of working appears. He is not one who must noisily crush every opponent to show that He is right, but the One who accomplishes the will God has entrusted to Him and keeps caring for those who need help.

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Let us read verse 20. *"A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matthew 12:20)*. Look at the two verbs in this verse. The reed is already bruised and the wick is already going out, yet the Lord does not *"break"* it and does not *"quench"* it. Matthew placed this word right after the synagogue scene. His not leaving the man whose hand had withered as a subject of dispute, but making his hand whole like the other hand, amounts to having shown beforehand what this verse speaks of.

So when you come before the Lord, you have no need to hide your withered hand and stretch out only your sound hand. That man stretched out the very hand that had been withered, and the Lord restored that hand. You, too, come bringing your own self that you cannot fix, just as it is, and look to the grace that the Lord has bestowed.

The words *"Till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matthew 12:20)* take up again verse 18's *"And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles"* and tell us that the Servant who neither quarrels nor cries out will win in the end. So the Lord's gentleness is not weakness. Just as verse 19 says, the Lord does not argue over people's rights and wrongs loudly in the streets, but accomplishes the will of God to the end.

Those who look to His name

Let us read verse 21. *"And in His name Gentiles will trust" (Matthew 12:21)*. The story that began with one man in the synagogue continues into the hope of the Gentiles looking to the Lord's name. The quotation that in verse 18 said He would declare judgment to the Gentiles closes in verse 21 with the word that the Gentiles will look to His name. God's promise is wider

than the dispute in that place, so Jesus is the Savior on whom all people are to rely beyond the boundaries of nations.

In the way the Lord saves sinners, there is the will of atonement that God has ordained. *"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)*. This is the word by which God had hands laid on the head of the offering so that sin would be passed on to that offering. It is not that sinners make themselves clean and then come forward; rather, God has them accept the way of the remission of sins that He has ordained.

So that even the Gentiles might look to His name, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins you will commit throughout your lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And to pay the price of all those sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

Just as the word says, *"In His name Gentiles will trust,"* our hope is in Jesus. How strong a person is, or what kind of evaluation he receives from people, cannot be the basis of salvation. The reason we have hope is that we know the One who accomplished salvation and believe in the grace He has bestowed.

When there is someone before you who needs help, remember that the Lord sees him as precious. As befits those who have received the Lord's grace, listen to his circumstances and find what you can do together with him. Let us correct wrong judgments, give the help that is needed, and keep learning the heart of the Lord, who restores people. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who came to break the religions of the world

< Matthew 12:1–21 >

“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’ But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’ Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’ Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he

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stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: (Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets—ASV)."

Jesus was walking along the road with His disciples on the Sabbath. Then Jesus' disciples plucked heads of grain and ate them, and the Pharisees, who were people fanatical about religion, made an accusation to Jesus. *"Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:2)*. Mocking in that way, they accused Jesus' disciples before Jesus. So Jesus asked the Pharisees whether they had not read what David did, and whether David and those who were with him, when they were hungry, had not eaten the showbread in the house of God, which only the priests eat; and our Lord said, *"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7)*.

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In fact, people who are zealous for religion pick quarrels over the Sabbath. People who are filled with religiosity pick a great many quarrels over things that appear outwardly.

As the disciples were passing through the grainfields, the wheat was so well ripened that they plucked it, rubbed it in their hands, and tossed it into their mouths. What is wrong with this? But in the eyes of people ardent about religion, it looked wrong. In the eyes of people filled with religion, everything that people of faith do is offensive. Because the disciples had rubbed heads of wheat and eaten them on the Sabbath, they made an issue of it, saying that they were *"doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath"*; so it means that people filled with religion were always the problem.

The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath

Our Lord said that the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath, and that man is more important than the Sabbath, that it was He who gave this rest to them, and so they should not talk about it in terms of the day. How much do we sin in a week? Yet there are people who think of this day as extremely important because in the fourth of God's Ten Commandments He said, *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8)*. Rather than regarding the Lord as important only on that day, they must regard as important the salvation by which Jesus saved them. But some people call the time from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday the Sabbath and think of that day as extremely important.

The Sabbath—on that day they do not work. They do not move a finger. Recently, among the members of various denominations, people who are very full of religion think of the

Lord's Day as extremely important. So on the Lord's Day they do not watch television, do not ride in cars, and do not meet guests. They think of the Lord's Day as extremely important, like the Sabbath.

Dear fellow believers, the Lord's Day or the Sabbath is a day of rest, one day in the week, and a day of offering worship before God, and after offering worship we do this and that. On that day we give thanks that God has given us salvation, offer worship before God, and preach the gospel. But if, like these people who appear in the Bible, one does not pull out an animal even when it falls into a pit and is dying, because it is the Sabbath and one was told not to work on the Sabbath, then, dear fellow believers, that is not knowing the will of God well. God desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice. It means that more than our trying to do something, He wants us to remember that God has saved us, wants us to believe, and wants us to believe and so receive salvation, become children of God, become righteous, go to the kingdom of heaven as well, and on this earth, as children of God, receive blessings from God and live happily. But these people filled with religion pulled out animals, yet even when a person was dying they gave no treatment on the Sabbath, and if they could, they gave treatment after the Sabbath had passed. People of the modern day are like that, too.

Some people apply literally the word that says to abstain *"from blood"* and refuse blood transfusions even when their child is dying. All they would need to do is have the parent give blood to the child, or transfuse another person's blood, and operate, but holding up that word, they absolutely refuse it. So they sometimes even lose their child. And in some conservative denominations, they strive to believe according to the Bible and take great pride in it. They are not to ride in cars or sew on the Sabbath; they prepare all their food on Friday, and on the

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Sabbath they only eat and do not even light a fire. Dear fellow believers, all of this is hypocrisy. The hypocrisy practiced by people filled with religion is not what Jesus wants.

The Lord, who healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath

Jesus went one step further. In front of those filled with religion, He healed a sick person on the Sabbath. That sick person was a man whose hand was completely withered, and when Jesus was about to heal that sick person on the Sabbath, the Pharisees who saw it jumped up in outrage.

Religionists believe in Jesus in a religious way. Believing in Jesus merely as one god is no different from believing in another religion. There are countless gods, and believing in one of them is religion.

When Jesus was about to heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, these religionists picked a quarrel and fiercely demanded, “How can You do that? Is it right to heal on the Sabbath?” So Jesus said, “Will you not pull out an animal even if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath? How much less, then, is there anything wrong with healing a person’s sickness on the Sabbath?” Our Lord healed the man with the withered hand. The Lord healed many sicknesses.

And when our Lord was on this earth, He suffered much persecution. The Pharisees hated Jesus intensely, wondering how they might kill Him. Jesus healed many sick people on this earth and told them not to make Him known to people. This word prophesied in the Old Testament is what our Lord actually fulfilled by coming to this earth.

"A bruised reed shall he not break"

"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets" (Matthew 12:18–21). This word says that what God recorded in the word of Isaiah chapter 42, verse 1 and following, was fulfilled through our Lord. Our Lord does not break a bruised reed. And He said that He does not quench the wick that is going out, until He judges and prevails. It means that our Lord does not break a bruised reed. He also said that He does not quench the wick that is going out. Until when? Until He judges and prevails. It means that until then He does not judge people. Our Lord heals those who are brokenhearted. Our Lord healed many sick people. He came to this earth to heal those who were sick in spirit and body like that—those who are brokenhearted, have fallen into sin, have sinned against their will and become sinners, have been deceived by others, and suffer from diseases. And He did heal them.

Our Lord healed anyone. Even those who oppose God He did not judge right away, but waited until that day—until He judges and prevails, truly until people's lives come to an end, until our Lord brings judgment upon this earth—so that all might believe in our Lord and receive the remission of sins.

Who is our Lord? He is the merciful God who does not break a bruised reed and does not quench the wick that is going out. Even if one has truly committed a sin worthy of death, He is not One who judges for it; rather, He heals that broken spirit with

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our Lord's gospel of the water and the blood, binds it up, removes all sins, and rescues it from all sins. Our Lord came to this earth and removed all sins completely. Our Lord removed all the sins of the brokenhearted, and He saved all people who had been wounded in heart because of material things, wounded because of their character, and wounded because of their own shortcomings. From all those sins our Lord washed us clean, bore our sins, made our sins be no more, received Himself in our place the judgment for our sins, and saved us. And He waited until He judges and prevails. The Lord said that He does not judge anyone until He carries out the final judgment.

Our Lord said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*. He said that He will give rest. *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29)*. For our salvation, to heal our spirits broken because of our sins, our Lord came to this earth, was born, and when He was thirty, received baptism from John. So He had all your sins and mine transferred to Him. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died, and rose again on the third day. Because our Lord did this work, He said to take His yoke and learn from Him.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Our Lord has saved us. Our Lord's having saved you means that with the water and the blood, the Lord bore all our sins, our weaknesses, and the wounds of our hearts, and healed them.

Our God has saved us. He healed the brokenhearted, and to save us, who truly could not but die and could not but be cursed because of sin, our Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John, and had all our sins transferred to Him. And He bore all the sin of the world and went, and in order to receive the

judgment for our sins, He was nailed to the Cross and died. And He rose again on the third day. In this way our Lord did the work of saving us. If you believe in our Lord, you gain strength in your heart. This is because our Lord did the work of removing all our sins.

We must not fall into religion

Dear fellow believers, you must never fall into religion. This world has fallen into the opium of religion. Someone said, "Religion is opium." Opium feels good at first, but if one keeps on with it, one becomes addicted, and because of its side effects it brings on serious symptoms: the body shakes violently, the head cannot stay still, and one sees visions and hears phantom voices. On one corner of an alley I saw when I was young, there were people who, though it was summer, sat crouched, trembling like aspen leaves. "Mister, what is wrong? Are you cold?" I was young then, so I did not really know, but when I think about it, that person was a drug addict. He drank alcohol and took drugs, and his suffering was extremely severe.

Dear fellow believers, religion is opium. If one is full of religion, one dies because of religion. And one is ruined because of religion. In this world countless people believe in Jesus, and it is because countless people believe in Jesus in a religious way that they go to hell. For a while at first it may be joyful and good, but in the end they are ruined because of religion. When they die, too, they die because they have sin, they receive punishment because of sin, and everyone who believes in Jesus religiously is ruined in that way. You must never fall into religion.

Dear fellow believers, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe is not religion. It is faith. It is belief. Dear fellow

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believers, we have met the real Jesus, and we believe in the real Jesus. We truly had sin in our hearts, our hearts were wounded because of sin, and we were a wick that was going out. Like an oil lamp whose wick has no oil, so that it flickers, barely staying lit as if about to go out at any moment, and then after a little time dies down—that is the kind of people we are before God. We were beings like a lamp that is going out, beings who could not but die and could not but be judged because of sin. But our Lord came to this earth and saved us.

If one falls into religion, rather than having one's broken heart healed, one is wounded even more. Our Lord said that He does not break a bruised reed, but religion cannot give real faith. If you and I believe in the Lord's water and blood, we receive the Lord's salvation, and we come to know and believe that the Lord has already borne all your sins and died on the Cross. What matters is not falling into religion but receiving real faith.

Being saved from sin—this is something very great. For example, suppose that while running a business you unintentionally incurred an enormous debt. Then your descendants would have to work generation after generation to earn money and pay it back, but even if they worked and paid over several generations, it would be impossible to pay it all back. They could not even pay the interest. But suppose someone paid it off in your place. At the moment you learned that someone had paid off that enormous debt, how joyful and glad you would be! The sin of man is like that, too. Man can do nothing about the sin of man. Man is a bruised reed and is like a wick that is going out. Our Lord never judged such people but saved them. He rescued them from all sins and all judgment.

Is there anyone who once unintentionally did something that, even to his own mind, he regrets very, very much, and who is tormented because of it? Dear fellow believers, our Lord bore

that sin, too. Dear fellow believers, do you know how much countless people in this world regret, not only for many years but until they die, because of the sins they should not have committed? They keep regretting, "Why did I do that, when I should not have?" and from that an inferiority complex arises, from that a sense of guilt arises, from that they come to abuse themselves and strike themselves, and when they absolutely cannot bear it, their hearts collapse and they suffer deep pain. In the end, they are tormented by Satan the devil. "Why did you do that? You did that then, didn't you?" Dear fellow believers, our Lord is the One who does not break a bruised reed, but Satan the devil breaks the bruised reed.

Our Lord bore all our sins and saved us. But if we fall into religion, fall into religious zeal, and try to receive the remission of sins by weeping and offering prayers of repentance every day, and by offering prayers of repentance while giving offerings, then what difference is there between us and the Pharisees who opposed Jesus, who appear here in the Bible? They and religious people are exactly the same. They are not people who believe in God but those who oppose God. Among those who believe in Jesus, there are countless such people. There are so many opponents like that.

Our Lord said that He does not break a bruised reed until He judges and prevails. If anyone believes in Jesus as his own Savior, and if we believe that Jesus came to this earth as a man, received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, bore the sin of the world and went and received judgment on the Cross in our place, rose again on the third day, and gave us salvation, our Lord gives salvation at any time. "That is right. Your faith is right. Your faith is right."

The word says of our Lord, *"Waiting till His enemies are made His footstool" (Hebrews 10:13)*. Our Lord is waiting until

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the day of judgment for people to believe in Jesus and receive salvation. The Lord is waiting so that anyone whosoever may believe and receive the remission of sins. The Lord is One who is that abundant in mercy and love and full of grace. God is truly merciful and full of love, and God is truly our Savior. He is the Lord who saved you and me.

The Lord, who is in a different class from the sages of the world

Dear fellow believers, how do we know God? How do we believe? Dear fellow believers, all the wounds of our hearts, our sins, pain, and shame, our frailty, and our diseases—our Lord bore all of these. And He saved us. Our Lord is such a One. Dear fellow believers, do you understand? Our Lord is not the same as people like the religious leaders of this world. He is not like those religious leaders who merely talk and who bless or curse depending on money and the hospitality they receive. He is in a different class from those people who are called sages and saints in this world.

Dear fellow believers, even those who are called saints in the world died while searching for the original nature of man, asking, "What is man? Where does he come from, and where does he go? Why can man not solve the problem of birth, aging, sickness, and death, and why must he die?" They died without solving even one of their own problems. None of those called saints and sages can solve even their own problems.

Dear fellow believers, when all those who are called saints in this world are truly starving to death, try snatching away their rice bowls and eating from them. Could they really say, "You eat it"? Do you think they are people who, while dying of hunger

themselves, could say to the one who snatches away their rice bowl, “All right, you eat it. You eat it, and you at least live. I will be going”? Only God, only our Jesus, is the One who takes up and solves for us the problem of all our sins, the problem of our weakness, the problem of sickness, the problem of going to hell, and the problem of being judged; man cannot solve them for us. Go to a sage who taught, “Be filial to your parents, be loyal to your country, and keep faith with your friends,” and try snatching away the rice set before him as he is dying of hunger. Do you think he would really say, “I must love my neighbor. You eat it”? Rather, he will try to protect his own life first.

But Jesus did not do so. For He went so far as to give His own life to us. The Lord gave His own life to us, personally bore all those things for which we would be despised, received our sins and our punishment Himself, received our judgment in our place, and saved us. Our Lord is different from those people. Because the Lord is God, because He has power, because He is omniscient and omnipotent and has the power to die and live again, the Lord was able to do it. Also, because the Lord is the Creator who made us, He could love us and could save us from sin.

Dear fellow believers, that is why we must believe in our Lord, who does not break a bruised reed. You must believe in your hearts and receive salvation. Even after believing, you must always remember that He has saved you, and be full of faith. Dear fellow believers, you must truly abide fully in faith. When you abide in faith, you can follow the Lord, love Him, and pursue the Lord’s will. If you do not abide in faith but abide in works, you cannot follow the Lord. We must think deeply about this salvation that our Lord has spoken of.

Dear fellow believers, the Lord said that He does not break a bruised reed until He judges and prevails. There are still many

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people in this world who have not received the remission of sins. But God still does not judge those countless people. There are many people who live enjoying wealth and fame through religion, but for now He is just leaving them as they are.

In a certain big church, people gather packed together like bean sprouts in a growing jar. Before them a pastor comes out and preaches, and he speaks well. But it is the kind of talk anyone could give.

Dear fellow believers, they emphasize, insist, give orders, and tell people to obey so much, but what is it that they gain before God by obeying what they insist on? They do not obtain the remission of sins, and all that remains is sin and a broken heart. Yet how many such people there are!

It is said that a certain church built its chapel at enormous cost. Dear fellow believers, if one builds a chapel at such an enormous cost, is it worth that much? There are also those who regard gathering many people in a big building as the success of a church. But a person's sins are not washed away because the building is big. It is people zealous for religion who do such things.

Those who believe by religion and those who believe by the word

Dear fellow believers, we all alike call on Jesus and believe in Jesus, but some believe in a religious way and some believe the word of God. We all alike believe in Jesus, but the person who actually receives the remission of sins by believing the word of God believes that he actually was a sinner and commits sin until he dies; believes that our Lord actually came to this earth, received baptism from John, and actually had all our sins

transferred to Him; believes that He bore the sin of the world and went and received the judgment for sin on the Cross; believes that He rose again from death on the third day and is now at the right hand of the throne of God; and actually believes that the Lord will come again. A person who is actually full of faith is like that. Among those who believe in Jesus, there are two kinds: those who lead a life of faith by faith and those who lead a life of faith by religion. Those who lead a life of faith religiously meet destruction. Those who believe in Jesus religiously actually oppose Jesus. Because Jesus is not seen with the eyes, they cannot kill Him, but they hate and persecute those who have believed in Jesus and been born again, those who have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and actually received the remission of sins.

But, dear fellow believers, the word says that not even one sparrow falls unless God permits it. *"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will" (Matthew 10:29)*. That is what the Bible says.

In the old days, people set nets in trees to catch sparrows and eat them. From the side opposite where the net was set, they drove the birds. When they threw stones wildly and banged on bowls, the sparrows were suddenly startled and fled in a flurry. Fleeing wildly, they got caught in the net. It was pandemonium, with some caught and some escaping, and if you took the sparrows that were caught, plucked off their wings, and roasted them whole over the fire and ate them, they were savory and delicious. This is a story from very long ago. It means that if you paid just a few coins, you could buy the life of a sparrow and eat it. The word says that even such a commonplace sparrow does not die unless God permits it. It says that unless God permits it, no sparrow falls while flying in the air or gets caught in a net.

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Dear fellow believers, our being saved or cursed also depends on the hand of God. God loved us and saved us, who had fallen into sin, with the water and the Spirit. Falling for the enticement of Satan the devil, our ancestors and we fall into sin and live committing sin. But our Lord has saved us. If we believe the salvation by which God has saved us, we receive salvation. Anyone receives salvation by faith.

Dear fellow believers, you must not fall into religion, and you must not be judged. He said that He does not break a bruised reed until He judges and prevails. Until the day the Lord comes, the Lord does not judge people. But there is one thing we must remember. It is that the Lord is the merciful God, who does not break a bruised reed, and the God of salvation. Even so, if you do not believe, if even though God has removed all your sins you do not believe it and oppose Him and die, you cannot but stand before the judgment. But because our Lord, being merciful, said that He does not break a bruised reed, we must truly believe in the Lord while we are alive on this earth. And people still do not believe in Jesus, or believe in Jesus in a religious way and live in grand style, but we must not envy them. Rather, we must have pity on them.

The Lord came to break the religions of the world

Some pastors raise the mood with a loud voice when they lead a gathering. If they do not shout loudly when preaching, then instead they put on very solemn formalities. So people accustomed to religion look at me and say that I have too little formality. With you who have received the remission of sins, I do so all the more on purpose. I do it on purpose to break the mold of religion. We must break the religion in which a bell is

rung and someone says, “We will have silent prayer,” and a pipe organ accompaniment is laid down underneath and a choir sings praise.

Our Lord came to this earth to break religion. It is no exaggeration to say that the Lord came to this earth to break the power of Satan the devil and to do away with religion.

In the past I believed in Buddhism, and I believed in all such religions as folk religions and Confucianism. Dear fellow believers, in one folk religion I believed in, a bell was rung at 1:30 at night, and at that time I had to get up, purify myself by bathing in cold water, and burn papers on which incantations were written. While burning those papers one sheet at a time, I had to keep reciting incantations, and I had to bow before the papers were all gone. I also grew up always hearing words of family pride: “You are the son of a noble family.” But what use is that? Dear fellow believers, religion is exactly the same as the fig leaves that Adam and Eve made and put on. It only covers one’s outward things. It cannot remove the sin in the heart and only covers the outer shell of deeds. Fig leaves are clothes made of plants. Religion is a tool of the devil. Religion is what Satan the devil uses to make people unable to believe in God. Through religion he kills people, through religion he binds people tightly, and through religion he leads them wholly to hell. God will judge someday. Before He judges, we must have pity on people and preach the gospel to them.

We must remember this fact. I hope you will know the fact that our Lord does not break a bruised reed, the fact that He actually did not break it, and the fact that He desired mercy and did not desire sacrifice.

What does our Lord say through this word? I hope you will know the fact that He requires the faith that believes that the Lord has saved us with the water and the blood. I hope you will

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know that He wants us to be filled with the faith that believes in the heart—to be filled with faith, that is. It means that God wants us to fully have the faith that believes that our Lord saved you and saved me, the faith that believes the word that He has remitted all the sins of this world. It means that He wants us, having faith, to give thanks before God, offer worship, set the confession of our faith to music and praise God with beautiful psalms and hymns, extol God, give glory, and receive all the blessings God has given—to become such blessed people. We should keep this in mind, know the heart of God, and have faith. I hope you will become people full not of religion but of faith. You who are truly full of the faith that believes in the heart, believe the fact that the Lord has saved you, has become your Savior, and did not break you, who are like a bruised reed, and so the fact that you and I have been saved and go to the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord, who saved us, who are like bruised reeds

You and I are bruised reeds. I hope you will believe the fact that God did not break the bruised reed, and so the fact that you and I have been saved and go to the kingdom of heaven by faith. You and I are bruised reeds. Have you seen a bruised reed? You have not? Well, people these days live far from nature, after all. I lived in a reed field.

When reeds grow well and ripen, they are yellow. But bruised ones turn the color of blood. Like sorghum stalks, they take on a blood-red tinge. They are bruised all over and reddish. They look like human blood. People cut down bruised reeds and throw them away. But our Lord does not do so. Even when there

is sickness, even when there are shortcomings, our Lord saves us, heals our broken spirits, and values our lives as precious. He has saved us, who are like such bruised reeds. While we live on this earth, our hearts can be broken at any time, but our Lord has saved you, cared for you, and cherished you. Rather than having your broken spirit broken even more by being deceived by the religions of the world, I hope you will remember that the Lord came to break the religions of the world, and lead a genuine life of faith. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Guard your spiritual life well

< Matthew 12:1–21 >

“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’ But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’ Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’ Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how

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they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: (Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets—ASV)"

After a certain subway fire disaster, I watched television, and singers were singing at what was called a night of consolation for the disaster. Truly, every song and every lyric was so heartrending, and much longing and love came through in them. A female singer came out and sang an old song filled with the grief of having sent away first the one who had said, "Let us live together for a long time," and it was very wrenching. Because she sang it with that disaster as the background, I cannot tell you how much that song was like a cry of anguish.

These days, when I see such things, tears come to my eyes. In the past I did not shed tears much, but these days, when I see such things, tears come, and when I watch a sad drama, my nose tingles and tears come, so I often close the door for no reason, worried that someone might see, and shed tears alone. How heartrending the stories were! While they were alive, people hated each other, nagged, fought, and so on, but after the other has gone, how achingly they miss them! Why is that so? It is so

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because the person has truly died. It is because they have died, because they cannot live together. Being alive and being dead are that different. That is so. That the songs sung at the end were so heartrending was also because lives had perished.

I cannot tell you how great the difference is between being dead and being alive. Even a person who seemed nothing special while alive comes to be missed after dying, and with someone one just got along with somehow while that person was alive, it hurts the heart all over again because that person went so miserably when going. Seeing that, I felt the great gap between life and death.

We must find the lost life again

Believing the gospel, receiving the remission of sins by believing in Jesus—this decides living and dying. Among the hymns we sing, there is a hymn that confesses that the merciful God saved me and that I have now at last found my lost life. This is the confession that a life that had died met the Lord, received the remission of all sins from the Lord, and came back to life.

The gap between death and life—that is a valley of sorrow far too great. We must truly find the lost life again and come back to life. If we have known only so much as that if we believe the gospel we preach, this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins, and that if we receive the remission of sins, we become the people of God, then we must realize and know that by this a soul that had died comes back to life and obtains new life. Many people do not know that knowing and believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit and being born again is exactly finding the lost life again.

That is truly so. Even though the dead have departed amid the sympathy of many people, before those who died without being born again, it is not only tears and regret that remain. It is a settled principle that a person is born once and dies once. Whether one dies in a train or wherever one dies, dying is certainly a settled principle, and the problem is what comes after. Because the word says, *"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)*, that is why one must shed tears and grieve bitterly. If there is judgment, one meets destruction.

"A bruised reed shall he not break"

When we look at today's word, it says, *"If you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7)*. This is the heart of the Lord. Here there is a word prophesied through Isaiah the prophet, and such a word prophesied in the Old Testament is pondered once again. *"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets" (Matthew 12:18–21)*.

"The Lord comes to this earth and gives the Holy Spirit to those who have received the remission of sins. And when the Holy Spirit comes, He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because people do not believe in the Lord." Such a word is also spoken in John chapter 16. So,

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coming to this earth, the Lord did just as it says, *"He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matthew 12:19–20).*

The Lord truly said that He would not break a bruised reed, and said that He would not quench smoking flax until He judges and prevails. Until when does the Lord wait? Until when is it? Until when does He not break this bruised reed and not quench the smoking flax, until He judges and prevails? Does the Lord examine whether we keep the law well, whether we have kept the Sabbath holy, whether we have healed the sick, whether we have done good works or not? No, He does not. He said that even if we are truly bruised in heart, dying because of sin, dying from believing in vain things, dying from being stubborn, and so on, He will not quench that flax. He said that He will not quench the flax but will keep it so until He judges and prevails.

Then by what does it mean that He judges? It means that He judges by faith. It means that He judges by the truth.

You and I are souls who were dead because of sin, but the Lord gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord came to this earth, remitted our sins through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, and gave us the gospel of the truth of the water and the Spirit. That was it: He gave this gospel of the salvation of the truth revealed in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen, and gave the way of life, so that He saves those who believe and judges those who do not believe.

What is it for your life and mine, which had been dead—for our souls—to be saved from sin and saved from death? How could we be saved? We were saved simply by faith.

The Lord gave you and me the gospel of the water and the Spirit to make your dead life and mine live again. It was that by believing this we obtain salvation, and that He brings judgment on those who do not believe. That is why the word says, *"A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matthew 12:20)*. God never judges by anything else, but looks only at whether there is faith or not.

Truly God so loved the world and had pity on people that He saved the souls who had grown distant from God because of sin, had built a wall, and were withering away. Just as a plant that does not see the sunlight and is hidden in the shade withers, becomes sick, and dies as time passes, He shone on such lives the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the bright light of the truth, and saved them; that is what it means. And so He has made it that those who believe obtain salvation and those who do not believe receive judgment; that is what it means.

How could a dead life obtain salvation? It could obtain salvation by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. How could you and I, who had been dead, obtain new life? We could obtain it by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. What is the gospel of the water and the Spirit? It is that the Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist and had all the sin of us human beings transferred to Him, bore the sin of the world once and for all, was nailed to the Cross, received the judgment, and died for us, and rose again from death and became the God of our eternal salvation. That He removed all our sins, saved us from all sins, and transferred us from the kingdom of destruction to the kingdom of the Son of God is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. By faith we can receive salvation.

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Ask God for mercy

What God wants from us is to ask God for mercy. It is to confess unconditionally, “I am one who cannot but die because of my sin,” and to say, “According to the law of God, I am one who cannot but go to hell. I am a lost life. Please save me.” And so the Lord wants us to pray such a prayer, hoping to obtain new life and obtain salvation by faith—by believing that the Lord removed all sins and saved us with the water and the Spirit, that is, through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross—and wants us to come forward with such a heart and such faith; that is what it means. *“I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (Matthew 12:7).*

When we look at today’s word, on the Sabbath, as Jesus and the disciples were passing through the grainfields, Jesus’ disciples stripped the grain, rubbed it, and ate the kernels. Then the Pharisees saw it, and as the Pharisees railed at them, saying, “What? Are you working on the Sabbath? Plucking the grain to eat and rubbing it and eating it? Isn’t that work too?” the Lord spoke: “Why are you doing this? They are hungry and want to eat a little; why are you making this fuss? Why do you keep picking quarrels over the Sabbath? I am the Lord of the Sabbath. The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath. I am the One who gives you rest. God gives you rest, and I, who am God, remit your sins, bear your sins, receive the judgment for sin, save you from your sins, and give you new life. Then is the Lord of the Sabbath with you? Or is it in the law? Is it with Moses? It is I who gave it. I am the Lord of the Sabbath. Then why do you treat people without sin this way? Do you live without eating on the Sabbath? Then would you not pull out an animal on the Sabbath if it fell into a pit and were dying?” After that, in the synagogue, when Jesus told the man with the withered hand to stretch out

his hand, the hand was immediately restored. Then the evil of the Pharisees reached its peak. “How can you heal the sick on the Sabbath while saying that you are a servant of God, that you are a prophet?” The Lord hated them most of all. The Lord was angry with those who put religion forward and picked quarrels, those who picked quarrels, saying whether one had kept the law or not, whether they themselves were good or not.

All human beings are people who have sinned before God and will go to hell. That is, all people are those who have lost their lives and are going to hell. The people who died in that subway accident died because the fire swept over them inside it; they were not put to death because they believed in some religion wrongly or kept the law wrongly.

Those who say, “I am better than you,” or “I do not commit sin as much as you,” know so little of the will of the Lord. It means that the Lord, until He judges and prevails, has accomplished the gospel of the water and the Spirit and says, “I have saved you in this way, so if you believe, you will obtain new life, and if you do not believe, you will receive the judgment of entering into the fire of hell,” and did not pick quarrels over whether one had sinned or not. The Lord did not set His purpose on exposing people’s sins one by one, but set His purpose on the mercy of remitting those sins. “You commit many sins in this world. You do not commit many sins.” The Lord did not pick quarrels like that. Then what does the Lord value most? He wanted us to have a heart that desires mercy and to ask for mercy before God. It means that because we are beings who cannot but go to hell, He wanted that attitude of heart that says, “God, please save my life,” and asks unconditionally to be kept alive. It means that God wanted the prayer made with such faith. He did not want the prayer that says, “I have committed this sin today. Please keep me from committing it again, and though

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someone reportedly did such and such, please keep me from doing so, and please forgive this sin I have committed." It means that He wanted the prayer of one who desires mercy, one who so earnestly desires, saying, "Please save me from the curse and destruction."

Then what did God give to those who desire it in that way? He gave the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this gospel of salvation. He actually saved those who believe in that way. Therefore, those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit obtain new life again from death. On the other hand, those who do not believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit are giving up their own lives. They are thrusting their own lives into the pit of the curse, leaving them neglected, and handing their souls over to Satan the devil. To this extent, whether one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit or not is tremendously important.

Dear fellow believers, will only the people of that city suffer like that? In the future, countless people will suffer disasters like that. Dear fellow believers, there are many major accidents as we live, but in fact these are nothing. If one nuclear bomb falls, a whole city disappears entirely. People would not want to blow away with one nuclear bomb what they have built up over hundreds or thousands of years. Yet many countries make nuclear weapons and also try to serve their own national interests by holding the safety of the world as collateral with them, and because of nuclear bombs the world may all destroy itself together. There is also the word of Zechariah that says, "*Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths" (Zechariah 14:12)*, and this calls to mind a terrifying weapon like a bomb. If a hydrogen bomb falls, people

go blind the moment they see its light, and their flesh burns up in an instant. Tremendous weapons have been made in this world.

There is an opportunity to obtain new life only before death

People who have already been born into this world are those who have become distant from God because of sin, and only while they are in this world is there time for them to obtain new life. Before death there is time, and after death the opportunity also comes to an end, and only judgment awaits. One receives judgment according to whether one believed or did not believe; if one believed, one obtains new life, but if one did not believe, one is a dead life and so falls into the fire of hell. Therefore, we must stay wide awake.

Now we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Dear fellow believers, who is there who knows the fact that the gospel of the water and the Spirit we preach makes one's dead life live again? Because we say, "This gospel is the truth. Believe this and receive the remission of sins," people think only of the remission of sins and do not really think about obtaining new life. They say, "What does it have to do with life?" but the remission of sins is everlasting life. Whether one has obtained eternal life or not depends on whether one has received the remission of sins or not. If one receives the remission of sins, one obtains eternal life, and if one does not receive the remission of sins, one has lost eternal life. To die without obtaining eternal life is death, destruction, and a curse.

I hope that you will desire mercy. God said that He does not desire sacrifice. The Lord came to this world and did not quarrel with anyone. He remained silent, then silently received baptism

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from John and bore the sin of the world, silently bore the sin of the world, went to the Cross, was nailed to it, and died for us, and rose again from death and became the Lord of salvation for you and me. So He gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit, told us to spread that gospel to the ends of the earth, and ascended. To those who believe this He gives new life, and on those who do not believe He brings judgment. That is why the Lord did just as it says, *"A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, Till he send forth judgment unto victory."*

Has your heart not been bruised because of sin? Are you not a life that can die at any time? You could die overnight. I could die, and you could die too. All mankind living on this earth may not make it safely through the night. Human beings are thus nothing.

But the Lord said that those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit will live even if they die. When the Lord comes, such a person lives forever. But what about those who do not believe? They are alive yet dead. They are people who have lost eternal life. When the Lord comes, He will throw them into the fire that is not quenched. As can be seen in the subway disaster too, it takes only an instant for a person to lose his life. Up to six minutes after the accident occurred, people made calls asking for rescue, gasping for breath, saying, "The smoke is too thick. Save our lives. Rescue us," but it is said that after seven minutes had passed, not a single call came in. They all inhaled smoke, burned in the fire, and all died.

Dear fellow believers, what about the life you have? Is it eternal life? Have you believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord gave, received the remission of sins, and received eternal life? Or are you still holding out, not even knowing that you are dying and not knowing that if you die you

will enter the eternal fire of hell? He said that He would not break a bruised reed and would not quench smoking flax until He judges and prevails. Until when did the Lord say He would wait? He said that He would wait until He judges and prevails. He waits until He judges. He tolerates you as you are and overlooks you until your life ends, and when you completely die, only then does He judge. Only until then is there an opportunity to obtain new life. When the flax is going out, He does not deliberately quench it but leaves it alone, and when it goes out, what does He do? He seizes it and judges it, of course. "Stubborn human beings. There is no more mercy." If God were to withdraw His mercy from you and me, would you and I not immediately enter the eternal pit of fire?

The spread of the gospel that saves lives

Dear fellow believers, do you know why the workers who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the people of God forsake themselves so desperately and strive to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit? You must know why the righteous want the spread of the gospel to the whole world even amid such hardship. It is because this work we do is not merely work but is related to life. If people do not believe even when it is preached to them, nothing can be done, but we do this work for the sake of those who will believe, receive salvation, and obtain new life, so that no one goes to hell without even an opportunity to obtain new life because of not having heard. Now you and I are doing the work of saving lives that are going out, toward the whole world.

I said that the remission of sins is none other than everlasting life. If one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it is

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more than receiving the remission of sins. If one receives the remission of sins, one becomes one of the people of God and obtains everlasting life. Obtaining eternal life and living happily forever without dying—that is precisely having obtained life. But if one loses life, one enters into the fire of hell. Whether one has obtained life or not—that difference is tremendously great. Therefore, you and I and all the people throughout the world must desire mercy from God and must quickly believe in the Lord, who does not quench the smoking flax. How much longer will your life last?

Dear fellow believers, God showed mercy and saved you and me through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Before this, can anyone pick quarrels over religion, argue over denominations, or oppose it, saying whether one has kept the Sabbath or kept the law? Let us stop all of that, believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus gave, obtain the mercy of God and have new life, and spread this truth to the whole world.

Because I have life, I will keep preaching even if someone in this world kills me. I have obtained eternal life. You, too, desire mercy from God. Look at your own dying soul. And kneel down and ask God for mercy. Believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is mercy. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is mercy; how can it be a doctrine? Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is life.

How do you wash away your sins? Jesus, the merciful God, came to this earth, received baptism from John, had your sins transferred to Him, and washed away your sins. That Jesus bore your sins, died on the Cross for you, and received the judgment for sin is the mercy of God. Why do you not desire mercy? You must desire mercy. Are you afraid of burning to death in a fire, yet not afraid that you will go to hell in the future because you do not believe this gospel? That is so foolish.

Let us say there is a flower that has been picked and arranged. Does it have eternal life? Right now it is alive indeed, showing off its beauty in its prime, but it will soon end its life. Because it is separated from its root, it is no different from being already dead, and the water dries up and the flower withers. In this way, one who is separated from God because of sin is a life already dead. When time passes and they have all withered, they are all thrown into the fire. Just as flowers dry up and go into the fire, if people do not look after their souls well and do not receive the remission of sins, they enter into the fire of hell. So believe.

Dear fellow believers, when we look at that disaster, there are truly many stories that bring tears. Parents who lost a daughter they had lived with affectionately, skin to skin and sharing their blood; a mother who went first after an argument, before there was even reconciliation; the death of a fiancé who had promised marriage; a father who had to send off his son, who had been accepted into a prestigious university and had been happy, without even fully sharing that joy with him—there were such wrenching stories that no one could hear them without one's heart aching and one's nose stinging.

Grieve over the death of the spirit more than the death of the flesh

Dear fellow believers, is that the only death? What if your soul, which you have, falls into such a pit of fire? Is the death of your spirit not death? People become weak only in the face of the death of the flesh, which can be seen with the eyes and sensed, but what we should actually grieve over, ache over, and worry about more is the death of the spirit. We must ask God for mercy to prevent the death of the spirit and receive the life of the soul

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that never dies forever. If we ask for the Lord's mercy and receive salvation, we can obtain eternal new life and live forever, and if we reject the Lord's mercy, we are cursed forever and enter into the fire of hell forever.

Even if your body dies, your soul does not die. Today people think lightly of believing in Jesus. And they know only that if one believes in Jesus, one receives the remission of sins and becomes a child of God. We must know that at the same time as one receives the remission of sins, one also obtains everlasting life; that if one does not receive the remission of sins, at the same time one's life dies; and that if one's life suffers eternal death, one goes to hell. I wept a lot as I watched the subway disaster. And even now my heart is heavy. I was not there, and you, my family, were also unharmed, but the fact that people who did not have to die died that way is so grievous. Passengers were riding the subway train when the train stopped. Soon the doors opened, and the smoke was thick. Then the doors closed again. Even though they looked out and saw smoke and flames, the passengers stayed still. Because the announcement said, "Please wait a little. We will depart shortly," they stayed still. While they waited like that, the flames and smoke rushed in. Our souls are the same. When we recognize danger, we must immediately find the way to live. Dear fellow believers, if your soul hurts even a little, you should set out to find a way to live, asking somehow to be kept alive, even if you have to make a fuss; if you just leave it neglected, and it spreads widely and comes right before your eyes, and then you say, "I'm dying, save me," it is already too late.

People have such severe insensitivity to safety when it comes to their souls. Now if you say, "Believe in Jesus," or if you say, "Jesus has saved you with the water and the Spirit," they are not even interested.

If you ask, “How were your sins passed on to Jesus?” people say as follows: “Sin? I commit that trifle every day. Other people have sin too, and you’re making quite a fuss over it just because I have sin.”

Wake up from the soul’s insensitivity to safety

Have you not fallen into insensitivity to safety? Are you not insensible and dull even though your own life is dying? If your own life dies, what in this world do you need? Can you use it after you die? Can you use it in the life to come? What can you take into the pit of the fire of hell? What people must know after being born into this world is neither rising in the world to make a name nor wealth, honor, and glory. They must have the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Yet they despise this. They do not even pay attention to it. Even among those who know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there are those who despise this. There are also those who think lightly of serving the gospel and say, “The gospel of the water and the Spirit? That’s just the basics.” Dear fellow believers, only after obtaining new life is there eternal life and the kingdom of heaven; if one has not even obtained life, what does it matter whether there is an eternal kingdom of heaven or not? If one has not even been born again of the water and the Spirit and has no new life, one enters into the fire of hell, so does the kingdom of heaven have anything to do with that person?

The people living on this earth have all fallen into insensitivity to safety. Even in living, they seek only for their bodies to live. And they think that if only their bodies are fine, they are fine. In fact, if one’s heart is not fine, one is not fine, and if the soul dies, one is dead; it means that they do not know

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this. Dear fellow believers, first heal the disease of your heart by faith.

People soon forget even great sorrow and return to daily life again. Why do you not take care of the eternal life you have? Is not life the most important of all the things you have? If you lose your own life, what is precious? When you yourself are sick and dying, what need is there of your household members, the television at home, the furniture, the clothes, your children? If you have no life of your own, they are of no use at all.

Look after your own souls. Those who do not look after their own souls are foolish. And it does not end with that; they go into the eternal pit of fire and receive the eternal curse. We must take care of our own souls. And we must ask for mercy from God, who gives new life. We must ask for mercy from God, who removes our sins. We must ask Him to save our lives, ask Him to save us, and when the Lord says, "I have saved you with the gospel of the water and the Spirit," we must believe that. You put your own thoughts first and put the gospel of the water and the Spirit last; now change that. Underestimate your own thoughts and value the gospel highly. You must not regard the gospel as something like an accessory. No, you may be regarding it as even less than an accessory. You think of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus gave as less than an accessory, less than a belt, less than a pair of pants. Do you not wear pants and also wear underwear? Then why is it that you know it is shameful not to wear underwear, not to wear a skirt, not to wear pants, but do not know it is shameful not to accept the salvation the Lord gave? That is exactly a naked soul. Those who do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit are shameful souls and cursed souls. Furthermore, those who do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit but take the lead in opposing and hindering it are children of the devil.

We look for even a single belt and put it on if we need it, so why do you not seek God, who rules over your life, and why do you not seek the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which gives you new life? Dear fellow believers, are you not thinking of Jesus even less than an accessory such as earrings, gloves, or a handbag? Are you not failing to value Jesus or the gospel of the water and the Spirit even at that much worth? When you go out somewhere, you carry a handbag and always do your hair, blow-dry it, and put on lotion and makeup, so why do you not think of Jesus even for a moment and regard Him as so worthless? You think such things are surely necessities, so why do you think Jesus is not a necessity? Who is the absolute necessity for your soul and mine, the One we cannot do without? It is Jesus. Why do you not believe that He washed away our sins, that He received the judgment for our sins, that He became our Savior? Why do you not treasure it? Why do you not boast of it? Why are you ashamed of it? Why do you try to accomplish salvation on your own?

The Lord said that He wants us to desire mercy. He says, "I desire that you desire My love from Me and desire to receive the salvation I have given," so why do Christian believers make salvation on their own? "Our denomination is like this, and that denomination is like that"—every person has his own denomination. They belong to a denomination and say that the denomination they believe in is the best. For Catholicism the Catholic denomination is the best, for the Seventh-day Adventists the Adventist denomination is the best, and for the evangelicals the evangelical denomination is the best. But, dear fellow believers, whatever their way may be and whatever our way may be, is not what Jesus did in saving us the most important? What does any other form matter?

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Dear fellow believers, do you think of Jesus as less than a cosmetics set? Jesus exists, and then we exist, and only after accepting the salvation He gave do all the other things exist. This world, too, exists because God exists. It is not that the world exists and then God exists. Because God exists and made this universe, we exist. But people think the reverse—that this world exists and then God exists. They have pushed God to the back. Even if they know, they pay it no attention at all.

"He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets" (Matthew 12:19). God never says, "What religion did you believe in? Did you believe this way or that way?" He accomplishes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, throws it to us, and goes. And He is seated on the judgment seat. And He judges everyone by whether one has believed that gospel or not. The rest is of no use. He does not quarrel either. The Lord does not examine any such things at all as "Why did you attend the Adventist church?" "Why did you attend the Presbyterian church?" whether you kept the Sabbath or not, whether you lived according to the law or not.

The word says, *"And in His name Gentiles will trust" (Matthew 12:21)*. Dear fellow believers, as you look at that disaster, look back once at our souls and look back at yourselves. And look at the people in the world. People instinctively try to live, but they foolishly do not know what to live for and how they must live. If they accept the gospel of the truth we preach, a life that had died obtains new life and comes back to life, but they still do not know this.

Even now this gospel is being spread. Throughout the world, even at this very hour, there are souls who read the books and receive the remission of sins, but in this land there are far too many who do not believe. And even within the church, there are still those who do not believe, "This gospel of the water and the

Spirit is absolutely necessary. This alone is the truth," but simply know and believe, "Ah! This is much better than other doctrines." "It is enough just to preach it and go. Nothing can be done about those who will go to hell." There are many such people.

Dear fellow believers, people sing of living together for a long, long time, but do you not want you and me to be saved, obtain new life, and never die forever, and even when the Millennial Kingdom is established on this earth, and even when we go to the kingdom of the Lord, never die at any time but live forever, receiving the blessings God has given, living like that? Do you want to live like that, or do you not want to? I wish that not even one among you, among your families, or among the saints or workers who live a life of faith together would go to hell because of not believing.

Dear fellow believers, we must know each other's hearts. I hope that you will know the heart with which we are now saying countless times to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, and that you will join in it. Dear fellow believers, if you do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you wither and die. If you believe the gospel, you have obtained new life, so even as you grow older, flowers bloom. By faith you gain new strength in your heart and go on living anew every day. But if you do not believe, there is nothing but death.

Dear fellow believers, tell the family members among your families who do not believe to believe as well. Tell them that if they do not believe, they will go to hell. Even so, there are people who do not believe, but you must preach to them and exhort them. And at the very least, the people within the church must all believe. We must have the faith that can receive the Holy Spirit as the Lord gives, the faith that can wash away sins. Do not think too lightly of the gospel of the water and the Spirit,

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underestimate it, and so on. If you think lightly of this gospel of the water and the Spirit or ignore it, you will end up in a ridiculous plight.

Will that incident be erased from the hearts of the people who went through that disaster and are still alive? It will not be erased as long as they live.

The remission of sins is none other than everlasting life

You must value your own life yourself. It is not something that comes about because others value it for you. It is not that you are pleased if others value it and sulk if others do not value it; you yourself must value your life. If you yourself do not value your own life, who will value your life for you? If you yourself do not value your own life, that means you have given up receiving blessing and new life. Do you think it ends when you die? Paul, too, said that if the life of this world were all there is, he would not live this way. If this world were the end, it would have been bitterly unfair, but because there is eternal new life in the Millennial Kingdom and in the kingdom of heaven ahead, we live joyfully by faith.

Is it not good to live forever? Or do you want to die quickly? Living is a good thing. If you are not sick but healthy, digest well, have a good appetite, and are well in every part, then living itself is good. If death were the end and you returned to a handful of ashes, it would be all right, but it does not end with ashes; you come back to life and are cursed and suffer torment forever. That is precisely death. Death is none other than a curse. The remission of sins is none other than everlasting life. God's formula has been set out that way. You and I must live knowing

that. Even those who have received the remission of sins must know that the gospel is precious, must know that preaching the gospel to that person is precisely bringing that person's life back to life again, and must believe so and work so. It is a world that can be so very depressing, but rather than our being depressed too, let us live preaching the gospel full of joy and glory and gaining new strength and joy every day.

In any case, living is a good thing. Dying is a sad thing. That is so. I give thanks to the Lord, who has given us eternal life and saved us so that we can live forever. You and I have obtained new life by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Does your heart respond to this? I give thanks before God. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Reveal your faith with your heart and lips

< Matthew 12:22–37 >

“Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’ Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’ But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. Either

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make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.'"

Different words that came from seeing the same event

Jesus healed a man. The crowd that saw it was amazed, and the Pharisees said that Jesus had borrowed an evil power. Today's passage follows the difference between those words and teaches about the heart with which one faces what God has done and the responsibility for the words that come out of that heart.

Let us read verse 22. *"Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw" (Matthew 12:22)*. When Jesus rescued him from the bondage that had tormented him, the man who was healed came to speak and see.

The result, *"The blind and mute man both spoke and saw,"* is clear. The people saw what Jesus had done right before their eyes, so now the question is not whether that event happened, but whom they accept the One who did this work to be.

Let us read verse 23. *"And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?'" (Matthew 12:23)*. The crowd is amazed and asks whether this is not the Son of

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David. The Gospel of Matthew began with the words *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1)*, and in chapter 9 two blind men followed Him, saying, *"Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 9:27)*. But the crowd here does not cry out that name; they leave it as a question. Verse 24 records that the Pharisees opened their mouths when they *"heard it,"* that is, this very question.

Let us read verse 24. *"Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons'" (Matthew 12:24)*. But the Pharisees attribute the same work to an evil source. Unable to deny that the sick man had been restored, they denounced Jesus, who had done that work. A heart unwilling to accept the Lord showed itself in words that explained a good work in a twisted way.

So examine whether you, too, are changing the meaning of clear facts in order to hold on to thoughts you had settled on beforehand. If we cut the work of Jesus that the Bible makes clear to fit our own tastes, we miss the truth. The standard by which we must judge is what the Savior actually did and said.

Can a divided kingdom stand?

Let us read verse 25. *"But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand'" (Matthew 12:25)*. Jesus knows their thoughts and answers. He does not deal only with the words that came out on the surface, but reveals the thoughts underlying those words and makes them examine whether their claim is consistent.

The word *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (Matthew 12:25)* shows the picture of a kingdom that tears itself down. If those on the same side fight one another and tear down their foundation, that kingdom cannot stand whole. Jesus applies this clear principle directly to their accusation.

Let us read verse 26. *"If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?" (Matthew 12:26)*. The explanation that Satan drives out his own forces by his own power is a contradiction in itself. Jesus does not simply let words pass just because they are hostile, but makes clear the reason those words cannot hold.

That question is exactly this: *"How then will his kingdom stand?"* The Pharisees looked for words with which to denounce Jesus, but they did not think the meaning of those words through to the end. When the heart that wants to reject comes first, one becomes unable to see the contradiction in one's own explanation.

Let us read verse 27. *"And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges" (Matthew 12:27)*. Jesus also asks about the standard they apply to their own side. If, regarding the same work, they attach a different source to Jesus alone, that judgment is not fair, and so the very people they acknowledge come to reveal the error of that judgment.

The same standard must be applied to the same grounds. An attitude that acknowledges facts only when they favor our own thinking and denies them when they do not blocks the way to learning the word. Jesus' answer straightens out that crooked judgment.

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The kingdom of God that has already come

Let us read verse 28. *"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28)*. After refuting the false explanation, Jesus reveals the true source of His work. His casting out demons by the Holy Spirit carries the meaning that the kingdom of God has come.

When we accept the word *"by the Spirit of God,"* the meaning of the same event changes. The restoration before their eyes becomes not a reason to slander Jesus, but a reason to acknowledge the work God is doing through Him and to come to Him.

Since He said, *"Surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28)*, we cannot push the kingdom of God aside only as a matter of the distant future. That is because the reign of God was revealed in Jesus' work. If someone rejects the Lord even while seeing that work, he is refusing the grace that has come near to him.

Let us read verse 29. *"Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house" (Matthew 12:29)*. To take the goods out of the strong man's house, one must first bind him. Jesus spoke this word when He was answering the accusation that He relied on Beelzebub, so read it together with verses 25 through 28 before it.

With *"unless he first binds the strong man"* and *"And then he will plunder his house,"* the passage makes clear again and again the order that the strong man must first be bound before his goods can be taken. The man in verse 22 was demon-possessed and could neither see nor speak, but after he met the Lord, he came to speak and see. What had held that man could

no longer hold him, so the Pharisees, in effect, gave the exact opposite explanation of that event before their eyes.

The Lord, who rescues people from bondage, also gives the remission of sins. That way of atonement is revealed in the offerings of the Old Testament as well. *"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)*. Once sin had been passed on to the offering through the laying on of hands, that offering was put to death. It was to have sinners accept the way God had prepared, instead of obtaining salvation by their own strength.

Jesus, who binds the strong man and rescues people, had all the sins of the world, including even the sins you will commit throughout your lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, in order to rescue us from sin as well. And as the price of the sins that were passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He overcame the power of death and rose again. Those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit are saved from the sin that had bound them, receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and become children of God.

Those who gather with Him and those who scatter

Let us read verse 30. *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matthew 12:30)*. In the face of Jesus' work of rescuing people, the attitude of each person is revealed. The question of whether one is with the Lord is connected to how one receives Jesus' salvation. At the center of the declaration *"He who is not with Me is against*

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Me" stands Jesus, so it is not a word that divides people into sides by human tastes or by the interests of an organization.

He also says, *"He who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matthew 12:30)*. Words that lead people to come to Jesus and words that make them distrust Him do different work. The Pharisees' accusation was aimed at blocking even those who were trying to accept the Lord's grace. Your words, too, affect those who hear them in this way. Making the word known accurately helps faith, but bending the facts and slandering the truth of salvation can block the way for those who hear to come to the Lord.

Those who serve the work of God do not look only for results that exalt themselves, but value people coming to know and believe the gospel. So even if the position they have been entrusted with is not noticeable, they can rejoice if that work does good, and if the direction of their hearts is right, they also come to be thankful for the labor of their coworkers.

On the other hand, if you think only of the treatment that comes back to you, even another person's doing well can become uncomfortable to you. Do not speak words that belittle that person's labor in order to hide such a heart. All you need to do is lay your thoughts bare before the word and join your heart to the work that pleases the Lord.

The weight of words spoken against the Holy Spirit

Let us read verse 31. *"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men" (Matthew 12:31)*. This warning is connected to the preceding event. In verse 28 Jesus said that He cast out demons by *"the Spirit of God,"* and that Spirit

appears again in verses 31 and 32. This is a word given to those who slandered the work Jesus did by that Spirit as the work of demons, and it shows how serious it is to oppose God's salvation by calling it evil.

The word *"every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men" (Matthew 12:31)* reveals the grace of the remission of sins. Even if a sinner's wickedness is great, that does not mean the Lord's salvation falls short. Because the way of salvation has already been given, anyone can turn his heart and believe in that grace.

But He says, *"The blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men" (Matthew 12:31)*. This is because rejecting the work of salvation that the Holy Spirit accomplishes, calling it evil, is opposing that very way of the remission of sins.

Let us read verse 32. *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:32)*. Jesus distinguishes between speaking against the Son of Man with words and speaking against the Holy Spirit with words. Even a person who failed to recognize the Son of Man and said that he did not believe can later turn and believe, so in the former case the way to receive remission is open.

So when we read this warning, we must clearly see what the passage points out. They attributed Jesus' healing of a man by the Holy Spirit to an evil source. Simply asking about what one does not know, or confirming the error of a decision made by people, cannot immediately be regarded as the same as this sin. Rather than endlessly counting over only past words in order to calm one's anxiety, what is needed is to accept the truth one has now clearly heard. The Lord's word makes people turn from a heart that slandered salvation and come to Him.

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Look at the tree and the fruit together

Let us read verse 33. *"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33)*. Jesus tells them to look at the tree and the fruit together. He is making them consider the contradiction of acknowledging the good work He did while denouncing the One who did it as evil. Fruit is not borne apart from the tree.

The word *"a tree is known by its fruit"* makes us look honestly at the result before our eyes. Jesus actually rescued a suffering man, so if someone slanders that work as having come from an evil power, he must realize for himself how much he is bending that fact in what he says.

This word also helps you examine yourselves. Even if you have a good name outwardly, if you keep speaking words that harm others, you should look back on your own heart. Examine together the name you put forward and the fruit that appears.

Making up good words once does not by itself solve the problem of the heart. If we speak gently in front of people but keep spreading lies behind their backs, we must acknowledge that discrepancy, and seeing the fruit of our words, we must recognize that there is a heart in us that needs to be corrected and receive the teaching of the word.

Those who believe the gospel live keeping in their hearts the grace of salvation they have received. So instead of words that try to make themselves look righteous, words that exalt the righteousness the Lord has bestowed come out, and even when they envy another person's labor, rather than justifying that thought as it is, they can turn back with a heart befitting people who have received grace.

A position or a career does not give anyone the right to treat people carelessly. The greater the work you have been entrusted with, the more you should consider the circumstances of those who work with you and give them the help they need. If you make unreasonable demands or keep repeating threatening words in order to establish your own authority, you must look at that fruit and examine rightly the direction of your heart.

What is stored up in the heart comes out through the mouth

Let us read verse 34. *"Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34)*. Jesus reveals the wickedness of heart in the Pharisees' words and makes clear the principle that what fills the heart comes out through the mouth.

Since He said, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks,"* words are not a decoration separate from the heart. What we believe, what we like, and what we have kept harboring show up in our words. So to correct our words, we must also lay the heart that produces those words before the word.

Let us read verse 35. *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35)*. This is a word explaining where good things and evil things come from. What has been stored up in the heart comes out, so do not stop at merely policing momentary expressions, but examine what you take into your heart as you live.

The word *"out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things" (Matthew 12:35)* makes us think about the direction in which the heart has long been heading. A heart that

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values the truth and is thankful for the grace of salvation produces words that fit it, and an attitude of building up those who hear and of trying to convey the facts accurately also grows in that way.

We must also apply the warning *"out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35)* to ourselves. If we keep nurturing thoughts of hating another person, at some moment they come out as words. If we have recognized our wrong, rather than piling up more excuses, we need only acknowledge that heart and correct the direction of our thoughts in the truth.

In the words we exchange over a single day there are many small choices. Every day we decide whether to spread an unverified story as it is or to stop it, and whether to enjoy another person's failure or to help. Those who take the word into their hearts think of the Lord's will even in such moments, and they keep learning to let the grace they have received lead even the attitude of their lips.

Remember the responsibility for your words

Let us read verse 36. *"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36)*. Even if people regard something as words they spoke lightly, the Lord makes clear that they are responsible for those words. You cannot think that words vanish without a trace, so remember that they are words you will have to explain before God.

The word *"for every idle word men may speak"* makes us look back even on our everyday words. We cannot lightly pass over words thrown out to put someone down, words spread

without checking the facts, or words that mock the grace of God. Rather than the pleasure of the moment of speaking, we must look at whether those words are true and what they leave behind.

Let us read verse 37. *"For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).* If verse 36 spoke broadly with the words *"men may speak,"* verse 37 turns it to each individual with the words *"by your words."* And as we heard in verse 34, these words are what filled the heart and came out through the mouth. Starting from verse 32's *"whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit"* and reaching this verse 37, the passage deals with words and the heart that produced those words together.

At the beginning of the passage there is the grace by which a man who could not speak was healed by the Lord and came to speak, and at the end there is the picture of people who could speak slandering that grace. So we must examine what words we are speaking with the mouth we have received from the Lord, and whether we are acknowledging the good work of the Savior and giving thanks.

Look back on where your words are headed. Believe truly in the salvation the Lord has bestowed, and set right before the word the envy and lies you harbor in your hearts. Speak the facts honestly, and treat people as precious. Let the faith that knows the grace of Jesus be revealed together in your hearts and on your lips. ✉

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Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The time to respond before the One who is greater

< Matthew 12:38–45 >

“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, “I will return to my house from which I came.” And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.’”

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A demand that stands before the word already heard

If we keep attaching new conditions even while saying that we will believe, responding to the word already given keeps being put off. In today's passage, those who demanded a sign from Jesus thought that they could believe only if they saw something greater. Then the Lord makes clear the sign He would show them, and He compares the attitude of those who had heard the word in the past with that of that generation.

Let us read verse 38. *"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You'" (Matthew 12:38).* Some of the scribes and Pharisees made this demand, but in the same chapter Jesus had already made the hand of the man with the withered hand whole, and had healed a man who was demon-possessed, blind and mute, so that he spoke and saw. Even after hearing of those things, they asked for a sign to confirm again with their own eyes.

They call Him *"Teacher"* and outwardly use the form of address of people who want to receive teaching. But when we see what answer Jesus gives, the fact is revealed that one cannot judge the faith of the heart by that form of address alone. Polite words and a heart that accepts the word must be seen as distinct from each other.

The content of the demand is *"we want to see a sign from You" (Matthew 12:38)*. It is the attitude of saying that if He shows them what they want, they will judge then. So, rather than listening to what Jesus did and taught, they set before Him the demands they themselves had decided on.

You too, examine whether you are putting off believing the word of God until after something special happens. If one says one will believe only when the circumstances of one's life

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change as expected, circumstances become the master of faith. The basis of faith is the truth of salvation that the Lord has made known through His word.

Asking Jesus for help is different from presenting conditions for believing in Him. In our weakness, we can ask for what we need as much as we want. But we must turn from the attitude of saying that the Lord's word is true only if what we have decided comes about. This is because faith begins with knowing who the One who spoke is.

The sign of Jonah that the Lord appointed

Let us read verse 39. *"But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah'" (Matthew 12:39)*. Rather than granting the demand as it was, Jesus reveals the condition of that generation. What they lacked was not a more amazing spectacle; their trouble was a heart that did not accept the word the Lord had given.

The rebuke *"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign" (Matthew 12:39)* is directed at those who asked for a sign even after seeing the man with the withered hand and the man who was blind and mute being healed. God does not take lightly the attitude of rejecting the One He sent while demanding more evidence.

The Lord says, *"No sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matthew 12:39)*. The sign He would show depends not on the order and manner people want, but on the work of salvation God would accomplish. So those who hear need only accept the will the Lord makes clear.

In the book of Jonah it is written, *"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jonah 1:17)*. The event of Jonah being in the belly of the great fish had been given in the Bible beforehand, and Jesus brings in this record to make known what would be fulfilled in Him.

This does not mean, however, that every point concerning Jonah was applied to Jesus just as it is. What Jesus directly connected here is the three days and three nights, so when we read the word, we must follow precisely the relation that the Lord drew in His comparison.

Those who demanded a sign have the responsibility to hear this answer and believe. Just because Jesus' answer is different from their expectations, they cannot say that there was no answer. It is right to lay down the conditions we have set and to listen to what the Lord will accomplish.

The Son of Man who would be in the heart of the earth, and the meaning of salvation

Let us read verse 40. *"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40)*. Jesus speaks of what would happen to the Son of Man. This sign makes us look to the salvation of the Lord in His death, His burial, and His rising again, so it is a far greater and more decisive thing than a miracle shown briefly to suit people's requests.

The word *"so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40)* shows the fact that the Lord knew His own future and went that way. So His

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death was not an end in which His work lost its meaning, but something the Savior had spoken of beforehand, something within the salvation that God accomplishes.

Here we must know why Jesus had to die. If we do not learn from the word how the death of the One who was without sin relates to us, and have only the impression that it was an astonishing event, it is difficult for our faith in the remission of our own sins to become clear.

Concerning the offering, God said, *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4)*. When sin is passed on to the offering through the laying on of hands, the offering is put to death because of that sin which has been passed on to it. When we know this meaning, we come to see together the baptism Jesus received from John and the death that followed it.

What was spoken beforehand through the sign of Jonah was fulfilled in this way. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins you will commit throughout your lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, and as the price of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and died in our place. Because there were sins that had been passed on to Him, He could die on the Cross and even go into the tomb, and that is His being in the earth three days and three nights. And after three days and three nights, He rose again from death and saved us completely. Those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, so we need only know Jesus' word and believe in that grace. Even on difficult days the content of salvation does not change, and even on days when things go well, our own achievements do not take the place of the price of salvation.

The Bible says, *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17)*. Faith comes from hearing the word of Christ. So do not keep watching only for whether something special happens and pass by the word of salvation that has already been preached. Knowing and believing in the Savior through the word is the most important thing.

Nineveh, which heard the preaching of Jonah

Let us read verse 41. *"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (Matthew 12:41)*. Jesus speaks of a comparison that will be revealed in the judgment. He places side by side what the people of Nineveh heard and what that generation received, and so the responsibility of not responding even though the One who is greater is near is revealed.

Concerning the people of Nineveh, He says, *"They repented at the preaching of Jonah" (Matthew 12:41)*. They heard the word that was preached and turned back. What mattered to them was not whether what they had demanded came about first, but how they responded before the word of God that had come to their ears.

The record in the book of Jonah also shows this. *"So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5)*. The people of Nineveh believed God and showed themselves humbled. The reason Jesus spoke of them did not stop at making people remember a past event; it was to awaken the present generation, which heard yet did not turn back.

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Jesus declares, *"A greater than Jonah is here."* The One who stood before them is greater than a single prophet; He is the Savior who came in person. Therefore, the case of those who responded to the words of Jonah becomes an even weightier question for the generation that rejects Jesus.

The word *"with this generation and condemn it" (Matthew 12:41)* makes us think about the opportunities received. The fact of having heard much does not by itself become the fruit of faith, so the more grace we have received, the clearer it must be how we are receiving that grace. Look back on the attitude with which you put off faith before the word of the Savior.

Hear the gospel that is now preached as the word given to you. You do not need to put off even your own response while waiting to see how others react. Knowing yourself in the light of the word of God and accepting in your heart the grace of salvation that Jesus has given is the direction of repentance.

The queen who came to hear wisdom

Let us read verse 42. *"The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42)*. After the repentance of the people of Nineveh comes the hearing of the queen of the South. One is turning back at the word that was heard, and the other is coming to hear wisdom, and both pictures make us look back on the attitude of the generation that stood before Jesus.

The queen came *"to hear the wisdom of Solomon" (Matthew 12:42)*. What she valued was wisdom worth hearing, and by

stating that purpose clearly, Jesus shows with what kind of heart a person who seeks to hear the word is moved.

He also says that she *"came from the ends of the earth,"* which emphasizes the fact that she came from a distant place to hear wisdom. But the people before Jesus did not accept the One who is greater, even though He was near. The nearer grace is, the more easily it can be taken lightly because it is familiar.

Jesus says, *"A greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42)*. It is a declaration that continues from the word in the previous verse about the One greater than Jonah. Both the word to repent at and the wisdom to be heard are in Him, so there is no reason to pass Jesus by, saying that we will wait for someone greater.

The word *"The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment"* tells us that our attitude now is connected with that day. We cannot let today's opportunity to hear slip away as if it were nothing. Now, when the Lord speaks to us close at hand, is the time to hear that word as precious and to believe it.

What the queen came a long way to hear was wise words. Today we, too, easily have our hearts taken by the things that appear before our eyes, but receiving the remission of sins is a far more precious blessing than having the circumstances of the flesh go well. So do not be satisfied with knowing familiar sentences, but hold on to the word of the One who is greater and follow that word.

The story of the spirit that leaves and comes back

Let us read verse 43. *"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none" (Matthew 12:43)*. The Lord speaks of what happens after an

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unclean spirit has gone out. The Lord, who in verse 39 called those seeking a sign an *"evil and adulterous generation,"* concludes this story in verse 45 again with the words *"this wicked generation,"* so it is not to be read as a strange story separate from the earlier demand for a sign.

Following the record that it *"goes through dry places, seeking rest,"* He says that it found no place to rest. The spirit is not depicted as simply disappearing just because it has come out. Jesus leads the eyes of those who look only at the moment it went out and think that every problem is over, on to what comes after.

Let us read verse 44. *"Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order" (Matthew 12:44)*. The spirit that had left comes back and sees the condition of the house. That house is in order but empty, so we must look at these two facts in the passage together. Just because the outside has been put in order does not mean that the later state, too, ends safely.

The spirit says, *"I will return to my house from which I came,"* and still calls the place where it used to dwell its own house. In this chapter, this is not the first time the word *"house"* appears. A little earlier, the Lord said that only by first binding the strong man can one enter his house and carry off his goods (verse 29). But the house in verse 44 is a house with no one bound in it and no one newly come in to live there—a house left empty and only swept and fixed up.

The passage depicts that house with three words. They are *"empty," "swept,"* and *"put in order."* Sweeping and fixing up are traces of work done on it, but the word placed first is *"empty."* This scene reflects that generation, which did not welcome Jesus even after seeing signs, so we, too, must not take a tidy outward

appearance as evidence of salvation, but must examine whether we have received the Lord's word within by faith.

The last state that became worse than the first

Let us read verse 45. *"Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation" (Matthew 12:45)*. When the spirit that had gone out comes in together with more wicked spirits, the last state becomes worse. If we judge the later condition only by the fact that it went out at first, we miss the meaning of this warning.

The passage says that the spirit *"takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself,"* and clearly shows how the condition gets worse. What matters here is not making up some other hidden meaning in the number of spirits, but listening seriously to the consequence of not accepting the Lord even after encountering grace.

The words *"they enter and dwell there"* describe something different from a state of stopping by briefly and then leaving. In the end they make that house their very dwelling, and so it is revealed how lacking the judgment was that felt at ease after looking only at the outward appearance.

The ending *"the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matthew 12:45)* is not a light matter. The memory of having experienced good things does not by itself guarantee later faith, so it is necessary to actually set one's heart on the Lord, who bestowed grace. Do not confuse the experience of having undergone change with faith in the Savior.

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At the end, the Lord applies this story, saying, *"So shall it also be with this wicked generation" (Matthew 12:45)*. If we leave out this word, we confine the story to one person's strange experience. It is that generation, which rejected Jesus even while encountering His power and teaching, that is now hearing this warning.

Therefore, as we read this passage, there is no need to try to determine whether a spirit is present or not by a person's visible condition alone. The focus the Lord makes clear is on how a generation that has encountered grace responds to Him, so hearing that warning as the word given to us comes first.

Those who are saved have no reason to read this story and worry whether the Lord's salvation is incomplete. This is because the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished is the basis of those who believe. What is needed is not continually adding other signs, but a life that clearly believes the word of the gospel already given and follows its teaching.

Hearing the word of the One who is here today

In the passage, those who waited and those who responded appear together. Those demanding a sign waited for what they wanted, the people of Nineveh turned back at the word they heard, and the queen of the South came to hear wisdom. Showing that difference, Jesus asks for our response now.

Remember the words *"a greater than Jonah is here"* and *"a greater than Solomon is here."* The One who is greater was already among them. Today we are hearing His word and salvation recorded in the Bible, so we need only open our hearts before the truth the Lord has made known.

What must be clear is not so much what we once experienced as whom we are relying on now. Do not make how much your life has changed the basis of your salvation, but believe in the righteousness that Jesus has accomplished. A changed life, too, grows preciously as we believe and follow that grace.

When we approach the word, we must not look only for the answers we want, but must be able to hear the will the Lord has already made known and correct our own thinking. Laying down the postponement that says we will follow if something more amazing happens, and accepting into our hearts first the word we have clearly learned, is the step of faith.

The salvation you have heard today is not a vague hope, but the grace that Jesus has accomplished and made known through the word. Those who believe His promise do not lose the basis of their salvation even when circumstances change, and they can live day by day relying on God according to the word.

So turn back from the heart that put off faith while demanding a greater sign. You need only accept the salvation the Lord has made clear, and hear that word and follow His will. Today, when the grace of the One who is greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon has been preached, is the very time to respond by faith. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

A family that comes together in the Father's will

< Matthew 12:46–50 >

"While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'"

Jesus, who is speaking, and the family standing outside

What kind of relationship makes a person belong to Jesus? In today's passage, when Jesus hears the news that His mother and brothers have come to see Him, He makes known who the people are whom He calls His family. So this word lets those who believe in the Lord see anew the relationship given to them, and also makes them think about how they should treat one another in the will of the Father.

Let us read verse 46. "*While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him" (Matthew 12:46)*. Jesus was

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speaking to the multitudes, and His mother and brothers were standing outside in order to speak to Jesus. The passage records these two scenes together, placing the Lord's teaching on one side and the visit of the family on the other.

Notice the beginning, *"While He was still talking to the multitudes."* Even at the time when His family came to see Him, Jesus' work was letting people hear the word, and the answer that follows also becomes a teaching to the people gathered in that place. In the place where personal news was conveyed, He made clear the meaning of the relationship that belongs to God.

It also clearly records, *"His mother and brothers."* The Bible does not hide that Jesus came in a human body and was within an actual family relationship. And at the same time, Jesus teaches a deeper relationship that cannot be fully explained by that relationship alone.

Their visit is recorded only as *"stood outside, seeking to speak with Him,"* so what they intended to say does not appear in this verse. The passage writes twice, in verse 46 and verse 47, that they stood *"outside,"* and near Jesus were the multitudes and the disciples who had been listening to the word. So rather than making up a detailed explanation of their hearts, we only need to listen to how Jesus answered this news. The focus of the passage is on the standard for family that He makes clear.

People consider visible closeness important. A relationship of long acquaintance or the fact of belonging to the same household actually has a great influence on life. But the relationship of belonging to Jesus is not determined by such conditions alone, so we must know it by following the will that the Lord Himself teaches us.

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The news one person conveyed

Let us read verse 47. *"Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You'" (Matthew 12:47)*. One person conveys the news of the family who are outside. This person's name and position are not recorded, but the words he conveyed lead to Jesus' answer, and through that answer the people come to learn the relationship as the Lord sees it.

He says, *"Your mother and Your brothers."* These are words that make known the relationship joined to Jesus by blood, and those who heard them would also have known how important such a relationship is. Jesus starts from these words of a familiar relationship and explains the family that is in the will of the Father.

He also conveys the words *"are standing outside, seeking to speak with You."* Jesus heard that news and knew the fact that His family was waiting. So the answer after that is not a word spoken without knowing; it is a word in which the One who knows the situation taught the people gathered there the truth they needed.

Even so, there is no reason to regard the very act of the family's coming to see Him in this scene as wrong. What is recorded is the visit, the conveying of the message, and Jesus' teaching. If we make up and attach a rebuke that the Lord did not give, the very grace that He makes clear can be hidden.

That you have a family gives you both the responsibility of caring and the opportunity to love. Speaking of faith does not mean you can treat that relationship lightly, but neither can a family relationship stand in for anyone's faith. Here lies the reason why each person must hear and believe the word of the Lord.

The relationship Jesus will make known is not an excuse to ignore our present relationships, but a truth that lets us recognize the people who belong to God. If we keep this distinction in our hearts, we will hear the question that follows rightly. The Lord soon shows what gracious name He gives to the people who believe in Him.

Who is My mother and who are My brothers?

Let us read verse 48. *"But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?'" (Matthew 12:48)*. Jesus asks a question of the person who conveyed the news. He did not ask because He did not know who His mother and brothers were; it is a teaching meant to make people look more deeply into the relationship they had taken for granted.

The record *"He answered and said to the one who told Him"* shows that this question is connected with the message conveyed before it. Jesus does not move off to an unrelated topic; while answering the very words that His family had come, He makes clear the meaning of the family that belongs to God. So even everyday words become a place for receiving the Lord's teaching.

When we hear the question *"Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" (Matthew 12:48)*, we come to think again about the basis of a relationship. We cannot determine who is close to Jesus by family lineage alone, so we must listen to His answer about whom He recognizes as His own family.

If there is someone in your family whose faith is good, it is something to be thankful for. This is because through that person you can learn the word and receive help. But another person's

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faith does not stand in for your own faith, so do not stop at the fact that someone close to you believes in the Lord, but accept the grace of salvation yourself as well.

On the other hand, not having a family that shares the faith does not make a person someone far removed from the Lord either. Jesus does not make a person's family background a qualification for salvation, and in this passage He Himself makes clear the relationship He gives to those who hear and believe the word.

Therefore, this question has the power to renew our hearts, which want to keep only familiar people close. When we know what the relationship that belongs to the Lord is, we can treat even someone we have met for the first time as precious within the same faith. This is because the Lord sets the basis of that relationship for us.

The hand that pointed to the disciples

Let us read verse 49. *"And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers!'" (Matthew 12:49)*. Jesus does not only speak, but stretches out His hand and points to the disciples. So the answer to the question of who His family is becomes concretely revealed through the people in that place, and those who hear confirm that word before their own eyes.

The action *"He stretched out His hand toward His disciples"* has a clear object. It is the disciples who learn from Jesus and follow Him. They were not people who had gained a place with Jesus by their own ability, but people who were in the grace of the Lord's calling and teaching them.

Jesus says, *"Here are My mother and My brothers!"* and gives the disciples the name of an intimate relationship. People could evaluate them by various standards, but the Lord called them people who belong to Him. We must know how great a grace this name that He gives is.

So the person who has heard this declaration cannot regard the place of a disciple merely as the place of someone who has been entrusted with work. In the life of learning from Jesus and following Him, there is a relationship of belonging to Him. The Lord is not One who needs only people's labor, but One who recognizes those who follow Him by the name of close family.

Your believing in the gospel and following the Lord, too, must not stop at counting the things you have to do, but must go on to knowing the grace that has accepted you. The fact that you have become a person who belongs to the Lord becomes a reason for serving, and becomes a comfort by which, even on weak days, you can rely on the word and learn again.

That hand pointing to the disciples also renews the eyes with which we see our coworkers. It enables us to see them not merely as hands doing the same work, but as people whom the Lord has called family. Even if the work entrusted to each is different and their abilities differ, the basis for treating one another as precious is in the word of the Lord.

The will of the Father in heaven

Let us read verse 50. *"For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50)*. Jesus clearly makes known the standard for family. It is the person who does the will of the Father. Seen from the whole of the Bible, that will of the Father is the will to

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save people from sin, make them His own people, and live together with them forever. So rather than to whom one is joined by blood, it is the faith that accepts that will that determines this family.

The word *"My Father in heaven" (Matthew 12:50)* makes known the source of this relationship. Jesus put at the center the will of the Father who sent Him, so the will of the Father, rather than people's expectations or the family's demands, is the standard that makes clear His work and His relationships.

Even so, we cannot read the word *"whoever does the will of My Father" (Matthew 12:50)* to mean that we should pile up our own merit and become the Lord's family. This relationship begins with believing in the salvation that God has bestowed on sinners, so the faith that accepts the Lord's grace comes before the many things done outwardly.

Jesus said, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:29)*. Believing in the One whom God sent is made clear above all else. So the person who seeks the will of the Father must know the salvation given through the Son, and human zeal cannot take the place of that Son.

God said concerning the sin offering, *"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)*. The laying on of hands, which passes sin on to the offering, is followed by the death of that offering. The way that gives life to sinners is not provided merely by a resolve to try to do well on one's own, so we must know the will of salvation that God has set.

In order to call us to be the family of the Father's house, Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins you will commit throughout your whole life, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And to pay the full price of the sins that had been passed on to Him, He shed His

blood on the Cross and died in our place, and He rose again from death. So whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child who calls God Father.

Those who believe in this salvation live according to the grace they have received from the Father. It is not piling up the price of obedience in order to obtain salvation, but knowing the God who has given them life and holding His will precious. Those who know that will do not make the work God has entrusted to them a means for their own success, but carry it out with the heart of a servant who serves just as the Lord directs. Therefore, the name "the Lord's family" is a relationship that leads them to live worthily of the grace they have received.

The breadth of the word "whoever"

The key word at the beginning of verse 50 is *"whoever."* When Jesus made known His family, He did not limit people's origins, so anyone who follows the will of the heavenly Father is within that relationship. Before this word, no one needs to draw back in advance because of his own background.

The Bible says, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12)*. The right to become children of God is given to those who believe in the Lord, so how one has been treated in the world does not determine the size of that grace. What matters is the salvation that Jesus bestows and the faith that believes in Him.

Then it records, *"Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13)*. The relationship of being born of God is not based on blood or

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on the will of man. The declaration about family in Matthew, too, in the same way lets us see the grace of belonging to God beyond the backgrounds people used to boast of.

If faith has been passed down in our family for a long time, we can give thanks for the grace that has let us hear the word all that time. But we cannot make that a ground for regarding ourselves as higher members of the family than those who are believing for the first time. This is because the relationship of being children of God is not a rank obtained by inheriting the honor of a household.

Those who have heard the gospel and believed for the first time can also treasure the relationship the Lord has given them. Even if there is much of the word they do not yet know and they must learn new habits of life, the grace they have received does not become smaller because of that. Here lies the reason why we should help one another to learn and grow together in faith.

In the declaration *"My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50)* is contained the intimacy of belonging to the Lord. From verse 46 through verse 49 only *"mother and brothers"* appear, but in verse 50 *"sister"* is added. Even in the words we can see that the family the Lord calls is wider than the people who were standing outside. So we need not keep being anxious as we try to dress up our qualifications. Jesus calls in this way those who believe the word of salvation and live following the will of the Father.

If a community believes the word *"whoever,"* it should also examine its attitude toward newcomers. If people share their hearts only among themselves because they are familiar with one another, someone who has come for the first time may feel distant even in the place where the word is learned. Welcome as precious, in the same grace, the people whom the Lord has accepted.

The care contained in the name "family"

The Bible says, *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19)*. In this way it makes clear the relationship of being a family that belongs to God. This is not a matter of getting one more name tag, but a grace in which, as people who rely on the same God, we learn anew how to see and treat one another.

The relationship of *"members of the household of God"* is not a relationship that continues only when one has strength. If we stay close to people only when they do their entrusted work well and keep our distance when they become weak, we have not yet fully known the relationship we have received. People who have met one another by the grace of the Lord treat a person as precious even when that person needs help.

When we come to know the difficulties of someone who listens to the word with us, we can listen to his story even if we do not have the ability to solve them right away. We can look together for the help that is needed and share labor that is hard to bear alone. Such care is one step that shows in actual life the words "the Lord's family."

Even when you think differently from one another, do not make the family relationship a means of pushing your own will. The closer the relationship, the easier it is to speak carelessly, so if you are people who have received the grace of the same Father, you must listen to the other person, confirm the facts, and look together for the right way according to the meaning of the word.

Hiding wrongdoing because we call someone family is not right care either. If we have come to know of wrongdoing, we must speak truthfully and help so that it can be corrected, but we must beware of an attitude of shaming the other person in order

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to put ourselves ahead. The purpose of care lies in that person's standing upright in the word.

Also, valuing the relationship of the family of believers does not do away with the responsibility of caring for one's physical family. Jesus made clear the word of God, *"Honor your father and your mother" (Matthew 15:4)*, and even on the Cross He entrusted His mother to the disciple (John 19:26–27). So the more a person follows the will of the Father, the more faithfully he also fulfills the responsibilities revealed in other parts of the word.

If your family does not yet believe the gospel, you can preach the word, hoping that they will believe. Along with that, look after their everyday needs, treat them honestly, and fulfill the responsibilities you have promised. If you speak of the love you have received from the Lord yet treat those close to you carelessly, the word you preach and your attitude will be at odds.

Remembering the relationship the Lord has given

The first news was the words that *"Your mother and Your brothers"* were outside, and Jesus' answer was the declaration that those who follow the will of the Father are His family. In this way, through a familiar relationship, the Lord let people know the true relationship of the people who belong to God.

Jesus' mother, too, was a person who had to hear and believe the word that God had spoken. The fact that she was a precious woman used by God does not make her a Savior like Jesus. The way of believing in the Son whom God sent is given equally to all people, and the Lord is fair to everyone before the word.

The word of the Lord, *"Here are My mother and My brothers!" (Matthew 12:49)*, is a comfort to the saints. This is

because we do not need to understand ourselves only as people who receive some evaluation in the world. As people who believe in the salvation that the Lord has bestowed, we can know the relationship of belonging to Him and live.

At the same time, the standard *"whoever does the will of My Father" (Matthew 12:50)* keeps leading our lives before the word. Rather than putting forward only the words "a person close to Jesus," examine what you actually believe and whose will you follow. Those who know the relationship they have received go on learning the heart worthy of that relationship.

Rather than raising up and putting down by your own standard the brothers and sisters who have received the same grace, look upon them as people whom the Lord has called to be His family. Learn together and share the needed labor, and help the weak so that they may stand again in the word. The attitude of treating that person as precious reveals the grace you have received.

In the will of the heavenly Father, we live as a family that belongs to Jesus. So we can give thanks together for the grace of salvation, look after one another's needs, and follow the word of the Lord. I hope that the life of treasuring this relationship Jesus has given and sharing love with one another will grow deeper among you day by day. ✉

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◇ About the Next Series

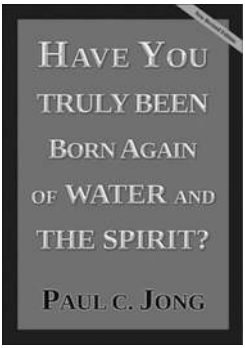
The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

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.**

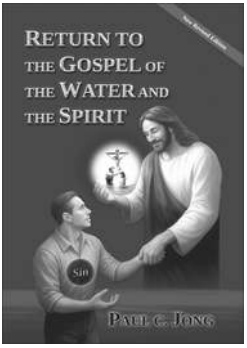
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

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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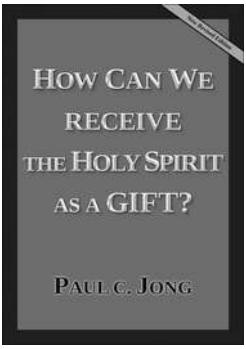
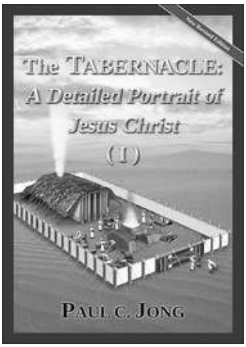
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



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]

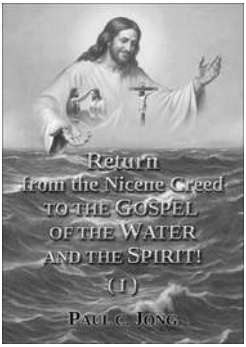


How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

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.

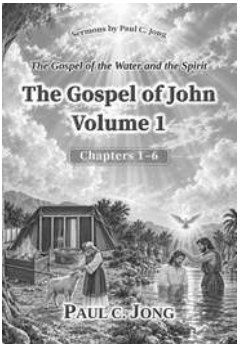
The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

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.

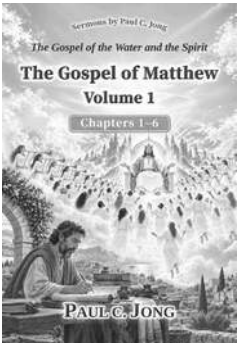
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of John (3-Volume Series)



"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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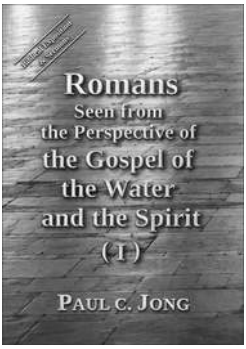
Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

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,

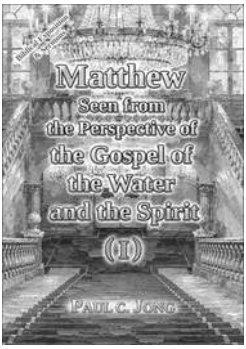
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of 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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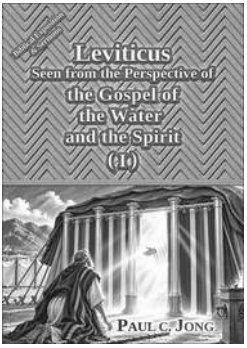
Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

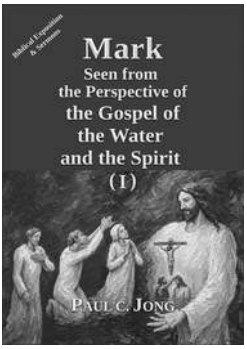


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the 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.

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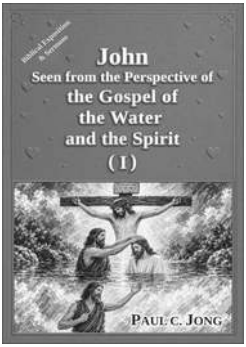
John Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



John seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) is a book that examines, through the entire Gospel of John, how the Word, who is God, came to this earth clothed in flesh and saved sinners from sin.

The author, pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached, through the word of the Bible, "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" that Jesus Christ completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. This book does not explain the signs and words of the Gospel of John as mere knowledge of the Bible or records of miracles, but guides readers to the faith by which they are saved from sin and obtain everlasting life by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

May everyone who opens this book meet Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible testifies, and obtain true life.

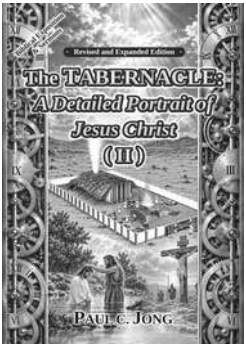
Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central message conveyed by this book is clear. Salvation is not accomplished by human goodness or merit. Rather, Jesus, who is God, received the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross to pay the price for those sins, and rose from the dead, thereby giving complete salvation from all sins to those who believe in this truth.

Pastor Paul C. Jong of The New Life Mission is a servant of God who has devoted his life to preaching the true gospel. Through the Word he preaches, this book will lead souls held captive by sin to the joy of the remission of sins and to eternal life in Jesus.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

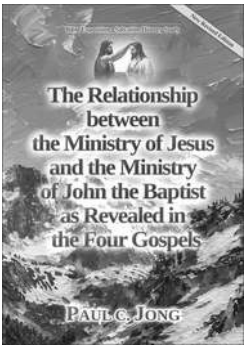
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



God had the tabernacle set up in the wilderness in order to dwell among the people He had delivered out of Egypt.

Through the Biblical Exposition of Exodus chapters 25–31 and the sermons on the tabernacle, this book conveys the heart of God, who wants to make His sinful people holy and keep them near. The promise of salvation contained in the tabernacle was fulfilled when Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again. Looking into the utensils and sacrifices of the tabernacle and the office of the high priest, we come to know the meaning of the remission of sins received by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and of the eternal atonement. Through the tabernacle, we seek to know God's love for us and to share the joy of living together as His people.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels [New Revised Edition]



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

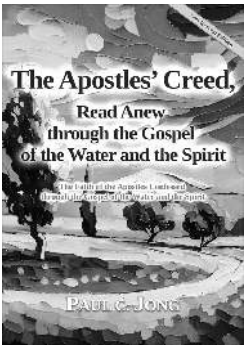
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]



As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)

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.

Visit our website to discover this and other Christian books, available as e-books (PDF/EPUB) and audiobooks.

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Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

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THE NEW LIFE MISSION
Contact: John Shin, General Secretary
E-mail: newlife@bjnewlife.org

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Sincerely,
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.

Do you have the faith that believes the word just as it is?

"But only speak a word" (Matthew 8:8) The centurion believed that even if Jesus did not come to his house, He could heal his servant by His word alone. The basis of that faith lay in knowing who Jesus is. In the word of Jesus, the King of kings, there is the authority to accomplish exactly what He has spoken.

Our salvation, too, lies in knowing through the word what He has accomplished and believing it. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. The sins we commit throughout our whole lifetime are also included in them. By shedding His blood and dying on the Cross as the price of those sins, He 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 remission of sins.

If you acknowledge the authority of Jesus, you must also accept into your own heart the salvation He has accomplished. When you believe in your heart that Jesus has removed your sins, you can come forward boldly, calling God Father. May you, like the centurion, believe the word of Jesus just as it is, and discover in the Gospel of Matthew the way of living by that word.

You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer.