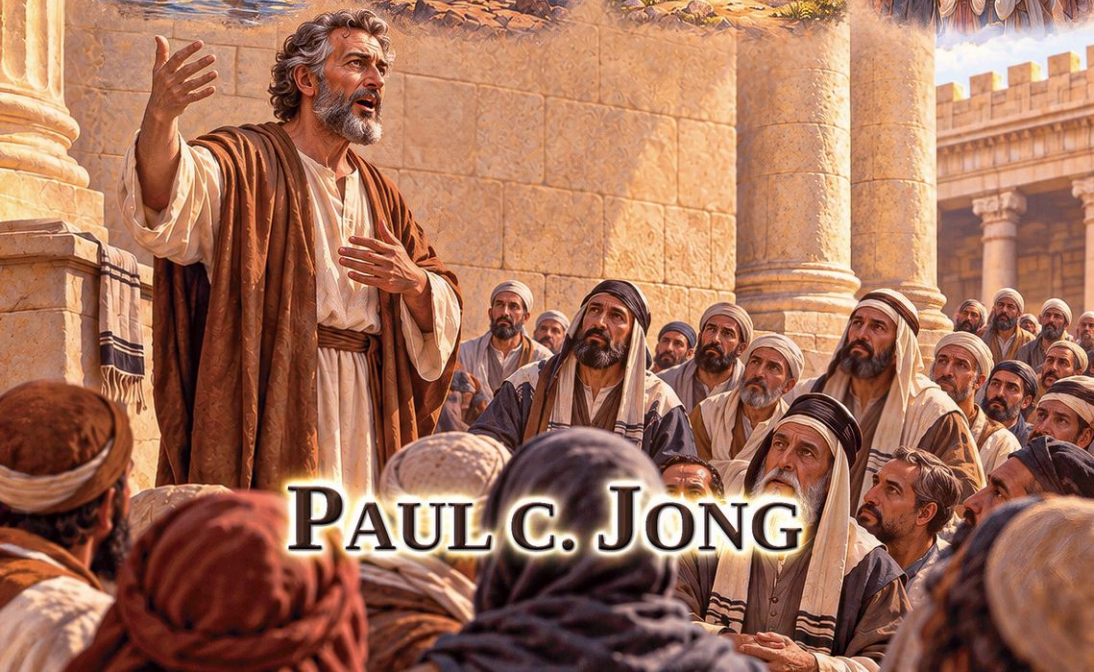
Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

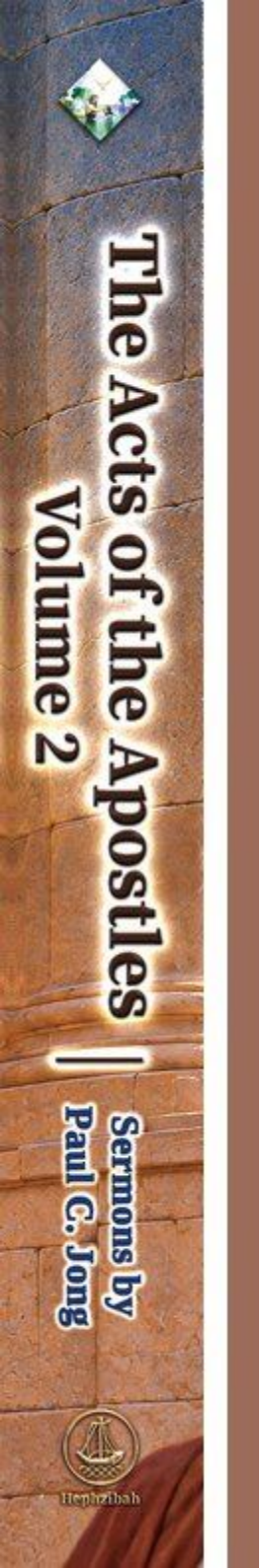
The Acts of the Apostles
Volume 2

Chapters 12–28





PAUL C. JONG



“Through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 13:38)

When Paul preached the remission of sins in Antioch in Pisidia, he placed its basis not in the resolve of those who heard but in this Man, that is, in Jesus. This is because, for us, who could not be justified by the law of Moses, Jesus received baptism from John and had even our lifelong sins passed on to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment for those sins in our place, and rose again from death. Therefore, do not doubt even your salvation whenever you see your own faults, but believe in the remission of sins you have received through this Man, Jesus, and preach it.

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and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

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

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Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

The Acts of the Apostles

Volume 2

Chapters 12–28

PAUL C. JONG



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

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The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Acts of the Apostles Volume 2

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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.

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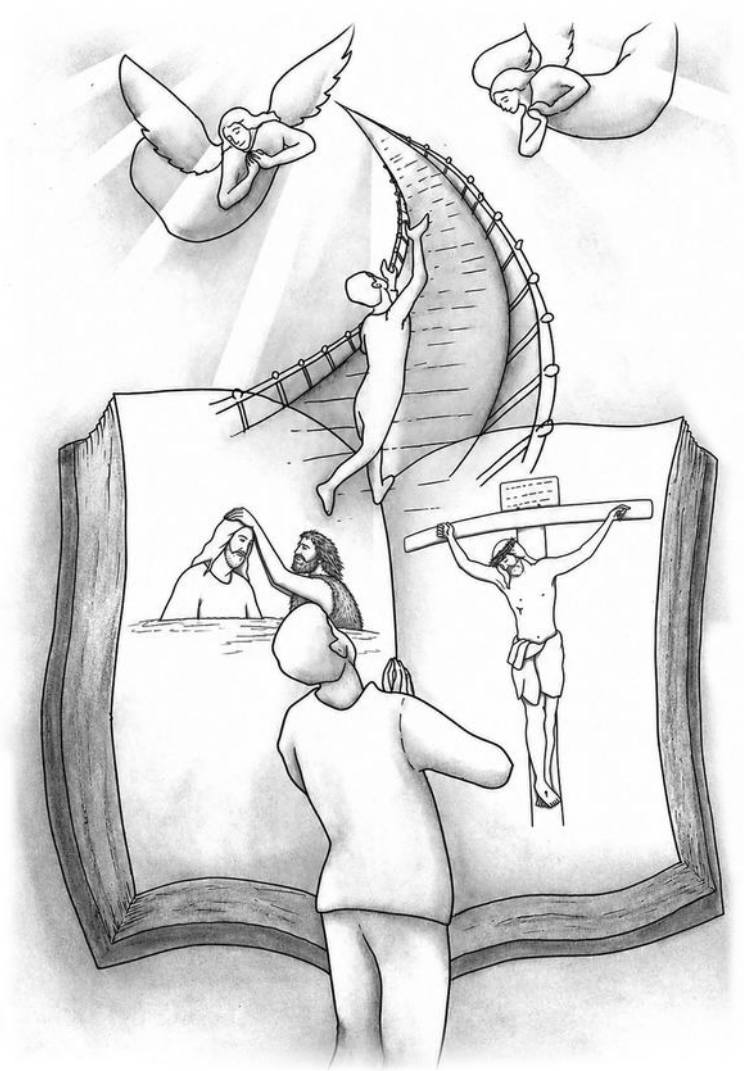

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Preface

What makes us preach the gospel even in the face of opposition?

What makes us preach the gospel even in the face of people's opposition? The faith that Jesus has completely removed my sin makes us stand in the place of testimony. The Lord gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the heart that believes in that salvation, and makes us preach the remission of sins we have received to other souls as well. In this book, which contains the word of Acts chapters 12–28, what we must also see, ahead of the strength of the person who preaches the gospel, is the content of the salvation he believed and preached.

Wherever Paul went, there were not only people who welcomed the gospel. There were people who heard the word and rejoiced, but there were also people who opposed him and drove him out, and Paul himself was seized, waited a long time for his trial, and arrived in Rome in chains. The Jews there also said to him, *"Concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere" (Acts 28:22)*. Yet even though people's judgments and Paul's circumstances changed, the salvation Jesus accomplished did not change. Because he believed in the Lord, who had already removed sin, he was able to preach the same word of salvation even in front of those who opposed him.

In Antioch in Pisidia, Paul preached, *"Through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38)*. He did not place the basis of the remission of sins in a sinner's resolve or in a promise to live well from now on, but placed it in Jesus Christ. The word that in all things in which people could not be justified

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by the law of Moses, everyone who believes is justified through this Man teaches us that the Savior, the Absolute One who made heaven and earth, Himself removed the sin we could not remove by our own strength. Religion that comes from the human mind cannot remove sin, but the faith that believes in the salvation God has accomplished makes a sinner a righteous person.

Whenever we see our own faults, our hearts easily become discouraged. However, the word that the Lord has removed sin is not a promise that applies only to people without blemish; it is a word telling us to believe in what the Savior has done for us, who have no strength to remove sin. Though people are imperfect, God is perfect; so if we judge that even the Lord's salvation is imperfect because of our own weakness, we must come to know again who it is that saved us. When we believe in the remission of sins that the perfect Lord has accomplished, the reason to give thanks and the word to preach become clear.

The evidence of having received the Holy Spirit is the remission of sins

Therefore, even when we speak of the Holy Spirit, we must first examine what salvation we believe in. When Paul asked the disciples he met in Ephesus, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*, they answered that they had not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. Paul did not tell them to pray more or to labor more, but asked, *"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)*. Through questions and answers about baptism, he made clear the content of the faith by which one receives the Holy Spirit.

They said that they had received John's baptism. John, while administering the baptism of repentance, taught people to

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believe in Jesus, who would come after him; therefore, if one stops at the idea that one must realize one's sin and turn around, one cannot know the remission of sins. We must know how Jesus bore our sins and how He finished the judgment for those sins. Here lies the reason we must distinguish between the baptism of repentance that John gave to people and the baptism Jesus received from John.

Jesus, the Son of God, actually received baptism from John and had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all. That sin of the world includes not only original sin but also all the actual sins we commit throughout our lives and even the sins we have not yet committed. Jesus, who bore that sin, actually received the punishment for our sins by shedding all His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again three days after He died and became our living Savior. At the very moment we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit with our hearts and receive the remission of sins, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the heart whose sin has been washed away.

The rite of baptism that people receive does not remove sin. Rather, one receives the remission of sins by believing the fact that my sin was passed on to the Lord through the baptism Jesus received, and that my judgment was finished through the death of the Lord, who bore that sin. Paul himself, too, had not been saved from sin through the strict teaching of the law and his zeal, but he was a person who, in Damascus, heard Ananias say, *"Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16)*, and then believed in this salvation and received the Holy Spirit. This baptism was never missing from the faith of the apostles, and what Paul preached to the disciples in Ephesus was also the same Jesus who had saved him.

The evidence of having received the Holy Spirit is the remission of sins. We should not judge the coming of the Holy Spirit by tongues, prophecy, or amazing experiences, but must see whether we believe in our hearts the word that Jesus has remitted all my sins. Even when the flesh is weak and our feelings change, the Holy Spirit testifies that, because of the Lord's salvation, there is no sin in our hearts. We who have received that grace can pray to God the Father and preach relying on the help of the Holy Spirit; so prayer and boldness are not the price for receiving the gift but a response to the salvation we have received.

The word of salvation to give to the soul who asks for help

A person who knows that his sins have been remitted knows that other souls, too, need that salvation. In the night Paul saw a vision in which a man of Macedonia pleaded with him, saying, *"Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9)*, and, recognizing it as a call to preach the gospel, he immediately set out for that place. He knew that preaching the word of the remission of sins to a person who asks for help is the work of giving life to that soul. Now God works not through visions but through the word, yet souls who call for the gospel to be preached to them are found everywhere in the world even today.

Lydia, who listened to Paul's words in Philippi, was a person who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart and made her heed Paul's words. There are people who fear God in every nation, and God sends a servant who preaches the gospel in order to meet such people. Even a heart that worshiped God needed the word of salvation, and after she accepted that word, she

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urged those who preached the gospel to stay at her house. This hospitality is not a merit offered in advance to obtain the remission of sins, but service that comes from the grace received from the Lord.

We, too, can devote our hearts to sharing with others the remission of sins we have received from the Lord; so along with directly preaching the word, the labor of welcoming those who preach and praying with them is also precious. This is because, even if the work entrusted to us differs, we can be of one heart with the Church for the same word of salvation. Believing that the Lord, who saved me, wants to save even the one person beside me, we must preach the word of the remission of sins to that soul who does not yet know the Savior.

Do not reduce the gospel you preach, but preach it according to the word

When we meet with people's opposition on this path of preaching, we may feel like not speaking in detail about the baptism Jesus received and saying only words that anyone would readily respond to. However, the purpose of our preaching does not end with gaining people's response. The purpose is for the one who hears to know and believe how Jesus removed his sins, and so actually receive the remission of sins.

Paul, who had arrived in Rome, stayed by himself with the soldier who guarded him, but people came to visit him, and from morning till evening he was *"persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets" (Acts 28:23)*. The law makes people realize sin, and in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, a sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering to pass his sin on to it, and that offering died in the sinner's place.

The reason Paul always spoke of the baptism Jesus received before he spoke of the Cross is also that, according to this word, the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus, and then the judgment for that sin was carried out on the Cross. Some believed those words and some did not, but the content of the salvation that had to be made known to them was the same.

We who read this book, too, must learn clearly the content of the salvation we have received. The more deeply we believe the fact that the Lord has remitted all my sins, the more we come to rely on the Savior, and our hearts toward other souls are also renewed. It is no small thing for one person to stand firm on the word. Because that person can preach salvation to his family and neighbors and give life to the souls who will come after, it is precious that each of our hearts first prospers through the gospel.

What makes us preach the gospel even in the face of people's opposition is not our own strength but the perfect salvation of Jesus, who delivered us from sin, and the help of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the heart that believes in that salvation. I hope that you will not reduce what the Lord has done because of people's reactions, and that you will not draw back from the grace you have already received because of your own shortcomings. This gospel, which is spoken against everywhere, is the word of salvation that gives life to souls everywhere; so I hope that you will keep in your heart the remission of sins that has given us life and preach it just as it is to the one soul you meet today. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in the Lord, who is not bound by the power of men, and pray

< Acts 12:1–19 >

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, 'Arise quickly!' And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, 'Gird yourself and tie on your sandals'; and so he did. And he said to him, 'Put on your garment and follow me.' So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by

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the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter had come to himself, he said, 'Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.' So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. But they said to her, 'You are beside yourself!' Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, 'It is his angel.' Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, 'Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.' And he departed and went to another place. Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there."

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Herod, who killed James and imprisoned Peter

Inside the prison was Peter, bound with chains, and outside the prison were the soldiers guarding him. When Herod stretched out his hand to harm the church, it was difficult to open that door with the strength the saints had, but the church prayed earnestly to God for Peter. The text shows together both how firmly the soldiers kept guard and to whom the church made its request. We too, in the face of hopeless circumstances, must not weigh only the power that is visible to our eyes, but must pray, relying on the Lord together with the saints.

While seeking to harm some from the church, Herod did what is recorded as follows: *"Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword" (Acts 12:2)*. The apostle James was killed by the sword. When Herod saw that the Jews were pleased with this, he seized Peter as well and put him in prison, and he delivered Peter to four squads of four soldiers each to guard him. There was even a plan to bring Peter, who had been seized during the Days of Unleavened Bread, before the people after Passover.

The fact that the gospel of the water and the Spirit was being preached and the fact that they suffered persecution were both present together in the lives of the apostles. Because the devil also works when God works, unrest and persecution follow wherever the work of the gospel takes place; and at that time, those who persecuted were often people who claimed to believe in God well, as the Jews who rejoiced at the death of James did. If we think that, since we have believed in Jesus and become people who have received the Holy Spirit, we will never suffer any harm from people at all, it will be difficult for us to accept this word that records the death of James. The salvation the Lord has given is the salvation in which Jesus had all the sins of the

world, which include the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and, by rising again from death, made sinners righteous and gave them eternal life; it is not a promise that the circumstances of this earth will always turn out the way we want.

Therefore, we cannot make the different outcomes—that James died and that Peter came out of prison—a standard for measuring the faith of the two men. The text does not explain why one man died and the other came out alive, but it records the fact that those who went through these things were apostles of the Lord. We too must not conclude, when we see a saint who has suffered hardship, that it was because his faith was lacking. We must look after, as our own matter, the pain of the saints who believe in the same Savior, and ask the Lord together.

The church that asked earnestly on behalf of its imprisoned brother

"Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church" (Acts 12:5). The church knew that Peter had been imprisoned, and it prayed. At a time when persecution was truly severe and it was hard to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the early church prayed instead. The saints did not scatter and look after only their own affairs because they could see no way to do anything; rather, they told the Lord of that situation. That prayer shows that the church regarded Peter as a brother of the same faith.

The basis on which the saints could come to God was not that their earnestness was sufficient and its worth was recognized. They were people who believed in the salvation of Jesus Christ

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that the apostles had preached. Because Jesus had the sin of all mankind and the sins of our entire lifetime passed on to Him once and for all when He received baptism from John the Baptist, we too could receive the remission of sins. The Lord, who shed His blood and died on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, received our judgment in our place, and by rising again from death He brought us to life. The salvation of the water and the Spirit that we believe in is what this Lord has accomplished.

Because God has made sinners His own people, we can pray, relying on the Savior. This means telling Him, without hiding them, the fear in our hearts and the circumstances of the saints, and asking for the Lord's help. Because the Holy Spirit is with saved hearts and guides us through the word, we do not have to think that we can pray only after we have produced all the answers by our own strength. Even if there are many things we do not know and circumstances that are hard to bear, we can gather our hearts toward the Savior together with the church.

To pray together is not merely completing the duty of having prayed, regardless of what happens with a brother's affairs. It is knowing that saint's hardship, being of one heart with him, and asking the Lord. When we pray while looking for ways to give the saints the help they need and to preach the word to them, our hearts too do not stay shut up in our own worries alone. The life of a church that prays in the midst of hardship is not a labor to obtain more of the remission of sins we have already received, but a life of serving together, relying on the Lord who has saved us.

The Lord sent His angel and delivered Peter

On the night before Herod was going to bring Peter out, an angel of the Lord appeared in the prison. The angel woke Peter, and the chains fell off his hands. Peter did just as he was told: to gird himself, to put on his sandals, to put on his garment, and to follow and come out. When they had passed the first and the second guard posts and came to the iron gate, the gate opened of its own accord, and when they had gone down one street, the angel departed. Only then did Peter realize what had happened.

"And when Peter had come to himself, he said, 'Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people'" (Acts 12:11). The One whom Peter made known as the One who delivered him was the Lord. Peter did not say that he had deceived the soldiers by his own wisdom or that he had loosed the chains by his own ability. He testified that the Lord had sent His angel and had let him escape from the hand of Herod. When we too speak of the help we have received, we must not forget the Lord who actually helped us and leave behind only a story about how well we got through it ourselves.

Believing in this amazing event does not mean that an angel must appear to us too, every time, in the same way. In the days of the apostles, the Lord helped the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit through special events, and now, since the completed word is in our hands and there is the church, He teaches and guides us through that word. Therefore, through this written word we can know who the Lord who delivered Peter is, and we need only tell the same Savior of today's hardships as well and ask for His help.

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The work of the Lord made known to the saints who were praying

Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, and many people were gathered there praying. Rhoda, who came out to answer the door, heard Peter's voice and, because of her gladness, ran inside without having opened the door. The people did not accept her words right away, but Peter kept knocking at the door. *"Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished" (Acts 12:16)*. The saints who had been praying saw Peter standing before them.

The saints who had been praying also did not recognize right away what had happened, but they had actually gathered and prayed to God, and Peter was actually standing before them. The Lord whom they called upon together was the One who had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and received that judgment in our place, and rose again from death and is alive. Because the Lord does not work only within the range of what we fully understand and expect, we too, rather than first drawing conclusions about things we do not know, must hear and accept what the Lord has done and give thanks together.

"But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, 'Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.' And he departed and went to another place" (Acts 12:17). Peter told in order how the Lord had brought him out, told them to report it to the brethren, and then left for another place. The James here is a different person from James the brother of John, who had been killed by the sword earlier. A witness is thus a person who testifies of what actually happened just as it

happened, and what the Lord had done was not something to be known only by the people of that house, but a testimony for the brethren to hear together. The prayer of the church and the help received from the Lord became news that helped the faith of the saints who believed together.

When day came, the soldiers were in a stir, and when Herod could not find Peter, he examined those who had guarded the prison and commanded that they be put to death. The power that harms people was still there, but the One who delivered Peter was not One bound by that power. Even if hardships remain before us, the reason to ask the Lord does not disappear. Because the One who has saved us from sin and destruction is alive, we can tell Him of the circumstances of the saints and entrust them to Him.

Even though there were soldiers before the prison gate, the One who delivered Peter was not bound by them, and the church that had been praying outside the prison heard from Peter, who had come out of prison, what the Lord had done. Let us too not stop, weighing only the obstacles before our eyes, but remember our brothers in hardship and pray together. Let us ask, relying on the Savior who has delivered us from sin, and serve the Lord as a church that shares together the help we have received. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Give glory to the Savior, who accomplished the remission of sins

< Acts 12:20–23 >

"Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country. So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, 'The voice of a god and not of a man!' Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died."

The people who came to the king for the sake of food

When the voices exalting one person grow loud, that person is easily regarded as a greater being than he really is. When Herod, wearing royal apparel, spoke to the people, they cried out that his words were the voice of a god, but that cry could not make the king, a created being, into God. Rather, the text records that he was judged because he did not give glory to God;

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therefore, when the voices exalting a person grow loud, we must examine who is the One who should receive glory, and whom we ourselves are exalting and believing in.

There was conflict between Herod and the people of Tyre and Sidon. *"Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country" (Acts 12:20)*. Because that region used food produced in the king's country, the people asked to be at peace with the king. They made friends with Blastus, who attended the king's bedchamber, and came to the king. The text first speaks of the practical circumstances that led them to seek the king, and then moves on to the scene in which the king spoke to the people.

Since they used the food produced in the king's country, they needed to be at peace with the king. Anyone may have the difficulty of having to obtain what is needed for living, but a person who has the power to supply what is needed or to help is not, for that reason, one who should receive the glory that belongs to God.

Herod chose a day, put on royal apparel, sat in a high seat, and spoke to the people. Hearing those words, the people cried out as follows: *"And the people kept shouting, 'The voice of a god and not of a man!'" (Acts 12:22)*. It was a cry that exalted the king's words as equal to the word of God. Royal apparel and a high seat could show Herod's authority, but they could not change him into the Creator, and the many voices of people cannot change that fact either.

We too can respect other people and be thankful for their help, but we must not accept whatever a person says as right just because he said it. For however great a person's power and

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eloquence may look, that person is a created being of God and has weaknesses. Just as the apostles listened not to the words of men but to the word of God, we too, while being thankful for the help we receive, must place the basis of our faith on the word of the true God. The center of that word is the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus had all the sins of the world, which include our sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death.

The end of Herod, who did not give glory to God

"Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:23). The Bible does not present Herod's death merely as a king's illness, but records it in connection with his not giving glory to God. People exalted him as a being who uttered the voice of a god, but he received judgment through an angel of the Lord. Even a king who sat in a high position could not protect his own life by himself before God.

The end of Herod that the Bible reveals is connected with his not giving glory to God. Since neither the praise of people nor a high position could protect him from the Lord's judgment, before this record we must see that man cannot take the place that belongs to God. Even at the moment we hear the praise of others, we must not forget who we are and who God is.

The God we believe in is not one among the many gods that people believe in, but the only Almighty One who created heaven and earth and all things. Even if man is weak, God is perfect, and man's lack cannot bring down the perfection of God.

Therefore, the glory we give must be directed to the One who actually made us and saved us.

Giving glory to God does not end with repeating words of praise with our lips; it begins with acknowledging and believing that what He has done is the work God has done. Although our being made righteous is not something we produced, if we regard it as the result of our own effort, our hearts are still exalting our own righteousness; therefore, we must not use this warning about Herod only to point out the pride of others, but must also examine the basis of our own faith.

Also, we must not carelessly judge the illness and death of others to be the same judgment as Herod's. This is because, although the Bible has directly revealed the cause of this event, the circumstances of every person have not been explained to us as having the same cause. What has been entrusted to us is not finding hidden sins in the sufferings of other saints and condemning them, but exalting God and examining our own hearts before the recorded warning.

Give glory to the Savior, who accomplished the remission of sins

Among the things God has done for us, the most precious is that He saved us from sin. Who removed your sins? Jesus, the Son of Almighty God, perfectly removed the sin of the world with the water and the blood. Since Jesus Christ has given us the righteousness that man could not produce by keeping the law, the One whom we, who have been justified, should exalt is not our own deeds or the people who taught us, but the Lord who personally accomplished salvation.

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When Jesus received baptism from John at the Jordan River, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The sins each one of us commits while living were also passed on to the Lord at that time, and because of those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we should have received, and He rose from the dead and gave us life. We received the remission of sins because we believed in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, not because we removed the sin of the world ourselves or paid the full price of our own sins.

Therefore, in a testimony of salvation too, what the Lord has done must be clearly revealed. If we speak at length only about what we gave up and how much we changed, those who listen may think that before believing in the Lord they must first change their lives that much. But the Lord accomplished the righteousness we could not produce through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. When we preach that salvation, the soul who listens can also, instead of envying the level a person has reached, believe in the Savior who bore even the listener's own sins.

Those who have preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit also must not take the glory as their own. When Peter saw the people marveling at the man who had come to walk, he said, *"Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" (Acts 3:12)*, and he gave glory to Jesus Christ. If those who hear have received the remission of sins and received the Holy Spirit as a gift, it is the work of God bestowing grace, and the evangelist is a worker who has preached the word of the Lord, not a savior who has distributed life to other souls. When we keep that distinction in our hearts, we can rejoice at

seeing the fruit and yet not bind people to ourselves, but give thanks to the Lord together with them.

In the previous chapter, the saints who heard the news of the salvation of the Gentiles spoke as follows: *"When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life'" (Acts 11:18)*. They heard Peter's explanation and gave glory to God. Herod did not give glory to God in the face of the cries that exalted him like a god, but the saints who came to know salvation exalted God, who had given them life. We too must rejoice together at what the Lord has done as we see other souls being saved.

Even the loud cries that exalted Herod could not protect him from the Lord's judgment. This is because the place that people exalt and the place of God are not the same. Let us not forget who the Savior is, whether we are receiving praise or receiving help. Let us believe with our hearts in the Lord who has saved us through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and let us testify of what He has done with our lips and our service and give glory to God. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The salvation preached even in the place where the power of man came to an end

< Acts 12:24 >

“But the word of God grew and multiplied.”

The word of God that remained after the record of persecution

In the course of a single chapter, the death of James, the imprisonment of Peter, and the judgment of Herod followed one after another. After this record, in which the power that harms people looks great, the Bible conveys in a single verse that the word of God grew and multiplied. If we look only at the events, it seems as though the church could no longer do anything, but the word God had given continued to be preached. As we read this short conclusion, we must not merely examine what kind of power there was in the world, but take into our hearts what kind of salvation was being preached in the midst of it.

“But the word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24). What the Bible says grew and multiplied is not the power of Herod but the word of God. Earlier, Herod killed James and even

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imprisoned Peter, but the plan he had made did not become the final conclusion of this chapter. Peter came out of prison with the Lord's help and told the saints what the Lord had done, and even after Herod died, the word of salvation kept increasing.

Reading this flow is not making light of the pain that persecution left behind. The death of James was a real death, and the church's prayer for the imprisoned Peter was also a real supplication. However, we cannot say that the word God gave failed because those hardships existed. In the days of the apostles there were more martyrs than at any other time, but even though they were seized and killed, those who remained continued to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and there arose souls who were saved.

We too, when we meet opposition while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, easily feel as though the hardship before our eyes will decide everything to come. When the strength of the saints who preach weakens or the ways through which we received help are blocked, we think that now we will not be able to preach the word of salvation either. But the basis of this gospel does not lie in our having plenty or in people's welcome. Because there is the salvation that Jesus has already accomplished for sinners—having all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paying the price of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rising again from death—we can believe in and testify of that salvation even in difficult circumstances.

Earlier, too, before the people who tried to stop the apostles, this word was recorded: *"But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God" (Acts 5:39)*. This means that what God has done cannot be done away with by the will of man alone, and that if the word we preach is the word of God, no one can stop us. That is why it is important

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whether what we preach is truly the word God has given. We must not confuse pushing our own thoughts through to the end while calling them the word of God with believing in and preaching the redemption the Lord has accomplished.

The salvation contained in the word that grows

We cannot think that the spread of the word of God means making widely known any words at all, as long as their content is religious. In the previous chapter, the reason the angel told Cornelius to send for Peter was that he was the one *"who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved" (Acts 11:14)*. What Peter was to preach was the words by which they would be saved. At the center of the word the apostles preached was the remission of sins that Jesus Christ accomplished for sinners.

Just as in the Old Testament, when a sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering, the sin was passed on to the offering, so Jesus, the Son of God, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, personally had the sin of the world—which includes the sins we commit throughout our lives and even the sins we commit with our hearts and thoughts—passed on to His own body once and for all. To pay the price of that sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we should have received, and by rising again from death He gave us life. What the apostles and the saints kept preaching was exactly the word about the Savior who removed our sins in this way and gave us life.

Only when the content of this salvation is clear does the saying that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is spread widely

have any meaning. If, while saying that Jesus removed sin, one leaves blurred which sins He bore and how He bore them, the heart of the listener ends up still keeping its own sins. Only when listeners know the fact that, when Jesus received baptism from John, He had even the listeners' own sins passed on to Him once and for all together with all the sins of the world, and that because of those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, received judgment in our place, and rose again from death, can they believe that Jesus is their own Savior. The remission of sins is not something produced when many people gather and acknowledge it, but the salvation given to the heart that believes in that redemption.

Therefore, the growth of the word does not mean that it is enough for the word to become known to many people even if its content becomes diluted. The salvation of the Lord that was first preached must also be conveyed to the next soul as the same salvation. We may explain it simply to suit the circumstances of the listener, but we must not leave out the baptism Jesus received from John or change the judgment of the Cross into merely an example of self-sacrifice. Only when we preach the salvation that the risen Lord actually accomplished will a soul also clearly know what to believe.

The Holy Spirit is with the hearts that have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is why the work of preaching the gospel does not end with leaving words that comfort the heart for a while, but is the work of serving so that a soul may believe in the Savior and become one of God's people. This is also why the one who preaches must first examine his own saved heart and know the word clearly. One cannot convey to others, merely in a confident tone, a salvation that one does not believe in oneself.

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Preach the word together with the Lord

God worked together with the apostles and the saints so that they would preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Of those who spread the gospel in the previous chapter, too, it is recorded, *"And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21)*, and since many souls believed the word through them and turned to the Lord, in the growth of the word there were both the service of the saints who preached and the hand of the Lord who was with them. When the hand of the LORD is with us, the work of the gospel takes place.

Only when we have the faith that God works together with us can we share the word entrusted to us without measuring only our own ability and giving up. If we try to accomplish by ourselves the work of changing the hearts of those who hear, we are easily weighed down by each and every reaction, but when we know that we are witnesses who preach the salvation the Lord has given, we can give our attention to the word we are to let them hear. We need only listen to why that person is bound by the fear of sin, and explain the meaning of the fact that the Lord bore all the sins of the world, which include even that person's sins, through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and received that judgment in our place, and rose again from death. An evangelist is a person who speaks of the facts of salvation and helps the soul who hears to examine the word.

This is work the church must carry out together. When one saint preaches the word, other saints can be of one heart with him in prayer, explain the parts that are not yet understood, and help newly believing souls to grow in the word. It is not that each person must do something conspicuous in order to serve the

gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we value the salvation we have received and serve with one heart, the hands of many saints are used together for the spread of the same word.

Of the gathering of the saints who had gone through threats, too, it is recorded, *"And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31)*. They prayed together, and with the help of the Holy Spirit they spoke the word boldly. Let us too not stop at talking about our hardships, but ask the Lord together with the church and preach the word. We can carry it out one step at a time with hearts that give thanks for the remission of sins we have received and that want to let other souls hear the same salvation.

Clearly preaching the grace of the Savior to the one soul who is listening now is the actual spread of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the church is to carry out. This one verse is not a promise that guarantees each person the number of fruits he wants at the time he wants, but neither can we think little of the true word a saint has preached just because the results look slow in that saint's eyes. Since we cannot control the work of God by numbers, we must believe in what the Lord has done and keep serving the word.

If we had looked only at the power of the king who tried to harm James and Peter, we would have heard only fearful news in this chapter. But the Bible conveys that even after that, the word of God grew and multiplied. Let us too not let our hearts be taken away by the sounds of difficult events alone, but believe in and share the word of the salvation the Lord has accomplished. Even in the place where the power of man comes to an end, the salvation of the living Savior is preached, and today we too can serve the Lord as witnesses of that word. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The gospel of the remission of sins carried by the worker who returned to the church

< Acts 12:25 >

"And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark."

If you have finished the work entrusted to you, return to the church

When we have finished the work entrusted to us, where do we return? Today's text is only one verse, but in it there are three steps. Barnabas and Saul finished the work entrusted to them, took one man with them, and returned to the church that had sent them. Even in the time of persecution, when James died and Peter was imprisoned, God raised up workers and worked through those workers, and this verse is the scene in which those workers finish one task and return to the place where they would receive the next task. Following these three steps, we will also see where a worker's steps end and where they begin again.

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"And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:25). Jerusalem, where the two had gone, is the city in which, in this chapter, James was killed by the sword and Peter was imprisoned. They entered that city, delivered to the brethren the help entrusted to them, and came out. The Bible does not record how that work was received or who recognized their labor; it says only that they finished it. This is because what matters for a worker is not how his labor looked, but whether he carried out the work entrusted to him to the end.

That work was also not one the two chose for themselves. The church decided to help the brethren and entrusted that work into the hands of the two, and the two received that work and carried it out to the end. To people who had been teaching the multitudes, the work of carrying relief might have seemed small, but they finished that work. A worker is not a person who chooses the work he wants to do, but a person who finishes the work entrusted to him.

Then where was the place they returned to? It was the church in Antioch, which had sent the two. The next chapter again records the names of Barnabas and Saul among the prophets and teachers of the church in Antioch, and conveys the word they heard there. *"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2)*. The place they returned to was the very place where they received the next work. Delivering the relief was not the last work of the two, and because they had returned to the church, the next road was entrusted to them: to set out to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from

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John, paid the price of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death.

Because God raises up workers and works through those workers, the usefulness of a worker does not end just because he has finished one task. Later, after the two had finished the road of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they again returned to Antioch, gathered the church together, and reported all that God had done with them. A worker is thus a person who returns to the church that sent him. When we finish the work entrusted to us, we easily count up our labor and scatter to our own places, but a worker's steps continue on to the next work when there is a church to return to. If you have finished the work entrusted to you, you must return to the church, hear the word, and stand together with the brethren. This is because the work to be entrusted to you next is given there.

The man whom Barnabas and Saul brought with them

The two did not return alone, and John whose surname was Mark, who returned with them, is a name that has already appeared once in this chapter. The Bible records the house that Peter went to after he came out of prison as follows: *"So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12)*. Since the house where the church gathered and prayed for the imprisoned Peter was his mother's house, John was a person who had been close to that church that prayed in the midst of persecution. Barnabas and Saul brought him to Antioch.

Barnabas is a man who had brought someone before as well. He went to Tarsus, sought out Saul, and brought him to Antioch, and from the time Saul joined Barnabas, Saul united in earnest with the Church of God and preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Now those two again bring one man. Later, when the two preached the word in Cyprus, the Bible records, *"And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant" (Acts 13:5)*. The man they had brought became an assistant on the road of preaching the word.

Here lies the way in which God raises up workers. It is not that one person does all the work alone; rather, a person who has watched and learned beside someone who works grows into the next worker. To take someone along means keeping that person close, letting him hear the word, letting him see how the work is done, and entrusting him with work he can handle. John too did not preach the word from the beginning, but helped the work of the two as an assistant. Each and every one of our brothers and sisters is a worker, and those who are working now must take the next workers along with them. If there is beside us a newly believing soul or a saint who has not yet been entrusted with any work, we must bring that person with us when we return from finishing our work, and set that person up together with us for the next road. Labor with no one going along ends with that person, but labor with someone taken along continues on to the next worker.

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What a worker carries is the gospel of the remission of sins

Then what did the two workers who returned carry on the next road? The word Paul preached in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia shows this. *"And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39)*. Paul went about his whole life preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is justified. The hands that had carried relief to the brethren next took up this gospel of the remission of sins and went.

This gospel of the water and the Spirit was accomplished as follows. Jesus, the Son of God, by receiving baptism from John, had the sin of the world, which contains even all the sins we will commit throughout our lives, passed on to Him once and for all. To pay the price of that sin, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we should have received, and He rose again from death and brought us to life. We, who could not be justified by the law, are justified by believing in this work. Paul also became a worker who preached the way of righteousness because he himself had first believed in this work that Jesus Christ had done and had become a righteous person. That is why he did not preach his own labors but preached what the Lord had accomplished.

The basis of a worker is not competence or the amount of labor, but a heart that has received the remission of sins. The Holy Spirit is with that heart and causes it to testify of what the Lord has done. Whether it is the work of carrying relief, the work of an assistant, or the work of preaching the word in a synagogue, what a worker carries is the same gospel of the water and the Spirit. Paul too finished the work of carrying the relief for the

brethren before setting out on this road, and John too followed the two as an assistant and saw the gospel being preached. The gospel we believe in is not different because the work entrusted to us is different, nor is the remission of sins we have received greater because the work is great. That is why, even if the work entrusted to someone looks small, that person is not a small worker, and the gospel to be preached does not disappear just because a task has ended. We must stand as workers who clearly know the remission of sins we have received and preach that salvation to the next soul.

Acts chapter 12 ends not with the death of Herod but with the workers who returned. In the time of persecution, God raised up workers and worked through them, and those workers finished the work entrusted to them, returned to the church, received the next work, and, taking one man with them, set out carrying the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that Jesus accomplished the remission of sins. Let us too, if we have finished the work entrusted to us, return to the church, receive the next work, and take along the one person beside us and go together. The Lord, who has remitted our sins, works together with us in those steps. ✉

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CHAPTER

13

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Serve together the gospel entrusted by the Holy Spirit

< Acts 13:1–3 >

"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."

The workers of the church who serve the Lord

After the names of the various workers who were in the church at Antioch, there follows the word of the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul. As the church was serving the Lord, the work entrusted to the two men became clear. In the church we tend to think first about what we ourselves can do, but before that we must know whose will we serve and what salvation we will preach. This is because when we know what work the Holy Spirit calls people to and has them do, the hearts of those who send and of those who leave are settled together.

Verse 1 records the people who were in this church as follows: *"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was*

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called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul" (Acts 13:1). It was a church in which prophets and teachers were together, and the many names recorded here show that the whole work of the church was not accomplished by the labor of one person. They were workers who served the same Lord, and from among them two men are set apart for the work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit in other places. We, too, must value the work of serving the Lord's will together more than the work of displaying ourselves.

Earlier, in Antioch, the gospel of the water and the Spirit had been preached to the Gentiles, and a multitude who believed in the Lord had come into being. Barnabas saw that grace and was glad, and Saul also did the work of teaching together with him. People who heard the word of salvation formed the church, and from that church workers go out again to preach the gospel. The joy of hearing the gospel and the service of preaching it to other souls are connected in this way, and the church does not leave the salvation it has received to remain only among its own people.

There is something that must first become clear to us as well. If I do not know the fact that Jesus has removed my sins, what could I tell other souls to believe? The remission of sins cannot be preached merely with words that gather people or words that urge a better life. Only when we know how the Lord bore sin and accept that salvation into our own hearts can we make clear the same basis of salvation to the souls who hear.

That salvation was accomplished in this way. By receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, Jesus Himself had all the sins of the world transferred to His own body once and for all, and those sins include the sins that you and I commit throughout our lives. To pay the price of those sins, Jesus shed His blood

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and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and by rising again from death He gave us the remission of sins and new life. The Holy Spirit comes as a gift upon the heart that believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and here lies the basis on which a person who has received the remission of sins can serve as a worker who testifies of salvation.

The Holy Spirit calls and entrusts the work

Let us read verse 2. *"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2)*. The Holy Spirit said to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He Himself was calling them and which He was assigning them. The church did not first decide on the work it wanted and then call that work the will of the Holy Spirit; rather, while serving the Lord, it heard the word that was given and followed that word. Because the One who entrusts the work is the Holy Spirit, we cannot change the content of the gospel of the water and the Spirit or set the purpose of the work as we please.

The work the two men took on is revealed in the verse that follows. *"So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:4)*. Sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went to Cyprus and preached the word of God in the synagogues. The purpose for which the Holy Spirit calls and sends workers lies in having souls hear of the salvation of Jesus. Therefore, do not measure the greatness of sending workers out only by the distance they travel or by the attention of people, but look at what salvation is actually preached on that path.

If the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has given is certain in our hearts as well, then we already have the content to preach. Do not hide the news of salvation on the grounds that you have no experience more special than that of others. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sins and causes it to testify of what Jesus has done. What we must do is not boast of our own abilities but make clear, according to the word, the fact that the Lord bore all our sins.

A life that follows the calling of the Holy Spirit is also different from working busily on one's own. Barnabas and Saul served in the midst of the church, and the church took part in sending the two men out. When we learn together the grace we have received and serve that grace, we also come to consider before the Lord who will take on what work. If each person regards only his own will as important, serving together becomes difficult, but if we value the same salvation, we can help one another in our roles and gather our hearts to the will of the Lord.

We must also remember that hearing and following the word is the way of receiving the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If we think that every feeling that arises is immediately a command of God, it becomes difficult to distinguish our own thoughts from the will of the Lord. God teaches us through the written word, and the Holy Spirit helps us to realize and hold on to that truth. Do not neglect the work of clearly believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that has now been given to us and serving together with the church according to that word.

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Send them out together while praying

Verse 3 tells what the church did after hearing the word of the Holy Spirit. *"Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:3)*. The church fasted and prayed, laid hands on the two men, and sent them away. Even after hearing the word of the Holy Spirit, the church had work to do, and the church prayed, keeping together in its heart the path of the two men who were leaving. Since these people had already received the Holy Spirit and were serving the Lord, this must not be read as meaning that one obtains salvation or the Holy Spirit only by fasting. Rather, they served the work entrusted to them according to the grace they had received, and they relied on the Lord.

Prayer must not stop at demanding that our plans be accomplished. We must ask the Lord to uphold the workers He sends and to enable them to preach the word of salvation to the souls who hear. This is because even those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot make another person's heart clean by their own strength. Jesus had all the sins of the world, including our sins, passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to receive the judgment for them in our place, and rose again from death; while we make clear the salvation He accomplished in this way, we go forward relying on the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of those who hear.

Nor is the church's sending of workers a matter of handing over the whole responsibility for caring for souls to a few people. There is work entrusted to those who leave, and there is work that the sending church serves together. Since all have received the grace of the same Savior, we must not remain as spectators of the labor of other brothers. Whatever role we have taken on,

we can keep in our hearts the souls who have not yet heard the word of salvation, and pray and serve together for the spread of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and for the missionary work.

The content of the word that the sending church must hold on to is the same as the conclusion Paul later preached. *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38)*. The reason for sending workers is to make known the fact that the remission of sins comes through Jesus Christ. The fact that the church has appointed people does not in itself bring about salvation, but because the church sends workers who believe in the One who accomplished salvation and has them testify of His work, other souls can also believe in the same Savior.

Those who served the Lord in Antioch set apart two men and sent them out according to the word of the Holy Spirit. When we think about the service entrusted to us, let us also first set our hearts on the word of the Lord and value the brothers and the church who will follow His will together with us. Since there is One who calls us and the salvation we must preach is clear, there is no reason for us either to put ourselves forward or to hide in the background because of our shortcomings. Let us go forward relying on the Lord as workers of the church who serve together the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Do not pervert the straight ways of the Lord

< Acts 13:4–12 >

“So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant. Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”

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In the presence of one who seeks to hear the word

There was a man who called for the workers because he wanted to hear the word of God, but a man beside him strove to keep him from believing. This incident that took place at Paphos shows that differing hearts are revealed where the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached. Before a soul who is hearing the word, on which side are we standing? Let us examine through this passage whether we are helping that soul to know and believe in salvation, or whether we are putting human thoughts first and blocking him from believing in Jesus.

Sent out by the Holy Spirit, the two men arrived in Cyprus, and the Bible relates what they did there as follows: *"And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant" (Acts 13:5)*. What they preached in the synagogues was the word of God. The Holy Spirit did not send them out so that they would go around looking only for some special work; rather, His sending led to the way of preaching the salvation of Jesus. Because those who know the word also need the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the two men preached that word of salvation in the synagogues as well.

Do not think that there is no need to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who say they believe in God. This is because saying that one knows God is not the same as believing that Jesus has removed all sins. If someone reads the Bible yet keeps sin in his heart and tries to become righteous by his own deeds, he must hear of the work of salvation that Jesus accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore all the sins of the world, which included even that person's sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving that judgment in our place, and rose again from death. A worker

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must not stop upon seeing by what name the listener is called, but must make clear the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

When they came to Paphos, they met Bar-Jesus, a false prophet and sorcerer, who was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, and the proconsul called for the two men because he wanted to hear the word. Verse 7 introduces the proconsul as follows: *"Who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:7)*. This is a record that a wise man sought to hear the word of God, and what is important here is not his position but the fact that he actually sought to hear the word of the Lord. We, too, must set our hearts before the word and value hearing the content of salvation.

But beside the one who sought to hear the word, there was also one who blocked faith. Verse 8 reveals that Elymas withstood the two men and strove to keep the proconsul from believing. This hindrance did not end merely in making the preachers uncomfortable; it was the blocking of a soul from accepting the salvation of God, and so the workers who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot remain silent in the face of it. We must know whose heart the word is meant to bring to life and preach that word clearly.

The Holy Spirit makes the straight way clear

Saul, who also is called Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit and looked intently at Elymas. The Bible does not say that Paul had a temperament that spoke more strongly than others; it states that at this time he was filled with the Holy Spirit and records what he said. Paul did not stand against Elymas with his own hot temper; rather, because the Holy Spirit, who testifies of the truth

of salvation, was with him, he spoke of the straight way of the Lord in the face of what was blocking faith. The boldness that guards the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be distinguished in this way from asserting one's own force.

What Paul said was this: *"O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10)*. Paul rebukes Elymas for perverting the straight ways of the Lord. To a person who is being led down a wrong way, we must make clear why that way is wrong. If we blur the content of salvation out of worry that we might hurt someone's feelings, that very soul will be unable to know what he must believe in order to receive the remission of sins. Preaching the word of the Lord just as it stands is the love that the soul needs.

On the straight way of the Lord, the One who gives salvation and the work He has done are clear. Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth and received baptism from John in order to have all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and those sins include all the sins we commit throughout our lives. Because He bore sin in this way, Jesus could shed His blood and die on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and the Savior, who rose again from death, has given us the perfect remission of sins. Therefore, we become righteous by believing in that salvation which He accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Since the content of salvation is this clear, no one must divide sins or leave some of them remaining according to his own thoughts. If we think that Jesus bore some sins but that we must remove the remaining sins, such a heart cannot accept the perfect work of the Savior. Jesus bore all sins because our deficient deeds cannot wash away sin. Knowing and believing exactly

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what the Lord did is right faith, and only when we preach according to that content will other souls also gain assurance.

Therefore, we must first look back on ourselves as well, to see whether we are putting human thoughts ahead of the word of God and whether what we preach agrees with what the Savior has done. If we teach that the sins Jesus has removed still remain, then no matter how zealously we speak, we cannot lead souls to the assurance of salvation. We must not quarrel to make our own words right, but must clearly testify of what God has done.

Receive the teaching of the Lord into your heart

Paul's words did not end with a rebuke. *"'And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.' And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:11)*. The word that he would not see the sun for a time came true exactly, and Elymas had to go around seeking someone to lead him. The task given to us is not to try to reproduce this incident by our own power, but to know how serious it is to block the straight way of the Lord and to receive the word before God.

Just because someone today does not accept our words does not mean that we gain the right to declare such a judgment upon that person. We must read the words Paul spoke and the work God did in this incident just as they are, and we, too, must rely on the word of the Lord. If we call that person an enemy of the Holy Spirit because our feelings have been hurt, we confuse our own hearts with the will of God. Because the Holy Spirit testifies of the salvation of Jesus, we, too, must set our hearts on making that salvation clear.

Look at what the proconsul marveled at in the end. *"Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord" (Acts 13:12)*. Seeing what had been done, he believed and marveled at the teaching of the Lord. Because the Bible records both the sign that took place and the teaching that was heard, we must not stop at saying that something wondrous happened, but must receive as precious the word of the Lord that was preached in that place. What a soul needs is not admiration at having met a person of power, but the faith that knows Jesus, who gives salvation.

The purpose for which the Holy Spirit works is also that souls may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved. Now we can confirm in the written word that Jesus bore sin, so there is no need to go around seeking only new signs in order to gain the assurance of faith. When this word enters the heart—that the Savior, who received the judgment for sin in our place, bore even my sins—the heart that had been bound to human claims can turn to the Lord. Having received the remission of sins by believing that word is the greatest blessing for us.

Before us, too, there are souls who, like the proconsul, seek to hear the word of God. Do not pervert the way of salvation by piling up our claims and conditions upon their hearts. Relying on the Holy Spirit, let us rightly make known what Jesus has accomplished and explain it fully so that the listener may believe the word of the Lord. What a person who seeks to hear the word needs is not words that block that faith, but words that clearly testify of the Savior who has delivered him from sin. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

God, who has removed sin

< Acts 13:38–43 >

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 'Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.' So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."

"By Him everyone who believes is justified"

The apostle Paul went to a region called Antioch and preached the word. When Paul was preaching the word in Antioch, the people begged *"that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (Acts 13:42)*. Having received this request, the apostle Paul was overjoyed.

While preaching Jesus Christ there, the apostle Paul testified, *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him*

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everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38–39). To the question of by whom a person can be justified, Paul said that through the salvation Jesus Christ has given, everyone who believes is justified. The message was that one becomes a righteous person by believing in the gospel Paul preached. The apostle Paul went to the synagogues of the Jews and preached the word. In the synagogue, the Jews read the scrolls of the Scriptures, and anyone who had something to expound could give an exposition. This was their way of worship.

So Paul came forward and testified of Jesus Christ as found in the Scriptures; he testified of the baptism of the remission of sins that Jesus Christ received from John, of the blood of the Cross, and of Jesus being the Son of God. The apostle Paul preached Jesus Christ whenever he had the opportunity. Jesus Christ was the Savior who gives the remission of sins to sinners. Dear fellow believers, what must a person believe to become a righteous person? The truth by which a person is justified before God is this: one becomes a righteous person by believing in the remission of sins that Jesus, the Son of God, accomplished by having all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, by shedding His blood on the Cross and receiving the judgment in our place because of those sins, and by rising again from death. The remission of sins does not come by deeds; it comes by believing in the salvation Jesus Christ has given. Among the people living on this earth, those who believe that the baptism Jesus received and His blood are their own salvation become righteous before God. And they receive this acknowledgment from God: "You are My child. You are a perfect person. You are a person who has no sin at all."

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The One who has removed sin is the Absolute One, who created heaven and earth and all things

Can a person be justified before God by doing some good deed? Can a person be justified before God through a religion of this world? Can one become a person without sin by believing in some god? Only Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, can remove people's sins. Dear fellow believers, Jesus Christ is God, the Son of the Father, the One who created heaven and earth and all things, and the One who made everything under heaven. He appeared to us as the Savior clothed in flesh and solved the problem of our sins. Jesus, in whom we believe, is the very King of gods of the whole universe. Do you know and believe the works Jesus has done in the universe? There are many people who do not know well the works Jesus did on this earth. But those who know Jesus rightly believe that Jesus made all things under heaven, that He is the Almighty, that He is the Master of all things, and that He is the Savior of mankind. In Romans, Paul said, *"Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Romans 11:36).*

This is to say that Jesus Christ has removed all the sins of this world. Because He, Jesus Christ, has removed our sins, people are justified by relying on His name. In this age, we too are justified and become righteous by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ has given. Those who believe in Jesus rightly have, in reality, no sin. Because Jesus, the Almighty and the Creator, has removed our sins, we become people without sin by believing in that Jesus. And having received the remission of sins by believing in the salvation Jesus has given is perfect salvation.

Religion and faith are different

Dear beloved saints, we must think about the truth of the remission of sins that God has given us. Christianity is called a faith. As I have told you many times, religion is different from faith; religion is something that came out of the human mind, something humans have made up. Then why is believing in Jesus called faith? This faith is believing in what Jesus did: He came to mankind and removed the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John and shedding His blood. It is also called the faith that has received the remission of sins. We believe in that truth—that He has removed our sins. If you believe in the truth that He has removed the sin of this world, you clearly have no sin. The people who believe in the fact that they have become righteous by believing that Jesus has removed all the sins of each one of us through His baptism and blood are precisely the people who have the Christian faith. We call the crowd that follows Jesus Christian believers.

Have you been saved from sin by believing in Jesus? Did He just declare that you have no sin even though you do have sin? Did Jesus ascend to heaven only pretending to have removed our sins? Our faith is believing in the Absolute One, and believing that the Absolute One has saved sinners from the sin of the world through the gospel of the water and the blood. This is faith. Throughout his whole life, the apostle Paul went around preaching the gospel of the remission of sins, that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is justified. Being justified is not the kind of remission of sins people speak of these days, in which Jesus took away original sin and actual sins disappear by repenting every day. The right faith is believing in the fact that Jesus, who truly lives, made the universe, came to this earth to save His own people from the sin of the world, and removed all sins.

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Who do you believe Jesus, the true God who is the Absolute One, to be? Is Jesus one among countless gods? Do we believe in such a god, or do we believe in the true God who is the Absolute One? Do you believe in pantheism, which says that everything is a god—that trees are gods, rocks are gods, the sun is a god, and people are gods? We believe in Him who made the sun and the moon and all things under heaven, and people and their souls—that Absolute One who exists forever and will never disappear. Faith is believing that Jesus has removed the sin of the world, believing that He leads us, and believing that He has prepared an eternal kingdom for us. This is precisely the faith that Christianity has. Our having been made righteous is not something we made. Our being without sin was not achieved at our own level. Our sins were not removed by one of the gods that is not the Almighty. The remission of our sins is that He who is the Absolute One has removed our sins. We have been saved from sin by believing in Him. Dear fellow believers, have you received the remission of sins? Who removed your sins? Jesus removed them. He also fulfilled all the words of the law. The Almighty removed the sin of the world with the water and the blood. He removed it perfectly. Is the remission of sins you have received incomplete? Is there any possibility that you will become a sinner again?

Even though people are imperfect, God is perfect

Let us look at Galatians. The apostle Paul says, *"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!" (Galatians 2:17)*. We believed in Jesus to receive the remission of sins. People believed in Jesus to become righteous; did they

believe in Jesus to become sinners? A faith by which one tries to become a sinner after believing in Jesus is a wrong faith. What does this word mean? If we say that we have received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ, and yet, after receiving the remission of sins, we become sinners again partway through, then this word is asking whether Christ, who removed sin, made us commit sin and turned us into sinners once again. Dear fellow believers, can God make us sinners again? Even though people are weak, God is almighty. The Bible says that even though people are imperfect, God is perfect. It is saying that God never allows the work He Himself has once done to become imperfect just because people are weak. Even though people are weak, God is perfect. Can people's shortcomings bring down God's perfection? They cannot.

"If I build again those things which I destroyed"

Concerning that work which God has done perfectly, can a person become a sinner again because he is lacking? A person who believes in God cannot become a sinner again. If you become a sinner again because you are lacking, become righteous because you have believed in God, and then become a sinner again because you are a little lacking, then that god is not a god who has saved us. Even though we are lacking, stumble and fall, and do all kinds of things, He has removed our sins for us. Since it says, *"By Him everyone who believes is justified" (Acts 13:39)*, anyone can become a righteous person by believing in Jesus. And He never lets a person who has once become righteous become a sinner again. However, a person can become a sinner if he himself betrays Him. How does one betray Him? If one betrays Him by saying, "Jesus did not remove all

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my sins. You are not God. You are not the Son of God. You are not the One who made me. You did not remove my sins," then he becomes a sinner again and has no choice but to go to hell. But we have become righteous because God has removed our sins. Jesus is God Himself. He is the very Almighty God of whom the Old Testament speaks. He is the One for whom nothing is impossible. He is love, holiness, truth, and perfection. The Bible says that He is omniscient and omnipotent.

Dear fellow believers, we have received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus. Who knew that He was the perfect God? Among the many gods and the many religions of this world, we received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ. Of course, where would there be anyone who knew one hundred percent that He is truly the Almighty and then believed? But Jesus Christ is the very One who made me and made you, who causes our descendants to be born, who made the universe and made everything on the earth, who governs, rules over, and judges all this, and who will tear it all down and create a new heaven and a new earth. Do you know who He is? He is none other than Jesus Christ, who is the God we believe in. The God we believe in is such a God. We have become righteous by believing in Jesus Christ.

What kind of God is the God we believe in?

"By Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). That we have received the remission of sins by believing is because God has removed our sins. Who is the Man Paul meant when he said *"through this Man"*? He is that Jesus whom Paul testified of just before: the One who had our sins passed on

to Him by receiving baptism from John, who shed His blood and died on the Cross, and whom God then raised from the dead. Because Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through baptism, He paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and because He paid the full price of those sins, He rose again on the third day; in this way God has removed our sins. We believe in God. We believe that God has removed our sins. We do not simply believe in a god that is merely one among various gods; rather, we believe in the only God, the God who is the Almighty, the God who alone exists in heaven above and on the earth beneath, the God who is highest of all. Think about how you and I happened to come to believe in God, and whether we have believed in God rightly. Do you know how many people in this world claim to be gods? With just a little power, one becomes a god to people. Any god can become a god to people merely by healing people's illnesses. But does that make such things gods? No, it does not.

The God we believe in is not such a god. The God we believe in is the God who has removed the sin in our hearts. God is the God who makes us happy. God is the God who makes us live well. God is the God who has made us free from sin. God is the God who has delivered us from hell. Believing in such an Absolute God is precisely the faith we have. The people who have received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ have this kind of faith. Dear fellow believers, please ask yourselves what god we are believing in—whether we are believing in one of the gods all people believe in, or whether we are believing in that God who is the Absolute One and the Almighty—and whether we have received the remission of sins through Him. Whose people are you? You are the people of God, who is the Absolute One. We have received the remission of sins in Him. Only God can remove our sins. Because He has removed our sins, we have no sin. If some god of this world had

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supposedly removed our sins, we would become people who have sin again after believing; but because Jesus Christ has removed our sins perfectly, we become people without sin. God has removed your sins. Having come to know God is also truly something to be thankful for. How could we ever have come to know God? Having believed in God, having received the remission of sins before God—have you truly received the remission of sins before God? What are we, that the Almighty should remove our sins?

The Almighty removed our sins because He loves us, who are human beings. The remission of sins is entirely as God pleases. It was said that God did so because He wanted to live together with us. It was said that God made us the objects of His love. All of us must give thanks that we have come to know God and to believe in Him. For receiving the remission of sins through Him, for becoming His people, and for becoming righteous before Him, we truly give thanks to God. In this world, there is no one on this earth who has received as many blessings as the person who has believed in God, obtained grace before God, and received the remission of sins. Long ago, in the time of Abraham, Abraham met God and received the remission of sins. Please think about how many people among the many people today know God rightly and have received the remission of sins completely through God. How many people are there who know God as God and believe in Him? How many righteous people are there on this earth who have received the remission of sins by believing in the name of Jesus Christ?

"You despisers, Marvel and perish!"

People are lacking, but God is perfect. There are not many people who have received the remission of sins through God Himself. The truth we believe in is that God has removed our sins perfectly. We came to know this fact and believed it. Those who have been saved before God, chosen in Jesus Christ, and have received the remission of sins are blessed people, and we must give thanks to God, knowing that those people are you and I. Here Paul quotes the Old Testament and says, *"Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 'Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you'" (Acts 13:40–41)*. If God has removed our sins, then we have no sin. But some people look at it with the eyes of religion and despise the truth of salvation. In the Old Testament, the prophet Habakkuk looked ahead to this future—looked ahead to the fact that there would be people who despise—and prophesied. Although God, who is the Almighty, came down to this earth, removed all the sins of us human beings, and tells us to believe this fact, many people say that this is something they can by no means believe. So that they would not become such people, they were warned to be careful in these words: *"Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you" (Acts 13:40)*. There are many such people on this earth. Just as our Lord said, *"Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14)*, how many people there are who believe! Yet even when they are told the word, they despise it and say it is something they can by no means believe. "However almighty God may be, how could He have removed the sin of mankind once and for all? And how could He have

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removed the sin in my heart?" They say that this is something they can by no means believe.

This word says that there will be many who say, "People commit so many sins—how can anyone say they have no sin? Even if God is the Almighty, how could He remove sin?" The apostle Paul became righteous by believing in that God, by believing in what Jesus Christ did. When Jesus received baptism from John, the sin of the world was passed on to Him once and for all, and Jesus paid the full price of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross. No matter how many sins people commit, those sins are sins that have already been passed on to Jesus and paid for; this is exactly what Jesus Christ, in whom Paul believed, did. So Paul became one who spread the way of righteousness, the way of faith. Today, you and I too have become righteous by believing in God. And please do not think too little of the fact that we have become God's people. We must truly be thankful for this one amazing fact: that God has truly become our God, and that you and I have become people who believe in God.

Believing in God is itself a blessing

Now we have become people who believe whatever God says to us. Those whose sins have been removed can, through the help of the Holy Spirit, understand the profound meaning of the salvation God has graciously given us. Those who have truly received the remission of sins have become people who can believe what God says. Do you believe the things God has done? Do you believe what God has said to us? You are people who have received God's amazing blessing. Who believes what God has done? Those who have received the remission of sins before God believe what God has said. What a blessing it is to believe

in God! And that the faith to believe in God is given into our hearts is God's grace. This very fact that we believe in God is a blessing; that we have received the remission of sins, that we have become righteous—that even in all the things from which we could not be justified by the law, we have become righteous solely by believing in God, by believing that Jesus Christ has removed our sins—this is precisely the blessing. We are blessed people. I truly give thanks for what a true blessing it is that I know God and believe in God, and what a blessing it is that our saints know God and believe in God.

Dear fellow believers, we are not just ordinary people who live out our lives among the many. We are God's people—one in a thousand, one in ten thousand—whom God has saved in Jesus Christ. We believe that He has saved us, that He Himself has planned us, and that God Himself will fulfill for us all His will toward us. We believe that, no matter what we are like, God will fulfill for us the things He has planned toward us—our eternal future—just as He Himself designed. We have become His people and His children. We have become God's people who have faith in God. Please believe how amazing a blessing He has given us: on this earth, in heaven above and on the earth beneath, there are not many people who have the same faith as ours. Truly, the word says that He chose us, saying, *"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4)*, so that we might become His people; and it also says that this is *"to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6)*. We believe that God will receive glory through us, who have believed in God and received the remission of sins before Him, and that He will clothe the people of God with that glory of God and reveal His glory.

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There are those who claim that they are the one hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned in the Book of Revelation. I do not say that we will be those people. But one thing is clear: those who will truly praise God and truly sing the song that the people on earth do not know are those who have received the remission of sins. Do you know how many Christian religious people there are who try to get into the one hundred and forty-four thousand while still having sin? That we have become God's people, have received the remission of sins before God, and have become people who believe in God is something to be thankful for. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus fulfilled the promise of salvation

< Acts 13:13–41 >

"Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, 'Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.' Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, 'Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment. After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised

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up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, "Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose." Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead. He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: "I will give you the sure mercies of David." Therefore He also says in another Psalm: "You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption." For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be

justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: "Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you."'"

He raised up a Savior as He had promised

After the law and the writings of the prophets were read in the synagogue, Paul was asked to speak if he had any word of exhortation for the people. Paul took this opportunity and, instead of laying out more things that people must do, preached the word of salvation that God had given. Whenever we hear the Bible, it is easy for us to look first for what more we must accomplish, but before that, we must know who fulfilled the salvation God promised and how, and we must believe in Him. This sermon of Paul shows that way.

Paul and his party came from Paphos to Perga, and John departed from there and returned to Jerusalem, while the party went on and came to Antioch in Pisidia and entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. The church in Antioch from which they had set out and this synagogue were different places, but the word of salvation they had to preach was the same. When the occasion came for the Scriptures to be read and an exposition to be heard, Paul testified of Jesus Christ so that those who heard that word came to know the Savior.

Paul told the men of Israel and those who fear God to listen, and then he went back over the work God had done for their fathers. God chose the people and brought them out of Egypt with great power, put up with their ways in the wilderness, and gave them the land of Canaan. He gave them judges, and to the

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people who asked for a king He gave Saul, and then He raised up David and had him fulfill the will of God. This story is not a boast that man reached God by his own strength, but a testimony of what God did for His people.

Verse 23 makes clear where all this history is headed. *"From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—" (Acts 13:23)*. This means that, as God had promised, He raised up a Savior from the seed of David, and that this Savior is Jesus. Even if we have heard the Bible for a long time and know the history of the fathers well, we cannot solve the problem of sin if we do not know the Savior who came according to the promise. Jesus did not come only as One who gave excellent teachings; He came in the flesh as the Son of God, who made all things in heaven and on earth, to save us from sin.

Paul also speaks of the work of John, who came before Jesus. *"After John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel" (Acts 13:24)*. John preached the baptism of repentance to the people and caused them to turn back, and he did not say that he himself was the Christ. Saying that he was not worthy even to loose the sandals of the One coming after him, he revealed Jesus. We too must hear the word and turn our hearts away from the direction in which we used to establish our own righteousness, toward the Savior, who gives the real remission of sins.

We must distinguish the baptism of repentance that John gave to the people from the baptism Jesus received from John, and know the difference. Jesus did not receive baptism because He had sins to repent of. Rather, by receiving baptism from John, the representative of mankind, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death. Just as the sacrificial offering in the Old Testament had sin passed on to

it through the laying on of hands, Jesus bore our sins, and that sin of the world includes all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die.

The Savior, who rose again from death

Paul tells his listeners who fear God that this word of salvation has been sent to them. What a person who reads the word needs is to know and accept that salvation has reached him as well. If he simply passes it by with the mind of one hearing about something that happened long ago, he will miss the fact that his own sins are also included in the sin of the world that Jesus bore. Only when we know the reason the Lord came in connection with our sins does that salvation become the faith in my heart.

The rulers in Jerusalem heard the words of the prophets every Sabbath, yet they did not know Jesus or those words, and so they condemned Him. Paul speaks of that event as follows: *"And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death" (Acts 13:28)*. See clearly here the fact that Jesus was not hung on the Cross because He had sins of His own. It is because the sinless Savior had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John that He received the judgment on the Cross in our place and rose again from death.

Jesus, who had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again from death. He Himself paid the price of that sin which had been passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. So there is the Cross because there was the baptism, and the blood of the Cross is not a death unrelated

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to our sins, but the sacrifice of the Savior, who received in our place the judgment we should have received. Paul says that the words written in the Scriptures concerning Jesus were fulfilled and that He was laid in a tomb, and then he testifies that death was not the end.

That testimony is verse 30. *"But God raised Him from the dead" (Acts 13:30)*. By God's raising Jesus from the dead, the Savior completed our salvation and gave us new life, so the resurrection of Jesus is the very coming to life of me and you. To believe the fact that we have come to life through this salvation Jesus accomplished is the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The resurrection the apostles preached is good news that concerns our remission of sins and our life.

Jesus was seen for many days by those who had come up with Him from Galilee, and they became witnesses before the people. Paul too, while preaching the promise given to the fathers, made it clear that God had raised up Jesus and fulfilled that promise. Paul was not proposing a new way of salvation out of human thinking, but making known a fact that God had accomplished. Because the object of faith is this clear, we can rely on the word of that testimony rather than on our own feelings.

Citing the words of the Psalms, Paul testified of the Son of God and of the resurrection, and he distinguished David from Jesus. David served according to the will of God in his own generation, then died and was buried with his fathers, but the One whom God raised up did not see corruption. Paul did not exalt David and make him the basis of salvation; rather, he made known the Savior, who fulfilled the promise given to David. We too must not stop at the excellence of a human being, but must believe in Jesus Christ, who is living now.

Receive the remission of sins through Jesus

Now listen to the conclusion Paul preaches to his listeners. *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38)*. All the things said so far point to the remission of sins that is received through this Man, Jesus. Paul continues: *"And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39)*. This means that everyone who believes is made righteous through Jesus, even in the things in which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Because Jesus actually removed our sins, which the law exposes, through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and His resurrection, we receive the remission of sins by believing not in our own deeds but in the work of the Savior.

The expression "through Jesus" does not mean that I become righteous by adding a little of the Lord's help to my own efforts; it means taking the fact that the Lord has removed all our sins as the complete basis of salvation. Wrongs and shortcomings still show up in our lives, but we must not judge, each time they show up, that the Savior's work was lacking. Though people are weak, what God has done is perfect, and God does not make a person who has once become righteous into a sinner again. Therefore, believing in the salvation in which He has already borne all sins, we must correct our wrong conduct and follow the word of the Lord.

While preaching salvation, Paul did not leave out a warning either. Telling them to beware lest what the prophets had spoken come upon them, he warned against the contempt of those who hear of what God has done and yet cannot believe it. We must examine whether we too have a heart that regards the word that

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God has removed all the sins of people once and for all as something wholly unbelievable. Do not judge, on the grounds that you are weak, that the almighty Savior cannot remove all your sins, but accept what He has done just as the word says.

When he was asked in the synagogue for a word of exhortation for the people, Paul made known the salvation God had accomplished. We too, as we hear the Bible, must not look for new conditions of salvation, but must set our hearts on Jesus, who came as promised and fulfilled that promise. Since the Savior, who rose again from death, has remitted all our sins, believe the fact that you have been justified through Him. The word of salvation God has sent is preaching this Jesus to us today as well. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The Gentiles also believe the word of salvation and rejoice

< Acts 13:44–52 >

“On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: “I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.”’ Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

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The multitude hearing the word and the heart of envy

When people who wanted to hear the word of God gathered in Antioch in Pisidia, not everyone rejoiced at it. What Paul preached was the news that Jesus Christ had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death, so that people receive the remission of sins through Him. But some people, rather than looking at that word, saw the multitude that had gathered and were envious. As the same gospel of the water and the Spirit was being preached, those who accepted the word and those who slandered it were divided. This passage makes us, too, examine the heart that puts our own thoughts ahead of the word of God. This is because if one resents another person's hearing the word of salvation, one ends up opposing even God, who is working for that person's salvation.

Let us read verse 45. *"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 13:45)*. Envy made them resent even other people's hearing the word, and that heart showed itself in the action of refuting and slandering what Paul said. This scene shows that people who claim to serve God can oppose the salvation of God. This is because the fact of having known the Bible for a long time, or the position one holds among people, cannot take the place of the faith that believes the word.

Paul and Barnabas, not pressed down by the voices of slander, did not change the gospel of the water and the Spirit. In verse 46 the two said, *"Since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46)*.

What was at issue here was not that those Jews had failed to meet the qualifications of good deeds, but that they had rejected the word of God that had been preached to them. One cannot reject the word of the One who gives everlasting life and still say that one will obtain everlasting life. There had been Jews who followed the word earlier, and the two apostles were also Jews, so the difference revealed in this situation was not ethnic origin, but whether one believes the word of God or rejects it. In the light of this warning, we too must cast away the heart that exalts our own judgment and pushes the gospel away.

The salvation to be preached to the ends of the earth

Before those who rejected the word, Paul and Barnabas made clear the Lord's command that had been given to them. That command was the reason the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which they had preached first to the Jews, had to be preached to the Gentiles as well. In verse 47 the two apostles say as follows: *"For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 13:47)*. The preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles belonged to the command God had given. Therefore, the opposition of the people who were there could not determine the mission of the two apostles, and the word of salvation had to be preached also to the Gentiles who had not heard the gospel.

Because the sin Jesus bore is the sin of the whole world, the news of that salvation is also preached to the whole world. Jesus, the Son of God, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John; the sins we will commit throughout our lifetime were included in it, and the sins

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of no nation were left out of that salvation. To pay the price of that sin of the world, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we should have received, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. We do not add to this salvation by our own deeds; rather, we receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit with our hearts.

To preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the Gentiles is to make known to them that this very salvation has been accomplished for them too. There is no reason for those who heard the word first to hinder the salvation of others or to think that grace should be only for themselves. Because Jesus, who bore our sins, also bore that person's sins, we must preach what the Lord has accomplished before asking what kind of background that person has lived in. The word about bringing salvation to the ends of the earth gives us who believe both a reason to look upon other souls and the content we are to preach.

Praise the word that has given salvation

The Gentiles rejoiced when they heard the word that salvation was being preached to them too. Let us read verse 48. *"Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48)*. What these people praised was not Paul's eloquence or their own righteousness but the word of God. Because they heard the news that they too would receive eternal life, they gave thanks to God, who bestowed salvation. In the record that those to whom God had determined to give eternal life believed, we also see the grace of the One who bestows salvation.

That we have received the remission of sins is also grace that God has bestowed in Christ. We had no righteous deeds to wash away sin, but because Jesus bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay their price, rose again from death, and saved us, even a person who knows his own shortcomings can give thanks to God, who has given eternal life. This joy is not a satisfaction gained by treating one's own sins lightly; it comes from believing the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which says that the Lord has actually removed those sins. Therefore, rather than doubting the salvation we have received as we look at our own lacking deeds, we must rely on Jesus, who has washed away even those sins, and praise the word that has delivered us from sin.

As the Gentiles believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and rejoiced, the Bible records, *"And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region" (Acts 13:49)*. The people who had at first gathered to hear the word now came to believe and praise that word, and the news of salvation spread widely throughout that region. We too must preach the gospel, longing for this work of salvation. We must preach the salvation of Jesus clearly so that those who hear can know how their sins were washed away, and we must also share that word together with those who already believe. Only when we know the basis of our joy will our hearts not depart from the gospel even when opposition arises.

The joy that remained even after they were driven out

As the word was spreading, those who opposed it stirred up the influential people of the city and drove Paul and Barnabas

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out. The two apostles shook off the dust from their feet and went to Iconium, and the Bible describes the disciples after the apostles had left as follows: *"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52)*. The disciples were able to rejoice even after the two apostles were driven out because the salvation preached to them was what Jesus had accomplished. Because they had received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit dwelt within them, they remained in that word and enjoyed the joy of salvation even after those who had been preaching to them left.

We too need to distinguish between the opposition of people and the joy of faith. When you meet opposition while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, tell the Lord of that pain, but do not doubt, because of it, the salvation the Lord has given you. The basis on which the Holy Spirit dwells within us does not lie in our circumstances being comfortable, but in our believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which has washed away our sins. When we serve the gospel according to the will of the Lord with that faith, our hearts become one with the work in which the Holy Spirit delights.

The Gentiles who had first gathered to hear the word became disciples who believed the word of salvation and rejoiced. The word that gave them life remained in their hearts as true salvation even after the two apostles were driven out. Let us also not let our hearts be taken away by the words of those who oppose, but hold fast to the word of God, who has given eternal life. Because the fact that the Lord has washed away our sins does not change, we can give thanks to Him, and with that thanksgiving we can preach the news of salvation even to those who have not yet heard the word. Let us know the grace by

which He bestowed salvation even on the Gentiles, and live rejoicing in the remission of sins He has given us. ✉

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CHAPTER

14

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The word of grace preached by relying on the Lord

< Acts 14:1–7 >

“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. And they were preaching the gospel there.”

The multitude who believed and the people who harbored ill will

Although they heard the same word in the same synagogue, people’s responses were not the same. In Iconium, a multitude arose who believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and those who did not believe stirred up the minds of other people and made them harbor ill will against the brethren. When we

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who preach the gospel meet such things, it is easy for us to worry first whether we have spoken wrongly, but what we must examine first is not changing the content of salvation to fit people's responses, but whom we rely on and what word we preach.

Let us read verse 1. *"Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed" (Acts 14:1)*. When the two apostles went into the synagogue and spoke, a great multitude of both the Jews and the Greeks believed. Because God is not only the God of the Jews but also the God of the Gentiles, the same gospel of the water and the Spirit was preached to people who were different from one another, and they heard that word and believed. The work of saving souls does not lie in making different paths according to the background of those who hear. Because there is Jesus, who bore the sins of all the people of the world, we can preach that salvation to anyone.

What Paul spoke in the synagogue was not a righteousness that people obtain by keeping the commandments or performing rituals. It was the same word he had preached in the synagogue in Antioch just before. *"And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39)*. Because Jesus Christ has removed our sins, people are justified by relying on His name. To hear the word and believe does not stop at being glad to hear the name of the Savior; it is to accept the work in which He removed all my sins, and to set on Jesus the heart that had tried to obtain salvation from one's own deeds.

What Paul testified of wherever he went was the baptism Jesus Christ received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. As Jesus received baptism from John, He had the

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sin of the whole world transferred to Him once and for all. At that time, our lifelong sins were also passed on to Jesus, and to pay the price of that sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and accomplished perfect salvation. That is why we believe in this remission of sins given through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We receive not a righteousness that people produce little by little, but the righteousness the Savior has already accomplished.

However, there were people who heard this grace and still did not accept it. Let us read verse 2. *"But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren" (Acts 14:2)*. To obey God's salvation is to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus fulfilled through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Therefore, those who do not obey come to judge what the Lord has accomplished by human thoughts, and through unbelief they remain sinners. Those who stirred up the people were not people who did not know God, but people who read the Scriptures in the synagogue and claimed to believe in God well. Where the work of the gospel takes place, turmoil also arises in this way, so we too must examine our hearts so that our own familiar judgments do not go ahead of the word.

Words that make others harbor ill will block even the opportunity for the souls who hear them to confirm the content of salvation. If we first hear someone's evaluation of a person and do not try to look into the word that person preaches, people's words come ahead of examining the truth of the Bible. We must not judge salvation merely by rumors about the one who preaches, but must confirm in the written word what Jesus

has done, and a heart that knows the basis of salvation is not so easily stirred up.

The Lord testified of the word of His grace

The two apostles did not immediately shut their mouths just because people harbored ill will. Let us read verse 3. *"Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:3)*. The two apostles stayed a long time and spoke boldly by relying on the Lord, and the Lord testified of the word of His grace. It was not that the Lord assisted while the apostles exalted their own ability; rather, the One they relied on was the Lord, and the One who testified of the word they preached was also the Lord. We can become witnesses of the gospel and preach the word not because of our own ability, but because of the Lord, who works through us and bears witness to the word of His grace.

To rely on the Lord is different from resolving to oppose people with a louder voice when their reactions grow fierce. It is believing that the One who removed our sins and made us righteous is with us. If we keep speaking only with the conviction that we ourselves are right, it easily becomes a quarrel to defeat others, but a heart that knows the grace of the Savior seeks to preach the salvation that souls who do not yet believe need. At the center of our boldness there must be the life Jesus has given.

The reason the Lord caused signs and wonders to be done is also revealed in this word. The Lord did not exalt the apostles with signs, but testified of the word of His grace; the signs were given so that the gospel of the water and the Spirit would be

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spread. It was not done to make those who heard marvel only at the fact that the apostles had special power; its purpose was to make them know the salvation of Jesus, who gives the remission of sins to sinners. Therefore, when we too read the stories of signs, we must not remain with a heart that looks for powerful people, but must listen to that word of salvation.

At that time, before the Bible had been completely written, God confirmed the gospel of the water and the Spirit through such special works, but now God works through the word. Today we have been given the written Bible, so God teaches us through that word, and the Holy Spirit helps us to realize and believe in the Savior's work. Do not close your heart, saying that you will believe only if a special work takes place before your eyes. The work of Jesus, who bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and received that judgment in our place, and rose again from death, has already been accomplished, and the Bible testifies of that fact; so what we need is not a demand to produce new evidence of salvation, but the faith that receives the word the Lord has given just as it is.

The multitude of the city was divided; some followed the unbelieving Jews, and some followed the two apostles. The truth is not determined by which side has more people. Just because everyone likes a message does not mean that the message gives the remission of sins, and just because there are people who oppose it does not mean that the Lord's grace becomes incomplete. Those who believe in what God has done are the ones who have received the remission of sins, so we must know what the salvation God has accomplished is and hold fast to that word.

Preach salvation even in the place you have moved to

Finally, the Gentiles and the Jews, with their rulers, rushed at the two apostles to abuse them and stone them. Hostility that had arisen in words led to an attempt to harm their bodies, and such difficulties can come even to those who have been saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If we think that there will be no opposition at all on the path of believing in the Lord, we will come to doubt even the grace of the Savior when we meet difficulties. However, this is not something to fear but something that naturally happens where the gospel is preached, and God protects His servants who preach the gospel.

The two apostles became aware of this and fled to Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding region. Do not turn their moving away to avoid danger into a judgment that they lacked faith. They were not people who obtained salvation by actions that put their lives at risk; they were God's servants who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit entrusted to them. If we cannot keep staying in a certain place, we can preach the word of salvation in another place as well, so our service is not a matter of proving our own courage but of making life known to souls.

Let us read verse 7. *"And they were preaching the gospel there" (Acts 14:7)*. They preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit even in the place they had moved to. The place changed, but the content of the salvation to be preached did not change, and people's hostility could not take away the grace they had received either. If the word we preach is the word of God, no one can stop that word. Because they knew the fact that the Lord had removed the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, they preached that news to other souls as well; so we too, when

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things are blocked, must not cling only to our own plans and become discouraged, but must look for the souls to whom we can preach the word now.

Let us think again about the division between faith and ill will that took place at first in the synagogue. What the two apostles relied on was not an expectation that all people would view them favorably, but the Lord. Let us also not measure the gospel of the water and the Spirit by people's reactions, but rely on the Savior, who testifies of the word of grace. When we clearly preach the salvation Jesus has accomplished wherever we are, we can serve standing on the word of the Lord, which is more certain than people's evaluations. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Turn to the living God

< Acts 14:8–18 >

"And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet!' And he leaped and walked. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them."

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The multitude who tried to exalt men

In Lystra, when a man stood up and walked, the multitude called Paul and Barnabas gods and tried to sacrifice to them. Even after seeing an amazing work, their hearts did not turn to God, who had done that work, but they tried to exalt men. We too, when we receive help or see a special work, can have our hearts captured by the person who became its channel. The reason we hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not to exalt people, but to know the living God and to turn to Him.

There sat a man who had been unable to use his feet from birth and had never walked. When we look at this man's condition spiritually, it is also the picture of all of us; we were born as sinners from birth and were people who could not stand rightly before God even a single step on our own. Let us read verse 9. *"This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed" (Acts 14:9)*. He was listening to Paul's words, and Paul, observing him intently, saw that he had faith to be saved. When there is a person who fears God, God sends His servant to him and meets him through the word of truth. Do not pass over the act of hearing the word in this record. It is important to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Savior has given and to accept it in our hearts, and if we pursue only amazing visible results, we will miss the content of that salvation.

Let us read verse 10. *"Said with a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet!' And he leaped and walked" (Acts 14:10)*. At Paul's words the man leaped and walked, but what raised him up was not Paul's godliness or power. It was Jesus Christ who healed that man—Jesus Christ, who had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, rose again, and saved us from sin.

God desires that people receive the remission of sins in their hearts more than that their bodies be healed. Even if the body rises up, if a person dies with sin, he goes to hell, so what we need first of all is to know and believe in the salvation of Jesus, who removes sin.

Seeing that work, the multitude called Paul and Barnabas according to their own familiar way of thinking. They called Barnabas Zeus and Paul, who was speaking, Hermes, and cried out that the gods had come down in the likeness of men. We must distinguish the fact that they were amazed from the judgment that their amazement had become faith that knows God. Just because power was manifested in a person does not mean that person becomes our Savior; the apostles too were people with the same nature as us, who had received the remission of sins from Jesus and become righteous. We should give thanks for the fact that God worked through them, but if we shift to a person the faith and glory that should be given to God, then even while hearing the salvation of Jesus which that person seeks to preach, we will fail to set our hearts on the Savior Himself.

The One who made all things came as the Savior

Barnabas and Paul made it clear to the multitude who were trying to sacrifice that they themselves were men. Let us read verse 15. *"And saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them'" (Acts 14:15)*. The purpose of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit was to make them abandon useless

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things and turn to the living God, who made all things. Their words telling the people not to sacrifice to them were not merely a display of a humble attitude, but words that rightly made clear who it is that souls must believe in and rely on.

Religion that comes out of people's heads and faith that believes in what God has done are different. The god the multitude spoke of was something they called a god because some power appeared in a person, and it was one among the many gods in the world. However, the God we believe in is the Absolute One who made the sun and the moon, heaven and earth and all things, man, and the souls of men, and He alone is living. We must know through His word what He has done, and we must not try to make up a God to fit our own thoughts and believe in Him.

Jesus Christ is this Creator, who put on flesh and came as the Savior to solve the problem of our sins. The multitude clamored that the gods had come down in the likeness of men, but the One who truly came in a human body was the one God, who made all things. Jesus is not One who merely told us a way to wash away sin and left it to us to accomplish it ourselves. Because people have no ability to remove their own sins, Jesus Himself bore our sins; so when we hear the word that tells us to turn to God, we must not stop at a vague resolve to change our lives, but must know the work of the remission of sins that He has accomplished.

The priest brought oxen and tried to offer sacrifice, but that was not the sacrifice God had ordained. Just as in the Old Testament, when a sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering, his sin was passed on to that offering and the offering died in the sinner's place, so in the New Testament Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind.

Because of that sin, Jesus shed His blood on the Cross and paid the price of sin, and three days after He died He rose again and gave life to those who believe. Since the Almighty has removed the sin of the world perfectly in this way through the water and the blood, those who believe in that gospel of the water and the Spirit as their own salvation become righteous before God.

The heart that tried to produce righteousness by its own efforts must change direction upon hearing this salvation. Both the heart that tried to gain something by sacrificing to people and the heart that relied on people as if they were the Savior must be turned to Jesus, who removed all our sins. Repentance is not merely saying that we did wrong and staying where we are; it is turning around from the path of wrong belief and believing in what the Lord has accomplished. Because there is the righteousness the Lord has given, we can now stop the toil of trying to obtain salvation by piling up more of our own righteousness. The servant of God who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit to us did not receive the judgment for sin in our place, nor did his godliness wash away our sins; so while we give thanks to him for having preached to us the salvation Jesus Himself accomplished, we must place our faith in the Savior.

Know the grace that has been given, and abandon useless things

Paul said that in bygone generations God had allowed all nations to walk in their own ways, yet he also made it clear that God had not failed to testify of Himself. Let us read verse 17. *"'Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons,*

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filling our hearts with food and gladness'" (Acts 14:17). The One who gives rain from heaven, gives fruitful seasons, and satisfies hearts with food and gladness is God. Since God has given all things to people, the grace given by the Creator is contained even in what we enjoy every day, and we must not forget the One who is the source of that grace.

Even people's eating and living depend on all the things God has given. If we think we live by our own strength alone, we fail to recognize the One who gave them, but if we know that God has bestowed what is needed for life and living, we come to give thanks even for the things we used to take for granted. God comes to and meets the person who has a heart that, even without knowing anything else, at least knows that God exists, and who therefore wishes to become a right person before God. However, we must not stop at enjoying food and satisfaction in our circumstances, but must receive the grace of salvation that has washed away even the sins of our souls.

The fact that God loved us and removed our sins is a ground for gratitude deeper than any other help. Even if we have seen a body raised up, if the problem of sin remains, we cannot stand boldly before God. When we believe in the work in which Jesus bore all sins through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and thus receive the remission of sins in our hearts, at the same time the Holy Spirit comes as a gift, is with us, and makes us know the grace of the Savior. Because we have received that salvation, we can call upon God and live following His word.

Let us read verse 18. *"And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them" (Acts 14:18)*. By saying these things, the two apostles could scarcely restrain the multitude and keep them from sacrificing to them. They did not leave alone the people's exalting them, but

preached the word so that the useless things would stop. Those who believe in God must keep away from idols; an idol is loving and pursuing something else more than God, and placing a person in God's place is also one of these. When we serve the Lord, we too must not blur the object of our faith because of people's praise, but must set the purpose of our service on making souls know the Savior and give thanks to Him.

The event in which a man who had never walked came to walk could not be a reason to exalt a person as a god. Just as Paul and Barnabas preached to that multitude, our hearts too must turn toward God, who made all things and has given us salvation. Place on the Savior the expectations that had rested on people, and believe in the remission of sins He has given. When we rightly know and believe in the One who has given us life, the admiration that arose from seeing an amazing work leads to thanksgiving offered to the living God. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The Church stands in faith in the midst of tribulation

< Acts 14:19–28 >

"Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.' So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. So they stayed there a long time with the disciples."

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The path of the gospel that continued after the stoning

The disciples gathered around the place where Paul, having been stoned, had been dragged out of the city. In Lystra, where not long before people had called the two apostles gods, they now cast Paul out, supposing him to be dead. People's reactions change like this, but the grace of the Savior on which the Church relies does not change. Let us look together at the words Paul left to the disciples on that path, about what we must stand on in faith when we meet tribulation.

Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium stirred up the multitude and stoned Paul. Those who had followed him all the way here were the ones who, in that Antioch, had despised as utterly unbelievable the word that Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death. They cast Paul out of the city, supposing him to be dead, but the work of the word entrusted to him did not end in that scene. The fact that a person who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit received such hostility turns us away from the thought that there will be no difficulties at all if we serve the Lord, while it also shows that God protects His servants who preach the gospel.

Let us read verse 20. *"When the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe" (Acts 14:20)*. When the disciples gathered around him, Paul rose up and went into the city, and the next day he went with Barnabas to Derbe. Paul, who had been stoned, set out on the road again, and the two preached the word of salvation in Derbe as well; so if the word we preach is the word of God, no one can stop it. The gospel of the water

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and the Spirit they had received was preached to the souls of the next city as well. We too must not stop at looking only at the scene of suffering and magnifying it, but must know the word of salvation that continued to be preached on that path.

After making many disciples in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia. Anyone who has received the remission of sins can become a witness of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and the Church grows through the witnesses raised up in this way. After they preached the gospel of the remission of sins to people, the work of caring for their hearts followed; because even those who have heard the gospel easily lose hold of the basis of the salvation they have received when they meet difficulties, it was necessary to teach them in what faith they should stand. The service of the Church is not something that ends upon hearing people say that they have come to believe for the first time.

We too must take an interest in what the brethren believe. When life is peaceful, everyone seems to have assurance, but when tribulation comes, they may think that the Lord has abandoned them; at such times, rather than urging them merely to add more of their own efforts, we must let them know that the salvation Jesus has bestowed does not change according to circumstances.

Commend them to the Lord and establish them firmly in the faith

Let us read Paul's exhortation in verse 22. *"Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22)*. Strengthening the hearts of the

disciples, he exhorted them to continue in this faith and made it clear that they must go through many tribulations. He taught them this so that they would not judge their faith to be wrong merely because tribulation had come. On the path of believing in the Lord and looking toward the kingdom of God there are also hostility and difficulties, so we must clearly know the basis of salvation to hold on to in the midst of them.

This faith is not an expectation that if we vaguely call on the name of Jesus, our circumstances will someday improve. The faith of the apostles was the faith that believes in the water, the blood, and the Spirit, and our faith now is also the same faith. *"For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV" (1 John 5:8).* The water is the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood is the blood He shed on the Cross to pay the price of the sin of the world that had been passed on to Him in this way, and the Spirit is the One who comes into those who have believed this and received the remission of sins, and testifies. Since He saved us not by water only, nor by blood only, but by the water, the blood, and the Spirit, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not complete if the baptism Jesus received from John is left out, if the blood of the Cross is left out, or if His resurrection from death is left out. The exhortation to continue in this faith is an exhortation to believe all of it just as it is, without leaving out any one of these.

Therefore, the degree to which we endure many tribulations does not become the price of the remission of sins. The One who made us righteous is Jesus, and the suffering we go through does not make the Lord's work more complete. God does not make a person who has once become righteous a sinner again; people may be weak, but God is perfect, and human shortcomings cannot destroy God's perfection. Even when our weakness is

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exposed in the face of suffering, we must hold on to the word that the Savior bore all sins, rely on Him, and take a step forward again.

The exhortation to continue in this faith also contains a heart to be together with the Church. If we hold only to our own thoughts by ourselves, the greater the difficulties look, the more our assurance of salvation can become blurred; but if we hear the word together and confirm what the Savior has done, we can look again at the Lord's righteousness, which is greater than our weakness. This is why, no matter how lacking and weak we are, we must stay attached to the Church of God. Let us not lightly judge the difficulties of other brethren, but care for one another with the heart that all of us are people who need the same grace.

Let us read verse 23. *"So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23)*. The apostles chose elders in each church, fasted and prayed, and commended them to the Lord in whom they believed. They did not appoint people and then leave everything to them, thinking that those people would now solve everything; rather, even while laboring to appoint them, they entrusted them to Jesus, the Master of the Church, and sought His help. In the early church, at a time when persecution was severe and it was hard to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they prayed all the more. Only when both those who teach and the brethren who learn believe in the same Lord can the Church stand in faith.

Having the responsibility of caring for the Church does not make one the master of souls. We must not try to hold on to people with our own words, but must let them know the salvation the Lord has accomplished and serve them so that they themselves rely on the Lord's word. The faith that commends

them to the Lord is not abandoning our labor, but knowing whom we must rely on even while we labor.

The One who opened the door of faith is God

The apostles passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia, and after preaching the word in Perga as well, they went down to Attalia. Let us read verse 25. *"Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia" (Acts 14:25)*. Even on the way back, they preached the word. The word Paul preached was the doctrine of the resurrection—that Jesus received baptism from John, had our sins passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again on the third day. It was not a teaching that made people belong to Paul, but a word that made known that Jesus had removed sin.

They sailed to Antioch, which had sent them out. This is a different place from Antioch in Pisidia, where they had stopped earlier while visiting several cities; it is the church where the two had been commended to the grace of God for the work. Even when they were sent out, they relied on grace, and after returning they also reported what God had done. What connected the beginning and the end was not boasting in the apostles' ability but the grace of the Lord, who had been with them.

Let us read verse 27. *"Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27)*. They gathered the church together and reported all that God had done with them and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. The apostles traveled many roads, but the One who saved souls was God. Because Jesus, by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, bore once and

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for all not only the sins of the Jews but the sins of all the people in the whole world, shed His blood on the Cross and paid the price of those sins, and rose again from death, the same gospel of the water and the Spirit was preached to the Gentiles as well, and to those who believed, the same gift, the Holy Spirit, was also given. God has opened the door to the whole world so that the gospel would be preached; so when the Church hears that news, the One to whom it should give thanks together, beyond the people who labored, is God, who bestowed salvation.

While serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we may still wish that our own labor would be recognized first. But if we know God, who opens the door of faith, we can rejoice because of the fact that other souls have been saved, and even if my role seems small, I do not become discouraged. Because everything that God's servants do today in the Church of God is a continuation of the Book of Acts, the service of each of us is for the work of the same Lord. Let us gratefully accept one another's labor, while together praising the grace that made that labor possible.

Even after returning, Paul and Barnabas stayed with the disciples a long time. The conclusion of the path they had taken after being stoned did not lie in becoming disappointed with people and drifting away from the Church. It lay in abiding in the faith of the salvation they had received, caring for the brethren, and rejoicing together in the door of salvation God had opened. When we meet tribulation, let us not test our own strength alone, but hold fast to the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Lord has given us together with the Church, and commend one another to Him. ✉

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CHAPTER

15

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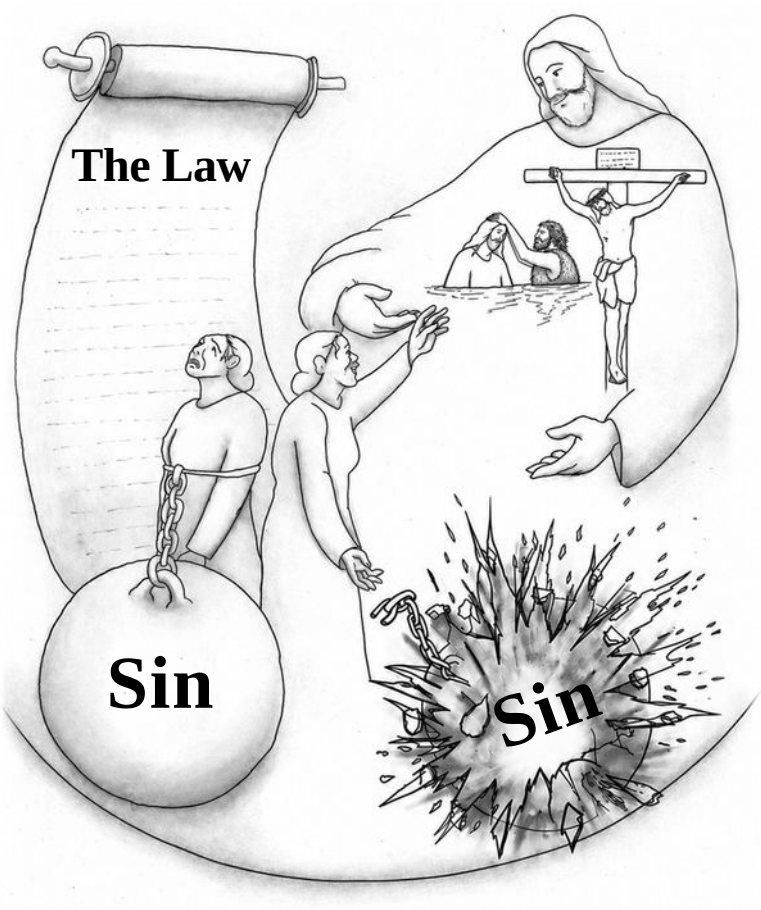

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The grace of salvation to which no human conditions can be added

< Acts 15:1–5 >

“And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.’”

The teaching that shook the joy of the brethren

To the brethren who had heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, the word was

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conveyed that they had to be circumcised to be saved. People who had been rejoicing because they believed in the salvation Jesus accomplished—by having the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, by shedding His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and by rising again from death—now came to ask what more they had to do to their own bodies. What we must examine at this point is not so much where the people who conveyed that word came from, but where that teaching places the basis of salvation. This is because we cannot believe that the Lord has accomplished everything and at the same time accept man's deeds as a remaining condition of salvation.

Let us read verse 1. *"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved'" (Acts 15:1)*. Attached to the urging to be circumcised are the words that they cannot be saved. Therefore, this problem was not merely a matter of choosing one habit of life. Because it was a problem that decided whether the work of Jesus, who gave the remission of sins, was sufficient, or whether man had to add something to it, Paul and Barnabas could not quietly accept it, and this matter became a great problem within the early church.

Even so, the work of keeping the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not end in people quarreling with one another. When we look at verse 2, the brethren determined to send Paul and Barnabas and some others to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. The church sent people so that this problem could be confirmed together, and Paul and Barnabas, too, did not leave the brethren after merely insisting that they themselves were right. When the content of the gospel is shaken, we must make clear through the word what we believed in to receive the remission of sins.

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What they reported on the way to Jerusalem was not only a matter of dispute. Let us read verse 3. *"So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren" (Acts 15:3)*. The news that the Gentiles had turned to the Lord caused great joy to the brethren. Because it was not a boast about who had done how great a work, but the news that God had saved sinners, the brethren who heard it also rejoiced together. If we treat those Gentiles as incomplete people who still need to receive more salvation, we end up binding even this joy that God has bestowed under human conditions.

Know rightly the basis on which we are made righteous

In what Paul and Barnabas reported in Jerusalem as well, the One who acted was God. Let us read verse 4. *"And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them" (Acts 15:4)*. Look at the passage saying that they told of all the things God had done by being with them. Although there was the labor of the people who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the One who saved souls was God, and the content of that salvation was not a method newly made up by man either. The two men preached the work of Jesus Christ, who removed sin, and those who heard believed in that salvation and turned to the Lord.

We cannot find the way to be made righteous before God in our own deeds. This is because knowing the law and fulfilling all of the law are different things. We, who know the right commandments and yet break those commandments, need a

Savior who will deliver us from the judgment of sin. Even if we think that our past sins will disappear if we add good deeds, the sins we have already committed remain as they are, and rituals performed on the body cannot remove the sin of the heart either.

Therefore, God removed sin not by a method made by man, but by God's own method. Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River; because of that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for that sin in our place; and by rising again from death, He showed that the remission of that sin is complete. Circumcision and the deeds of the law are things man does to his own body and life, but the remission of sins that came through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross is the work God has done concerning the sin of our hearts. To believe in the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished in this way is our faith.

Faith that believes in the work of the Savior who bore our sins and a heart that trusts in its own deeds differ in the very basis of salvation. If I believe in the work of Jesus, I receive the remission of sins He has already accomplished, but if I wait until my deeds become sufficient, I cannot put an end to the problem of sin. This is because today's resolution cannot erase yesterday's sins, and setting up a resolution for tomorrow does not give one the ability to live the rest of one's life perfectly. The Lord knew this whole life of ours and bore all of that sin.

This difference is clear also in the word Paul preached earlier. Let us read chapter 13, verse 39. *"And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39)*. It means that the righteousness that could not be obtained by the law of Moses is obtained by relying on Jesus. The remission of sins is not accomplished by deeds but is received by believing in the

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salvation Jesus Christ has given, and saying that we believe in Jesus also does not stop at acknowledging His name; it is to accept that He removed my sins through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. We cannot again demand the deeds of the law as a condition of salvation from a person who has been made righteous by this faith.

No human conditions can be added to the grace of salvation

Let us read verse 5. *"But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses'" (Acts 15:5)*. Some of the believers from the sect of the Pharisees rose up and demanded circumcision and the keeping of the law. Because they were people who knew the Scriptures well, this claim became an even greater problem, but the mere fact that they knew the Scriptures well does not mean that their claim agrees with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is because one can talk about the salvation of Jesus and yet in the end set up what man must do as the basis of the remission of sins. We must not look only at the zeal of the speaker, but must examine whether those words lead people to believe in the perfect work of Jesus.

There are times when the thought enters our hearts too that we can only feel at ease if we add something. A heart that discovers its own shortcomings and wants to live rightly is needed, but we must not think of correcting our deficient deeds as filling an empty space in salvation. The remission of sins is not a result produced because the standard of our lives has risen;

rather, because Jesus removed all sins, we have believed in that salvation and become righteous. It is those who are thankful for that grace who go on correcting their lives as well before the word.

Therefore, even when exhorting a brother, we must not blur the basis of the salvation already received. First make clear what the Lord has accomplished, and then make known why a person who has received that salvation must live relying on God. If we look only at outward deeds and divide the brethren, saying that one brother has received complete salvation while another must still fill in more, we end up putting human judgment ahead of Jesus, who gave the same salvation to all. Our exhortation must lead a brother to rely on the Savior even more.

The church's confirming this problem together was also for the sake of keeping this grace. Many opinions do not make many ways of salvation, nor does people's agreement make the work of Jesus perfect. When we believe in and testify of that work, which is already perfect, together, we can rejoice in the salvation of other souls and have fellowship in faith.

Let us think again about why the brethren in Phoenicia and Samaria rejoiced. They rejoiced because of the news that God had saved the Gentiles, and the basis of that joy is the same for us now. Do not try to resolve again by our own deeds the sins that Jesus has removed. The basis on which we answer the question of whether circumcision can be added to salvation is the grace of Jesus Christ alone, who accomplished all things for us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

We, too, are saved by the same grace

< Acts 15:6–11 >

"Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: 'Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.'"

What God testified of first

When we try to judge whether someone else has received salvation, we tend to look first at what we ourselves have been accustomed to keeping. Before the people gathered in Jerusalem, too, words were spoken demanding circumcision and the law from the Gentiles. However, Peter did not ask how much they resembled us, but testified of what God had already done for them. Because the standard for judging salvation does not lie

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with man, we too must first look at the One who acted in the events Peter tells us about.

As the apostles and elders deliberated, there was much dispute. Since the fact that they talked a great deal with one another does not produce the answer of salvation, Peter spoke of how God had chosen him and caused the Gentiles to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit. First, God sent His servant, and the Gentiles heard that word and believed. In this order, in which God sent His servant to those who fear God so that they would hear the gospel, the will of God, who prepares the way of salvation and makes it known, is revealed.

Let us read verse 7. *"And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: 'Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe'" (Acts 15:7)*. Peter was not putting forward his own experience and telling them to follow their feelings rather than the law. For Peter, who had been preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the Jews, preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was something he experienced for the first time, and as he went through it, he came to know that God delights in the Gentiles too and saves them. God's salvation was wider than the boundaries Peter himself had held, and God made him realize that the Gentiles, too, were souls who must hear and believe in the gospel of Jesus.

Let us read in verse 8 the result of the word that was preached to them. *"So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us" (Acts 15:8)*. When Peter preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and all the people of that house received the remission of sins. God did not follow the distinctions that people make by looking at the outside; rather,

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He testified by giving the same gift to the hearts that believe in the gospel. Peter did not speak of them as people who had received a lesser salvation than his own, but made it clear that they had received the same Holy Spirit as had been given to us.

We must not exchange the evidence that the Holy Spirit has come upon someone for human passion or bodily sensations. God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the heart that believes in the remission of sins Jesus accomplished—by having the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, by shedding His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and by rising again from death—and the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit are not received separately. To think that one has received the Holy Spirit upon obtaining a strong feeling, while still thinking that sin remains, is to miss the basis of salvation. To know the gift God has given, one must first know who washed away the sin of that heart, and how.

He cleansed hearts by faith

Peter immediately goes on to speak of the content of that salvation. Let us read verse 9. *"And made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9)*. The One who cleansed the hearts is God, and the way to receive that salvation is not human customs or rituals performed on the body, but faith. Because the Gentiles accepted in their hearts what Jesus had done, they obtained the remission of sins, and God made no distinction between them and us.

Even while hearing the word that God has cleansed the heart, we may look at our own shortcomings and hesitate. However, if we had obtained the remission of sins because our deeds were sufficient, the word that He cleansed hearts by faith would not

have been necessary. Because the Savior, who knows our weakness, Himself dealt with sin, the heart that believes in that work does not make its own level the basis of salvation. It accepts the work of God, who washed away the sin of the heart, just as His word says.

Before Peter went to the house of a Gentile, God spoke in a vision. *"What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 10:15)*. This word, that God has cleansed, points to what Jesus did. Jesus came to this earth and, by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and those sins include the sin we had from birth, the sins we have committed until now, and even the sins we will commit in the future. Because of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross, received the judgment, and rose again from death; therefore, no sin can remain in the person who believes in that work. Because God has removed the sins of all people in this way, the heart that believes in that work becomes a clean heart.

Here there is no different price or qualification for each person. This is because the One who bore our sins and the One who bore the sins of the Gentiles are the same Jesus. We cannot divide people, saying that the Lord removed the sins of some, while others must remove their own sins by keeping the law. Since God has given us the Savior who bore all sins, anyone who believes in that salvation is made righteous, and the testimony that He gave the same Holy Spirit is also connected to the fact of having received this same remission of sins.

Therefore, when dealing with the brethren as well, we must first acknowledge what God has cleansed. Having believed for a long time does not give anyone the right to pass judgment on another brother's salvation, nor can we demand that he obtain the remission of sins again because we have discovered

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shortcomings in his life. A deficient life should be corrected by exhorting with the word, but we must preserve the basis that the righteousness of the heart was given by Jesus. The One on whom we must rely together is the perfect Savior.

Do not again lay a yoke that cannot be borne

Peter contrasts what God has done with the burden of the law. Let us read verse 10. *"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10)*. Their demand was putting on the other disciples a yoke that neither their fathers nor they themselves had been able to bear. No one can demand of others a righteousness he has not achieved himself and teach it as the way of salvation. If we could keep all of the law, the grace of Jesus would be unnecessary, but there is no one who has kept the whole law, and the only One who has fulfilled all the words of the law is Jesus.

Saying that we believe in grace does not mean that we make light of the commandments. Because we know how heavy the price of sin is, we rely on the Savior who received that judgment in our place. If we could have been saved by resolving not to commit sin, there would have been no reason for the Lord to bear our sins. But because we cannot remove sin by our resolutions, the Lord had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for those sins in our place, and rose again from death; therefore, we follow God in thankfulness for that grace.

Let us read verse 11. *"'But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner*

as they'" (Acts 15:11). Peter did not conclude that the Gentiles had to become like us in order to be saved. He confessed that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same manner as they. Because he acknowledged that he himself was a person who needed to receive grace, he could not tell another brother to qualify himself, and he made the basis of salvation that God has given clear to all alike. Sin remains in people not because their deeds are lacking, but because they do not accept and believe this grace that God has given.

Let us look back today at where we obtain the assurance of faith. The reassurance I get when I seem better than others by comparison collapses when the object of comparison changes, but the fact that Jesus removed our sins does not change according to our comparisons. Set your hearts before that sure word, and receive with joy the brethren who have received the same salvation. When we confirm together the righteousness the Savior has accomplished, instead of words that make us look at our own level, our faith becomes clearer.

At first, we tried to see how close other people were to us. Now, following Peter's confession, let us acknowledge that we, too, are people saved by grace in the same manner as they. Do not put on the brethren whom the Lord has cleansed a yoke that we ourselves could not bear. Before the one Savior, who cleansed the hearts of all, we are brethren who have received the same grace. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Do not trouble those who are turning to the Lord

< Acts 15:12–21 >

“Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, ‘Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: “After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.” Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.’”

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He called a people for His name

What must we tell a person who has turned to the Lord? We must rejoice together in the salvation he has received and lead him with the word, yet at times we demand that he first meet our standards and so trouble his heart. What James said in Jerusalem shows on what basis the church must treat souls in the face of such a problem. If we know that God has called His own people, we cannot set up another threshold of salvation before them.

After Peter had confessed that we are saved by grace, Barnabas and Paul reported what God had done among the Gentiles. Let us read verse 12. *"Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles" (Acts 15:12)*. The One who worked the miracles and wonders was God, and the two men made known what God had done through them. If we think of souls turning to the Lord as the personal ability of the apostles or as the achievement of the church, we will miss the salvation God has given.

What Paul preached to the Gentiles was the remission of sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we who hear of the miracles and wonders must not stay there, seeking only marvelous scenes. At that time, because the Scriptures had not yet all been written, God also worked through special events, but now He works through the written word. We must confirm the work of Jesus in that word and believe in it, and no special experience can replace the content of that salvation.

James speaks of what happened among the Gentiles by connecting it with the will of God. Let us read verse 14. *"Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14)*. That is, God visited the Gentiles in order to take out of them a people for His

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name. In the news that the Gentiles, too, can become God's people lies the grace of God, who washes away their sins and makes them His own people. When we know whose people those who have received salvation are, we come to respect what God has done rather than judging them by fitting them to ourselves.

The blessing of having become God's people is not a status that man has obtained by exalting himself. No one can remove his own sins or create the qualification to belong to God, but God Himself removed those sins and made us His own people. That way is the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had the sins of all nations transferred to Him all at once; because of those sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and paid the price of sin; and He rose again on the third day and established those who believe in Him as people without sin.

To those who believe in this work, God gives His acknowledgment, saying, "You are My child; you are one who has no sin at all." Therefore, the name "God's people" must hold thankfulness before our boasting. Within that thankfulness, I can also rejoice that another person has received the same grace that I was able to receive.

The salvation that agrees with the words of the prophets

James did not conclude his words with people's experiences alone, but made it clear that the words of the prophets agree with this. God's giving salvation to the Gentiles was not a new method suddenly made by people's agreement. Because it was a work accomplished according to the word the Lord had made

known from of old, the church had to hear that word and confirm the will of salvation. We must listen to the will of God, which was there before the familiar boundaries that people have set.

In the word James quoted, the promise to rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, is followed by its purpose. Let us read verse 17. *"So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things" (Acts 15:17)*. The will to have all the Gentiles seek the Lord is revealed here. In every nation there are people who fear God, and God gives the word so that such people may seek the Lord, and He sends His servants so that they may meet such people. As we hear this word, we must not limit those who are the object of salvation to the people around us or to people who resemble us.

To souls who fear God and seek the Lord, we must preach the content of salvation clearly. This is because if we end with vague words telling them to believe in God and live rightly, we cannot let them know how the sin of their hearts is removed. Jesus, whom God sent, is not One who merely gave words to help sinners, but the Savior who actually bore the sin of the world. We must preach what He has accomplished, so that those who hear may turn their hearts, which had been seeking salvation in their own deeds, to the Lord.

Being Gentiles does not mean that they can come to God only after first learning the customs of another people or gaining all of people's approval. Because there is Jesus, who bore all sins, anyone who believes in that salvation becomes one of God's people. To other souls who seek Him, too, do not hold out conditions newly made by man, but make known to them the Savior who removed the sin of their hearts.

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Discern your life within grace

Let us read verse 19. *"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19)*. James said not to trouble those who are turning to God, and this means not to add a burden to them by demanding that they must be circumcised and keep the law in order to be saved. Jesus had not only their sins but all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for them by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death, taking away all sin; so no one should tell them that they still have sin. If the church, while claiming to help a soul, makes the remission of sins that he has received uncertain, his heart becomes bound again to the labor of trying to obtain righteousness by his own strength.

Then, does a person who has been saved not need any exhortation for his life? Following his words not to lay burdens on them, James proposes to make known to them by letter the things they must stay away from. Let us read verse 20. *"But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20)*. In this word to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood, we must receive both meanings together: that no conditions should be added to salvation, and that those who have been saved must live with restraint.

A heart that loves and pursues other things more than God turns toward idols, and if we follow only the pleasures of the world, we lose the heart to serve the grace we have received. In the passage telling us to abstain from things strangled, too, we must guard against a life that pursues pleasure, and we must also abstain from sexual immorality. These are not things to refrain

from for a short while merely to avoid making people uncomfortable. They are exhortations that those who believe in God, who saved us, should keep in their hearts and follow even now.

If we turn this exhortation into the price of salvation, we end up laying again the burden of the law that was cast off earlier. On the other hand, if we think that any kind of life does not matter because we have received the remission of sins, we turn away from the will of God, who saved us. Grace has delivered us from the judgment of sin, and the heart that knows that grace follows what pleases the Lord, in thankfulness to Him. When our lives go wrong, we must not hide it or rationalize it, but must turn around before the word.

Verse 21 says that the reading of the writings of Moses in the synagogues of every city continues. What we need where we hear the written word is not to boast of the righteousness of the law, but to realize our sin and to know Jesus, who resolved that sin. Even those who know much of the Scriptures must take care not to add their own thoughts as conditions of salvation, and we who teach must be the first to rely on the work of Christ.

Let us return to our first question of what we must tell a soul who is turning to the Lord. Since the Lord has called him to be one of a people for His name, we must confirm together the perfect remission of sins and exhort him to a life worthy of grace. Do not trouble him with burdens for obtaining salvation, but help him to believe in and follow God, who saved him. Caring for the people God has called, with the word God has given, is our work. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Words that guard the hearts of the brethren cause them to hold fast to the Savior

< Acts 15:22–29 >

"Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, 'You must be circumcised and keep the law'—to whom we gave no such commandment—it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things

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strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

The basis of words that shake the heart

A single remark that someone says he heard in the church can shake the heart of a brother. When that remark adds human conditions to the salvation of Jesus, the one who hears it begins to doubt again whether he has really received the remission of sins. Such was the demand for circumcision that was conveyed to the brethren in Antioch. The church in Jerusalem did not merely admonish them gently with words about that confusion; it sent the brethren a letter and men who made clear what it had taught and what it had not taught.

The apostles and elders, with the whole church, resolved to send Judas and Silas with Paul and Barnabas. The letter begins with words of greeting to the Gentile brethren. The letter already calls them brethren, and it does not attach to that title a demand that they must meet a new condition in order to obtain salvation. On the basis of the fact that God had given the same salvation, the church greeted one another and cared for the brethren who had been troubled.

Let us read verse 24. *"Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, 'You must be circumcised and keep the law'—to whom we gave no such commandment—" (Acts 15:24)*. Although some people had gone out from within the church, it was not the church that had commanded their teaching. The place they set out from or a familiar name does not make their words true, and a thought that comes not from the word of God but from a person's head is only his own thought, no matter how

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much Scripture it drags in. If such a teaching has blurred the content of the salvation Jesus has given and unsettled hearts, the basis of that claim must be corrected first.

Words that shake the assurance of salvation do not always sound harsh. They may begin with an offer to help a person become more complete, and in the end teach that human deeds finish salvation. At such times, we must not look only at the outward appearance of encouraging zeal. We must examine whether those words lead people to believe in the remission of sins that the Lord has fully accomplished, or whether they make people think that this salvation has not yet been completed because of human shortcomings.

That is why the comfort the church sends must come from clear truth. If we merely tell people not to worry without making clear why there is no need to worry, they will be shaken again by the same words. To guard the heart of a brother, we must let him know the fact that Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and removed those sins by rising again from death, and we must also let him know why nothing can be added to that work by human deeds. A heart that clearly knows the One who gave salvation can hold on to the word even in the face of confusing claims.

Men who did not spare their lives for the name of Christ

The letter introduces two beloved men to the brethren. Let us read verses 25 and 26.*"It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the*

name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:25–26). The words that Paul and Barnabas did not spare their lives do not mean that they washed away the sins of others by their own sacrifice. What matters is the fact that the name they served was the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were men who devoted themselves to testifying of Him because they believed in the One who accomplished salvation.

The content of that name, which Paul and Barnabas preached without sparing their lives, was clear. The two men testified of the baptism of the remission of sins that Jesus Christ received from John, of the blood of the Cross, and of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment for that sin, and revealed that He is the Son of God by rising again from death. So a person is justified not by his own deeds but through that name. What those who have received the remission of sins preach is not some remaining atonement that we must accomplish, but this gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has already fulfilled.

The sacrifice of the two men also has its meaning in serving that very salvation. If we take the praise that someone did not spare his life only as words that exalt a man, we miss the name of Jesus that he preached. Knowing the grace of the Savior, he held it more precious than his own life and preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, the brethren must gratefully receive that labor while believing in the Savior he testifies of, and must not turn the size of that labor into a new qualification for salvation.

Let us read verse 27. *"We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth" (Acts 15:27)*. The church did not stop at sending a letter, but also sent Judas and Silas, who would convey the same content by

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word of mouth. It had men go to the brethren in person and convey it, so that the brethren who heard might understand its meaning rightly. What mattered was not adding something new and special. It was the work of conveying, with the same content, the meaning of salvation and the exhortation that the letter had made clear, and so helping the brethren not to go on suffering because of the wrong demand.

When we care for souls, we too must make the content of the word clear in this way. If we speak of grace to one person and demand deeds from another as a condition for salvation, the basis on which we believe together becomes blurred. So that the one who has heard the explanation can accept that salvation in his own heart, we must clear up vague words, be patient with an understanding that is still lacking, and teach. The work entrusted to the church is not to bind souls to our own judgment, but to make them firm in the truth of Jesus.

Do not add the burden of salvation to a brother

Let us read verse 28. *"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (Acts 15:28)*. It means that the Holy Spirit and the senders of the letter judged it right to lay no burden on the brethren beyond these necessary things. Without adding circumcision and the deeds of the law to the basis of salvation, they let the brethren know the things they had to abstain from. For the born-again there is nothing else to restrict, but these necessary things must be received as the word of God, and the church did not pile any other burden on top of the salvation already given.

The remission of sins is not a gift that becomes complete only when we do something more. Because Jesus bore the sin of the world, in which all our sins were included, through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and brought the judgment for that sin to an end, and rose again from death, we have become righteous by believing in His work just as it is. When this fact is clear, the way we help a weak brother also changes. Instead of driving him on with the fear that sin still remains, we can exhort him to rely on the Lord and turn around from his wrong way of life.

Let us read the last exhortation of the letter in verse 29. "*That you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell" (Acts 15:29)*. The letter told them to abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. Rejecting the claim that salvation must be obtained by deeds did not mean approving even a life that God is not pleased with. While the church did not lay on people the burden of completing salvation, it clearly let them know the things they should abstain from as people who believe in God.

The things to abstain from are exactly what James said, and what we should note here is the place where this exhortation stands. The church did not bind the brethren with all kinds of ordinances about food and daily life, nor did it make them worry about the things God has given people to eat. It told them to abstain only from those things, because when people who believe in God love something else more than God or follow after pleasure and lewdness, they lose the heart to serve the grace they have received. Do not regard living as your heart is drawn as freedom, but discern before God, who saved us.

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When you hear the exhortation that they would do well if they kept themselves from these things, do not hear it as a threat that you must hold on to your qualification for salvation. It is a word given so that the brethren who had received the remission of sins might serve God and live rightly, and it is still valid today for us who are born again. A person who relies on grace does not insist on his freedom while hiding his wrongs; he believes in the Savior who bore even those wrongs and turns around in his way of life. The fact that the Lord has saved us and the fact that we must follow His exhortation stand together within this relationship.

When words that shook the hearts of the brethren came in, what the church sent was a clear word and men to preach that word along with the letter. Let us not allow an unnecessary burden of salvation to be added to souls from our mouths, either. Make clear the remission of sins that Jesus has given, and within that grace exhort people about the things they should abstain from. Like that letter which guarded the hearts of the brethren, a heart that desires the peace of a brother must show itself not in words that make his salvation uncertain, but in words that cause him to hold fast to the perfect Savior. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Place the basis of your peace in the Savior

< Acts 15:30–35 >

“So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”

The comfort conveyed to the brethren who had gathered

The brethren in Antioch gathered together, read the letter, and rejoiced. When we think of the words that had troubled them before, we can see how precious this joy is. There had been a demand that circumcision must be added in order to receive salvation, but now the word had been conveyed that this burden would not be laid on them. The comfort the church needs must not stop at words that make people forget their worries for a moment; it must be the word that sets their hearts up again on the grace of Jesus.

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Let us read verse 30. *"So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter" (Acts 15:30)*. Since the letter was delivered to the gathered multitude, it was not news left for only a few people to know and then pass by, but content that they had to hear together. If wrong words have brought confusion to the hearts of the brethren, the right word must also be made known to them together. It is the service of the church to help people who had been anxious from hearing different words to confirm the same basis of salvation and to stand in that grace.

What the brethren heard together contained both the intention not to attach any other condition to the remission of sins and the exhortation to exercise restraint in their lives. Because it was important to understand what that content was, the sending of the letter and the sending of men were carried out together. Even after preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must examine what the listener believes. More important than the mere fact that he attended a meeting is whether his heart stands on the salvation that Jesus accomplished by having the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rising again from death.

Let us read verse 31. *"When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement" (Acts 15:31)*. The brethren read it and rejoiced over its words of consolation. This was because the demand that circumcision and the law must be added in order to obtain salvation had been withdrawn, and they heard that no burden would be laid on them except a few things that the born-again should be careful about. There was nothing to worry about in matters such as food, and they had only to rely on the One who had given them the remission of sins, just as He is. In a heart

released from the fear of having to finish salvation by oneself, there is a peace different from before.

There are times when we think too little of the fact that we have been saved. When problems of life still remain, even the blessings the Lord has given us may look faint. But there is no one on this earth who has received more blessings than a person who has received the remission of sins before God, and becoming God's people is a blessing that concerns our whole lifetime. We must not measure the size of that blessing by today's circumstances alone, but must confirm again what grace Jesus, who removed our sins, has given us.

Place the basis of your peace in the Savior

The assurance of the remission of sins does not arise because we have heard good evaluations from people. The heart that kept asking what more we must accomplish in order to be accepted by God obtains peace when it believes in what Jesus has already done. What a person who has realized his shortcomings when faced with the demand to keep the law needs is not merely a greater resolve. He must know the actual work of the Savior, who bore even the sins of that lacking person.

The Bible says that what saved us is the water and the blood. The water is the work in which Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, and the blood is the work in which He paid death, the wages of sin, on the Cross in our place because of that sin. Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross because of the sin passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and by rising again from death He established that remission of sins as eternal. So our peace does not come from our own hearts but from this work

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that the Lord has finished. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not take the problem of sin back into their own hands.

This salvation does not become more complete because our emotions grow stronger, nor does it become lacking again because our emotions have subsided. This is because the extent of the sins the Lord bore and the judgment He received in our place do not change according to our moods. Therefore, when your heart is troubled, do not keep checking only whether you have a feeling of peace, but listen again to the word of Jesus. If you know what God has accomplished, you can believe that fact and entrust your heart to it.

Let us read in verse 11 the word that Peter confessed earlier. *"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they" (Acts 15:11)*. The truth that the Gentiles, too, are saved by the same grace was the basis the brethren in Antioch were to hold on to, and it is also the truth that establishes our hearts today. We rejoice not by comparing ourselves with others and finding that we have become better than they are, but because the Savior has given us the same salvation. Even when we see one another's weaknesses, we must first remember that same grace.

Yet we cannot put off the exhortation of the word on the grounds that we have received comfort. Just as the saved were told the things they should abstain from, God leads our lives, too, by the word. Following His leading is not an attempt to obtain salvation again, but a response of thanks for the grace we have received. When we know that relationship, we do not lose the basis of our salvation even when we hear exhortations, and we can also ask the Lord for the strength to turn around from a wrong life.

They strengthened the brethren with many words

Let us read verse 32. *"Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words" (Acts 15:32)*. Judas and Silas exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. They did not leave right away, thinking that their task was finished because they had delivered the letter; rather, they served so that the brethren would understand the word and stand in faith. An exhortation that strengthens people must not be a demand to produce and display a righteousness better than that of others, but teaching that makes them rely more clearly on Jesus, who has already made us righteous through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection.

Even when we speak many words to a brother, we must consider what we leave behind. Even if the explanation grows long, if only our own thoughts and experiences remain, the heart that listens may become bound to a person. On the other hand, if we make clear the salvation Jesus has given and resolve the problems of life through that grace, the brother can look back on his own steps by relying on the word. The one who exhorts must entrust the brother's heart to the Lord instead of holding on to it himself, and must fully preach what the Lord has done.

After some time, Judas and Silas were sent off in peace. The brethren sent them away, and Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch. Although the roles of those who had come and those who remained were different, the service of caring for the brethren with the word continued. The work of strengthening the church is not something that is possible only if one particular person is always at the side of the brethren; when we learn and serve the same word of the Lord together, the faith of the brethren grows according to that word.

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Let us read verse 35. *"Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also" (Acts 15:35)*. Paul and Barnabas taught and preached the word of the Lord with many others. When we see that the record does not leave only the names of the two men but tells us that others joined them as well, we can know that thanks for the salvation we have received leads to a life of learning together and serving together within the church. When we, who have received the Holy Spirit in our hearts, speak of the salvation of Jesus, God lets other souls also come to know the remission of sins through that word.

In this way, there is a next step for a brother who has received comfort. It is not to stay where he is, remembering only the fact that he has been released from his distress, but to keep learning the word of salvation that gave him peace and to preach it to other souls as well. Because it is easy for us to enjoy grace while we are listening and then to rely only on our own strength when we return to daily life, we must treasure hearing the word together with the church. Following the comfort we have received, let us set our hearts on the Lord and continue the service entrusted to us.

The brethren in Antioch rejoiced over those words of consolation. The grace Jesus had given was clearer than the demand that had troubled them, and the word that taught that grace continued to be preached afterward as well. Let us, too, speak words that will strengthen the hearts of others. Instead of words that blur the basis of salvation, make clear the grace of the Lord, and serve so that the brethren gathered together may hear the same word, rejoice, and live by faith. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The church entrusted not to human perfection but to the grace of the Lord

< Acts 15:36–41 >

“Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.’ Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

The brethren they intended to visit again

In Paul’s proposal to go back to the places where they had preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we see concern for souls. Though he had preached the word and left, he wanted to see how those people were doing. Yet in the course of preparing for this visit, Paul and Barnabas contended sharply

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and parted. In this passage, where the intention to look after the church and the difficulty that arose between co-workers are recorded together, we must examine why faith that relies on the grace of the Lord is needed rather than a heart that relies on people.

Let us read verse 36. *"Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing'" (Acts 15:36)*. The places Paul intended to go were every city where they had preached the word of the Lord, and the people he intended to meet were the brethren. He sought to see how they were doing rather than to check what activities they had carried out and how many. When we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must not end our concern for a soul with the fact that he has heard it once. We need care that confirms together with him whether his heart stands on the word and that helps him live relying on the Lord.

We, too, must treasure the fact that a soul who has heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit has become a brother. We must set our hearts not only on the joy of new people coming to the church, but also on the lives of the brethren who are already with us, as they keep their faith. The salvation Paul preached and the salvation we will teach now are not different. We must explain the word so that they come to know the same Jesus more clearly, and encourage them to rely on that grace even in the midst of the difficulties of life.

At the center of this care is not human achievement but the work of Jesus. If we judge salvation by the degree to which our deeds improve, we bind a brother who has met difficulties to yet another burden. On the other hand, if we clearly let him know that Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross

to pay the price of those sins, and removed even his sins by rising again from death, he can rely on the Lord without hiding his shortcomings. The concern that asks how a brother is doing must not stop at examining his life, but must go on to help his heart hold fast to the Savior.

Do not take lightly the contention between co-workers

Barnabas wanted to take John called Mark along with them, but Paul made a different judgment. Let us read verse 38. *"But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work" (Acts 15:38)*. Paul gave as his reason the fact that Mark had earlier departed from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. While preparing for the same visit, the two men differed in opinion about whom to take with them. The Bible records that this difference of opinion led to sharp contention and separation.

Let us read verse 39. *"Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 15:39)*. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. When we read this record, there is no need to make up explanations about the characters of the two men, such as who was more generous and who was stronger. We cannot fully know their inner thoughts, but it is clear that even among co-workers who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit there was real contention. We, too, must not think that our own hearts are always perfect while we serve the church.

The mere fact that we are doing the Lord's work does not make all our judgments go in the same direction. So when we

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share our views with one another, rather than putting forward the thought that we are right, we must look back on what we are together for. A heart that wants to fulfill its responsibility for the task entrusted to it is needed, and a heart that cares for people is also needed, but in the process of expressing those hearts we may treat another brother lightly. We must acknowledge that even saved people have such weaknesses, and examine ourselves before the word.

Acknowledging a person's weakness does not destroy the salvation he has received. Even if people are weak, God is perfect, and human shortcomings cannot destroy the perfection of God. A person has become righteous not because all his actions have become perfect, but because Jesus washed away his sins through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and God does not make a person who has once become righteous a sinner again. But we must not use the fact that salvation is perfect to justify our own quarrels either. The grace we have received is not a reason to treat a brother lightly, but a reason to rely on the Lord together, and a ground that makes us look back on our attitudes.

Because we believe in the perfection of the Savior, when our wrongs are exposed we can look back on ourselves without putting all the blame on others. This is because we do not need to dress up our appearance to keep our salvation, and acknowledging our shortcomings does not make the righteousness of the Lord disappear. When we believe in the righteousness the Savior has given and stand before the word, we also gain the room to share our hearts with one another and to think about our common service. Rather than simply following a heart that is disappointed in people, we must ask the Lord for help.

Strengthening the church by relying on grace

Paul chose Silas and departed, being sent off by the brethren. Let us read verse 40. *"But Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord –ASV" (Acts 15:40)*. What the brethren commended Paul to was the grace of the Lord. They did not guarantee that Paul had the ability to solve everything alone, nor did they entrust the future of the church to the resolve of one person. Both the brethren who sent him off and the man who departed had to rely on the same grace.

The grace of the Lord to which the brethren commended Paul is not vague goodwill but a work already accomplished. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world—which included the sins of Paul, the sins of Barnabas and Mark, and the sins of all of us—passed on to Him all at once. His hanging on the Cross and shedding His blood because of those sins was His receiving the judgment for those sins, and His rising again in three days means that people who have received the remission of those sins have come to life with new life. Even the weakness of the two men who contended and parted was not outside this grace. That is why the church could entrust one another not to human perfection but to the grace of the Lord.

When we gather our hearts for someone who labors, we must not expect him to be only a strong person. The one who labors also needs the help of the Savior, and he needs brethren who will believe and serve together the word he preaches. When wrongs are seen, we must exhort him with the word, and when he carries out the task entrusted to him, we must pray that the Lord will hold him up. The church is not a place where people feel secure by speaking highly of human ability, but a place where people rely together on the grace of salvation.

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Let us read verse 41. *"And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:41)*. Paul went through Syria and Cilicia and strengthened the churches. The intention he had first expressed, to visit the brethren and see how they were doing, led to service that actually looked after the churches. We cannot use this result to recast the earlier contention as a good thing. Without any need to glorify the contention, we must observe that, just as it is recorded, the man commended to grace went the way of strengthening the churches.

The basis on which the church is strengthened is also the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has given. Even if the one who visits shares many words, if salvation is not at the center, it can end with people merely comforting one another. When we confirm together the fact that the Lord has removed sin and follow His word, the brethren come to know clearly whom they should rely on, whatever they may face. We who care for the church must value the preaching of the Lord's word to the brethren more than the thought that we ourselves are needed.

There are times when our hearts drift away from service because of difficulties that arise between co-workers. But do not let your disappointment in those you have worked with blur even the grace of Jesus, who saved us. That grace was not given on the basis of human perfection; it rests on the work of the Savior, who gave life to us, who were lacking from the beginning. Believing in the salvation we have received, let us ask for a heart to be together with the church, and turn our attention to the souls we must care for now.

What we must learn on that road on which Paul went to visit the brethren again is concern, together with the faith that supports that concern. Do not think that you can care for others only by human strength; entrust one another to the grace of the

Lord, who has saved all of us, and strengthen the church with the same word. What is needed on the road of visiting is not so much the confidence of having gained perfect co-workers as the faith that relies on the Savior, who upholds us, lacking as we are, and our brethren. ✉

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CHAPTER

16

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

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The church that stands firm by grace

< Acts 16:1–5 >

“Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.”

Timothy, the disciple who would set out with Paul

What must the church rely on in order to stand firm in faith? Paul’s meeting Timothy and seeking to set out with him, and his delivering the decrees to the cities, lead on to the passage in which the faith of the churches is strengthened. When we read this word, we must not bind together the commendation a coworker received, circumcision, and the decrees the church was to keep, all as qualifications for salvation. Only when we clearly know the grace of Jesus, who saved people, and the way in which those who have received that grace are to live, can the

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church also stand on faith. Following that distinction, let us look in turn at Timothy's going along with Paul and the delivering of the decrees.

Let us read verse 1. *"Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek" (Acts 16:1)*. When Paul arrives at this place, the name and the family of this disciple are introduced, and it is recorded that his mother was a Jewish woman who believed and that his father was a Greek. In this way, after revealing Timothy's family in concrete terms, the Bible shows what kind of person he was among the brothers. *"He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium" (Acts 16:2)*. Not only the people of one place but the brothers of two regions were commending Timothy, and Paul wanted to take that very disciple with him and set out. What Timothy did to be commended is not written in this passage, but it is clear that the disciple who was commended by the brothers came to join Paul on his journey.

Since Timothy is already introduced as a disciple at this point, if we read the circumcision that follows as the event by which Timothy at last obtained salvation, we miss this order. We should accept just as they are the fact that the brothers commended him and the fact that Paul sought to make him a traveling companion, but we must not turn that commendation into a merit that washes away sin. A life that is commended by people and the basis for receiving the remission of sins before God must be distinguished. We too need a life of serving the brothers, but that life cannot replace the salvation Jesus gave us by having the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rising again from death.

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Circumcision does not accomplish the remission of sins

Paul took Timothy and circumcised him. The Bible reveals the reason as being *"because of the Jews who were in that region" (Acts 16:3)*, and adds that those people all knew that Timothy's father was a Greek. That Paul wanted to take him along and set out, and that he circumcised him because of the Jews of that region, is what the passage conveys. On the basis of this event, we cannot teach that those who believe in Jesus must also receive circumcision for their salvation to be completed. For the very decrees that Paul delivered to the cities immediately afterward were determined because the claim that held up the law and circumcision as conditions of salvation had become a problem within the church. If people could obtain salvation by keeping the whole law, the grace of Jesus would end up becoming unnecessary.

The grace that washes away sin lies in what Jesus did. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all; because of those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received the judgment for our sins in our place; and He rose again from death and became our Savior. Since all those sins include even the sins that you and I commit throughout our lives, we must not think as though some sin that was not passed on to the Lord still remains and try to fill up that share with other deeds. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this salvation He accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. A ritual performed on the body did not bear our sins in our place or pay the price of those sins.

Therefore, we must not confuse the circumcision performed on Timothy with the basis of the remission of sins. If we say that

we have been saved by the grace of Jesus and then add that we must keep the law to be made righteous, our heart moves away from the salvation the Lord accomplished to our own deeds. This is because doing so turns the sin that the Lord has already borne and received the judgment for back into something we must resolve again. The faith the church must hold on to does not consist of conditions that people have added; it is faith in Jesus Christ, who has removed all sins.

Keep the exhortations delivered to the churches

Let us read verse 4. *"And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem" (Acts 16:4)*. As Paul went through the cities, he delivered the exhortations that the churches were to keep. He did not stop at knowing in one place what had been determined in Jerusalem, but he passed it on to the believers in various regions and had them keep it. Helping the saved brothers know what they should refrain from was also a task Paul carried out as he looked after the churches.

These decrees did not mean that the works of the Law had to be added as conditions for salvation. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem exhorted the saved Gentile believers to abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. These decrees were not conditions for salvation but instructions for believers to observe as they lived together in the faith. Paul delivered these decrees to the churches in the various cities just as they had been determined in Jerusalem. The exhortations Paul delivered did not attach a new condition for obtaining the remission of sins to those who

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believe; rather, they taught what we, who have received the grace of salvation, should keep away from as we live.

There is no need to worry that we might fail to obtain the remission of sins because of the food we eat. Since our heart can leave God and follow other things even while we eat what God has given, we must not stop at weighing what we eat and do not eat, but must examine our own heart and life. The word that He saved us by grace is not permission to live however we please. Because the Lord bore our sins and made us clean through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, we turn back from the path that goes against God, as befits people who believe in that grace. Only when the church that delivers the decrees also teaches this relationship clearly can the brothers live according to the word without being weighed down by the burden of deeds.

The church stands firm by believing in the salvation it has received

The Bible records what happened after that: *"So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5)*. After Paul took the disciple with him, went through the cities, and delivered the decrees, the faith of the churches was strengthened more and the number of believers increased daily. Since the Bible records the fact that faith was strengthened together with the number of people, we must look both at the increase of people in the church and at what they believe. Helping people clearly know and believe in the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished is the center of serving the church.

Faith being strengthened does not mean gaining the assurance that our own deeds have become perfect. It means that the grace of Jesus, who saved us in our weakness, becomes clear, so that we hold on to that word. Then we can also receive the exhortations for daily life that Paul delivered, not as a burden by which we must repay the price of salvation, but as the way taught to us by God, who saved us. Only when the basis for the remission of sins is clear do we not return to the path of building up our own righteousness, even when we correct the wrongs of our daily lives.

At the beginning, I asked what the church must rely on in order to stand firm in faith. We must not make Timothy's commendation or the circumcision performed on the body the basis of salvation, but must stand on the grace that Jesus Christ has bestowed. With that faith, look after the brothers and, together with them, keep the word you have received. Clearly preaching the salvation of the Lord, who has made us sinless, and teaching a life that fits that grace, is the way of following Paul's service that strengthened the churches. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The way of salvation and the authority are in the name of Jesus Christ

< Acts 16:16–18 >

“Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour.”

The masters who gained profit through the slave girl

As soon as Paul’s party began to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in Philippi, another work also followed. On the way to the place of prayer, a slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination appeared, followed them for many days, and cried out. When God works, the devil also works. Because, where the work of the gospel takes place, a work that tries to cloud and block it also takes place, we cannot regard something as the

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work of the Holy Spirit merely because we hear a voice speaking of God. In this passage, I intend to see where the authority that drove out that voice lay, and what salvation is contained in that name.

Let us read verse 16. *"Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling" (Acts 16:16)*. This slave girl was bringing great profit to her masters by telling fortunes, so to the masters, the girl's spirit was not something to be cast out but a means of making money. But what the Bible shows us is not how much that income was, but the fact that a soul was held captive by a spirit and was being used for people's moneymaking. What that soul needed was not the assessment that she was useful, but the Lord who would save her.

The profit people gain and the benefit of that soul are not always the same. The masters enjoyed profit while the slave girl told fortunes, but when the spirit went out, they considered the hope of their profit to be cut off, and they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them away. Here it is revealed what they regarded as precious. We too must not judge something to be the good will of God merely because a work goes well and leaves a profit. What God desires is that people's souls receive the remission of sins and live within the truth of salvation.

In our hearts as well, there are thoughts that envy visible power. It is easy to accept the words of a person with special power without even examining the content of salvation, but that person's words do not wash away our sins just because the person appears to have power. The wondrous things that happen through a person who has sin are not the work of the Holy Spirit but the work of the devil. What a soul that must come to know salvation needs is not a more astonishing experience, but the

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word that makes clear that Jesus had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death.

The way of salvation is in Jesus

Let us read verse 17. *"This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, 'These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation'" (Acts 16:17)*. The slave girl cried out that these men were servants of God and that they preached the way of salvation. Her words were not wrong, but it was the spirit of divination that made her say those words, and the fact that a spirit spoke of God does not turn that work into the work of the Holy Spirit. The salvation that Paul's party preached had nothing to do with the power of a spirit, and the word entrusted to them was the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which testifies of the fact that Jesus Christ removed the sin of the world. Therefore, we must not stop at hearing the word "salvation," but must know its content and its basis.

The way of salvation is the way to the kingdom of heaven, the way to become righteous before God, and the way by which a person bound by sin is delivered from sin and lives again as a child of God. People cannot erase the sin in their hearts or remove the wrongs of their past lives by their own resolve, and telling fortunes to find out what lies ahead and receiving the eternal remission of sins are entirely different things. What we need is not the ability to guess what lies ahead, but faith in the Savior, who bore all our sins and delivered us from judgment.

The name of Jesus Christ contains the fact that our sins were passed on to Him. Jesus came to this earth and, by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, had all the sins of the

world passed on to Him once and for all, and at that time He also took away all the sins that you and I commit throughout our lives. Because of those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and by rising again from death, He gave life to us who believe. To believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to accept in the heart that this Savior has removed all sins, even my sins.

The Holy Spirit comes as a gift upon those whose sins in their hearts have been washed away by believing in this salvation, and in such a sinless heart, a spirit cannot have a place. If we look for the evidence of having received the Holy Spirit in a power of divination or in wondrous experiences, we miss the basis of the remission of sins. Therefore, when we examine our faith, we must not merely look back on what we have experienced, but must confirm whether we believe in the Savior, who bore my sins through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection.

Let us read chapter 3, verse 16 concerning faith in that name. *"And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all" (Acts 3:16).* Concerning the man who had been unable to walk coming to walk, Peter made it clear that this was not done by his own godliness or power, and he held up the name of Jesus and faith in that name. What Paul relied on when he commanded the spirit was also not his own name but the name of Jesus Christ. Our assurance too must not rest on people but must be directed toward this Savior.

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Believe in the name of the Savior and resist

Let us read verse 18. *"And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And he came out that very hour" (Acts 16:18)*. When the slave girl kept doing so for many days, Paul was greatly distressed and turned. The one who received the command was not that slave girl but the spirit; the authority Paul relied on was the name of Jesus Christ; and the spirit came out immediately. This event came about not in a way that protected people's profit but in a way that revealed the authority of Jesus.

When bad thoughts arise in our hearts and fear rushes in, it is not something God gives but something the devil gives. Because God is not One who makes us afraid, we do not need to be dragged along by the thoughts the devil gives. When we believe that Jesus is the Savior who has removed our sins and resist in that name, the devil retreats. Even when fear comes in that shakes the basis of our salvation, rather than looking for the answer in how perfect my deeds are, we must confirm the word that He who made us righteous has not left the sins He bore with us again.

Yet this does not mean that we should use the name of Jesus like words that display our own power. Assurance of salvation does not arise by repeating that name without knowing any of its content, nor do we resist with our hot temper. We call on that name, relying on the Holy Spirit who is within us, with a heart that knows that He is the Savior who had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross receiving the judgment for those sins in our place, and rose again from death and is now alive.

Let us read in chapter 3, verse 19 the word of salvation given to our souls. *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19)*. When we turn our heart, which believed in its own thoughts or power, to the Savior and receive the remission of sins He has given, our heart becomes refreshed. We who have received the Holy Spirit by this faith must not abandon the truth of the Lord because the devil makes us afraid, but must hold on to the salvation that made us clean. A soul that clearly knows the remission of sins is not bound by wondrous things or by the words of people, but relies on the Lord who saved it and goes forward following the word.

Let us think again about the slave girl's voice that was heard for many days before the party on its way to the place of prayer. The mere voice speaking of God and salvation could not give life to that soul, and the authority that drove out the spirit was in the name of Jesus Christ. In places where the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached, the devil also works; but because Jesus, who bore our sins through the baptism He received from John and accomplished salvation through the blood of the Cross and the resurrection, is alive, we do not entrust our hearts to visible power or to voices that we hear. The way of salvation and the authority we are to rely on are in that name. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel

< Acts 16:6–15 >

"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' So she persuaded us."

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Salvation that came to the Gentiles

There was a man named Cornelius who feared God. One day, while this man was praying, God spoke to him, telling him to send men to the seaside house of a man named Simon, a tanner, and to call a man named Peter and hear the word. This Cornelius was a man who feared God, and he was a Roman. When he heard the voice of God telling him to call Peter and hear the word, he sent his servants and invited Peter. Before that, while Peter too was praying, God showed him something in a vision. A sheet came down from heaven, and in it were all kinds of animals. God said to Peter, *"Rise, Peter; kill and eat" (Acts 10:13)*. All together in it were things that, according to the law, could never be eaten: creeping things, things without scales, animals whose hooves were not divided, and the like. Peter said, *"Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean" (Acts 10:14)*. He meant that he would never eat what was forbidden in the word of God. But God said, *"What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 10:15)*. He was telling Peter not to call it unclean by some standard of his own, but to kill and eat, because He had cleansed it all. After He had done so, the sheet went back up to heaven as Peter watched.

Peter was seeing such a vision, and after God showed him that vision, He told him that some men would come to him. He told him that when some men came and looked for him, he should not doubt but go with them. The men who came said that their master had been praying and had been told to invite Peter and hear the word. Up until then, Peter had thought that God was the God of the Jews. But when he saw that a Roman, a Gentile, wanted to hear the word, something did not fit his own standard. So Peter discovered that God is pleased with the Gentiles too and saves them, and that it is God's will to have the word

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preached even to those among the Gentiles who fear God and to save their souls. When Peter preached the word of God, *"the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word" (Acts 10:44)*, and their whole household received the remission of sins. They received the remission of sins by believing the word that Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including even the sins of the Gentiles, passed on to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment because of that sin, and rose again from death. Peter was now experiencing this for the first time. It was the first time Peter had ever preached the gospel to Gentiles.

Peter was in fact the apostle to the Jews. For that reason, Peter, James, and John were in fact the most senior leaders in the Church of God in Jerusalem. And as for Paul, at that time he was still a complete fledgling. So God called Paul from the beginning to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and entrusted that work to him. Paul preached the gospel to the Gentiles. But Peter did not. He had been preaching the gospel to the Jews, but God had him preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and after he experienced preaching it to them himself, his thinking changed a great deal from then on. Of course, looking at this passage, we can see that when a sheet came down from heaven with all kinds of animals in it and Peter was told to rise, kill, and eat, he said that he could not eat what was unclean and that he had never eaten it, but God said to him, "Do not call unclean what I have cleansed; rise, kill, and eat."

The laws of one's own standards

God, speaking of the way Peter, who was a Jew, had dealt with things and judged them with certain notions of what is clean

and what is unclean, is speaking to you and me today as well. Just as God told Peter to kill and eat everything, and just as He said, "I have cleansed it all," we must know and believe that He has removed all the sins of all the people in this world—not only original sin but also actual sins, and even the sins of the people who will be born into this world in the future—and that God has already made all of us clean. The Jews, holding to certain notions, do not eat things that creep, things without scales, and the like. They never eat even such animals as the pig, which has a divided hoof but does not chew the cud. According to the Law, the Jews regarded land animals that both chewed the cud and had divided hooves as clean and permitted for food. They did not eat animals that met only one of these two conditions.

Peter said that he would never kill and eat such animals. But God said to him, "Why do you call unclean, by your own standard, what I have made clean? It is clean, so kill and eat it all." Dear fellow believers, while believing in Jesus, people say that He took away original sin but did not take away actual sins, that He did not take away the sins of people who will be born in the future, and that Jesus did not take away the sins we have not yet committed—but that is in fact their own thinking. Jesus came to this earth and, by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River, bore all the sins of this world once and for all. It was by receiving baptism from John that He bore them all in this way. He made all people sinless.

Since Jesus received baptism, how could the people of this world have sin? Jesus swept up all the sins of all the people in this world—of all people until the day the history of mankind ends—once and for all and bore them, bore that sin and received the judgment on the Cross for us, and removed it all; so how could you have sin? That makes no sense at all. The principle is simple. Because God is great in power, Jesus took away all the

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sins we will commit in the future, even those we have not yet committed.

Peter thought that God had said, “This is unclean and this is clean, so eat this, but do not eat that,” and that he believed according to that word, and he also thought that this was right, so he acted that way. But, dear fellow believers, God has given all things to us human beings. When He gave them to human beings and said, “Do not eat certain things, and eat certain things,” He was telling us, born-again people who believe in God, to live our lives cleanly in this way, and telling us not to live in the ways that are unclean. God did not say, regarding the food we eat, to eat what is rich and not to eat certain foods.

After Noah’s flood had passed, God gave us animals as food. And when God said in the books of the law, “Do not eat what does not have a divided hoof; do not eat what does not have scales,” this meant that we should not do what is not of faith. In other words, it meant that we should not do what God is not pleased with.

All things—all plants and all animals—were given to us for the sake of human beings. So when we human beings, from our side, say that He took away original sin but did not take away actual sins, or say, even while believing in Jesus, “How could God have taken away sins we have not yet committed?”—this is people saying that there is sin when God has taken away all sin and removed it all, so it means that we should not say such things. It means that we should not say that there is sin in this world.

Who dares to say there is sin?

Where is there sin in this world? God has taken it all away. There is no sin in this world. It is by not believing—by not

believing the word God has spoken and by not accepting the grace God has given—that we have sin; it is by not believing that we become sinners. If we believe that our Lord has taken away all the sins of this world, who in this world could have sin? No one. Who dares to say that he has sin? Who would dare to say, "I am going to hell because my deeds are lacking"? Since He knew that we would commit sin and knew well our wretched state, He took away all our sins, even the sins of all those whose deeds are lacking; so how can it be said that you have sin? Because Jesus had all our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, He shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment for the price of that sin in our place, and by rising again from death on the third day, He removed that sin completely. The God who said that He had cleansed all the animals in the sheet has cleansed our sins in the same way. God met those who feared Him and had the gospel preached to them. If you keep reading this Book of Acts, you will find that both Cornelius and Lydia, the seller of purple here, were people who feared God; the people who met God were people who feared God. To fear God is, first of all, to acknowledge that God exists, to believe that God exists, and also to know how to be afraid before God. If someone was this kind of person, God had the gospel of Jesus Christ preached to that person and enabled that person to receive the remission of sins.

Therefore, in this age in which you and I live as well, God meets those people who truly have a heart that fears God. Now, among the Jews there were many people who believed in Jesus Christ, such as the Pharisees. The Pharisees believed in Jesus and came into the church. Once they had come in, they insisted, "We do believe and we have been saved, but we must still keep the law and practice circumcision." They insisted that even

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though they had been saved, they had to keep the law and practice circumcision.

Keep away from idols, pleasure, and sexual immorality

This problem became a big problem in the Church of God, in the early church. It became a big problem because the Pharisees knew the Bible well. So the apostles and elders discussed it at the Jerusalem Council: "Those people are saying this; is it right? What should we do?" The Council decided that it was not so. "What is this circumcision? And how can we keep the law?" If we kept the whole law ourselves, the grace of Jesus would not be needed. The law is not something to keep; rather, there are a few things that those who have truly been saved must truly be careful about, and first of all, they must be careful about serving idols. To serve idols is to love and follow something else more than God. This is what the early church decided.

Be careful about serving idols. Second, it said not to eat animals that were strangled, and this is a word in which God tells us not to pursue pleasure. It means that we should not pursue only the pleasures of this world. And third, it said that they should abstain *"from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well" (Acts 15:29)*, which means that we should keep away from sexually immoral acts. It means that they were exhorted only about these three things.

At the Jerusalem Council, the Church of God made a decision, and this was proper. It is still valid today. Those who believe in God must keep away from idols. And they must not pursue only pleasure. And it says to keep away from sexual immorality, and that if they are careful about these three things,

they will do well. As for food and the like, we may eat as we please. There is no need to worry about such things. In fact, who eats only after sorting out every food? People do that because they misunderstand the word of God. What we born-again people must be most careful about and keep away from is sexual immorality, the pursuit of pleasure, and then keeping idols. This is clear. Although there is nothing else by which we born-again people are restricted, we must all know that these three things are the word of God.

"Come over to Macedonia and help us"

When we look at the word we read today, it says, *"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:6–10).*

This Macedonia is Europe. Within Macedonia there was Philippi, and there were small cities such as Thessalonica. The Apostle Paul tried to preach the word in Asia, but God kept stopping him. So he could not preach the word in Asia, and he tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not permit him, so he passed by Mysia and came down to Troas, and there a vision appeared to him in the night, in which a man of Macedonia beckoned him to come. He saw a vision. Now God

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does not work by showing such visions. At that time the Bible had not yet been completely written, so God did such special things. Now God works through the word. So I hope you will understand it that way.

And a man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with Paul, beckoning him and saying, *"Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9)*. After Paul saw that vision, he sought to go to Macedonia. The Apostle Paul believed that the people of Macedonia were beckoning him to preach the gospel to them. We too must realize the will of God in this age. We must believe that God has opened the door for us to preach His gospel to the whole world.

The beginning of the church in Philippi

The Apostle Paul went to Macedonia and arrived at a small region called Philippi, and it was here that a church was first established in Europe. The church in Philippi, the church in Thessalonica, and several other churches appear in the Bible, and they began to be established from here. When Paul arrived in the region of Philippi, he went out on the Sabbath to see whether there was a place of prayer, and he sat by the riverside outside the city gate and spoke to the women who had gathered there. Women had gathered by the river. He went there and spoke the word of God. And he met a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, who lived in the city of Thyatira, not in the region of Philippi. The words "a seller of purple" mean a cloth merchant. It says, *"A certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14)*, which means that the Lord opened her heart

and caused her to heed and believe this gospel that the Apostle Paul preached. And it means that she received baptism right then and there. Those who preach this gospel of the water and the blood of Jesus Christ give baptism right then and there, as long as there is water, to anyone who believes in the baptism Jesus received from John. This was exactly the word that Lydia opened her heart to and heeded. When she believed the word that Jesus, who had the sin of the world passed on to Him through that baptism, shed His blood on the Cross and paid the full price of that sin, and rose again on the third day, sin disappeared from Lydia's heart.

Here we see that God moved the heart of this sister, this woman named Lydia, and established the church in Philippi. This truly became the foundation of the church in Philippi at its very beginning. This woman named Lydia, who was a seller of purple, was a person who feared God. When we look at the Bible, in the case of Cornelius and in the case of Lydia alike, God met people who feared Him. A person who knows nothing but fears God—to fear God is to know how to be afraid of God, to love God, and also to acknowledge God; this is what the Bible calls fearing God. God met Lydia, a person who feared Him.

You and I, too, had only this kind of heart: we did not know much about anything else, but we did know that God exists, so we were afraid of God, and in any case we wanted to become truly upright people before God. We had such a heart, and God came to us and met us. He met us through the gospel of truth, such as the gospel the Apostle Paul preached. Dear fellow believers, it does not matter if our deeds are lacking and weak. What matters is whether we have a heart that fears God; God was pleased with such people. He met such people. He met them through the word of truth. It is a fact that God met us in this way.

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People who fear God

I truly give thanks for the establishment of this church in Philippi, and also for the fact that God knows that there are people everywhere who fear Him and has saved them. There are people who fear God everywhere. And God enables such people to meet His servants.

Here, in the church in Philippi, the house of this person, Lydia, the seller of purple, became the foundation of the church. As soon as this woman received the remission of sins, she urged them, saying, *"If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay" (Acts 16:15)*. That is a remarkable thing. How could she, having heard the gospel that day and received the remission of sins that same day, ask them to stay at her house? So the church in Philippi began in Lydia's house. When we go to some region and establish a church, we see that if there is such a person in a household who fears God and that person receives the remission of sins, we first begin the church in that household. We hold worship services and pray. Then later we obtain a building and run the church. Lydia's name is recorded in the Bible in this way, and it seems that Lydia is a byword for a person who serves well.

The Apostle Paul met Lydia, the seller of purple, preached the gospel to her, and began a church there; he went to a small city called Philippi in the region of Macedonia and preached there, and then a little later he moved on and went to Thessalonica. In the Bible it may seem to be described grandly, but in reality it is just like going around the cities within one country preaching the gospel. They are simply the names of cities within that one country. God enables people who fear Him to meet His servants. Also, God sends His servants for the sake of such people who fear Him.

The whole world is calling us

Now is an age in which we can go to any country if we only make up our minds to go. I believe that the people of those countries are beckoning and calling us to preach the gospel to them. Those people have not encountered the true gospel. Because the gospel has been altered as it has been handed down, they have not encountered the true gospel. But churchgoers are demanding the true gospel. Many people gather and listen to sermons, but those sermons merely give them courage, give them strength, and stir up their emotions; they do not preach the real truth to them. One must know it to be able to preach it.

If those people encounter the complete gospel, the gospel of the water and the blood set out very systematically, how many of them will believe! I believe that in every country there are such people who fear God. I also believe that God is telling us to preach the gospel to such people. Just as the man of Macedonia called Paul to come in a vision, we must know the fact that people all over the world are calling you and me. To that end, we must pray for world missions. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

What must I do to be saved?

< Acts 16:19–34 >

"But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, 'These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.' Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.' Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord

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to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household."

They relied on God even in the inner prison

Before the prison doors that had opened in the middle of the night, a man asked a question. Let us read verse 30. *"And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'" (Acts 16:30)*. The jailer, who only a moment earlier had thought that the prisoners had fled and had tried to harm himself, fell down before Paul and Silas and asked this, and the answer that came to the jailer and his household that night was the word telling them to believe on the Lord Jesus. What must a person believe to become a righteous person? To answer this question, let us follow how Paul and Silas came to be in that prison and what word they preached that night.

When the spirit went out of the slave girl, her fortune-telling no longer worked, and since her fortune-telling no longer worked, her masters' moneymaking was cut off. Seeing that their hope of profit was cut off, they seized Paul and Silas, dragged them to the authorities, and accused them, saying that these men were troubling the city and teaching customs that Romans could neither receive nor observe. When the multitude brought charges against them all together, the magistrates had the two men beaten many times with rods, threw them into the inner prison, and even fastened their feet in the stocks. When the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit takes place,

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commotion also arises and the devil also does his work, and people whose own profit has been cut off because of the gospel oppose the gospel in this way. However, the servants of God did not give up just because persecution arose against the gospel.

Let us read verse 25. *"But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25)*. Paul and Silas, who could not even move, since their bodies had been beaten with rods and their feet were fastened in the stocks, prayed to God and sang praises to Him in that inner prison. This is because a person who has the Holy Spirit calls God Father and comes boldly before Him to make supplication, and a person who has received the remission of sins looks to God and lives by faith even when the world is bleak. The thanksgiving of a person who has received the remission of sins does not begin after his circumstances have all become good; rather, it comes forth even in the inner prison, because the grace given by the Savior is certain—the Savior who had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rose again from death.

At that moment, suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were loosed. The jailer, awaking from sleep, saw the open doors, thought that the prisoners had fled, and drew his sword to kill himself. Let us read verse 28. *"But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here'" (Acts 16:28)*. Even though the doors had been opened, Paul and Silas did not flee but remained where they were, and Paul's cry stopped the jailer's hand. God is pleased with the preaching of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and protects His servants in one way or another, and if He did this for the apostles of old, He does this for us today as well.

As we read of this event, we must not let our hearts be captured only by how the prison doors were opened. We must see what happened that night: a man who had tried to end his own life heard the word, believed in God, and came to rejoice together with his whole household. We who rely on the Lord also must not seek only to escape quickly from our problems, but must ask for a heart to preach the word of salvation to the souls we meet in the midst of those problems.

Believe in the salvation the Lord Jesus has accomplished

To the jailer who asked what he must do to be saved, Paul and Silas did not set forth deeds that he would have to pile up from then on. Let us read verse 31. *"So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household'" (Acts 16:31)*. Because the remission of sins does not come by deeds but by believing in the salvation Jesus Christ has given, what the jailer was to rely on had to change from himself to the Savior. However, we must not think that we have fully understood this word merely by calling on the name of Jesus with our mouths. We must know what the Jesus we believe in has done.

In the Old Testament, for a sinner to receive the remission of sins, he had to bring a sacrificial offering, lay his hands on its head, and pass his sins on to it. As its counterpart, in the New Testament, John, the representative of mankind, gave baptism to Jesus, and the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus. The baptism Jesus received from John at the Jordan River is the event in which all the sins of our whole lifetime were passed on to Jesus. Because Jesus had sin passed on to Him in that way, He

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hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving the judgment for sin in our place and paying its price once and for all, and He rose again from death and brought us, who had been dead because of sin, back to life. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is my coming back to life and yours.

If Jesus had not borne our sins by receiving baptism from John, what connection would Jesus have with us? If we leave out the fact that our sins were passed on to Him, we cannot know why He died on the Cross in our place and rose again, and if we take away the blood of the Cross, we cannot know where the judgment for that sin ended. A person who believes in the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection as his own salvation becomes a righteous person before God, and this is the faith that believes in the Lord Jesus.

So, after urging the jailer to believe, Paul and Silas preached the word so that he could know what he must believe. Let us read verse 32. *"Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house" (Acts 16:32)*. This did not mean that if the jailer alone believed, the other members of his family did not need to hear the word. The word that he and his household would be saved led to letting all who were in his house hear the word, and they also received that word purely and believed in the same Savior. People are saved when the word is preached and they believe that word.

If we, too, want to let our families and those close to us know of this salvation, we must preach its content. Because the mere fact that a relationship is close does not make my faith that person's faith, we must read together the word that Jesus bore all our sins and explain the parts the listener does not know. If the listener thinks that his own sins still remain and knows only the name of Jesus, he cannot obtain the assurance of salvation, so we must let him know that his sins, too, were included in all

the sins of the world and were passed on to the Savior, and that the Lord even received the judgment for them.

The night when the whole household believed and rejoiced

That night the jailer took the two men and washed their stripes, and he and all his family received water baptism. In the days of the early church, people who received the remission of sins were given water baptism that very day, but this was not because sins disappear by receiving water baptism. Since our sins were already passed on to Jesus when He received baptism from John, and those sins were ended through the blood of the Cross and the resurrection, the water baptism that saints receive is a token of the faith that I believe in that salvation in this way, and a confession of faith made before God and before the brothers. The jailer received water baptism the very night he heard the word, without waiting until his own life became perfect, and this, too, was because he believed not in his own deeds but in the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Therefore, we must not interchange the baptism that the Savior, who removed sin, received from John and the water baptism that saved saints receive. The baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are the work by which He bore and removed our sins, and the water baptism we receive is the confession that we believe in that work. Those who receive the remission of sins receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and a person who has received the Holy Spirit confesses that faith through water baptism.

Let us read verse 34. *"Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having*

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believed in God with all his household" (Acts 16:34). The reason for the joy that the Bible reveals is that they believed in God. When we believe in our hearts that Jesus had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving all our judgment in our place, and rose again from death, we receive the remission of sins, our hearts become glad, and we become children of God; and that very joy entered the house of the jailer who had been trembling with fear. The joy of the remission of sins is not obtained by working up our emotions by force; rather, it follows in the heart that believes that word, because what Jesus did is certain.

Since the Lord, who saved us, has given us the Holy Spirit and accepted us as children of God, we can come to Him even in dark circumstances and ask for help. Because Jesus bore our sins by receiving baptism from John, we are grateful that He died on the Cross, grateful that He rose again from death, and grateful that He became our God. The faith with which Paul and Silas prayed in the prison and the faith with which the jailer's household rejoiced are grounded in the same Savior.

The jailer, who had been thinking of death before the opened prison doors, asked what he must do to be saved. The answer he needed was not a word telling him to exert more of his own strength, but the word telling him to believe on the Lord Jesus, who received baptism from John to bear sin and put an end to that sin through the Cross and the resurrection. The answer is no different for people who hold the same question today. What brings our hearts to life is not the size of the work we can accomplish, but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has already accomplished all things. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The grace received from the Lord gives a heart to look after the brethren

< Acts 16:35–40 >

“And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, ‘Let those men go.’ So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, ‘The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.’ But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.’ And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city. So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.”

The morning when the word came to let them go

If you heard that you were free to leave the place where you had been confined, what would you do first? Such a morning came to Paul and Silas as well, but as soon as they stepped out

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of the prison gate, instead of setting out on their way, the two went to the house of Lydia, met the brethren, and comforted them. Following the release of their own bodies, they looked after even the hearts of the brethren before they left. Let us follow this short record and examine what the last thing was that the servants of God, released from tribulation, did before leaving that city.

The day before, the two had cast the spirit out of the slave girl in the name of Jesus Christ, and because of the accusation of her masters, whose hope of profit had been cut off, they were beaten with rods and locked up in the inner prison. In that prison they prayed and sang praises to God, and on the night when the prison doors were opened by the earthquake, they preached the word of the Lord to the jailer and his household, and the whole household believed in God and rejoiced greatly. And then the day dawned.

Let us read verse 35. *"And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, 'Let those men go'" (Acts 16:35)*. Because the magistrates had sent men to say that the two should be let go, the jailer also reported those words to Paul and told him that they should now depart and go in peace. For those who the day before had received the accusations of the multitude, had been beaten with rods, and had then been locked up in the inner prison, their circumstances changed overnight. In this way, in the midst of danger, God protected His servants who had been locked up in prison after encountering adversaries while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore, we must not judge that the Lord has left a believer merely because hardship has come upon that believer. Even while they were confined, Paul and Silas prayed to God and preached the word of the Lord. Saints who have received the remission of sins are not orphans; the Lord had our sins

transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rose again from death, and so He gave us the remission of sins, made us His children, and gave the Holy Spirit into our hearts. So when we encounter tribulation, rather than doubting the promise of salvation, we must lift up our hearts to the Father, who has accepted us as His children, and ask for help.

We must not forget that grace even when our circumstances have eased. If we seek God only when we are in suffering and then distance ourselves from the gospel of the water and the Spirit and from the brethren once we become comfortable, our hearts are apt to become bound again only to our own circumstances. The reason we read about the next day of Paul and Silas lies not in how quickly they got out of the prison, but in what these servants, who had gone through hardship relying on the Lord, did before they left.

Hold fast to the grace of the Lord rather than to the fear of people

When the jailer reported the news that they were being released, Paul did not leave right away but answered him. Let us read verse 37. *"But Paul said to them, 'They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out'" (Acts 16:37)*. Pointing out the fact that, although they were Romans, they had been beaten in public and locked up without even being condemned, Paul said that the magistrates who had done this should come themselves and get them out. Since the magistrates had beaten them with rods and put them in prison although they had never done anything wrong,

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Paul, even though the jailer told them to go in peace, stated plainly what had been done to them.

Later in Jerusalem as well, when Paul was about to be scourged, he escaped that crisis by asking whether they would scourge him, a Roman, without even charging him with a crime. A servant of God, too, can speak clearly about what has happened to him, and God uses even such words to protect His servants who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Since the Bible does not record separately the reason Paul told the magistrates to come in person, we, too, should not add any hidden meaning to it, but should see only as far as the fact that he stated truthfully what had been done to him.

Let us read verse 38. *"And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans" (Acts 16:38)*. Having heard Paul's words reported to them, the magistrates were afraid at the word that the two men were Romans, and they came in person, brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city. Those who the day before had had the two men beaten and locked up in the inner prison now came themselves and pleaded with them. Human power is reversed like this even within a single day, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the two preached did not change, whether they were locked up in prison or released.

When our hearts shrink in the face of human power, we must look again at who it is that removed our sins. It was not a person with worldly power who made us righteous; rather, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, swept up all the sins of the world and bore them all once and for all by receiving baptism from John at the Jordan River. Because of our sins that He took away in that way, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, received the judgment for us, rose again from death, and removed all those sins, so how could

we have sin? Jesus has caused us, who believe in this salvation, to live again as children of God.

Therefore, we must not confuse a change in people's attitudes with the salvation the Lord has accomplished. The remission of sins does not become certain only when people treat us well; rather, the salvation accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection does not change, no matter how anyone treats us. A person who has been made righteous by believing in that work places the ground of his heart in the Savior even in fearful circumstances, and can preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit with boldness, without being oppressed.

This is also why we must hold fast to the grace we have received. If we set our hearts on human approval and on changes in our circumstances, we are shaken every time, but the word of the Lord, who bore all our sins, establishes our faith firmly. Whenever our weakness is exposed after we have been saved, we must not think that we have become sinners again and try to remove sin by our own deeds, but must believe in Jesus, who has already borne even those sins and received the judgment for them, and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit. It does not matter even if our deeds are lacking and weak. The Lord knows our wretched condition well and has taken away all those sins.

The two men comforted the brethren and departed

The magistrates came, pleaded with them, brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city, and Paul and Silas would leave that city and go to other places to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Preaching the gospel in one place and then, when persecution arose, moving to another place to preach the

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gospel was the way the apostles walked. But before they left, the next steps of the two men were directed toward the brethren in that city.

Let us read verse 40. *"So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed" (Acts 16:40)*. The house of Lydia, whose heart the Lord had opened to heed what Paul said, was the place where the church began, starting from that house, and now there were brethren there who needed to be comforted. Although it is not recorded what words the two men shared or how much, their last step clearly remains on record: they departed after seeing the brethren and comforting their hearts. Being able to leave the prison did not mean that their task of looking after the people who had heard the word together with them had ended as well.

When we comfort the brethren, along with telling them not to be afraid, we must let them know what to rely on. Before He departed, the Lord made a promise to His disciples: *"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18)*. Saints who have received the remission of sins are not orphans, and God has not forsaken us but has given the Holy Spirit into our hearts. The fact that Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving that judgment in our place, and rose again from death holds the hearts of the saints firm even in the midst of tribulation.

The love received from the Lord also gives a heart to look after the brethren. When those who hear the word together with us and serve in spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit or in mission work go through difficulties, we must listen to their circumstances and share the help they need, and even if we cannot solve every problem right away, we can stay by their side and pray as brethren who have received the same salvation.

Since we have nothing if we do not gather together, we must not leave the Church no matter what happens, and because the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we must ask for help so that we may turn our hearts, which used to look only at our own circumstances, to the Lord and carry out the work of looking after the brethren.

Paul and Silas, having heard that they were free to leave the prison, departed after seeing the brethren and comforting them. That last step also remains in our hearts as we finish reading this chapter. When we have escaped from difficulty, let us not end by looking after only our own peace, but let us remember the grace of the Lord, who bore our sins and has protected us, and carry it on in steps of sharing the word and love with those whom He has caused to believe together with us. ✉

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CHAPTER

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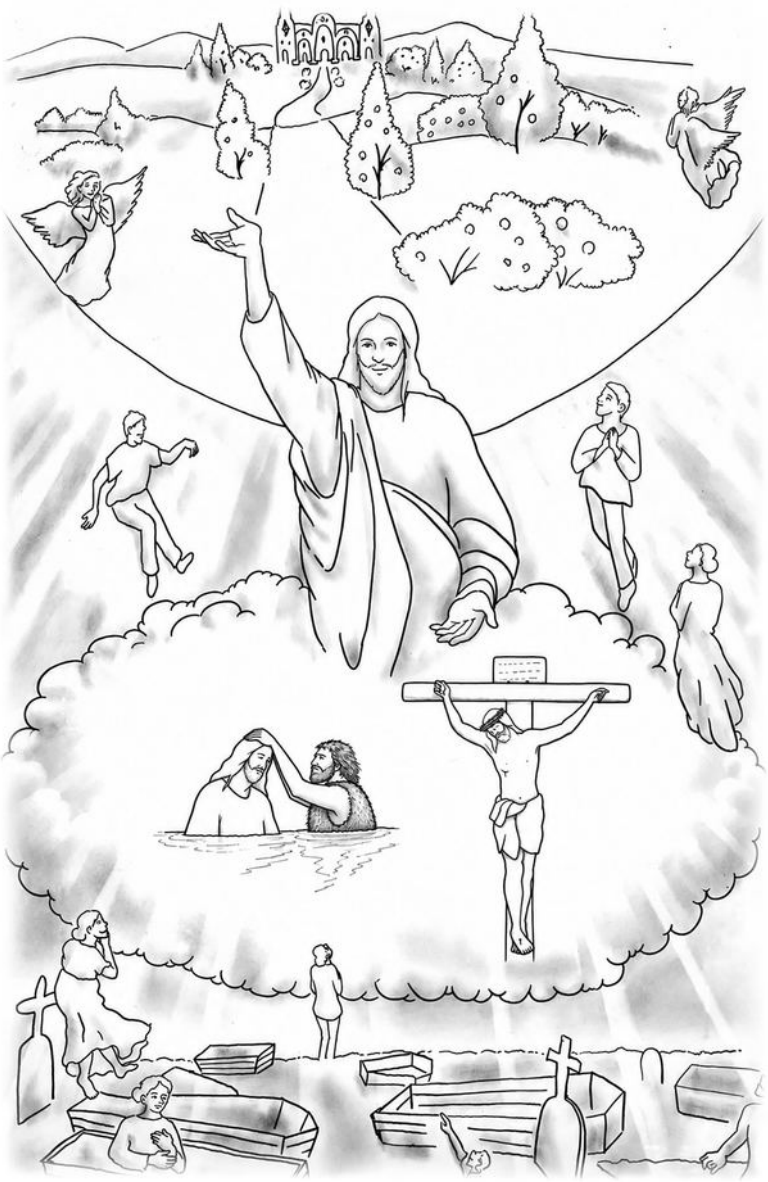

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in Jesus, the King of whom the Scriptures testified

< Acts 17:1–9 >

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.' And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.' And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go."

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The sufferings of Christ made clear through the Scriptures

When an uproar arises where the gospel of the water and the Spirit has been preached, by what should we judge whether that word is right? In Thessalonica there were people who heard the word and followed Paul and Silas, but those who were envious gathered a mob and rushed to the house of Jason. Since such different responses came out within the same city, we must examine on what basis Paul preached Jesus before we look at people's welcome or opposition. Our hearts, too, are easily shaken by the words around us, so I hope you will learn from this passage where we should place the assurance of salvation.

Let us read verse 2. *"Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2)*. Paul did not introduce Jesus with words that move people's hearts only for a moment; he explained the meaning of the Scriptures and demonstrated that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. The Scriptures he opened were the Old Testament; the Old Testament is the promise in which God said that He would bring salvation in this way in the future, and the New Testament is the record of His fulfilling that promise. The death and resurrection of Christ were not things that happened to Jesus by chance, but the fulfillment of the salvation God had promised. Therefore, when we say that we believe in Jesus, those words must also contain the knowledge of why He suffered and how He saved us.

Let us look at verse 3. *"This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ" (Acts 17:3)*. The Christ is the Savior who was promised to come to save sinners. Since it is not our resolve or our religious life that delivers us from sin, we must not stop at vaguely regarding Jesus as a great person and respecting Him.

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We must know through the Scriptures and believe that the One whom God promised actually bore our sins. The reason Paul demonstrated Jesus from the Scriptures was also so that those who heard might receive that very Savior.

In the sacrifices of the Old Testament, a sinner passed his sin on by laying his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, and the offering that had the sin passed on to it died and paid the price of sin. If we know this relationship, we cannot look upon the Cross of Jesus merely as a pitiful death. Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the same way as that laying on of hands; because of those sins He shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment in our place; and He rose again from death. The suffering of the Lord is the suffering of redemption, which came from the sinless One's bearing our sins.

Pointing to that Jesus, John testified as follows. *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. The sin of the world includes all the sins that you and I commit throughout our lives. Jesus, in the body that had borne that sin completely through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and He rose again from death and gave us complete salvation. The basis for believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit lies here; so rather than striving to produce the remission of sins again because of our own shortcomings, we must accept in our hearts the righteousness the Lord has fulfilled.

Jesus is the King who has saved us

Having heard this word, devout Greeks and not a few leading women followed Paul and Silas. Since God is not only the God

of the Jews but also the God of the Gentiles, the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished is not something to be received selectively according to status or origin. Our task is to preach the word of salvation to those who fear God and listen. We must clearly preach the fact that people are not saved because their deeds have become perfect, but receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus, who bore all the sins of the world, including even their own sins.

But when this news of salvation spread, those who were envious stirred up an uproar. Those who opposed Paul were not people who said they did not know God, but people who claimed to believe in God well. Their hearts, unwilling to let go of the thinking and the vested interests they had held on to, tried to drag out those who preached the word rather than trying to listen to the testimony of the Scriptures. We too must look back on whether we push away the word on the grounds that our faith is the one we are used to. Even if we bear the name of those who believe in God, if we put our own judgment ahead of the fact that Jesus has removed all sins, we come to stand against the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The truth is not determined by the fact that we have insisted on it for a long time, but lies in what God has accomplished and in the written word.

Having failed to find Paul and Silas, the mob dragged Jason and the brethren before the rulers of the city. Among their accusations, let us look at the words of verse 7. *"Saying there is another king—Jesus" (Acts 17:7)*. The accusers framed the preaching of Jesus as an act of defying the decrees of Caesar. But what Paul had demonstrated earlier was the suffering and resurrection of Christ. When the Scriptures call Jesus Lord and Christ, it means that He is our Savior and our King. To believe in Jesus as King is to be under the rule of the Savior who washed away sin and overcame death; so we must not miss this content

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and change the meaning of the gospel of the water and the Spirit according to the words of the accusers.

Jesus, who is the King, did not leave us bound in sin; He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and Himself paid the price of sin, rose again from death, and so saved us. Therefore, a heart that follows Him is different from a heart that tries to press others down with its own righteousness. Before the King who bore all sins, our boasting cannot stand, and we come to testify of Jesus to people who need the same grace. Those who believe in the righteousness the Lord has given do not put forward their own godliness as the basis of salvation, and because they know who it is that rules over us, they lay down their own thoughts before the word and learn His will.

Hold on to the word even in the midst of uproar

Jason and the brethren were caught up in an uproar because they had accepted the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and they were dragged before the rulers of the city. Let us read verse 9. *"So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go" (Acts 17:9)*. The outcome, in which the rulers of the city took security from those who had accepted the word and let them go, shows that the joy of salvation and the difficulties of reality were present together in the lives of those who believed. Since uproar also arises where the work of the gospel takes place, even when we believe the fact that Jesus has accomplished the remission of sins, we may go through such accusations and fears. So we must not judge the genuineness of salvation by the presence or absence of difficulties.

When opposition arises, there are times when we are first shaken, wondering whether we have believed wrongly. At such times all the more, we must return to Jesus, who has been clearly revealed through the Scriptures. If we place the basis of salvation on people's agreement, our assurance also collapses when opposing words multiply; but if we place it on what the Lord has done, those words cannot bring our sins back upon us. Because Jesus has accomplished the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit testifies of that truth in the hearts that believe, and relying on the Lord's word, we can tell God of our fears.

The work that the Church must carry out together also comes from this faith. We must not leave a brother who is suffering hardship alone, and we must continue to preach the salvation of Christ to those who will hear the word. Rather than stirring up an uproar ourselves in response to the uproar of the other side, we must testify step by step how sin was passed on to Jesus and how the judgment for that sin was ended, just as Paul explained the meaning of the Scriptures. Preaching so that those who hear may know the truth is the task entrusted to the witnesses of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Jesus whom Paul preached in Thessalonica was the Christ who suffered and rose again. People heard that testimony, and some followed, while others brought accusations, saying that they were preaching another king; but the King in whom we must believe is that Savior whom the Scriptures have revealed. Therefore, before measuring the size of the uproar, set your heart on Jesus, who bore our sins and received the judgment. Even on the days when you meet difficulties, just as Jason and the brethren had to stand before the rulers of the city, I hope you will come to God relying on the word of the King who has remitted sins. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Salvation comes through the word of the Scriptures

< Acts 17:10–15 >

"Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed."

Those who received the word eagerly and examined the Scriptures

The people of Berea, while eagerly receiving the word, also examined the Scriptures daily. We too must think deeply about the fact that receiving the word and verifying it were present together. Easily accepting whatever is said does not make it faith,

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nor is endless doubting right discernment. If we have heard the word that Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, rose again from death, and remitted sins, we must learn from the Scriptures how that salvation was accomplished. This scene in Berea teaches us both the heart that hears the word and the basis of faith.

Let us read verse 10. *"Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 17:10)*. Paul and Silas, who had gone through an uproar in Thessalonica, went to Berea by night, and there, too, they went into the synagogue. They did not abandon the work of opening the Scriptures and preaching Jesus because of people's opposition. Although the place had changed, the Savior to be preached was the same, so the people of Berea also came to hear the word of God through Paul and Silas. The spread of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a work in which the preacher newly makes up his own ideas, but a work of testifying to the next person of the salvation that has already been accomplished.

How did the people of Berea hear this word? Let us look at verse 11. *"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11)*. That they received the word eagerly is different from pretending to listen while holding on only to one's own claims. Also, that they searched the Scriptures means that they did not entrust their hearts only to the eloquence of the preacher. They examined the Scriptures daily to see whether the word they had heard was so. Since God now works through the word, faith that is not based on the word is merely a religion made by man. When we hear words that preach

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salvation, we too must first check what God has actually promised and accomplished, rather than weighing whether those words are familiar.

Verify the word that sin was passed on

The reason the people of Berea examined the Scriptures was to know whether the word Paul preached was so. The Scriptures they searched were the Old Testament, and the Old Testament records the sacrifice in which a sinner passed his sin on by laying his hands on the sacrificial offering and that offering died in his place. Therefore, if the promised Savior had come, there must surely be the word that He had the sin of the world passed on to Him, and we must look for it in the Scriptures. Even words that exalt Jesus cannot make people know the complete remission of sins if they ultimately leave the responsibility for washing away sin to man's effort. A heart that searches the Scriptures does not stop at admiring the zeal of the preacher but goes on to ask about the content of the salvation God has accomplished.

Look at the word Jesus spoke when He was about to receive baptism from John. *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. In order to fulfill all righteousness, the Lord had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John, and because of those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again from death. Just as the offering in the Old Testament had sin passed on to it through the laying on of hands, this baptism Jesus received from John was the laying on of hands that transferred the sin of mankind to Him. That sin of the world includes all the sins that you and I commit throughout our lives. Therefore, if we read the baptism Jesus received from John only

as a ceremony that displayed His own godliness, we will miss the relationship between that work, which continues into the blood of the Cross and the resurrection, and our remission of sins. The One who had sin passed on to Him and the scope of that sin are clear in the word.

The death on the Cross must also be seen in connection with that baptism He received from John. Because of the sin of the world that had been passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment for sin that we were to receive; and rising again from death, He saved us, who were bound to sin and death. To know why the sinless Lord died, we must see our sins that were passed on to Him; and to know what that death has to do with me, I must believe that the Lord paid even the price of my sins. To verify the word is, in this way, to know and accept the work of Jesus as one's own salvation.

When we know and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, it also becomes clear that our own feelings cannot replace the evidence of salvation. It is not that the heart is clean only at the times when one has shed tears; rather, I believe in the remission of sins because the Lord has already borne my sins and received the judgment for them. Even if we discover our own shortcomings today, there is no need to ask that the salvation recorded in the word be accomplished again. While acknowledging our wrongs and turning around, we can rely on the Savior who has remitted sins, and as people who have examined that word, we can give thanks to Jesus.

Let us read verse 12. *"Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men" (Acts 17:12)*. Among the people of Berea who examined the Scriptures, many believed. Just as prominent women and men are recorded together, the word of salvation is not news given

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only to particular people. It is neither the amount of one's Bible knowledge nor one's origin that remits sins; we receive that grace when we believe in the salvation God has testified of. Only a salvation that has been verified through the Scriptures and believed in this way is a salvation with a basis, a salvation that does not change even when circumstances become difficult. We too must not stop at getting to know the word but must accept into our hearts Jesus Christ, to whom the Scriptures point.

The testimony that continues along a path different from the uproar

Opposition arose again in Berea, where those who believed had increased. Let us look at verse 13. *"But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds" (Acts 17:13)*. These Jews from Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching the word of God and came all the way there and stirred up the crowds. Since those who search the word and those who stir up the crowds appear in the same scene, what we should follow becomes even clearer. The size of the crowd or the intensity of the uproar cannot replace the testimony of the Scriptures, and if what Paul preached was the word of God, it cannot be stopped by an uproar caused by men either. To know whether salvation has come from God, we must open the word; by following the uproar, we will not obtain that answer.

In our hearts, too, there is a habit of wanting to hear people's evaluations before verifying the Scriptures. When many people oppose something, we tend to set aside even a right word, and when many people approve of something, we easily feel at ease without knowing its content. However, faith is not bound to the

number of people; it is accepting the salvation that the Lord accomplished, as He had promised, through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Therefore, we must make the gospel of the water and the Spirit we have heard clear through the word. Only when we have this assurance do we not lose the words to preach even in the face of opposition, and we can also point out the basis of salvation together with a brother who is going through difficulties, going beyond human comfort.

The brethren had Paul go to the sea, and Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. Those who conducted Paul went with him as far as Athens and then returned, having received a command that Silas and Timothy should come quickly. There were not only people who heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit but also brethren who helped the one who preached it. Because the church that had received the word moved together in this way, the work of serving the gospel continued even after the uproar arose. We too must stand on the word we have received, care for one another, and carry out the work entrusted to us so that the testimony of the gospel may continue.

That service is not a price offered in order to obtain the remission of sins. Because the basis of salvation has already been made clear in the Scriptures, we do the Lord's work together, giving thanks for the grace we have received. If we try to confirm our salvation by our own service, our hearts become bound to sin again on the days when our labor decreases; but if we believe in what Jesus has done, we do not lose the One on whom we can rely, even while acknowledging our shortcomings. Faith that has verified the word does not grow through self-boasting but grows with a heart that relies on the Lord.

Look back on your hearts through the scene in which the people of Berea listened eagerly and examined the Scriptures to

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find out whether these things were so. Let us not stop at only hearing without verifying, or at verifying but putting off accepting it. Through the written word, know and believe in Jesus, who has remitted our sins. Then, even on the days when people's uproar and our moods change, you will not forget where to find the basis of salvation. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The trustworthy evidence given to all people through the resurrection

< Acts 17:16–31 >

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, 'What does this babbler want to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,' because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.' For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

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God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring." Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.'"

The altar built to the unknown god

The city of Athens was full of idols, and the people spent much time on newly heard stories. While Paul waited there for Silas and Timothy, he preached Jesus and the resurrection of the body to the people he met in the synagogue and in the marketplace. Speaking much about God does not mean knowing the true God, so we too must examine what we rely on as we live. Even if our hearts are earnest, if the object of our faith is not clear, we cannot solve the problem of sin with that earnestness.

Listen to who the One is whom Paul wanted to make known to the people of Athens.

Let us read verse 23, from among the words Paul spoke as he stood in the midst of the Areopagus. *"Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23)*. The people set up an altar inscribed TO THE UNKNOWN GOD and worshiped there, but Paul did not want them to remain without knowing. Preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a matter of praising the religiousness of those who hear it and then moving on; it is making them know the true God and His salvation, which Jesus accomplished by having the sin of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rising again from death. We too, before we feel at ease simply by saying that we have faith, must know what God we believe in and on what basis we are awaiting salvation.

God is not One who has gone far away from us and pays no attention to us at all. He is the One who has caused people to dwell on all the earth and who gives life and breath to each person. Therefore, when we hear the word that shows us the way to come to God, we must not treat it merely as one more new story. This is because we must know who the One is who gave us our life, and how our sins are resolved before Him. The purpose of testifying of the gospel of the water and the Spirit lies in causing people to hear and believe what they could not understand before.

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The Lord, who gives life and all things

Let us look at verse 25. *"Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25)*. God, who gives all things to all people, is not One who receives help from people as though He needed anything. We must not confine God in a temple made by human hands, or regard Him as something like what we have produced by our own abilities. When we rightly know the relationship between the Creator and the people He made, we cannot think that God becomes our God only after we have offered Him many things. It is God who first gave us life, and we live depending on Him.

Paul preached God, who made every nation from one blood and caused them to dwell on all the earth. No nation's pride or knowledge can raise a person up to the place of the Creator. Since all of us are people who have received life from God, there is no reason for us to despise one another, and the word of salvation must not be given selectively according to people's origins either. Because the sin that Jesus bore through the baptism He received from John and removed through the blood of the Cross and the resurrection is the sin of the whole world, when we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must not narrow it down to a salvation that applies only to the people close to us.

We live by relying on God, but the sin in our hearts has not disappeared merely because of the fact that we were created. To obtain the remission of sins, we must know the salvation that the Creator accomplished for sinners. Herein lies the reason why the word of truth is needed by people who knew that God exists yet did not know what to do about their own sins. Even when people know nothing else, God does not abandon those who know that

He exists, fear Him, and grope to find Him; He sends people who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit and meets them through the word of truth. We too must hear that word and come to God.

Do not rely on what people have made

Let us read verse 29. *"Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising" (Acts 17:29)*. To regard the One who made people as being like the gold, silver, and stone that people have made is to see the relationship between the Creator and the created being upside down. Even if we adorn a visible image well and devote our sincerity to it, that image cannot bear our sins or receive the judgment in our place. The word telling us to cast away idols does not end with telling us to clear away one decoration; it makes us turn our hearts, which relied on what cannot save us, to the true God.

We too have times when we love and follow something else more than God. If we put the thoughts we hold in our hearts or the things we want to gain before the Lord, then even when we hear the word, it is easy for us to turn away from the truth in order to keep those things. Therefore, we must not attribute the problem of idols only to the people of ancient Athens, but must lay our hearts open before God. When we acknowledge the fact that our cravings and religious zeal cannot remove our sins, it also becomes clear what we must cast away and whom we must believe. The place to which a heart that has left God must return is the living Lord.

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Verse 30 commands that turning. *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30)*. Repentance is not merely repeating words of sorrow over wrongdoing; it is turning from what we wrongly believed and believing in the salvation the Lord has accomplished. If we keep confessing that we have sin yet do not receive the Savior who removed sin, the problem of sin is not solved. Jesus does not demand that those who acknowledge their sins go and wash themselves by their own strength and then come; rather, through the word He makes known the remission of sins for the sins that He Himself bore. A heart that turns back to Him must have the faith that accepts this salvation.

John the Baptist proclaimed to the people a baptism of repentance, but to Jesus he gave the baptism that passed on the sin of the world. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred onto His own body once and for all; because of that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment for sin in our place; and He rose again from death and completed the salvation that gives life to sinners. Since neither my past sins and yours nor the sins we will commit as we go on living have been left out of that sin of the world, the Lord is not One who suffered without any relation to our sins. This is the reason why repentance that turns from idols must not stop there, but must reach as far as the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Because the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has given contains such clear grounds for sin having been passed on and judged, those who repent must rely not on their own sincerity but on the work of Jesus.

Stand by faith before the One who rose again

God not only makes salvation known, but also speaks of the day on which He will judge. Let us read verse 31. *"Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31)*. Raising Jesus from the dead is the trustworthy evidence given to all people. Therefore, the resurrection is not a story by which we are comforted for a moment and then forget, but a fact that reveals before whom we will stand. We cannot vaguely put off the problem of sin that awaits the judgment, and we must believe now in Jesus, of whom God has testified.

Jesus, who will judge, is the Savior who first bore our sins and received that judgment in our place. Therefore, those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can wait for Him with the assurance of the remission of sins. This is not because we have the merit to wash away sins, but because the Savior has paid the price of sin. Faith is not a heart that regards what God has done as insufficient and adds something else to it, but a heart that accepts the salvation He confirmed through the resurrection. When we know that grace, even before the word of judgment we come to rely on the Lord rather than look for a place to hide.

What Paul first preached was Jesus and the resurrection of the body, and at the Areopagus as well, the evidence he made clear at the end was the work of God, who raised Jesus again. Even though there are many idols in the city and new stories abound, the One who will give life to sinners is someone else. You too, turn from the path of piling up your devotion without knowing salvation, and receive in your heart Jesus, who bore our sins and rose again. Just as Paul said he would make known what they worshiped without knowing, now is the time not to hesitate

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while building an altar toward an unknown object, but to come by faith to the living Lord, who has accomplished salvation. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Do not put off the word of the resurrection you have heard, but receive it now

< Acts 17:32–34 >

"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter.' So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

The responses of the people who heard of the resurrection

Not all the people who heard the word of the resurrection at the Areopagus went the same way. Some mocked, some said they would hear Paul again, and a few drew near to Paul and believed. This scene, in which people standing before the same evidence showed such different responses, asks us too what we do after hearing the word. If we say that we know the fact that Jesus rose again from death, yet do not accept Him as our Savior, we end up leaving the word we have heard outside our hearts.

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Let us read verse 32. *"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter'" (Acts 17:32)*. What Paul preached in Athens was this from the beginning: *"Because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18)*. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that the apostles preached was the doctrine of the resurrection, and the gospel we have is also the same doctrine of the resurrection. Words mocking the resurrection do not make what God has accomplished disappear. People take the word they have heard lightly on the grounds that it is hard to understand, but the fact that Jesus rose again is not bound to people's evaluation. We too must not push the word away by following someone's ridicule, nor blur the evidence of the resurrection in order to win the approval of those who hear the gospel. This is because this evidence cannot be left out of preaching Jesus, who has saved us from sin and death.

We must also distinguish between the words that they would hear Paul again and the record that some believed. We cannot know the inner hearts of other people, but a heart that puts off hearing cannot take the place of our own faith. If, while saying that we will look into the word at the next opportunity, we are not accepting the evidence of salvation we have already heard, we must examine where our hearts are staying. Salvation is not obtained by the merit of having thought it over sufficiently at some later time; it is receiving by faith the salvation of Jesus, which God has let us hear now.

We too have a heart that wants to store away the gospel of the water and the Spirit we have heard as if it were a new story. While wanting to hear something more marvelous, or while watching the reactions of other people, we may fail to receive into our hearts how the Lord has actually remitted our sins. But what a soul in which sin remains needs is not a larger number of

stories, but the Savior who had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rose again from death. Therefore, before the word of the resurrection, we must not only ask, "What more is there to hear?" but must make clear, "On whom will I rely to stand before God?"

The evidence of the Savior, who rose again

These people heard of the resurrection after the word that revealed the day on which God will judge. Let us look again at verse 31. *"He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31)*. We who hear God's evidence that He raised Him from the dead cannot dismiss the resurrection as a matter of dispute unrelated to ourselves. This is because we must consider together the judgment of that day and the sin that remains in our hearts today. God, who has testified of the resurrection, has given us grounds to know and believe in the Savior, and we who have heard that word also need to respond with faith.

What relation does that resurrection have to us? Jesus is not One who died because of His own sin, but One who died bearing our sins. Because He bore all the sins of the world once and for all by receiving baptism from John, my lifelong sins and yours were also passed on to Jesus at that time. Only when we know this fact does the meaning also become clear that His death on the Cross was the judgment He received in our place, and that His resurrection was the completion of that salvation. The reason the sinless Lord could be judged for us, who are full of sin, is that He had first had our sins passed on to Him in this way.

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Because of that sin of the world, which had been passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and paid the price of our sins, and He rose again from death and gave new life to us who had been bound by sin and death; so the resurrection does not end as an amazing event that happened to Jesus alone. Because the One who bore our sins received the judgment and rose again, we who believe in Him rely on the remission of sins that has already been accomplished. The resurrection that the gospel of the water and the Spirit reveals is the resurrection of the Savior who completed this salvation.

Therefore, if, while believing in Jesus, we think that there are still sins we must wash away ourselves apart from that, we have not properly received the full extent of the sins the Lord bore. We do not become righteous because there is nothing lacking in our deeds; we obtain righteousness because Jesus bore all our sins and received the judgment. Because the Holy Spirit testifies of that remission of sins in the hearts of those who believe, we do not try to prove the Holy Spirit by our own feelings. We must set our hearts on the salvation that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has accomplished, and even on days when our shortcomings are exposed, we must hold on to the righteousness the Lord has given us.

A few people believed and came to the Lord

Verse 33 briefly records Paul's movement. *"So Paul departed from among them" (Acts 17:33)*. The passage does not end with Paul having departed from among them. The very next verse reveals that there were people who believed the word. Even after we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, not

everyone agrees on the spot, but we must not judge the response of all who heard it by looking only at the voices of opposition. God meets souls through the word of truth, and relying on Him, we must testify of the salvation we have received.

Let us read verse 34. *"However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (Acts 17:34)*. While saying that some believed, the passage records together the names of Dionysius and Damaris, and also others. The mocking voices heard earlier must not hide this faith. Because Jesus is the Savior who bore the sin of the world, we cannot look lightly on even one soul, and we cannot regard the salvation preached to people as trivial just because those who receive the word are only a few. A heart that values the souls being saved turns us back from both boasting and discouragement over the number of people.

We too needed the grace by which God meets those who fear Him through the truth. It is not because we knew everything or because our deeds were excellent that we encountered the gospel of the water and the Spirit; rather, through the word we came to know Jesus, who remitted our sins. Therefore, now we who believe must not despise those who do not yet know, but must explain salvation carefully, step by step, to them as well. Those to whom the gospel has become clear, rather than putting forward their own knowledge, devote their hearts to making known the fact that Jesus bore all the sins of the world, including even the sins of each of those souls.

The response of the people who heard the word remains in the last verse in the words that they believed. Dionysius, Damaris, and others drew near to Paul and accepted the Savior he preached. For us too, the time of hearing and the heart of believing can be distinguished. Before you assume that you are

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already relying on Jesus because you keep on hearing the word, look back on whether you have accepted into your heart the fact that the Lord bore your sins and was judged. The object of the faith that receives salvation is not Paul himself, who preached the word, but Jesus, of whom he testified.

Neither words of mockery nor words saying that one will hear again next time can wash away sin by themselves. What we need is the faith that relies now on the Savior who rose again from death. Just as the names of Dionysius and Damaris were recorded among those who believed, you too, do not stop at watching other people's responses, but accept the salvation you have heard as your own. I hope that you will not leave the evidence of the resurrection outside your heart, but will stand before God believing in the remission of sins that Jesus has accomplished. ✉

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CHAPTER

18

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Paul, who worked together with others and testified of the Savior

< Acts 18:1–4 >

“After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”

Aquila and Priscilla, whom Paul met in Corinth

The people Paul met in Corinth were Aquila and Priscilla, who had the same trade of making tents. After recording with whom Paul lived and what work he did, the Book of Acts goes on to show how he reasoned from the word every Sabbath. Since those who serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit also work to make a living and live together with other people, we can examine in this scene how our daily work and our hearts that believe in the Lord should be connected to each other. What

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matters is not the name of an occupation, but with whom and for what we are spending our lives.

Let us read verse 1. *"After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth" (Acts 18:1)*. Paul, who had preached the word of the resurrection in Athens, now arrived in Corinth. Coming to a new place did not mean that the Jesus he had to preach had changed. For preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not carrying around the inspiration one received in one place, but testifying to other souls as well of the salvation Jesus has already accomplished. Even when the setting of our lives changes, the Lord, who received baptism from John and thereby had all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him once and for all, who shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and who rose again from death to save us from sin, is the same Lord, and we must value the people with whom we will share that grace.

The circumstances of the couple Paul met appear in verse 2. *"And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them" (Acts 18:2)*. These were people who had received the command to leave Rome and had recently come from Italy, and Paul went to them. The text does not explain this meeting by the couple's reputation or wealth, but reveals in the next verse that their trade and Paul's were the same. People who had come by different paths came to work together in the same place. We tend to regard only great, conspicuous works as opportunities to serve the work of the Lord, but we cannot neglect meeting the people we live with and staying close to them either.

Aquila and Priscilla later become people who explain the way of God in more detail to others, but in this first meeting they

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appear as a couple who stayed and worked with Paul. When we look at the people God uses, we too must not look only at the positions or titles that are outwardly visible. For those who have received the word of the remission of sins and keep it in their hearts have something precious with which to serve other souls. Staying close to and living together with those who rely on the same salvation is the actual form of union for the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

A life of working together also belongs to the Lord

Let us look at verse 3. *"So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers" (Acts 18:3)*. Paul stayed and worked with the couple who had the same trade. Since the work of making tents and the work of preaching the word were both present in Paul's life, we see that the work of supporting one's own living can also be connected with a life of serving the Lord together with the Church. We do not need to make light of our everyday responsibilities on the grounds that we serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit, or to cut off the fellowship of faith on the grounds that we work. We must live knowing that, within the salvation the Lord has given us, our whole lives belong to Him.

The reason each of us works and makes a living is not to pile up our own righteousness and be acknowledged by God. Even if people work faithfully and are well regarded by others, they cannot wash away their own sins. Even on days when the results of our work were good, there are greed and pride in our hearts, and when we meet hard and unjust things, the evil hearts we had hidden are revealed. What people like us need first is not a righteousness that boasts of our own lives, but the remission of

sins that Jesus has granted. Nor must we confuse even living our lives rightly with the price of obtaining that salvation.

John testified of Jesus as follows: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. That sin of the world which Jesus bore includes the sins we commit in our workplaces and homes as we live, the evil we harbor in our hearts, and the transgressions of our whole lifetime. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all those sins passed on to His own body once and for all. Therefore, the salvation by which He removed our sins through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection does not divide us in the hours of worship from us in the hours of daily living. The Lord bore the sins of a person's whole life.

Jesus, who had that sin passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we should have received, and rose again from death to give us life. In this gospel of the water and the Spirit lie the clear grounds on which our sins have been removed. The reason we can believe in the righteousness the Lord has accomplished even on days when we come to know the shortcomings of our lives is that our actions did not produce salvation, but Jesus Himself saved us. Those who believe rely on this grace and turn away from wrong hearts, and together with the brothers who have received the same salvation, they look for work by which to serve the Lord.

Therefore, to say that we live a life that belongs to the Lord does not mean that we abandon all the work of making a living. It means that, while knowing that our own labor does not remit sins, we take responsibility for our lives in gratitude for the grace we have received and share the necessary work. We must not treat the people we work with merely as means for our own profit. When we remember that Jesus bore that person's sins too,

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together with all the sins of the world, we come to value the word and the fellowship that soul needs. The heart that serves the people we meet in daily life must be connected with the faith by which we were saved.

The one Savior preached in the synagogue

The record of Paul and the couple working together continues into verse 4. *"And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4)*. Even while staying and working in Corinth, Paul did not let go of the work of preaching the word, so, just as the text records that it was every Sabbath, he persuaded Jews and Greeks in the synagogue. Meeting people with whom to live and preaching the word to people were connected within Paul's life. Rather than putting off serving the Lord until all our circumstances are in place, we too must examine what we can testify of now with the salvation we have received.

The Savior whom Jews and Greeks need is the same Jesus Christ. Paul testified from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ, and when he preached the word, he never left out the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Still, we must explain the word while considering what the listeners know and what they do not know. To those who know the Old Testament sacrifice, in which people laid their hands on the sacrificial offering to pass on their sins, we must make known Jesus, who fulfilled that promise; and to those who do not know how sin is passed on, we must explain from the beginning the relationship between the baptism the Lord received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. If we assume that the other person must already know, only the name

of Jesus remains and the content of salvation becomes blurred, so when we persuade people, the One to be believed and the grounds for believing must be clear.

Such testimony is not a matter of boasting of the preacher's ability. Because the Holy Spirit, who dwells in hearts that have received the remission of sins, causes us to testify of Jesus, we open our mouths relying on the word we have received. Having a certain occupation neither creates nor takes away the qualification of a witness. Those for whom the Savior who remitted their sins is clear can preach Him to the souls they meet. We must remember that what others need is not our boasting of our own lives, but the salvation Jesus has granted.

Even while staying with the couple who did the same work, Paul did not lose the word he was to preach in the synagogue. Let us also not forget, in our everyday lives of working, resting, and meeting people, that we are people who belong to the Lord. Share the burden of one another's lives, have fellowship in the word, and value the work of letting souls who do not yet know the remission of sins come to know the Savior. Just as the work of making tents and the testimony in the synagogue were present together in one life, I hope that our ordinary days, too, will become days of serving Jesus, who saved us. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The reason He said not to be afraid but to speak

< Acts 18:5–11 >

"When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.' And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

Jesus Christ, made known clearly by one constrained by the word

To Paul, who was preaching the word in Corinth, the Lord said not to be afraid and not to keep silent, but to speak. There were people who opposed him, but there were also people in that

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city who believed and received water baptism, so the reason Paul had to keep preaching lay in the will of the Lord rather than in people's reactions. We too, when we meet opposition while testifying of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, feel like shutting our mouths. But if we know the reason why the Lord said not to keep silent, we can testify of the Savior again without following our fear and abandoning the words we are to preach.

Let us read verse 5. *"But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ –ASV" (Acts 18:5).* When Silas and Timothy came down, Paul was constrained by the word of God and clearly testified of Jesus. The word Christ means the Savior and King whom God promised to send, so preaching Jesus does not stop at urging listeners to have good hearts. We must make them know clearly through the word that the Savior God sent is Jesus, and what work He did to save sinners.

The salvation Paul preached to the Jews was not separate from the Old Testament Scriptures they knew. In the Old Testament, sinners laid their hands on the head of the sacrificial offering to pass on their sins, and that offering died in their place, so they received the remission of sins; Jesus fulfilled what that sacrifice pointed to. Jesus, the Son of God, had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and those sins include my lifelong sins and yours. Because the Lord first bore our sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross because of those sins, receiving the judgment in our place, and rose again from death to save us completely. The Jesus we testify of is not One who left the way of the remission of sins to people, but the Savior who accomplished it Himself.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit testifies in this way of the salvation the Lord carried out. With the thought that one can

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believe in Jesus only after first correcting one's own heart and becoming clean, one cannot reach that grace. It is because the grounds for washing away our sins are not in us that Jesus, the Son of God, bore our sins. Those who preach must not put forward their own sincerity as a qualification for salvation, and those who listen must not push away the Lord's salvation as something unrelated to them because of their own transgressions. When we clearly testify of how sin was removed, the One to be believed becomes clear.

But there were people in the synagogue who opposed and blasphemed. Paul shook his garments and told them that their blood would return upon their own heads, then said that he would go to the Gentiles, and moved to the house of Justus, who worshiped God. Because the Lord has taken away all the sin of the world, the reason a person now remains a sinner is that he does not believe that word. Yet we must not change the word because not everyone listens, nor must we stop testifying while looking only at those who refuse to listen. Since God is the God of the Jews and also the God of the Gentiles, we must keep preaching to the souls who will accept the same salvation Jesus has accomplished.

The baptism of those who heard and believed

Even after Paul moved to the house next to the synagogue, the gospel of the water and the Spirit was testified of. Let us look at verse 8. *"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8)*. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with his whole household, and many Corinthians also heard, believed,

and received water baptism. Earlier, those who opposed are recorded, but after them, those who believed appear, so we cannot judge all the souls of a city by opposition alone. Since God meets those who fear God and preaches the gospel to them, we must believe in that grace and keep testifying of the word.

See clearly also the order: they heard, believed, and received water baptism. It is not the ritual of water baptism that people receive that removes sin; rather, it is the way those who have heard and believed in the salvation in which Jesus bore our sins show that faith. If we confuse the baptism Jesus received from John with the baptism we receive as a sign of faith, the grounds of salvation change. The Lord had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death, and the water baptism believers receive is a confession of believing that fact. We must not place our assurance of the remission of sins in our own experience of going into the water and coming out.

When we believe in this salvation and receive the remission of sins, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. It is not that, after obtaining the remission of sins, we add our own labor to bring down the Holy Spirit separately. Because the work Jesus accomplished is perfect, the Holy Spirit testifies of that righteousness in believing hearts. So a witness of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a person who opens his mouth by his own vigor alone, but a person who relies on the Holy Spirit dwelling in his heart. When we preach, we must believe in the truth of the word of God rather than in our own power of persuasion, and explain it step by step so that listeners may know and believe in the Lord.

Therefore, those who show their faith through water baptism are not putting forward their own righteousness, but are

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confessing that they believe in Jesus, who bore our sins. When we remember the grace that has enabled us to make that confession, we come to preach to others, too, the salvation the Lord has accomplished rather than the specialness of our own experience.

We cannot keep silent because He is with us

Let us read verse 9. *"Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent'" (Acts 18:9)*. The Lord told Paul not to be afraid and not to keep silent. This word does not merely demand that the one who preaches have a strong personality. Because the Lord gave in the very next verse the promise that He would be with Paul, Paul could testify relying on the Lord's word rather than on his own courage. Likewise, when fear arises, we must not think that we can serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit only after overcoming that fear by ourselves; we must ask the Lord and follow the word. For if we keep our mouths shut, the souls who need to hear will not hear the word of salvation.

The reason appears in verse 10. *"For I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10)*. Look together at the promise of protection given to Paul in Corinth and the word that there were people to whom he had to preach. Everywhere there are people who fear God, and God sends His servants for such people and lets them meet one another. The Lord did not leave Paul alone in that city, but let him continue the work of testimony He had entrusted to him. Today, too, the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, confirming our salvation and leading us to follow the Lord, so we do not

preach alone, but can serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit relying on the Lord who is with us.

Having received that promise, Paul stayed in Corinth and taught the word. Let us read verse 11. *"And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11)*. It did not end after he testified once with a fervent heart; the work of staying among the people and teaching the word of God continued. For listeners to know and believe in the Lord, we must accurately explain the word of the salvation accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. At that time, before the Bible had been completely written, the Lord also spoke through visions, but now God works through the written word, so faith becomes clear when we let people know the written truth rather than making them pursue new experiences. We too must receive deeply into our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit we have heard.

Amid the words of opposition that resounded in Corinth, the Lord said not to keep silent but to speak, and the reason lay in the fact that the Lord was with Paul and that there were people in that city who would be saved. The salvation we are to preach has already been accomplished, and there are still souls who need to hear of that grace. Let us not shut our mouths while counting only people's opposition, but ask the Lord who is with us for strength and clearly testify of Jesus Christ. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Cast away the righteousness of works and worship God

< Acts 18:12–17 >

“When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, ‘This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.’ And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters.’ And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.”

The exhortation to worship God comes under accusation

Paul’s urging people to worship God became words of accusation and was brought all the way to the judgment seat. Although he had not told them to leave God, those who opposed him pressed hard against him, saying that he was breaking the

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law. In the face of such a scene, we must ask what kind of faith truly worships God. For holding fast to thoughts one has kept for a long time is not the same as accepting the Savior whom God has sent. Before accusing someone in the name of faith, we must examine on what grounds we ourselves believe in the remission of sins.

Let us read verse 12. *"When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat" (Acts 18:12)*. Earlier, many Corinthians heard the word and believed, but here people who oppose Paul rise up and bring him to the judgment seat. Where the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit takes place, opposition also appears like this, because when God works, the devil also works. Moreover, the persecutors were people who at that time claimed to believe in God well. Therefore, we must not judge Jesus' salvation to be wrong merely because there are people who oppose it. For the accusation that people gathered to make and the Lord's remitting of our sins stand on different grounds.

Let us hear that accusation in verse 13. *"Saying, 'This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law'" (Acts 18:13)*. What Paul had already testified was that Jesus is the Christ. Those who heard and believed came to the Lord, but the opponents accused Paul of breaking the law. We too, when we regard works and ordinances as the grounds of salvation, come to look wrongly upon the grace the Lord has given. God's purpose in giving us the law is to make us realize sin, and the salvation that delivers us from that sin was accomplished by Jesus Christ, who had all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rose again from death. Only when we know and

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believe this relationship does the faith that worships God also become clear.

The Lord bore the sin that the law exposed

When we set ourselves before the law, we cannot boast of a righteousness by which to judge others. For even if there are ordinances we kept outwardly, they could not make clean even the greed and evil thoughts of our hearts. If we could keep the whole law, we would have no need of Jesus' grace, but the law only exposes the sins we have committed; it does not let us pay the price of the rest of our sins with the few deeds we say we have kept. We who have realized our sin must turn from claiming that we are righteous and receive the salvation God has granted. This is why we must distinguish boasting in works from faith in Jesus.

These are the words Jesus spoke when He received baptism from John. *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Jesus, the Son of God, received baptism from John to fulfill all righteousness and thereby had all the sins of the world, including my lifelong sins and yours, passed on to Him once and for all, and He removed that sin through the blood of the Cross and the resurrection. God did not declare us righteous by hiding sin, but accomplished the remission of sins by sending the Savior who would Himself bear sin.

Because of that sin which He had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and rose again from death to complete salvation. In this gospel of the water and the Spirit lie the grounds on which we stand righteous before God. The baptism Jesus received from John was the event

in which sin was passed on to Him, and the Cross was the event in which He paid the price for that sin, so we must not separate the two and try to resolve the remaining sins with our own deeds. A heart that believes in the risen Lord relies on the righteousness Jesus accomplished rather than on its own perfection.

Believing in this grace is not an attitude of taking sin lightly; rather, because we know from the Lord's sacrifice how severe the judgment of sin is, we do not justify our own evil but turn back before God. At the same time, we do not abandon the salvation already accomplished and try again to establish the righteousness of works just because our transgressions have been exposed. Believing in this grace means believing the fact that my sin was included in the sin the Lord bore, and going on learning the way that pleases God. A life that worships God comes from a heart that believes in the salvation given in this way.

So those who testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, must not mix two kinds of words for their listeners. If, after preaching that Jesus has remitted all sins, we say that one must add one's own merit to obtain salvation, we blur the grounds of faith. Urging people to live according to the word and demanding that they obtain the remission of sins by works are different things, so we must clearly make known the righteousness Jesus has given and exhort people to follow the Lord in gratitude for that grace.

Gallio's words and Paul's testimony are different

At the judgment seat, when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio spoke first. Let us read verse 15. *"If it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I*

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do not want to be a judge of such matters" (Acts 18:15). Saying that he did not want to be the judge of such matters, Gallio drove the accusers from the judgment seat. He spoke of the matter of handling an accusation, whereas what Paul had preached before was Jesus Christ, who saved sinners. We must distinguish between the fact that the accusers were driven from the judgment seat and the reason why we can stand righteous before God.

The mere fact that we are not accused by people does not mean that our sin before God has been removed; conversely, when a believer is accused, it does not mean that the sins Jesus remitted come back into being. Our righteousness does not come from the consent of accusers or the attention of a judge, but lies in the atonement Jesus accomplished by having our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood on the Cross to receive that judgment in our place, and rising again from death. Therefore, the faith that worships God first relies on that salvation. We must not confuse the desire to have our innocence acknowledged by people with the heart that gives thanks to the Savior who remitted our sins.

Such assurance is different from a heart that looks down on those who oppose. For we too held on to our own righteousness before we knew grace, and even now there are times when we put our own thoughts before the word. Since the Holy Spirit causes us to testify of Jesus from hearts that have received the remission of sins, we must not preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit with a fleshly temper that seeks to defeat people. We must make clear what one must believe to be saved from sin, and testify of the word so that even hostile souls may hear what the Lord has accomplished.

Turn away from the violence at the judgment seat

Let us look at verse 17. *"Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things" (Acts 18:17)*. Even though Sosthenes was beaten before the judgment seat, Gallio took no notice of this matter; so what remains is a scene in which a man suffered violence in the very place where the testimony of the gospel of the water and the Spirit should have been heard and judged. We must not take delight in the fact that someone was beaten and treat it as evidence of salvation. For what Jesus has given us is not the right to rejoice in the pain of others, but the grace to preach the Savior who bore sin.

In our hearts, too, there is an evil that, when others point out our faults, wants to see those people fail. If we follow such a heart while saying that we know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we put our own feelings before the Lord's grace. Therefore, the more we meet opposition, the more we must pour out our hearts to God and look to Jesus, who gave us the remission of sins. Even while giving needed help to brothers who are going through hardship, we must not regard harming the other party as a fruit of faith. The salvation the Lord has given turns us away from evil feelings and makes us follow the word.

The exhortation to worship God became an accusation at the judgment seat, but the words of those who insisted on the law there were not the word that washes away sin. Before we put forward the name of faith, we too must clearly know the law, which makes us realize sin, and Jesus, who remitted that sin. Turn from the heart that made its own deeds its righteousness, and believe in the righteousness the Savior has accomplished. Because we have received that grace, we do not let our hearts be taken up with accusing and defeating others, and we can help

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brothers who are suffering hardship and worship God with the word of salvation. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Service that strengthens the disciples even after preaching

< Acts 18:18–23 >

“So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.’ And he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.”

The couple who went with Paul as he departed

Even after we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in one place and leave, our heart toward the people there does not come to an end. Paul took leave of the brothers in Corinth

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and traveled to many places by way of Ephesus, and wherever he went, he preached the word and strengthened the disciples. What we must see in this journey is not only the names of the places he moved to, but how he cared for the souls who believed in the Lord. What is needed is not to be satisfied with leaving behind the fact that we have preached the gospel as our own achievement, but to serve people so that they may stand firm in the salvation they have received.

Let us read the first part of verse 18. *"So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him" (Acts 18:18)*. After staying many more days, Paul took leave of the brothers, and Priscilla and Aquila also set out on the way with him. Earlier, they appeared as a couple who had the same trade and lived and worked together, but now they appear as people who depart with Paul. The fellowship of those who had received the gospel of the water and the Spirit did not end merely with closeness in daily life, but extended to serving the work of the Lord together. We, too, must examine what we do together in life with the brothers who have received the same salvation.

The same verse also records the fact that Paul had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because he had taken a vow. Since the Bible does not reveal the content of that vow, we cannot make up a meaning and attach it to the vow; but what is clear is that in this journey, the One who saves sinners is not Paul's vow or deeds, but Jesus Christ, whom Paul preached. Since the sin in the heart is not washed away merely by the fact that one has made some decision of faith, we must not swap the places of our resolve and Jesus' work of salvation.

What Jesus did is as follows. When Jesus, the Son of God, came in the body of a man and received baptism from John, all the sins of the world were passed on to the Lord once and for all,

and included in them were also all the sins we would commit throughout our lifetime. Because He had those sins passed on to Him, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us. Since our salvation is this clear in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, those who believe must not try to secure their salvation by keeping their own resolve to the end, but must rely on what the Savior, who bore sin, has done.

If we believe in the righteousness the Lord has fulfilled, we can serve the work of the Lord together with our brothers. This is because, even when shortcomings are exposed, we do not demand of one another the perfection of deeds as a condition of salvation, but can testify of the Lord, who bore even those faults. This is not a fellowship that leaves wrongdoing alone, but a fellowship that obtains from the grace of the Lord the strength to turn back from wrongdoing. The clearer the One who saved us is, the clearer our joining of hearts in thanksgiving to the Lord also becomes; therefore, we must not regard a brother who walks the same path as a tool for our own plans, but must value him as a person with whom we serve the salvation we have received.

The way of return entrusted to the will of God

Let us look at verse 19. *"And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews" (Acts 18:19)*. Having arrived at Ephesus, Paul left the couple there, and he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. Even in a place where he was staying only briefly, there was a word he had to preach. A life of serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not tied only to the place first decided upon, but extends to the work of making salvation

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known to the souls whom the Lord lets us meet. Even if the place and the people accompanying us change, the remission of sins that Jesus fulfilled remains the same; therefore, what we testify of must also rest on that salvation.

The people in Ephesus asked Paul to stay longer, but Paul did not consent. As he departed, he left behind the words of verse 21. *"But took leave of them, saying, 'I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.' And he sailed from Ephesus" (Acts 18:21)*. Paul placed his way of return in the will of God. We, too, when we make plans to serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must not put our own thoughts above the will of the Lord. If we insist that what we want must necessarily be accomplished in our own way, we can easily fail to see properly the work to be done in other places and the people who serve with us. This is the reason we must do the work entrusted to us while asking the Lord.

A heart that seeks the will of God is different from a heart that waits without doing anything. Even at the moment of departing, Paul preached the word, moved on to the next place, and looked after the church and the disciples. We, too, must not vaguely wait only for some other opportunity when there is work we must do now. We must believe that God leads us by the written word, and we must examine what we are to serve together with the Church and obey. Even on a day when our own plans change, the salvation Jesus gave through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection does not change; therefore, we can rely on the Lord and take on the next work.

Strengthen all the disciples

Paul continued his fellowship with the church. Let us read verse 22. *"And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch" (Acts 18:22)*. After landing at Caesarea, he asked after the well-being of the church and went down to Antioch. It was not that he remembered only the word he had preached and forgot the people; looking after the circumstances of the believers was part of his journey. We, too, must not try to build up our own faith separately, apart from the Church that has received the gospel of the water and the Spirit. No matter how lacking and weak we may be, a life of faith needs a fellowship in which we remain attached to the Church of God, hear together the grace the Lord has given, look after one another's circumstances, and serve the gospel.

What happened after that is recorded in verse 23. *"After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23)*. It says that he went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order and strengthened all the disciples. The work of first preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that people believe and the work of strengthening with the word those who have already believed are both works of serving the same salvation. Even after people have received salvation, there are times when their hearts are shaken because of difficulties in life and their own thoughts; therefore, they need help that clearly points out again what the Lord has accomplished. The word "strengthen" must not become a word that merely demands that people hold out by their own strength.

Since Jesus has already completed the salvation that will hold us fast, the words that help believers must also be the word

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that reveals the basis of that salvation. Encouragement that only makes people feel good for a moment cannot establish the assurance of the remission of sins, and even a person's strong resolve cannot replace the righteousness the Lord has given. When we bring up the promises of the Old Testament and what was fulfilled in the New Testament, and tell people again, with clear grounds, how Jesus bore our sins through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death, that salvation remains in their hearts and makes them follow the Lord even in adversity. When we listen together to where we grow weak and what makes us afraid, and point out through the word the fact that the Lord had all our sins passed on to Him, a brother can turn his heart from looking at himself to relying on Jesus.

A person whose faith is strengthened in this way does not end up staying safely alone, but can serve the Lord together with others. Since the Holy Spirit testifies of salvation in hearts that have received the remission of sins and lets them know Jesus, the Church shares that word with one another and carries out the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Rather than demanding that all the brothers do exactly the same work, we must help each person rely on the Lord within the grace he has received. A heart that believes in the same Savior connects us to one another, and in that fellowship, the work of serving souls who have not yet believed also continues.

Paul left Corinth, but he did not abandon the fellowship he had with the brothers or the work of caring for the disciples. So you, too, must not think that it is finished because you have preached the word once; take care that the soul may live relying on the Lord. Like Paul, who strengthened the disciples even on the road as he was leaving, the journey entrusted to us must also be a service that builds up those who have received the same

salvation: entrusting the way of return to the will of God and helping, with the word, the faith of the brother we have met today. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The remission of sins confirmed through the Scriptures

< Acts 18:24–28 >

"Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ."

Apollos, who was mighty in the Scriptures

A person who preaches Jesus must clearly know how He removed our sins and preach it. The Book of Acts records that Apollos, who was mighty in the Scriptures and taught fervently, was of great benefit to the believers after he learned the way of

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God in more detail. What he needed was not to add more zeal, but to know fully the content of the salvation he had been teaching. Through this word, we too must examine what we believe and what we preach.

Let us read verse 24. *"Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus" (Acts 18:24).* Apollos was a Jew born at Alexandria and a man mighty in the Scriptures. Unlike the apostles, who had lived with Jesus and seen His work firsthand, Apollos was a man who came to know Jesus and testified of Him through the word of the Scriptures. Later, Paul also acknowledged his faith and regarded him as a coworker, and the basis on which Apollos taught people was not what he himself had seen and experienced, but the Scriptures. As we look at this man's work, we too must place the basis of our knowing Jesus in the word.

But the Bible does not stop at introducing Apollos as a capable man. *"This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25).* He had learned the way of the Lord and fervently taught the things concerning Jesus, but he knew only the baptism of repentance that John administered. He knew that one must confess one's sins before God and return to Him, but he did not know the connection that, because Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the world passed on to Him, He shed His blood on the Cross, paid the price of that sin, and rose again from death. Being very learned and zealous did not mean that he had nothing more to learn. Since the word revealed what was lacking, we must not stop at praising the zeal of Apollos, but must examine what he learned further.

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Go beyond the baptism of repentance and learn the remission of sins

When Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila, who had heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit from Paul and been saved, heard what he said. *"When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26)*. They did not simply pass him by on the grounds that Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures; instead, they took him aside and taught him in detail what he lacked. What he had to learn was not a skill that adds to a person's eloquence, but the remission of sins that Jesus Christ fulfilled.

The baptism of John that Apollos knew was a baptism of repentance in which the people confessed their own sins and returned to God. But John also gave baptism to Jesus, and through that baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all; because of those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place; and He rose again from death and saved us. What Priscilla and Aquila explained to Apollos in more detail was precisely the connection between the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Since a heart that resolves to return to God and the faith that believes in the fact that Jesus bore our sins are not the same thing, only when we know the work by which He removed sin does it also become clear on whom we rely to receive the remission of sins.

Since the sin of the world that was passed on to Jesus includes the sins we commit every day, the sin in our hearts is washed away when we believe in this salvation that Jesus Christ has fulfilled. Having learned the content of this salvation,

Apollos went beyond knowing only the baptism of repentance that John administered and became a servant who fully believed in and testified of the work by which Jesus saved sinners. We, too, must not be satisfied with the words we already know, but must clearly learn through the word what the Lord has done.

He was a help to the brothers who had believed through grace

When Apollos desired to cross over to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to receive him. The exhortation and letter of the brothers accompanied the departure of this one man, and Apollos went there and helped the believers. The Bible says, *"When he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27)*. The people there were people who had believed through grace, and Apollos became a worker who was of great benefit to them. His learning the way of God in detail did not stay with him alone, but led to the work of helping other brothers.

A person who knows and believes in the salvation Jesus has given has the content with which to help the brothers who have received the same salvation. If he clearly knows how the remission of sins was accomplished, he can help the brothers not to measure their faith by leaning on their own feelings or on the words of other people, but to hold on to what the Lord actually accomplished. The knowledge of the Scriptures that Apollos had also benefited the church when it was used in this way to make Christ clear. Rather than displaying how much one has learned, it is necessary to make clear with that word whom the brothers must believe in.

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However, this service of Apollos was not a price paid to obtain salvation, but a fruit that followed a person who had received the remission of sins; therefore, we too must not read it in reverse order, as though we are saved only if we help our brothers. The Savior he preached is Jesus Christ, and both Paul and Apollos are only workers who serve that Savior. Since the grace the brothers have received becomes hidden when faith is divided around people, the one who learns the word and serves the brothers must not put forward his own name, but must help the brothers know more clearly Jesus, who saved them.

The salvation of Christ revealed through the Scriptures

Verse 28 explains why Apollos was of great benefit. *"For he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 18:28)*. The Jews believed only in the Old Testament and did not acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, but from that very Old Testament Apollos proved that Jesus is the promised Savior, and he prevailed over their words. This is not a story about overpowering an audience with eloquence; it means that the center of the work of Apollos was making clear through the Scriptures the fact that Jesus is the Christ.

The Old Testament, in which Apollos was mighty, records the sacrifice in which, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering to pass on the sin of the people, and that offering paid the price of sin by shedding its blood and dying. Just as that sacrifice pointed to, Jesus had our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, and because of those sins passed on to Him, He shed His

blood on the Cross, received the judgment, and rose again from death; therefore, the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection cannot be separated from one another in our faith. Because Apollos testified of Jesus in this way with the promise of salvation revealed in the Old Testament, he enabled those who heard him to know the Savior who removed their sins. We, too, must not stop at telling people to believe in Jesus, but must explain and preach His work, of which the Scriptures testify.

The remission of sins revealed through the Scriptures gives a clear answer to our conscience as well. When our hearts are bound by sin as we look at our own faults, that sin does not disappear through words that vaguely soothe us by saying that everything is all right; but if we believe the word that my sin, too, was passed on to Jesus and that the Lord received the judgment for that sin in my place, our hearts are delivered from sin. This is also the reason why Apollos, when he first came to Ephesus, needed more detailed teaching. Help the brothers with a faith that clearly knows how salvation was accomplished, and reveal through the word that Jesus is the Christ. Rather than stopping at speaking with zeal, we must clearly know through the Scriptures the Savior who washed away sin, and preach Him. ✉

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CHAPTER

19

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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

Did you know and believe in the baptism Jesus received?

< Acts 19:1–10 >

"And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all. And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

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What Apollos learned more accurately

The incident involving Apollos that took place in Ephesus is an event that teaches us how important the baptism Jesus received is. Although Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures and fervently taught the things concerning Jesus, it is said that *"he knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25)*, and that Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and *"explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26)*. The word tells us that Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos in more detail the baptism Jesus received from John, in which the righteousness of God was fulfilled, so that Apollos's faith came to reach the faith that receives the Holy Spirit. What is important here is that the gospel of receiving the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, which includes the baptism Jesus received, must be spread. Therefore, in the preaching of the true gospel, we must testify of the faith that believes that Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of that sin, and rose again from death.

What Paul did not ask and what he did ask

The important meaning of the question Paul asked concerning the baptism Jesus received can be understood by examining what Paul did not ask. Through his first question, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*, Paul learned that those people had not received the Holy Spirit. At that time, Paul did not ask, "Then what kind of wrong teaching did you receive?" Nor did he teach them to offer prayers of repentance in order to receive the Holy Spirit. Instead,

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he asked, *"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)*. And we must fix our eyes on the fact that as soon as Paul learned that they had received John's baptism, he taught the baptism Jesus Christ received, saying, *"John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus" (Acts 19:4)*. In other words, what Paul taught them upon learning that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit was, surprisingly, the reason Jesus Christ received baptism.

This point is very important. It means that the way for people who do not know the Spirit of God well to receive the Holy Spirit is not special teachings or knowledge, new conditions, emptying the mind, unconditional obedience, deeper devotion, or fervent prayers of repentance. The word shows that in order for those people to receive the Spirit of God as a gift, they must be taught the meaning of the baptism Jesus received and of His blood through the word of God. This means that faith in the baptism the Lord Jesus Christ received and in the blood of the Cross is itself the remission of sins, and is the great truth that causes one to receive the Holy Spirit.

Paul did not urge them, "After first believing in Jesus, you must be clothed with power through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and then do the work." This is also different from the teaching of those today who insist that pastoral ministry must by all means be carried out while seized by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because the disciples in Ephesus had not known until then why Jesus had to receive baptism, they were curious about it. Only after they heard the gospel of the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross, which Paul preached, did they come to have faith in the great gospel of God, that is, faith in the baptism and blood of Jesus, which bless people.

They had to know and believe the reason Jesus received baptism. Before they knew the reason for the baptism Jesus received, Paul did not demand of them any moral conditions or church conditions, nor any evidence such as ecstasy, mystical trances, or hazy prophecies. That Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind, and the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received from John, His shedding of blood and death on the Cross, and His resurrection as the remission of one's own sins—this was the message the apostle Paul preached.

"Did you fail even though you made enough effort to believe in Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit? Is your faith a matter of obeying fanatically? Did you thoroughly offer prayers of repentance to receive the Holy Spirit? Did you completely empty yourselves? Did you completely obey and submit to being filled with the Holy Spirit as revealed in the word?" Paul did not ask in this way. Compared with these questions, the meaning of Paul's actual question, *"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)*, is clear. Upon learning that those disciples had received only the baptism of repentance, which is the entrance to faith, Paul taught the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John. The apostle Paul did not examine whether they had lived a life of sanctification, nor did he investigate the hearts of the disciples in Ephesus or the reality of their devotion. Instead, he taught them the baptism Jesus received and helped them so that the Holy Spirit would come upon them when they knew and believed it. Here, the gospel of baptism that the apostle Paul preached was the gospel the apostles had preached from the beginning. He taught believers the baptism Jesus Christ received. This was one of the core truths of the Christian faith.

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The faith that causes one to receive the Holy Spirit

The baptism that is received and taught within Christianity today is completely different from the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John, and it is also being taught differently. Paul taught the disciples the fundamental faith that believes in the remission of sins that came through the baptism and blood of Jesus. For all believers to receive the Holy Spirit, they must follow the faith the apostles believed. Their faith must become the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus Christ received as the washing away of sins.

The birth of Jesus, the baptism Jesus received from John at the beginning of His public ministry, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are the center of the Christian message, and they have truly clothed those who believe this truth with the blessing of receiving the Holy Spirit. This is because the gospel of the remission of sins is a blessed work that causes people to receive the washing away of sins through the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus Christ received, His blood, and His resurrection.

And what we must clearly know is the fact that they did not offer special prayers of repentance in order to receive the Holy Spirit. Rather, by believing in the truth of the baptism Jesus Christ received and of the Cross, they were able to receive the Holy Spirit according to the promise of God.

Even in this present age, if we have this faith, we can experience the Holy Spirit coming upon us just as the disciples of old did. Saving people from sin is the work of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the gospel and the faith that the apostle Paul preached, the condition for receiving the Holy Spirit was that one must have a heart that believes in the baptism Jesus received, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection.

From the time Jesus ascended until now, if Christians, while believing in Jesus, know only repentance and believe without knowing the deep meaning of the baptism of the washing away of sins that Jesus Christ received, they will in the end never receive the Holy Spirit. Moreover, they will be nothing more than religious people who have an incorrect faith without even having received the remission of their own sins. What is the beginning of true faith? It is to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* and had the sin of mankind transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, and thus to receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit, and make a new start as a true Christian. Therefore, the apostle Paul testified to the disciples in Ephesus of the truth that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind, that is, of the baptism and the blood. The faith of the remission of sins and the coming of the Holy Spirit came freely when one believed in the baptism, the blood, and the resurrection that were fulfilled in Jesus.

"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"

If the early church in the Book of Acts had believed that the water baptism Jesus received and the baptism we receive have the same meaning and had not distinguished between them, how could it have explained the declaration of John the Baptist, who clearly contrasted them, saying, *"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8)*?

We must understand well that this clear contrast made by John the Baptist was a contrast not only outwardly but also in its inner meaning. In his declaration, two things—water and the Holy Spirit—are contrasted. And that declaration showed that

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within the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received and His blood, the Holy Spirit also came together with it.

John the Baptist said, *"He who is coming after me is mightier than I" (Matthew 3:11)*, telling us that the baptism He, that is, Jesus, received had a meaning beyond that of a mere baptism. The saints of the first century A.D. believed by fundamentally distinguishing between the baptism of repentance that John gave to people and the baptism that fulfilled all righteousness, which John gave to Jesus. For those who believed in Jesus in the time of the early church, the baptism Jesus received was the true glad tidings of salvation, that Jesus had the sin of the world transferred onto His own body by receiving baptism from John.

Linking the baptism Jesus received and the receiving of the Holy Spirit into one was the special contribution of John the Baptist. John declared, *"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8)*. The baptism Jesus Christ received was not a baptism that merely gives the remission of sins. The baptism Jesus received was a baptism that washed away the sins of believers once and for all, and at the same time, it was the truth that causes one to receive the Holy Spirit. But because people did not know well the power of the baptism Jesus received, they were replacing the baptism Jesus received with the baptism of repentance that John gave. As we have seen in the Book of Acts, this great blessing, in which those who believe in the baptism Jesus received receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, is something that cannot be replaced by the prayers of repentance we offer. Peter said, *"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" (Acts 2:38)*.

In the early church, the meaning of the baptism Jesus received had a power of faith far more profound than the promise of John the Baptist or the experiences of the church. It was that

because the baptism Jesus received washed away all the sin of mankind, one can receive the Holy Spirit and enter into the kingdom of God by believing this. In John the Baptist's proclamation of the kingdom of heaven, water and the Holy Spirit were distinguished from each other. But the baptism Jesus received was a baptism that linked these two things to each other: our believing in Jesus and becoming sinless, and our receiving the Holy Spirit.

Where does the Holy Spirit, the Helper, work?

For those who believed in the baptism of the remission of sins that Jesus received, the work of having their own sins washed away took place. The connection between the baptism Jesus received and the coming of the Holy Spirit appears vividly in the account of the Gospel of Matthew. That connection is so close and direct that it binds into one the water baptism Jesus Himself received and the Holy Spirit's coming upon Him. Receiving the Holy Spirit originated and began within the baptism of atonement that Jesus Christ received.

When Jesus received baptism from John, the testimony of the Holy Spirit was that Jesus is the Son of God and that the baptism Jesus received was the baptism of atonement by which He had all the sins of the world transferred to 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 3:16–17).* Here, the Father's testifying of Jesus was the testimony that Jesus is the Son of God, and the testimony that the Son of God bore all the

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sin of mankind by receiving baptism from John and became the sacrificial offering to save sinners by shedding His blood on the Cross.

God the Father helped the work of Jesus by Himself testifying of it. Here too, the voice heard from heaven testifies that Jesus became the Savior of sinners. The voice from heaven said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)*. Therefore, God the Father testified that His Son had borne the sin of sinners. All we have to do is believe. This was the amazing plan and providence of the triune God to save mankind. It is truly something to be thankful for.

God the Father testified that the Holy Spirit was present in the work of atoning for the sin of mankind, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that the baptism Jesus Christ received was the atonement to save the sinners of the world from sin. According to the Bible, the testimony of the Holy Spirit is not tongues or ecstasy; rather, it is that the Holy Spirit comes when this testimony—that Jesus Christ atoned for the sin of sinners—is believed.

Do you believe this word, which shows that the baptism Jesus received was the baptism by which He bore the sin of the world? We can see that the water baptism Jesus received is the link connected to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Believe in the baptism Jesus received and the remission of sins as one

People who believe in Jesus today are far too cautious about seeing the baptism Jesus received and the remission of sins as one. They are so even though it is clear that the baptism Jesus received was not a baptism for receiving some kind of power,

but the baptism by which He bore all the sins of the sinners of the world. They are so even though it is written that way in the word of the Bible. Perhaps it is because they are oppressed by human theology and doctrines. It seems that the oppression by ecclesiastical authority handed down from of old still remains even now. But both the remission of sins and the receiving of the Holy Spirit could be received with certainty and testified of only by those who believe the word written in the Bible. The baptism Jesus received and His blood are the truth that washes away the sin of mankind and causes one to receive the Holy Spirit.

The baptism Jesus received was one and the same truth in that it causes one to receive the Holy Spirit, in that it bears sin and washes it away, and in that it reveals that Jesus is the Son of God. The faith of those who believe this truth was the same as the faith of the saints who had become members of the Church of God.

The baptism Jesus received, together with the testimony of John the Baptist, teaches that for those who believe in Jesus, receiving the Holy Spirit and receiving the remission of sins belong together as one. Therefore, this truth is the faith that is absolutely indispensable and essential to the faith by which those who believe in Jesus receive the washing away of sins and receive the Holy Spirit. The baptism Jesus received had tremendous efficacy. Do you know and believe this?

This faith, which believes that the baptism Jesus received from John was the baptism of the remission of sins, causes us to testify of the truth that the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus not through some other ritual, but precisely through that baptism Jesus received. Now the saints must believe the truth that enables them to possess the remission of sins given through the gospel of the baptism Jesus Christ received and His blood. The true baptism Jesus received was the baptism by which Jesus bore the

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sin of all the people of the whole world. We praise our Lord. We must know and believe in the baptism Jesus received. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?

< Acts 19:1–7 >

"And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all."

"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

I would like to share the word, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. Did you receive the

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Holy Spirit when you believed in Jesus?

The Book of Acts speaks of the fact that when the Apostle Paul preached the word and Peter also preached the word, the Holy Spirit came down upon people together with the gospel. The Book of Acts is the record of the spread of the gospel, in which, together with the Holy Spirit, the word was preached, deeds were done, and people were caused to receive the remission of sins and to receive the Holy Spirit. But when we look at this word, we see that Paul asked as follows: *"It happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'" (Acts 19:1–2)*. The Apostle Paul thought of believing in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit together. So whenever people said that they believed in Jesus, he always checked whether they had received the Holy Spirit or not. So the Apostle Paul asked the believers in Ephesus, and they said, *"We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2)*. They were people who knew nothing at all. So it is written, *"And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all" (Acts 19:3–7)*.

Here it says, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. Dear fellow believers, this word is a very unfamiliar word to religious people. It is a riddle that they cannot solve at all. It is a mystery. An ordinary person would have asked,

"Did you receive the remission of sins when you believed?" But Paul asked the believers in Ephesus this way: *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. But for the believers in Ephesus, this was something they had never heard of before. If we listen to what these people said, they had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. They did not even know whether there is a Holy Spirit, and yet Paul asked whether they had received the Holy Spirit, so I get the impression that he asked such an unfamiliar question and such a mysterious question that it almost seems to be a secondary matter. In any case, after the Apostle Paul asked this question here, when the people said that they had received the baptism of repentance, John's baptism, he told them that the baptism of John they had received was John telling them to believe in Jesus Christ and receive the remission of sins, and he testified to the people of the baptism Jesus received from John. He testified that Jesus bore all the sins of the world once and for all through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross because of those sins, and rose again from death. And when these people believed, he baptized them right after that. Then he laid his hands on them and caused them to receive the Holy Spirit.

John's baptism and the baptism Jesus received

In fact, the baptism Jesus received and John's baptism are different, and our receiving the Holy Spirit when we believe is directly connected with the baptism Jesus received from John. That is why here the word says, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. It says this by connecting it with the baptism Jesus received. Then what is John's baptism?

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It is the baptism of repentance. John cried out the baptism of repentance, telling people to repent, saying, *"Brood of vipers!" (Matthew 3:7)*. He cried out that they should all turn back, that they should turn back, cast away their serving of foreign gods and of idols, and return before the living, true God. So John's baptism is the baptism of repentance. Then what is the baptism Jesus received? The baptism Jesus received is the baptism by which God transfers the sin of mankind to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, through John. So the baptism Jesus received from John is the baptism that fulfilled all the righteousness of God. The baptism that fulfilled all the righteousness of God is the baptism by which God transfers all the sin of mankind—all the sins of all people, starting from Adam and Eve until the time when mankind comes to an end—to Jesus, His own Son, through John. This is all the righteousness of God. It is God doing what is right for mankind; in other words, it is the right thing God does by transferring all the sin of mankind to His Son and having Him nailed to the Cross, so that through His Son's receiving the punishment for sin, He makes mankind sinless, takes them to the kingdom of heaven, and lets them live with God forever. This is the love of God and the salvation He gives to mankind. This is the baptism Jesus received.

Then why must we receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ? It is because Jesus came to this earth clothed in human flesh, received baptism from John the Baptist at the age of thirty, had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him, was judged on the Cross for us, rose again from death, and saved us; therefore, after we believe in Jesus Christ and receive the remission of sins, we receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. It is because we believe so. That is why those who believe in Jesus Christ certainly receive baptism, and this is found not only in the Book of Acts but also in the four Gospels. If we look at the word of

the Gospel of Matthew, He said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20)*. This is the last will the Lord left to His disciples. The reason is that, because God, who is the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—removed our sins through the baptism Jesus received from John, He told them to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Are tongues and prophecy necessary in this age?

It is said that there was speaking in tongues and prophesying in the time of the early church; were there tongues and prophecy in the early church? Yes, there were. Tongues in the early church existed for the spread of the gospel. They were not tongues like the unintelligible sounds people make today; although these people had not learned them, the Holy Spirit caused the disciples to speak foreign languages in order to preach the gospel to the people of other countries, of neighboring countries. So He caused those people to understand. And there were also tongues for personal fellowship with God. The Apostle Paul spoke in tongues well. But the Apostle Paul said, *"In the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:19)*. Because of people who speak unintelligible tongues by themselves and make so much noise that the person next to them, who is praying to God personally, cannot pray, those who do not speak in tongues become discouraged. They are already living in confusion because they have not received the remission of sins, so how could it be right for someone to

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make noise beside them? So the Apostle Paul said, *"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40)*. And he said that in the church five words spoken with understanding to teach and instruct others are better than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Then are tongues necessary in this age? Tongues are necessary. If we do not know how to speak foreign languages, tongues are necessary. If there are no interpreters and no coworkers, tongues are absolutely necessary. But after the incident of the Tower of Babel, God gave mankind wisdom and interpreters so that people could interpret one another's languages. So there are people who translate and people who interpret. When we go out to other countries to preach the gospel, we also preach the gospel through people who interpret. Because this exists, tongues are not necessary in this age. Rather, if someone speaks in tongues, people who do not believe in Jesus are frightened and run away. Therefore, I want you to know that because tongues are not necessary in this age, there are no people who speak in tongues in the Church of God. I also speak in tongues well. Speaking the language we use now is also speaking in tongues. Speaking the language of another country is also tongues. One person speaking the languages of many countries is practically speaking in tongues. People think that speaking in tongues means speaking words that cannot be understood, but the Book of Acts records that on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues, the people of many nations who were there all understood in their own languages. That is why tongues spoken by receiving an evil spirit, not by receiving the Holy Spirit, are not beneficial.

Then was there prophecy? In the time of the early church there was prophecy. Is prophecy necessary in this age? The

reason there was prophecy in the time of the early church is that it existed so that people could know the will of God. Dear fellow believers, the saints in the time of the early church lived a life of faith, and in the time of the early church there were many prophets, many who prophesied, many who spoke in tongues, and many who cast out demons. This is because the sixty-six books of the Bible had not all been completed, so they could not know the will of God. Because they could not know what God was saying, the Apostle Paul said to exercise self-control and to do things in order even when speaking in tongues, and to strive to prophesy rather than to speak in tongues. Why should one prophesy? At that time God moved and inspired the heart of that person by the Holy Spirit and caused him to prophesy. It was saying, "The Lord has spoken this way." For example, when the Apostle Paul was about to go to Jerusalem, a prophet named Agabus took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and prophesied, *"Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:11)*. People tried to stop Paul, telling him not to go, because if he went there, he would be seized by people in this way and suffer much. But the Apostle Paul said, *"I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13)*. So, although he knew that it would happen just as the word of that prophecy said, he shook off the people's pleas and went. So in the time of the early church there was prophecy. There were words that God spoke through people.

Then are tongues and prophecy necessary in this present age? This age is the age in which the word of God has been completely finished. It says in the Book of Revelation that if anyone adds to or takes away from this word, He will remove him from the Book of Life and give him suffering. Since all the

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word has already been completed, there is no need to prophesy, saying, "The Lord says this." Rather, believing the word of God that is in the Bible—"The Lord has written that He will destroy in the future; since He has said so, it will surely come to pass"—this is precisely the prophecy of the written word. We only believe the word of God. And we only preach the gospel. This is tongues, and this is prophecy. That is why born-again people in the Church, even if they spoke in tongues well in the past, do not speak in tongues after they are born again. If someone has truly received the remission of sins, he will know that tongues are nothing and will stop of his own accord.

Man's flesh cannot be sanctified

Here the Apostle Paul asked, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. When a person receives the remission of sins, does he receive the Holy Spirit? Yes, he does. When a person believes in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross and receives the remission of sins, he receives the Holy Spirit. Then can man's flesh be sanctified? One may ask this question. The reason I ask this question is that there is something called theology in Christianity. Theology is the word of God organized into a system as an academic discipline, by human thinking. And in theology there is something called the doctrine of sanctification. There is a doctrine that says a person becomes sanctified—that if one believes in Jesus for a long time, his body and heart change and become holy. So people call sanctification the highest state of believing in Jesus. So they respect people who speak gently and greet others graciously. And there is a school of thought that regards someone as greatly sanctified if, even when he is angry,

he says, "Would it be right to do that? It would not, would it? Let us not do that." This is one kind of mental ideology. Among the ideologies of Christianity, the ideology of sanctification has become the one most opposed to the gospel.

In the Bible there are many words telling those who have believed in Jesus to live good lives. He said, *"You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)*. He told us to be examples. While the Bible says so, it speaks of the gospel. It says that He has made you completely clean through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But many pastors, while they themselves cannot live that way, demand it of the church members: Is it right for a deacon to do that? Is it right for a senior deaconess to do that? Is it right for an elder to do that? We must not do that. We must be the light of the world. We must be examples. Therefore, we must also speak in a dignified manner. In any case, they demand this of the church members. That is why, as saints become deacons, senior deaconesses, and elders, the higher their positions go, the more wrinkles run down here. Why is that? It is because, no matter how much they think about it, they themselves have not been sanctified. Though they do believe in Jesus, they also curse readily. When people grow older, does their character become gentle? From your experience, has your character become gentler and meeker than when you were young? The breadth of understanding others has become wider. Why is that? Because we have experienced many things, we think, "That person could act that way." But our temper does not become meek. We cannot bear things. We simply cannot endure them. I am the same. As my body grows weak, when I wake up, I have less strength than yesterday, and when someone asks me a question, I become irritated because I have no strength to think, and because I know everything in my heart but cannot think things through well, I get angry and end up shouting. I thought, "So this is how it

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happens." When we too grow old, at times we get angry even at small things, and this is not because our character is bad, but because all our organs have become weak, so we are stressed and find it hard even over small things. So, far from being sanctified, we break down. When a machine runs for a long time, eventually it stops, and we repair it and use it, and in the end we throw it away. People are exactly the same. What sanctification could there be? Sanctification is something that can never happen. To be changed and become holy is impossible. So the answer to whether man's flesh can be sanctified is, in a word, no. Then theology says that when a person believes in Jesus for a long time, he becomes sanctified—does that make sense? In a word, flatly, it does not. That claim was made by theologians. Then is what the theologians said the word of God? And is it right? It is not the word of God; it is their own thought, and they said something that they themselves cannot keep and that is not even in the Bible. That is the conclusion we reach.

The greatest hindrance to accepting the gospel is that people are caught up in the idea that, although they believe in Jesus and have sin, if they go on for a long time they will hardly commit sin, and so even in the flesh a person can become a righteous person who does not commit sin, can become sanctified; because of this, it is so hard for them to accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Calvin said it, many theologians have said it, and pastors who are not born again always insist on the doctrine of sanctification. They say that we must believe in Jesus and live holy lives, but that is a lie. To put it simply, it is a word brought by the devil. The devil keeps telling us that since we have believed in Jesus, we should live good and holy lives and must become holy people. But God does not speak that way. He speaks this way: "You were originally a brood of evildoers. But I have made you clean through My Son. You have no sin. You

are holy. You are righteous." How do what God has said and what the devil says compare? What the devil says kills people. It is written, *"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6)*. The devil speaks according to the thoughts of the flesh.

Buddhism also asserts something like the doctrine of sanctification. It says that one enters Nirvana, that one reaches liberation. The highest state in Buddhism is attaining Nirvana. And it is attaining liberation. It is escaping from oneself. Escaping from selfish desires, distracting thoughts, and cravings, and living with the spirit in a world of freedom, in a world not ruled by the flesh, is called Nirvana. Only if there is truth can one be enlightened; how can one be enlightened to a way that does not exist? They themselves also say, "How can one be enlightened to a way that does not exist?" No matter how hard one searches, there is no path and no way, but Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)*.

Jesus actually came to this earth, had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment on the Cross for us, rose again from death, and ascended to the kingdom of heaven, and when we believe in Jesus Christ and receive the remission of sins, we ascend to the kingdom of heaven. That is why this has become the way. It has become the way to go to the kingdom of heaven. But there is no such thing in Buddhism. No matter how much a person cultivates himself in the way, it only means that he himself did not commit sin; can his not committing sin have any influence on others? It cannot. So it does not work, and the liberation of Buddhism and the doctrine of sanctification in Christianity are the same thing. The Bible says that if we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we have become holy people, righteous people, sanctified. The Bible says, *"Unless one is born of water*

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and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). It says that only then does one become righteous, become sanctified, and become a person whose flesh and spirit have been completely changed. So if we say that we have been changed, we have been changed because we believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, not through asceticism, good deeds, zeal, or prayers of repentance.

The gospel that came not in word only but in power

Can a person's soul become a soul without sin? It can, by believing in the gospel of the water and the blood. How do those who believe in Jesus receive the Holy Spirit? This is something you and I can receive by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Is the Holy Spirit received when man's flesh is sanctified? No. The way to receive the Holy Spirit is to believe in Jesus, the Son of God, as one's own Savior. We receive the Holy Spirit by believing in our hearts that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, and shed His blood on the Cross, thereby causing us to receive the remission of sins. It says, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. Dear fellow believers, it never says that people receive the Holy Spirit by doing something—by praying much, living good lives, and praying with fasting. It says, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. Did we receive the Holy Spirit when we believed, or did we not? If we know Jesus Christ rightly and believe, we receive the Holy Spirit at the moment we believe. First Thessalonians says as follows: *"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy*

Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thessalonians 1:5). It says that the gospel did not come in word only. As for how it came, it says that it came only in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. Receiving the Holy Spirit happens when we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and as for what this gospel is like, it is a gospel of great power. When the Apostle Paul asked, *"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)*, they said that it was John's baptism, so the Apostle Paul told them that it was not that, but the baptism Jesus Christ received from John.

Dear fellow believers, who is Jesus Christ? He is God. And He is the Son of God. And He is the Savior of us sinners. Our Lord was born on this earth by borrowing the body of Mary. And when He turned thirty, He received baptism from John the Baptist and had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him. It is recorded that Jesus Christ received baptism after saying, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. To fulfill all righteousness means that it is fitting to make all people sinless; then why did Jesus receive baptism from John? He received baptism in order to have the sins of all people transferred to Him. This is precisely the power of the gospel. Jesus Christ did not come to this earth and save us in word only. He did not merely say in words, "I have saved you," and He did not merely say in words, "Believe in Me; I am your Savior; if you believe in Me, your sins will disappear." Rather, our Lord came to this earth, actually received baptism from John, and had my sins and yours, and the sins of all the people of mankind, transferred to Him. He actually received baptism and actually had sin transferred to Him, actually bore the sin of the world and went on to actually receive

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the punishment for sin on the Cross, shed all the blood in His heart and died, rose again in three days after His death, and actually ascended to the kingdom of heaven; He was the Jesus of power, who made sinless whoever believes in Him, He was the Savior of power, and He gave the gospel of power to mankind. Jesus Christ did so.

God did not speak to us in words only, like the doctrine of sanctification spoken of in theology. He actually came, was born by borrowing the body of a woman, received baptism through John the Baptist when He turned thirty and had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, and actually, three years later, was nailed to the Cross and shed the blood that was in His body, and rose again from death and became the real Savior of you and me, who believe in Jesus Christ. He actually did it. So the gospel that has come to us did not come in word only but came in power. When it is said that God bore our sins for us, what is there to say? When it is said that He received baptism from John and had all sins transferred to Him, died on the Cross, and rose again from death, what is there to say? The One who is mighty in power has removed all the sins of the world once and for all, so such things as having to live good lives, having to be sanctified, or having to repent come out of the human head.

If we believe that Jesus Christ is God, believe the word that Jesus Christ received baptism from John and had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, and believe that He received the judgment for sin on the Cross, then to those who believe the fact that Jesus Christ rose again from death and has become our living Savior, He has actually given the Holy Spirit as a gift. He has actually given Him. After Jesus Christ rose again, He told His disciples to receive the Holy Spirit. Did God the Father directly tell them to receive the Holy Spirit? When Jesus Christ was with His disciples for a long time, He often said, “It is to

your advantage that I be crucified, die, and ascend to the kingdom of heaven, because only when I ascend will the Holy Spirit come down upon you, because I will send the Holy Spirit to you; it is to your advantage that I leave you quickly, be nailed to the Cross, rise again from death, and ascend to the right hand of God." In this way, after Jesus actually died on the Cross and rose again, He appeared to His disciples, and the first word He spoke to them was *"peace be with you" (John 20:19)*. There is actually peace for those who believe in Jesus Christ. Peace in people's hearts is given by Jesus Christ. The peace Jesus Christ has given is eternal. Jesus Christ has given us peace. And then He said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22)*. He has given the Holy Spirit as a gift to you and me, who believe in Jesus Christ, to you and me, who have received the remission of sins. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Because the Apostle Paul too received the Holy Spirit as a gift by believing in Jesus Christ, he asked people, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit?" If you have not received the Holy Spirit, it is of no use. It has been done only in the head. That is why it was said that we receive the Holy Spirit by believing in Jesus Christ.

We receive the Holy Spirit when we believe with the heart

Then with what do we believe? Do we believe with our thoughts, or do we believe with our heart? We believe with the heart. Then what is the heart? It is a personal being. It thinks and has intellect, emotion, and will—all of them. It thinks, knows, feels, and has a will. One truly makes one's own heart submit: "I actually had sin. I could only go to hell. If Jesus Christ had not received baptism from John for me, if He had not fulfilled

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all righteousness in this way, I could only die. I receive salvation by believing in the Lord." In this way one exercises the will, disciplines oneself, and makes oneself submit to the Lord, before the word of the Lord. It is saying "Yes" and believing. This is believing with the heart. It is written, *"With the heart one believes unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10)*. It is coming to the truth. This is receiving the Holy Spirit.

Dear fellow believers, people say that they believe in Jesus, and believing is a matter of the heart. A person has a head, a chest, and arms and legs. In the same way, a person has a spirit, and what is the spirit? It is the heart. Knowing with the heart, feeling with the heart, and acting with the heart—this is the faith that believes in Jesus Christ, and this is the heart. Dear fellow believers, do you believe with your heart? Do you know with your heart? Do you know with your heart that without Jesus Christ you could only die and could only go to hell? Knowing with the heart is extremely important.

Merely knowing with the head and knowing with the heart are different. Knowing with the heart is real. The Bible says, *"A brood of evildoers" (Isaiah 1:4)*. When it says this, saying in your heart, "That is truly so," is knowing with the heart. The Bible calls us a brood of evildoers, and if you think, "Well, seeing the way I act, I am a brood of evildoers," this is knowing with the head. Knowing with the heart is acknowledging that I actually am so. Do you know with your heart and feel with your emotions? Dear fellow believers, do you feel in your heart that without Jesus Christ you are truly one who would go to hell? And do you feel in your heart that Jesus has truly saved you and me? Do you truly feel in your heart that there is no sin in your hearts? You must discipline yourself before the Lord, saying that it is so, that it is right, make yourself submit, and say, "That is right. I believe." It is lying flat with your will before the word of

the Lord and saying, "I could only die and could only go to hell." Anyone who truly knows that he is a being who can only die bows down in his heart. He becomes a very small person and acknowledges the word of the Lord. It is saying, "That is right. Thank You," and with one's will disciplining oneself and submitting.

Do you believe with your heart? It is believing with the heart. When we believe in Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit, we receive the Holy Spirit by believing with the heart that Jesus Christ is the Savior. That is so. It is not a great deal of knowledge, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit—do I believe in that Jesus, in His birth, the baptism He received from John, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection, as my Savior? This is the knowledge. The question is whether, with this, one yields in one's heart. Do you believe? Do you accept it? Do you rely on Him? Dear fellow believers, do you rely on Jesus Christ with your heart? Do you believe? Relying and believing with the heart is believing. Believing with the heart and relying with the heart is believing.

Within a person there are two kinds of man. There is the man of the heart, and there is the man of the flesh. Therefore, we must believe as the man of the heart. If you acknowledge and believe the word of God, salvation is yours. Do you believe? I hope that you will believe with your heart. It is written, *"But also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance" (1 Thessalonians 1:5)*. *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. In the case of you and me, we can say that we received the Holy Spirit when we believed.

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The Holy Spirit given to those who believe in the water and the blood

But the believers in Ephesus said that they did not even know what the Holy Spirit is. The Apostle Paul asked, *"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)*. The fact that Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of my whole life and yours transferred to Him is connected with receiving the remission of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit in people's hearts. The Apostle Paul always asked, *"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)*. And as he asked this, he talked about the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross. When the Apostle Paul preached the word, he never left out the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross. An ordinary person would have asked, "Do you believe in the blood of the Cross?" But the Apostle Paul asked that way because the conclusion is that Jesus received baptism and shed His blood on the Cross. For example, Gentiles were mixed in the church in Ephesus, and these people did not know well the reason Jesus had to receive baptism. They knew well that Jesus is the Son of God and has power, but because they did not know that reason well, they knew only the baptism of repentance, by which they had turned from serving foreign gods back to faith in God. It is turning back before believing in Jesus. It is coming back before the true God, thinking, "This was a wrong god." But they did not know that Jesus had borne all their sins. So the Apostle Paul preached the baptism Jesus received from John. As a result, they then for the first time received baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. It is those who believe in the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross who receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.

Those who do not know the baptism Jesus received from John are not qualified to receive baptism in the name of Jesus.

Because the baptism Jesus received is the process of moving our sins onto His own body and washing our sins clean, without it Jesus Christ could not possibly have died on the Cross, nor could He have received the judgment for us. That is why the baptism Jesus received is so important for receiving the Holy Spirit as well. Through the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross, He gave the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who believe in that water and blood. As a result, the believers in Ephesus received baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit caused the apostles to perform special works of power in order to show that they were ones sent by God. This is special power. Dear fellow believers, even without the laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit actually comes. Then why did the apostles do so? Because they were full of power, they did not have time, as we do today, to think, "That person seems to have believed only in his head," and then talk with him at length again, and then talk with him again two months later. They called the person right away, asked, "Do you believe this way?" and when he truly believed, they assured him that the Holy Spirit was in his heart. As for truly receiving the Holy Spirit, if you believe with your heart in that Jesus who came to this earth, received baptism from John and had the sin of mankind transferred to Him, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again, the Holy Spirit comes upon you. When you believe with your heart, the first thing that comes is the remission of sins. You are acknowledged before God as having no sin. Second, when you receive the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes upon your heart and says, "You have no sin. You have been saved. Although you are lacking, Jesus took away your sins and was judged in your place. Therefore you have no sin," and the faith of salvation, like that of a little child, like a mustard seed, springs up. The One who confirms that faith is the

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Holy Spirit. *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. I have received Him. Dear fellow believers, have you received Him?

Peter also said, *"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" (Acts 2:38)*. Peter told the people to repent. And when they repent and believe that Jesus Christ remitted their sins through the water and the blood, the remission of sins comes. That is why it means, "Repent, and because your sins have been remitted, each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and you shall receive the Holy Spirit as a gift." When we repent and believe in our hearts that Jesus Christ saved us through the water and the blood and receive the remission of sins, each one who has received the remission of sins receives baptism as a sign that says, "I believe this way." And when faith is expressed, the Holy Spirit comes.

So if we believe in Jesus Christ with our hearts, we must confess with our mouths. When we confess, saying, "Lord, I believe this way," faith becomes complete, we are acknowledged before God, and the Holy Spirit comes. That is why any baptism received before receiving the remission of sins is entirely invalid. We receive the Holy Spirit as a gift only when we believe in our hearts that Jesus Christ removed our sins with the water and the blood and receive the remission of sins; do we receive baptism, then receive the remission of sins, and then receive the Holy Spirit? We receive baptism as a sign that we have believed. So the gospel that makes us truly receive the Holy Spirit is this: we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift when we believe in our hearts the gospel that came by water and blood. Dear fellow believers, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?

This question is still valid today

Today, for the countless people on this earth, this question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed in Jesus Christ?" is still valid. Even if all the remaining billions of people on this earth, except those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, believe in Jesus, this question is valid. They have clearly not received the Holy Spirit. Then what did they receive? When they believed in Jesus, they only repented. And even now they repent every day and receive the remission of sins every day. Even now they are in the ongoing process of receiving the remission of sins. "I will be saved; I am being saved"—according to what those people say, it is, "I believed in Jesus Christ and was saved, and I am being saved, and I will be saved." For those who believe in Jesus Christ without knowing Him fully, this question has not ended even now and is still valid. They must hear the sermon about Jesus Christ that the Apostle Paul preached, and if they cannot meet Paul, they must hear through you and me the gospel of the water and the Spirit—what kind of baptism the baptism Jesus received was and what kind of death the death of Jesus Christ was.

Now the whole world is made up of Christians who believe in Jesus but do not have the Holy Spirit. They are not even Christians, but simply people who believe in Jesus. People who believe in Jesus confess in their own consciences. They confess that they are sinners. They do not have the Holy Spirit. They make up a Holy Spirit of flow and ebb—at times the Holy Spirit comes in, and when they commit sin the Holy Spirit goes out; if they live good lives the Holy Spirit comes in, and when they commit sin the Holy Spirit goes out—and they pray prayers of repentance every day and say that even now they are being saved and will be saved. Will they be saved in the end? Will they

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receive the Holy Spirit? It is a question. It is a riddle. Do people who believe in Jesus truly go to heaven? Do people who believe in Jesus truly have no sin? Is there truly no sin in the hearts of people who believe in Jesus Christ? Is the Holy Spirit always there? Or is He out and then comes back in? If you ask these questions, they are all caught here.

It is said that a survey was conducted in a certain country. They asked whether people truly believed in the birth of Jesus Christ, dividing them into laypeople and pastors, and it is said that even among the pastors there are many who do not believe that Jesus Christ was born through the body of a virgin. When they cannot even believe that, how could one ask them about the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is a higher-level question. Even so, it is said that many people believe that the kingdom of heaven exists. Would people who do not believe that He was born through the body of Mary have the Holy Spirit, or not? The Bible says, *"No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3)*. The whole world is like that.

I am a person with many thoughts. There are times when I think, "The whole world is like this, so what can we do, gathered in such small numbers?" But, dear fellow believers, we must preach to the whole world this gospel that says, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. The responsibility to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit lies with you and me. We are apostles sent by God.

We need to know ourselves a little. We must know that we are those who have the gospel, which is more precious than the whole world. And we must know that we are people qualified to save souls, which are more precious than the whole world. But not knowing that, people think only of fleshly things, saying, "Why was the meal served like this?" Those who serve God are people who receive the highest treatment in the world.

Dear fellow believers, we are those who have the responsibility to preach to the whole world this gospel that says, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. We are people with a mission. We are the workers of God. When we preach the gospel, speak this way: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed in Jesus?" Let us preach the gospel this way.

Is the Holy Spirit One who goes in and comes out? What kind of Holy Spirit is like that? Why is the Holy Spirit they say they received like that? In the future there will be very many such things to talk about. I worry that people may not be able to understand—they cannot even understand about Jesus, so would they understand if I talked about the Holy Spirit?—but even so, I trust that if I speak with faith, they will understand. People are now desperate to receive the Holy Spirit.

When I saw what the Apostle Paul asked long ago, I agonized over it. I had received a false Holy Spirit, but because I had sin in my heart, I could not say that I had received the Holy Spirit. The term Holy Spirit means the Spirit who is holy. Would the Spirit who is holy come into a heart that has sin? So I could not bring myself to say it.

But there are those who speak boldly. There are those who speak boldly and testify. There are those who preach, not together with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but simply a Holy Spirit who comes in and goes out. *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"* "No, we have not received Him." When they say, "I believe that today the Holy Spirit will come fully upon your hearts," people say, "Amen." Dear fellow believers, false people deceive people with the spirit of the devil. They lead people astray. They say, "If you believe in Jesus, you receive the Holy Spirit; speaking in tongues is evidence of having received the Holy Spirit; shaking is evidence of having

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received the Holy Spirit; prophesying is evidence of having received the Holy Spirit; seeing visions is evidence of having received the Holy Spirit." One person got an eye disease during a prayer meeting, and the audience said that it was evidence of having received the Holy Spirit. How can they say that getting an eye disease is evidence of having received the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is not shaking that makes the body tremble, nor foaming at the mouth, nor meeting Jesus in a dream, nor tongues bursting out. The Holy Spirit is He who comes when we believe in our hearts the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior who came to this earth, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose again, and removed all of my sins and yours.

When the Holy Spirit comes, there is no shaking at all. In the heart, just one thing is planted—faith as small as a mustard seed: "You have no sin. Jesus has completely removed your sins with the water and the blood. You have no sin. But you are insignificant. It is only that you have no sin. You are a righteous person who has no sin." He testifies that you have no sin. He teaches only this: "Because you have no sin, belong to the church of the Holy Spirit that has received the remission of sins, and listen to the word of the Holy Spirit."

Dear fellow believers, we are not insignificant people now. Each and every one of you is a person who has received the remission of sins, a noble person, and you look like princes and princesses of the kingdom of heaven. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? But how do you see yourselves? Do you see yourselves as princes and princesses? This self-respect is a self-respect that only those who have received the remission of sins can have. That is why we do not live carelessly just anywhere.

Dear fellow believers, let us truly live like nobles. We who have received the remission of sins are nobles on this earth. In some countries there are nobles, and they have castles and

soldiers under them. You are nobles. You cannot be compared with people on this earth who boast of having a lot of money. You and I are nobles. We must live knowing that we are nobles. We do not compare ourselves with worldly people and think, "They live like that, so why can't I?" Nobles live like nobles. Even if their bodies are small, they go their own way, and their convictions are clear. Nobles do very great work. So they go to the Church of God, preach the word, hear the word, and go to save souls. Their state of mind is different. Their faith is different, and the level of their thinking is different. Nobles are nobles even if they eat humble food. When nobles eat such food, it is a refined thing. Do you believe? Nobles preach the gospel. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

We are those who have the Holy Spirit

< Acts 19:1–7 >

"And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all."

Apollos, who knew only the baptism of John

The word records the following about Apollos: "*Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:24–25).* A

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man named Apollos taught the Scriptures in the synagogue, and through the Scriptures he taught people that they should believe in God well. But among the audience were people called Priscilla and Aquila, who had heard the gospel from the Apostle Paul and had received salvation. They heard him, took Apollos aside, and explained the gospel of the water and the Spirit to him in great detail by citing the Old and New Testaments. So Apollos's faith became complete, and because of this, he became a servant who was used powerfully in the Church of God. The word records that part.

It was said that Apollos *"knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25)*. John told people to repent and cried out, *"Brood of vipers!" (Matthew 3:7)*, and so led them to Jesus Christ; he also cried out for repentance to those who had left God and served foreign gods, and he preached the baptism of repentance that turned them back to God. There are two kinds of baptism that John the Baptist gave. To the people he proclaimed the baptism of repentance, and to Jesus Christ he gave the baptism through which he carried out the duty of the high priest of mankind, transferring the sin of the world. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all; He shed His blood and died on the Cross as the price of that sin; and He rose again from death on the third day and saved us from sin. In the word, it is written, *"And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism'" (Acts 19:1–3)*. At that time, many people knew of the baptism of John and were aware of it. This is because the

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baptism of John meant that people confessed their sins before God and, after serving foreign gods, returned to God. Here in Ephesus there were some disciples, and in their belief in God, these people, too, knew only the baptism of John. They did not know the baptism Jesus Christ received from John. The Apostle Paul went to them and asked, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*. Then they answered, *"We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2)*. Through this word, we can see that there are many people who believe in God knowing only the baptism of John—many who served foreign gods, then returned to God, and now believe in and rely on God alone. It was so in the past, and it is so now as well. In fact, among the many people who believe in Jesus, there are many who believe in and follow only the baptism of John. As for what it means to believe in and follow only the baptism of John, to put it simply, people serve foreign gods and believe in petty gods, then abandon them and come to church to believe in Jesus—that is exactly what can be called the baptism of John. There were many such people in the time of the early church as well. Even now there are a great many. We need to know this.

Receiving the remission of sins is connected with baptism

The Apostle Paul asked, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*, and in fact, if we know Jesus accurately and believe in Him, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift when we believe in Jesus Christ. When the Apostle Paul asked, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*, they said that they did not even know what the Holy

Spirit was, so how could they have received Him? When he asked, *"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)*, they said that they had received the baptism of John. In the work of the Holy Spirit, which is regarded as very important in the Book of Acts, also called the Acts of the Holy Spirit, and in receiving the remission of sins, there is a word that is absolutely essential, and that word is baptism. The Apostle Paul asked, *"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)*. Dear fellow believers, the intention behind the Apostle Paul's question was to imply that if they said they had not received the Holy Spirit when they believed in Jesus, then they did not know the baptism Jesus Christ received. Apollos, too, believed in God and knew and believed that the Messiah would come, but because he knew only the baptism of repentance, Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and testified to him of the baptism Jesus received from John, of His having the sin of the world transferred to Him through that baptism, of His bearing the sin of the world and dying on the Cross, and of His rising again from death. Receiving the Holy Spirit—receiving the remission of sins—is connected with baptism.

So when some disciples in Ephesus said that they had received baptism from John, the Apostle Paul went on to explain it to them. *"Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all" (Acts 19:4–7)*. So it was. In asking whether they had received the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul now speaks of baptism, and in speaking of baptism, he speaks of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist cried out that

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the people *"should believe on Him who would come after him" (Acts 19:4)*, and that One is none other than Jesus. So these people received baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. And the Apostle Paul laid hands on them, and at that time the Holy Spirit came upon them. Peter, too, said, *"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" (Acts 2:38)*. When people believe in Jesus Christ, receive the remission of sins, and receive baptism—that is to say, those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross receive baptism as a sign that they believe. That is why those who have received the remission of sins receive the Holy Spirit as a gift right away. But here it says that when they received baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and hands were laid on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. People can be confused about this. We receive the Holy Spirit when we receive the remission of sins, so do we receive the Holy Spirit only when hands are laid on us? What is actually being said here is that when baptism was given and hands were laid on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then what do we do when we give baptism? A true baptism is given with the laying on of hands. When we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we receive the remission of sins, and at the same time as we receive the remission of sins, we receive the Holy Spirit before God; it is not that receiving the remission of sins is one thing and receiving the Holy Spirit is another, so that we receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. In the Book of Acts, there are a few verses that say the Holy Spirit came upon people through the laying on of hands. Of course, the laying on of hands is a means of conveying what I have to the other person. Just as we scoop up our food with a spoon when we eat, it is a medium for conveying something.

When the Apostle Paul gave baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. In reality, when we receive the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes upon us. And receiving the Holy Spirit is not a matter of repenting a great deal, serving a great deal, fasting a great deal, and the like. When Paul asked them whether they had received the Holy Spirit, they said they did not know; he then went on to ask what baptism they had received, and right away he taught them about Jesus Christ, told them to believe in Jesus Christ, and gave them baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. We receive the Holy Spirit as a gift when we have faith in Jesus Christ—that is, when we have the faith that believes the fact that Jesus Christ had my sins and yours transferred to Him when He received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, that believes that Jesus took away the sin of the world, and that believes that He died on the Cross, rose again three days after His death, and saved you and me. In reality, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift when we believe in Jesus Christ.

We receive the Holy Spirit as a gift when we believe in Jesus Christ

Today many religious people know only John's baptism of repentance, and they think that receiving the Holy Spirit is one thing, believing in Jesus is another, receiving fire is another, and receiving tongues is yet another; but that is not so—it is all one. When I believe in the baptism Jesus Christ received from John, I come to believe the fact that all my sins have been passed on to Him; next, I come to believe in Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross; and I come to believe that He rose again to give me life. As people believe in this way, the Holy Spirit is given as a gift

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to those who believe in Jesus Christ, to those who accept the truth that Jesus Christ has removed all our sins and saved us.

Dear fellow believers, in the past I, too, was truly puzzled about this. I believed in Jesus, but I did not know the Holy Spirit. I had received the fire of the Holy Spirit, but I did not actually know personally in my heart what kind of One the Lord is. Here the word says, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2)*, and I used to think that to receive the Holy Spirit I had to go to a mountain and offer fasting prayers and all-night prayers. So I struggled hard to receive the Holy Spirit. Also, I had to struggle hard to receive tongues, and I had to exert myself to receive the gift of healing. I had to offer prayers of repentance thoroughly. That is what I thought. But what is clear is that this is not so. As we fully believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit—as we believe that Jesus has completely saved us through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross—the Holy Spirit comes upon you and me the moment we believe, and within that Holy Spirit are contained tongues, prophecy, all the grace by which we can serve the Lord, the gift of being able to teach others, and everything else. Prophecy, tongues, and the gift of healing are gifts within the Holy Spirit. They are called spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit, too, is a gift that God the Father gives us, and tongues, prophecy, the grace to serve the Lord, and all such things that are given to those who have received the Holy Spirit are small gifts that belong to the Holy Spirit. So we are saved by believing in Jesus Christ; we receive the remission of sins by believing in the baptism Jesus Christ received from John and in the Cross; and at the same time as we receive the remission of sins—at the same time as we believe in Jesus Christ as our own Savior—we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift before God.

In reality, those who have received the remission of sins have the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Those who truly believe that Jesus Christ has removed all my sins and yours have received the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit, no one can say that he has been saved, and those who do not have the Holy Spirit are those who have been cast away. Receiving the Holy Spirit does not mean that one's body becomes hot and one speaks in tongues and such things. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. There are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is one of Them. Like Jesus Christ, He is God to us. Jesus Christ has cleanly removed our sins through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross; those who believe in that Lord have received the remission of sins; and for those who have received the remission of sins, although the Lord has now ascended, the Holy Spirit becomes the guarantor in your heart and mine. He puts His seal on us, saying, "Your faith is right." Therefore, because the Holy Spirit dwells in those who are born again, they come to call God Abba, Father. They come to call God Father, and they come to pray just as a child entrusts something to his father. That is how it comes to be.

Rely on the Holy Spirit and go boldly before God

Dear fellow believers, those who have the Holy Spirit call God Father and make supplication to Him, and because they have the Holy Spirit, they ask Him for things. When we believe in Jesus rightly and receive the remission of sins, we have the Holy Spirit. Dear fellow believers, do you believe in Jesus as your Savior? You must know the fact that when you believe, the Holy Spirit is in your hearts. And you must know the fact that you are those who have received the Holy Spirit. Even when we

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believe in Jesus, there are times when we cannot tell whether we believe or not, and there are times when our body, heart, and soul are caught up in other things. We sometimes hope, “Won’t a big break come my way?” or go to a casino and say, “Just let me hit the jackpot once!” There really are such times, and when we have been caught up in such things and come out of them, it is hard to tell whether we are people who believe in Jesus. The evidence that you and I are truly people of God is that the Holy Spirit is in your heart and mine. Although we have received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ by faith, it is by knowing that the Holy Spirit is in your heart and mine that we come to go boldly before God the Father and ask. It is through the Holy Spirit that we make our supplications. When we go forth in the flesh, something pricks our conscience and we hesitate, but when we go forth through the Holy Spirit, we come to make our requests boldly and directly before God. Because our salvation is already secured and we have received the Holy Spirit before God, we go boldly and ask. The reason we are bold and have power in our life of faith is that the Holy Spirit is in your hearts. Because we believe and know the truth, and because, no matter what anyone says, we are children of God and have been saved, we have received the remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and by relying on the Holy Spirit, and we rely on the Holy Spirit and go boldly before God to pray. That is why the Apostle Paul said, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (Acts 19:2)*. If I believe the fact that Jesus Christ received baptism from John for me and had my sins transferred to Him, if I believe in Jesus Christ, who bore the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross and died for me, and if I believe that this Jesus is my Savior, the Savior who has removed all my sins, then I am saved; and when I am saved, the Holy Spirit stands as my guarantor as a sign of it and puts His

seal on me, saying, "You have no sin. You are a righteous person. You are one of God's people. You are a son of God." Because of this, you and I come to live our life of faith boldly by faith and through the Holy Spirit. We come to testify of the gospel boldly.

The Book of Acts is the Acts of the Holy Spirit. The disciples believed in Jesus Christ, but on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon them, and being filled with Him, they testified of Jesus Christ's gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the same with you and me in this present age. Although we were not present at Pentecost, we have become those who have received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ as your Savior and mine—by believing that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had all your sins and mine transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, was nailed to the Cross, and received the judgment for all sins on our behalf, and that He rose again from death and gave new life to you and me. We received the Holy Spirit by believing in Jesus Christ, who saved us, and we spread the salvation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus Christ

Just as the apostles preached the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit in the time of the early church, you and I also testify of the gospel through the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is now in our hearts. When you preach the gospel, doesn't the Holy Spirit cause you to speak? Isn't it strange that you and I do not have tongues today? Whom is the Apostle Paul testifying of? Whom are Priscilla and Aquila testifying of? They are testifying of the baptism Jesus Christ received from John and the blood of the Cross, that Jesus Christ is God, that He is the Son of God,

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that Jesus Christ died on the Cross and rose again from death, and that He is the King of kings. The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus Christ. He testifies of the fact that Jesus Christ has removed the sin of all mankind—of this gospel. Therefore, those who have received the remission of sins preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. At that time, people spoke in tongues, and when they spoke in tongues, the Holy Spirit interpreted those words for the people. Through tongues, they testified to the people of various regions of that Jesus Christ—who came to this earth, had our sins transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John just as the Old Testament had prophesied, and died on the Cross to save us—as the gospel by which people are born again, receive the remission of sins, and receive the Holy Spirit. There is a kind of tongues that one speaks privately. However, the Apostle Paul testifies, *"In the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:19)*. Speaking in tongues is conversing with God in secret. You must know the fact that, in order for the gospel to be testified of, the Holy Spirit made them speak in tongues, and because they had learned nothing, He made them speak the languages of those regions so that they preached the gospel.

In this present age, there is no need for God to work through tongues. Today, languages have also changed a great deal. Every language changes so much that new words come into being every year and dictionaries have to be newly compiled, so even if someone speaks in tongues in some country's language, that language would not be complete. Rather, it is better to preach the gospel together with an interpreter. This is because interpreters know the culture and everything else of the people there. God can certainly do it through tongues as much as He wants, but please know the fact that in this present age the gospel

is not testified of through tongues, because now we can freely converse with others in the languages we use. At that time, the Bible had not yet been fully completed. That is why, when people received the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit worked powerfully in their hearts and made them speak in all kinds of tongues and also prophesy. In this age, prophecy is not needed. What will Jesus Christ do in the future? As for that, what will become of this world has been told through the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation. And it was brought to a close. It is said that whoever adds to or takes away from this word will be removed from the Book of Life. In this way, prophecy has already been completed in the Book of Revelation.

The Holy Spirit given to hearts that have received the remission of sins

How do we receive the Holy Spirit? Receiving the Holy Spirit is connected with the faith that believes that Jesus received baptism from John, that He bore the sin of the world and went to the Cross and died, and that Christ rose again from death. It is by believing in that Jesus Christ that we receive the Holy Spirit. Dear fellow believers, have you received the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit in your hearts? It was said that when you receive the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit is given to you as a gift. Those who have received the remission of sins and received the Holy Spirit have no sin in their hearts. Those who can say that they have no sin are those who have no sin. Such people have been saved from sin by believing that Jesus Christ has completely saved you and me through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross.

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God has given the Holy Spirit to you and me as a gift. When Jesus was on this earth, He said, *"It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7)*. This means that when He goes up to the Father, He will send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to you. Just as He promised, God the Father actually gave us the Holy Spirit as a gift in our hearts when we believed in Jesus Christ, when we received the remission of sins. He actually gave the Holy Spirit to us when we believed. I cannot tell you how thankful I am that He has given us in our hearts the Holy Spirit, who intercedes for us and holds on to us. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot live a life of faith. If people do not recognize the fact that they themselves have the Holy Spirit, they cannot live a life of faith. How could they? Our thoughts and emotions always change—fine at one moment and overturned at another—so if the Holy Spirit did not set His seal in our hearts, if He did not lead us, how could we live a life of faith even though we have received the remission of sins? We could not. By what strength do we do it? The Holy Spirit is in the hearts of you and me, who have received the remission of sins. We have received the Holy Spirit as a gift. I am so thankful. Though you and I are lacking, the Holy Spirit is in our hearts. That is why we can do the work of God, believe in Jesus Christ, testify of Jesus Christ, and testify of the gospel. It is because we have the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit, no one can say that Jesus Christ is his Savior. No one can preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. No one can receive the gospel through which the Holy Spirit is received. Apart from the Holy Spirit, it cannot be done.

"Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"

The Holy Spirit is in your hearts. Whatever your flesh may be like, because the Holy Spirit is in your hearts, the Holy Spirit leads and governs you, and because you have the Holy Spirit, you do the work of God and live the life of disciples of Jesus Christ. You exercise power. God has given the Holy Spirit to you and me as a gift. What did Jesus say in the Gospel of John? *"'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive" (John 7:37–39)*. He said that whoever is thirsty should come to Him and drink, and that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will drink living water in his heart. He said that if one believes that when Jesus received baptism from John, He had our sins—all the sins we commit until we die—transferred to Him, and that Jesus bore my sins, went to the Cross, died, and saved me, then rivers of living water will flow from that person's heart. When a person believed in Jesus Christ—when he believed in that baptism and the blood of the Cross—the Holy Spirit came upon his heart, and peace like a river flows in his heart; that is why Jesus Christ said so. He tells all who are thirsty to come to Him, and He says, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28)*. Dear fellow believers, it says, *"Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38)*. Because we have received the remission of sins, we have received the Holy Spirit as a gift, and because we have received the Holy Spirit as a gift, there is peace like a river in our hearts. There is living water. Even while living in this world where there is famine on the earth, we have food in our hearts, and the river of life flows in our hearts, so that we eat of it ourselves and also give it to others; in this way, we live

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through the Holy Spirit. That is so. Therefore, if you ask what you and I should remember together with the fact that we are people who have received the Holy Spirit, we must remember it together with the fact that Jesus saved me through the water and the Spirit, and we must remember our receiving the Holy Spirit as well. We must testify as follows: Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed in Jesus? You believe in Jesus, but do you have the Holy Spirit? This is how we must preach when we preach the gospel. Do you have the Holy Spirit in your heart? If someone believes in Jesus but does not have the Holy Spirit, what kind of believing in Jesus is that? It is just the same as not believing.

We are not orphans

You and I are not orphans. God has not forsaken you and me. He has given us the remission of sins, made us His children, and given the Holy Spirit to our hearts. The Holy Spirit is in our hearts. That is why we converse with God the Father, ask Him for things, turn back from what is wrong, and converse with Him as a family in a personal relationship. You and I must give thanks that we did not receive only the baptism of repentance. When we had not yet encountered the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we had received only the baptism of repentance. But now the Holy Spirit is in our hearts. We are entitled to go boldly before God and ask for anything, as long as it is not evil. And you and I have the blessing of being able to make requests as much as we want. The power of having the gospel that causes others to receive the Holy Spirit is in us just the same as it was in Paul, Peter, and the disciples who appear in the Book of Acts. That is why, when we preach the gospel, people receive the remission

of sins, and when they receive the remission of sins, they receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, and we hear them confess that there is no sin in their hearts. So please remember that you and I are those who have the Holy Spirit. Because we have the Holy Spirit, we follow God, and because we have the Holy Spirit, we have hope and dreams for the future, even though we are living in a difficult world. We have the hope that we will spread the gospel to the whole world and that all the people of the whole world will believe in the gospel we preach and receive the Holy Spirit. We have a dream. That is why we live on dreams and hope. We have the hope that when Jesus Christ comes to this earth, He will take us with Him; the hope that the Lord will take us and we will live happily, receiving blessings; and the dream that if all the people of the whole world believe in the gospel we preach, they will receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit, and become children of God. Because of this, we live with dreams and hope by preaching the gospel. Even though the world is dark, because of our faith, because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, and through the gospel of salvation the Lord has given us, we look to God and live by faith even in this gloomy world. That is why we are greatly thankful and blessed people. If only we have faith, we come to serve the gospel, live together with the gospel, live in this world to expand the kingdom of God, and live in hope. Because we have the gospel and the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, you and I come to live.

Dear fellow believers, our flesh wastes away, but we have the Holy Spirit. We are children of God. That the Holy Spirit is in your hearts—this is the main point of this word. I thank the Lord for giving us the Holy Spirit. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The name of Jesus that cannot be borrowed and used

< Acts 19:8–20 >

“And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.’ Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in

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Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."

The kingdom of God preached through daily reasoning

In Ephesus, the people who called on the name of Jesus differed from one another. Paul taught people the word of the Lord, but some people tried to display power by borrowing the name of the Jesus whom Paul preached. Speaking the same name did not mean that they had the same faith. Therefore, when we read this word, along with the fact that astonishing things happened, we must examine what kind of One we know Jesus to be and rely on Him as. For believing in the Savior who remitted sins and trying to use His name for one's own purposes are different paths from the very beginning.

What Paul did in Ephesus was to reason and persuade concerning the kingdom of God. *"And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8)*. Paul explained the word so that people would enter the kingdom of God. Paul, who had earlier taught the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, is now preaching the kingdom of God. If one teaches that this kingdom is a place entered by human effort, one departs from the work of Jesus, who saved sinners. Only

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when we know the grace by which God remitted sins and made people His own people does faith concerning that kingdom also become clear.

Jesus, the Son of God, came as the Savior of sinners, and when He received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all. Because even the sins each of us commits throughout our lifetime were passed on to the Lord's body, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died because of those sins. When we believe in our hearts in Jesus, who received in our place the judgment for sin that was to fall on us and rose again from death, we receive the remission of all sins. The word concerning the kingdom of God cannot become a teaching that departs from this Savior and tries to change people only outwardly. The reason we can stand before God without sin lies in the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

As the word was being heard, there also arose people who hardened their hearts and spoke evil of the Way. Paul departed from them, set the disciples apart, and reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus; he did not stop teaching the word just because slander arose. The Bible records the result as follows: *"And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10)*. Jews and Greeks were different peoples, but the way to receive the remission of sins was not different for each of them. Because Jesus bore the sin of the whole world, everyone needed to hear of that salvation, and Paul's reasoning was the labor of letting people hear that very word.

We too, when we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must explain it so that those who hear may know what they must believe. For if we only urge people to believe zealously, the object and content of faith become blurred. We must teach from the word why Jesus received baptism from John,

what sin He had passed on to Him before He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and how the Lord, who rose again from death, becomes our Savior. Since one cannot preach to others what is not clear to oneself, we who preach must first know this salvation clearly, and the work of helping those who hear to know and believe that salvation is connected with the reasoning Paul continued.

People who used the name of Jesus as a pretext

God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul. When people brought handkerchiefs or aprons from Paul's body and laid them on the sick, the diseases left them and the evil spirits also went out. If, seeing this, one thinks that the handkerchiefs themselves had the power to save, one misses God, who worked the miracles, and the word that Paul preached. God's purpose in doing special things through the apostle was to have people know Jesus as the Savior and hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Because God desires that a person's heart receive the remission of sins more than that his body be healed, even if someone experiences his body being healed, if he does not know how his sins were remitted, that person still needs to hear the word of salvation.

But some itinerant Jews who practiced magic gave commands to those who had evil spirits, using as a pretext the Jesus whom Paul preached. The sons of Sceva also did this, but things did not turn out as they wished. The evil spirit answered, *"Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" (Acts 19:15)*. And the man who had the evil spirit leaped on them and wounded them. Taking the name that another person preaches and using it does not make that person's faith one's own. No one

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should try to obtain power by calling on the name without knowing who Jesus is.

The name of Jesus contains the work of the Lord, who saved us. If we leave out the fact that the Lord bore our sins through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins with the blood of the Cross, and rose again from death, and rely only on the act of calling the name aloud, we cannot reach the truth of the remission of sins. We must be not people who rely on Paul's fame but people who believe in the Jesus of whom Paul testified. God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift, together with the remission of sins, to those who accept in their hearts the salvation the Lord has accomplished. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in a heart in which even the slightest sin remains, and power displayed through a person who has sin is not the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, before putting first what power one displays, I must confirm from the word how my sin was passed on to the Lord.

Throw away the books of magic and follow the word

When this became known, the Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus were afraid and magnified the name of the Lord Jesus. Then those who had believed came, confessing and telling their deeds, and many who had practiced magic gathered their books and burned them. What they threw away had great value, for it is written, *"They counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19:19)*. But the great value of the books was no reason they had to keep holding on to them. The fact that people brought out into the open what they had relied on and threw it away shows that looking back on one's old

ways before the word of the Lord is not something removed from daily life.

We must not think of the value of the burned books as the price for the remission of sins. If the size of salvation were determined by what and how much one gave up, our faith would again come to rely on our own actions. The One who remitted sins is Jesus, and the Lord had already accomplished that work before we threw anything away. Returning from false gods to the true God is the first step, and turning back all the way to believing the fact that Jesus removed all our sins through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection is the repentance through which one receives the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must distinguish between turning back without hiding one's wrongs and striving every day to produce the remission of sins anew. Those who have received the remission of sins from the Lord acknowledge and correct their wrong ways of living, but even then, they rely on the Savior who removed sin rather than on their own resolve.

The Bible closes this passage with these words: *"So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" (Acts 19:20)*. It says that it was not the fame of the man who showed marvelous power but the word of the Lord that gained power. The word Paul taught daily, the fact that the name of Jesus cannot be used carelessly, and the sight of people throwing away what they had formerly relied on all lead to this conclusion. In our hearts, too, the word that testifies of Jesus, who accomplished salvation, must stand firm.

Those who used as a pretext the Jesus whom Paul preached tried to make use of His name, but the people of Ephesus came to know of this and magnified the name of the Lord Jesus. We too must not treat the Savior as a means of accomplishing our own will, but must believe in Him and exalt Him as the One who

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remitted our sins. Do not merely speak the name of Jesus with your lips while holding on in your heart to what you formerly relied on. I hope you will turn away from the wrong path, place the basis of the remission of sins on the salvation already accomplished, and stand firm on the word through which we know Jesus, as Paul taught. What must remain in our hearts is not the fame of those who showed power but the name of the Lord, who gave us life. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Paul's plan for the spread of the gospel

< Acts 19:21–22 >

"When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.' So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time."

A heart that seeks to preach the gospel further

After the word of the Lord gained power in Ephesus, Paul's plan included even Rome. He said that he would pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, and that after that he must also see Rome. But what is recorded following that plan is not that Paul left at once, but that he first sent Timothy and Erastus and he himself stayed longer in Asia. A heart looking ahead was followed by the action of sending people to work together with him. We too, when we plan the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must not think only of where to go, but must consider to whom we will preach what, and with whom we will do that work.

The Bible relates Paul's thoughts as follows: *"When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem,*

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saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome'" (Acts 19:21). Macedonia and Achaia, Jerusalem, and Rome appear in order. If we read this simply as a travel plan to see several places, we miss the flow in which Paul had been preaching the word until then. He had come to Ephesus and taught the disciples the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and even while being slandered, he reasoned daily so that people heard the word of the Lord. Since he looked toward other places after such labor, Paul's plan must be read within the flow of his work of preaching the word of the remission of sins further.

The word the Lord gave to His disciples also did not end with the work of one place. He said, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8)*. The One of whom the witnesses are to testify is Jesus, who, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rose again from death; and the range of those who will hear that testimony is to the end of the earth. Therefore, just because there are now people who hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we cannot forget those who have not yet heard it. As we read that Paul looked even toward Rome, we too must examine whether our hearts are set only on contentment in places that are already familiar to us. For the word of salvation is not a word needed only by us.

The Lord told His disciples that when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would receive power and become His witnesses. Paul was a man who preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit and lived his whole life by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, even the work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit is given up after a few attempts, but because the Holy Spirit, who

dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sins, causes us to testify of Jesus, we too can rely on the Lord and preach that word to the end. Therefore, we cannot leave the will to preach the gospel further only to people's great ambitions or to the strength they have of themselves. The hope of reaching to the end of the earth is also different from a heart that seeks to make one's own name widely known. Because people, wherever they are, must know the same Savior, it is a heart that seeks to let others also hear the salvation given to us.

We must receive salvation before making plans

As we read of Paul's labors, we must not think that we too must do many works in order to receive salvation. It was because Paul had first received the salvation he would preach to others that he could carry that word with him. If a person's own sin remains in his heart, he cannot remove that sin by moving about busily, nor does he become a righteous person before God by going to many places. What must be clear before we make plans for the spread of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the fact of how Jesus, who sends us, remitted our sins.

John, pointing to Jesus, testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had the sin of the whole world passed on to Him once and for all, and all the sins we commit from birth until death were also passed on to the Lord at that time. Because of that very sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and became our Savior. Because Jesus, who gave us life, bore the sin of the whole world, the salvation to be preached even to people in Rome is the same salvation. Though

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the places we intend to go may differ, the Master of the news we carry is Jesus, the Lamb of God.

The remission of sins comes upon the heart that believes in this Jesus as my Savior, and the Holy Spirit is with that heart. The reason we can preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit also lies in this grace. For though we cannot wash away another person's sins by our own resolve, we can preach the fact that the Lord has already borne even that person's sins together with all the sins of the world. When Paul thought of the places he would go, what he took with him was not a story to boast of himself but the word about Jesus. The content of our plans must also be to testify of the Lord who saved people, and the satisfaction of having done much work must not take its place.

Even after we have received the remission of sins, our flesh still has shortcomings, so we cannot always work trusting only in ourselves. But we must not, because of our shortcomings, forget even the help of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord has given in our hearts. We can examine again the word we are to preach, learn the passages we have not understood, and ask God for the wisdom we need. Because the Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus, who accomplished salvation, we too must strive to explain that salvation accurately rather than seeking only eloquence to move people's hearts. The more we prepare, the clearer it becomes who the One is on whom we must rely.

The labor of sending others ahead and staying behind to carry on

Paul's plan did not end with a statement that he would do all the work by himself. *"So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself*

stayed in Asia for a time" (Acts 19:22). The two men went ahead to Macedonia and Paul stayed in Asia for a while longer, so although they were doing the same work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the places where they were at the time and the labors entrusted to them were different. The text calls the two men people who helped him. Paul had the part of receiving help, and they had the part of being sent and moving. Being together does not necessarily mean only gathering in one place and doing the same work.

Timothy and Erastus leaving first did not mean that Paul's labor stopped. While thinking about the road he would take, Paul had his co-workers move ahead, and he himself stayed longer in Asia. In carrying out a plan, there is being sent, and there is also the work of staying behind and taking responsibility. Therefore, we cannot regard only those who leave first as workers who go ahead, or make comparisons as if the labor of those who remain were small. What is important is that each person, in the place where he is, shares together in the work needed for the gospel of the water and the Spirit to be preached.

The strength to carry out that work is in the Lord. Paul confessed, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13)*. Holding on to this word, we must not boast with certainty that we can make everything we want to do succeed. The One on whom Paul, who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, relied was not One who would make Paul's own ability look great, but the Lord who saved him through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and who enabled him to carry out the work entrusted to him. Therefore, while acknowledging that we need the help of co-workers, we must not make those who work with us or our own strength the master of our salvation, but must rely on Jesus.

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Paul, who was looking toward Rome, also valued the help of Timothy and Erastus. Though he had a purpose for the road ahead, he did not take on all the work alone, and while sending the two men, he carried on the work that remained for him. When you too serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit, do not boast of your faith by the size of your own plans, but consider to whom and how you will let others hear the salvation the Lord has given. I hope you will not regard the labor of the brothers who are sent together with you as smaller than your own work, but will be of one mind with them. In that life of helping one another while relying on the Lord, who gave us the remission of sins, the plans given to us must also lead to the work of testifying of Jesus. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Follow the word of the Lord rather than the cries of the crowd

< Acts 19:23–41 >

“And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: ‘Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.’ Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’ So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one

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thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: 'Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.' And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly."

Things made with hands are not gods

People rushed into the theater in Ephesus. Shouts burst out here and there, but most of those gathered did not even know why they had come together. The fact that they were raising their voices together did not mean that they all understood the situation and were judging rightly. In the midst of this uproar,

Gaius and Aristarchus, who traveled with Paul, were seized and dragged in, and this became a threat to those who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Where the work of the gospel takes place, uproar also arises like this, because when God works, the devil also works. When we encounter such scenes, it is easy for us to be overwhelmed by the momentum of people and to doubt even the word we believe, but what is needed at such a time is not to see who shouts louder but to discern what the true word is.

The uproar began when Demetrius gathered the craftsmen together with the people engaged in the same trade. He was a man who made silver shrines of Diana and brought no small profit to the craftsmen. After saying that their prosperity depended on this trade, he took issue with Paul's teaching. He claimed that Paul had persuaded many people by saying that *"they are not gods which are made with hands" (Acts 19:26)*. The word that things made by human hands are not gods is a word needed for returning to the true God, but Demetrius worried that because of those words their trade was in danger of falling into disrepute.

He went on to say that he feared the temple of Diana would be despised and her magnificence would be diminished. He put forward their profits and the goddess's magnificence side by side. Hearing this, the people were filled with rage and cried out, and the whole city was thrown into confusion. When the desire to protect what is familiar and profitable to oneself is strong, one may not try to understand the meaning even when hearing the right word. If we too, before the word of God, first calculate, "Will this be a loss to me?" we will put what we ourselves want to protect ahead of the Lord who saved sinners.

Merely leaving idols does not cause sins to be remitted on their own. If we have returned from false gods to the true God,

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we must also know how the Savior whom God sent saved us. Things made with human hands are not gods, but Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth in a human body and received baptism from John, and at that time all the sins of the world were passed on to the Lord once and for all. Because those sins include, without exception, the sins each of us commits throughout our lifetime, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross because of our sins, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. Jesus, the Son of God, Himself accomplished what gods made with hands cannot do, and so He saved us from sin.

Faith that knows this salvation and relies on Jesus does not judge the Lord according to the benefit it brings to my life. It is because the Lord actually bore my sin and paid its full price that I believe in Him as the Savior. The Lord is not true only when business goes well or when one is respected by people, nor does the salvation He accomplished change because those who oppose it have increased. Therefore, what we need is not the stubbornness to keep what is familiar to the end, but the faith that turns our hearts to Jesus, who remitted sins.

What we must discern in the midst of loud cries

The two men who had been seized were dragged into the theater, and Paul wanted to go in among the people. But the disciples held Paul back, and among the officials of Asia who were Paul's friends there were also some who urged him not to go in. *"Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater" (Acts 19:31)*. Those who cared for Paul held him back from going right then into the dangerous crowd, and in this way, in

one form or another, God protects His servants who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. From this scene we cannot learn that it is faith to ignore all restraint on the grounds that one must show boldness. We must not regard the heart that seeks to preach the gospel and the action of rushing into danger right away as always the same thing.

Listening to the counsel of the disciples also belongs to the life of serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit together. Because God teaches us the word through the Church and has us work together, we need not hold on to our own judgment alone as absolute. Even if I think that I am acting for the Lord, I must examine why the brothers are concerned, and listening to their words cannot be regarded as cowardly. Those who rely on the Lord also need to consult together with one mind to keep the gospel and to take care of one another's labors. As we read how the disciples in Ephesus held Paul back, we too must value the counsel of those who are with us.

Meanwhile, the state of the assembled crowd was very confused. *"Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together" (Acts 19:32)*. Even though a great many had gathered and the cries were loud, there were many among them who did not even know why they had gathered. Alexander came forward and tried to make his defense, but rather than listening to what he said, the crowd cried out for two hours that Diana was great. In this way, people sometimes follow the anger of others without time to think. We must not accept something as true merely because many people say the same thing, but must know what actually happened and what the word says.

The sight of people shouting the same words without knowing their meaning also makes us look back on our own faith.

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Even if many people say that they believe in Jesus, if we do not know how He removed our sin, we may go no further than repeating what others say. We must know in our hearts and believe that the Lord's having our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood on the Cross and receiving that judgment in our place, and rising again from death is my salvation. Because the Holy Spirit testifies of salvation in the heart that has received the remission of sins in this way, we can confess Jesus, who saved us, without borrowing other people's words that they believe. Joining in the momentum of the crowd and the faith that knows the word of salvation are different in this way.

The way to keep the word without harming people

At last the city clerk quieted the crowd and urged them not to act rashly. Concerning the men who had been brought there, he said, *"You have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess" (Acts 19:37)*. Opposing Paul's teaching and claiming that the seized men had robbed the temple or blasphemed were not the same thing. The city clerk said that if there was a case to bring, they should follow the courts and lawful procedures, and he also pointed out the danger of being rebuked for an uproar without cause. And the Bible records, *"And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly" (Acts 19:41)*.

We do not have to believe even what the city clerk said about the temple of Diana. He calmed the crowd by putting forward what he himself acknowledged, but the God we believe in is different from idols made by human hands. What we must clearly see here is that the crowd made an uproar without

charging the men they had seized with any specific wrongdoing, and that the assembly was eventually dispersed. Therefore, just because we hear cries opposing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is no reason for us also to harm our opponents or to confront them with anger. For the work the Lord has entrusted to us is not to knock people down, but to let those people also hear the word of the remission of sins.

The cries that had filled the theater eventually scattered, but that uproar cannot decide for us what we should follow. What we must examine before the profit and the magnificence of Diana that Demetrius put forward is the word saying that things made by human hands are not gods. You too, do not seek only words that protect your own interests, but turn your heart to Jesus, who remitted sins. Knowing the meaning of that salvation clearly and listening to the counsel of the Church, we must turn away from the anger that harms people. I hope you will not be content with raising the same voice in the crowd, but will follow His word with a heart that knows and believes in the Lord who bore our sins. ✉

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CHAPTER

20

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Exhort with the word the brothers who have come through the uproar

< Acts 20:1–6 >

“After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.”

Exhorting the disciples after the uproar had ceased

What Paul did after the uproar had ceased was to call the disciples and exhort them. It was not that each person scattered and looked only to his own life because the noisy affair had passed; rather, Paul looked once again after those who had

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received the word and then set out on the next road. Wherever the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit takes place, uproars also arise like this, and because such things can shake the hearts of believers, it is necessary afterward to help one another with the word. We should not think that our faith has also become firm on its own merely because the difficulty has passed; rather, we must examine together what a brother relies on as he follows the Lord.

Let us read verse 1. *"And after the uproar ceased, Paul having sent for the disciples and exhorted them, took leave of them, and departed to go into Macedonia –ASV" (Acts 20:1)*. Paul said farewell to the disciples in Ephesus and then went to Macedonia. Although he had gone through an uproar while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there was still the word to preach, and there were still disciples to look after. Our service, too, is not something to bring to an end because of a single instance of opposition or commotion. Because the grace by which the Lord has given us the remission of sins is perfect, and because there are souls who must hear of that grace, we must examine in the light of the word what we should do even after our circumstances have changed.

Let us look at what followed on that journey in verse 2. *"Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece" (Acts 20:2)*. Paul came to Greece while exhorting the disciples with many words. This journey did not end as mere travel that lists the places he passed through; it was a road of serving the disciples in each place with the word. We, too, must not stop at merely telling those who have received the gospel of the water and the Spirit to be well. We need exhortation that listens to what is shaking their faith and clearly points out the salvation of Jesus on which their hearts can rely.

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The exhortation of the gospel of the water and the Spirit first makes known what the Lord has given us. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and He bore even the sins that each of us commits throughout our lifetime. Because of those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us. Because the gospel of the water and the Spirit is this clear, the one who helps a brother must first make known the righteousness the Lord has accomplished, rather than that brother's resolve.

After passing through a difficult matter, there are times when we look back on our own conduct and are weighed down by our shortcomings. What a believer needs at such a time is not only praise for having endured that matter well, but the word that confirms the salvation of Jesus, who bore even the believer's own failures. If our salvation depended on how brave we had been, our weakened hearts would lose any place to stand again; but because Jesus has accomplished it, we can stand on the righteousness we have received and turn away from our wrongs. Exhortation must make known the way to follow the Lord without clouding this grace.

Deciding on the way back to avoid the plot

Let us read verse 3. *"And stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia" (Acts 20:3)*. Paul intended to sail to Syria, but when there was a plot to harm him, he decided to return through Macedonia. Those who plotted to harm him were not Gentiles but Jews, that is, the people of that time who claimed to believe in God well, and whoever preaches

straightforwardly, exactly as the word says, suffers persecution in this way. But living for the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean always insisting on the route one first had in mind. The Savior who must be preached does not change, but the road one travels while considering the work one can actually carry out can be changed; so Paul chose the way back and continued his journey.

We, too, easily become discouraged, as if we had failed, as soon as the way we have set for ourselves changes. But we must distinguish between the purpose of serving the Lord and the method I first had in mind. When a certain road is blocked, acknowledging that fact and examining the next work together with the Church is not abandoning the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Rather, if we put forward only our own insistence, we can easily miss the circumstances of those who go with us and the testimony that must continue. We must ask the Lord for wisdom and calmly judge how to serve the gospel entrusted to us.

Even the fact that there was a plot to harm Paul did not change the truthfulness of salvation. Since it is only natural that there are adversaries on the road of believing in the Lord, this is not something to fear, and when fear arises in our hearts, we must bring it before God. At such a time, what holds us fast is not merely calculations that guarantee our own safety, but faith in Jesus, who gave us life through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts that have received salvation and testifies of the truth, even when we meet difficulties, we do not think that we must decide and bear everything alone. We can find our next step within the word and the fellowship of the Church.

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Brothers who wait for one another and go together

In verse 4, the names of those who went along are recorded. *"And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia" (Acts 20:4)*. People from various places went with Paul. Companions from Berea and Thessalonica, from Derbe and Asia, took part in the same journey. The work of serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit was not recorded only as the movements of one man, Paul; the names of the brothers who joined in were also preserved in this way. We, too, should not value only the witnesses who stand out, but must treasure the service of each single person who carries out the work together in union with the Church. Even if an individual's ability is small, if he serves the gospel with a true heart in union with those who have gone before and with the Church, he, too, becomes one who serves the gospel well.

Those who have received the same salvation can be together in the Lord even if their backgrounds differ. Because Jesus bore the sin of the whole world through the baptism He received from John, paid its price by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death, our union also does not depend only on how similar we are to one another. If we boast of our own righteousness, our hearts are easily divided over small differences; but if we know the grace the Lord has bestowed, the salvation we have received together looks all the more precious. Before demanding that the other person become the same as my way, we must look back on the fact that we believe in the same Savior and consider what work we will serve together. For those who live for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is no separate life of their own; there is only a life united with the Lord,

so fellowship for the gospel also comes not from one another's characters but from the faith that belongs to the Lord.

Let us look at verse 5. *"These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas" (Acts 20:5)*. The companions went ahead to Troas and waited, and those who were with Paul set sail from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread and reached them in five days. And they stayed in Troas for seven days. Not everyone moved at the same moment on the same ship, but those who went ahead and those who came after met within one journey. In this scene we can see that the work of serving together requires both the labor of moving ahead and the labor of waiting for one another.

Our service, too, does not end just because each person has finished his own work. If we have joined our hearts for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must be able to look at how other brothers are carrying out their work, share the help that is needed, and wait for the time to go together. There is no reason to withdraw because one's role seems small, nor any reason to look down on those who come after because one did something first. The very fact that we, who received the remission of sins freely, can serve the Lord and the Church together is grace, so we must carry out the work entrusted to us, giving thanks for that grace.

The journey that began where the uproar ceased took a detour to avoid the plot and continued until Paul met the brothers again at Troas. Let us, too, not stop by merely dwelling on the difficulties that have passed, but exhort one another with the word and serve on the next road. When you must examine your plans, ask the Lord for wisdom, and I hope you will treasure both the brothers who have gone ahead and the brothers who come after. When those who have received the gospel of the water and the Spirit care for one another and join their hearts, our journey,

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too, becomes not a road that leaves traces of our own stubbornness, but a road of serving the gospel together with the Lord. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Look to the Lord, who gives life, rather than to human ability

< Acts 20:7–12 >

“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, ‘Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.’ Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.”

The night when they broke bread and heard the word

The brothers in Troas gathered together on the day before Paul departed, broke bread, and heard the word. At that gathering Eutychus fell and died, but in the end they brought the

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young man in alive and received great comfort. As we read this scene, which went from sorrow in the middle of the night to comfort, we must look to the Lord, who bestows life in the midst of the Church. The ability and godliness of those who gather do not give life to the Church; rather, the Lord, who saved sinners, is the life and the comfort of the Church.

Let us read verse 7. *"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7)*. They gathered on the first day of the week to break bread, and because Paul intended to depart the next day, he continued speaking until midnight. What the church that has gathered together holds fast to is the salvation Jesus has bestowed on us. The early Church gathered and broke bread following the word of the Lord, who said that this was His body and His blood and that they should do this in remembrance of Him; it was an act of remembering together the fact that with the very body in which He received baptism from John, Jesus bore our sins, received judgment on the Cross, and rose again. We must not stop at merely keeping the form of the gathering, but must make clear in our hearts what the content of the salvation we remember together is.

The body of the Lord that we remember as we break bread is the body that had all the sins of the world transferred to it once and for all when He received baptism from John; and because the sins each of us commits throughout our lives were also included in that sin of the world, the body Jesus gave is not a body unrelated to our sins. Because He bore that sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and gave us salvation. The heart that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit relies in this way on the Lord, who gave

Himself for us. It is not the bread and the food themselves that wash away sin; rather, our sins have been remitted through the salvation the Lord accomplished.

Therefore, hearing the word together becomes important food for the hearts of those who have been saved. If we look only at our own faults or the worries of life, we easily forget the righteousness the Lord has given us; but when we hear again of the work of Jesus through the word, what we believe becomes clear, and this is how we break bread spiritually every day. The joy of having met one another is also precious, but what sustains that fellowship is the heart that believes in the same Savior. We must keep sharing that grace in the Church and also make Jesus, in whom they must believe, known to those who do not yet know the remission of sins.

Eutychus, who fell from the third story

Many lamps had been lit in the upper room where they were gathered, and a young man named Eutychus was sitting in a window. Let us look at verse 9. *"And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead" (Acts 20:9)*. While Paul's discourse went on longer, Eutychus could not overcome his drowsiness and fell, and when they picked him up, he was dead. This death recorded in the text was a real sorrow that occurred in the midst of the gathering. As we see human weakness, we must learn to care for the souls who need help rather than exalting ourselves.

When Eutychus fell, Paul went down. The man who had earlier been discoursing on the word now appears as the one who

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embraces the dead young man. We must not separate the work of preaching the word from the work of caring for the people beside us. For if the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which tells us that Jesus saved a person's soul through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, is precious news, then we must not take lightly the sorrow and weakness that soul goes through either. Faith that relies on the Lord must also be revealed in service toward the people before our eyes.

Look to the Lord rather than to human ability

Let us read verse 10. *"But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, 'Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him'" (Acts 20:10)*. Paul embraced the body of Eutychus and said that his life was in him. As we read about this event, we must not regard Paul's personal godliness or strength as the source of life. God worked through the apostles, and that sign did not come from man; it was something God did so that the gospel of the water and the Spirit would be spread. If we stop at exalting man, we cannot come to the Savior even after seeing what God has done, so we must set our hearts on the Lord, who gives life.

While we treasure the fact that God brought a person back to life, we must not miss the eternal remission of sins that we need. God can bring about such works even now, but He desires that a person's heart receive the remission of sins more than that his body be healed, because even if the body is alive, if sin remains in the heart, he has no righteousness with which to stand before God. The salvation in which Jesus remitted our sins and gave us new life is greater than temporary comfort. When we believe that

the Lord's death was the judgment for my sins and that His resurrection was what brought me to life, we come to know who it is that we should rely on in the face of life and death. This very salvation is the center of what the Church must preach.

Today, we also do not need to wait, saying that we will believe only if we see amazing things. In the time of the early Church, when the Bible had not yet been completely written, God made His will known through such special works; but now that the word has been completed, He works through the written word, and the Holy Spirit testifies of that truth in hearts that have received the remission of sins. The fact that Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death is clear in the Bible. Rather than examining whether our own senses have become special, we must examine whether we receive that word in our hearts. Faith is not boasting about what experience we have had, but accepting what Jesus has done.

The people who were comforted by the young man brought back to life

Paul went up again, broke bread, ate, and continued talking. Let us look at verse 11. *"Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed" (Acts 20:11)*. After being together with them until daybreak, Paul departed. The night in Troas did not end with only the event of Eutychus's fall; the church continued the fellowship of eating and talking together. When we meet sorrow, we, too, must remember the salvation we have received within the word of the Lord and the fellowship of the brothers, rather

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than keeping only that matter in our hearts and withdrawing alone. If we do not gather, there is nothing; when we are together with those who have received the same grace, the way to rely on the Lord opens up.

Let us read verse 12. *"And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted" (Acts 20:12)*. The people brought the young man in alive and were comforted not a little. The fact that one person was brought back to life became a comfort to many people. When we care for one another, too, giving the other person the help he needs becomes a precious strength to the whole Church. If we think it is enough as long as our own affairs go well, we cannot truly share either a brother's sorrow or his joy; but if we treasure the souls who are in the same salvation, we come to give thanks for the grace we have received together.

The comfort the church received shows how precious one person's life was to them. Paul departed when day broke, but those who had been with him were comforted by Eutychus, who had been brought back to life. We, too, should not see a single soul in the Church as a number or as a result of our work, but must treasure the sorrow and joy we are to share with that person.

The night when the brothers in Troas broke bread and heard the word passed through the sorrow of death and continued until they were comforted by the young man brought back to life. As we read about this gathering, I hope that we, too, will treasure the life the Lord has given us, care for one another's weaknesses, and remember together the salvation we have received. Just as with those people who brought the young man in alive, in the church that looks to Jesus, who brought us to life from sin and death, there is a comfort that cannot be obtained by human ability. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Spend your time for the mission you have received from the Lord

< Acts 20:13–16 >

"Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost."

The road from meeting at Assos to arriving at Miletus

When Paul left Troas, he sent his companions ahead on the ship and went to Assos on foot himself. After that, he boarded the ship, passed by various places, and arrived at Miletus. This sea route, recorded only briefly, lies within Paul's journey

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toward Jerusalem. As we read about that road, we must examine for what Paul spent his time and moved together with people. For a worker of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is not only the word to preach, but also the days of actually living while serving that word. We, too, must lay our daily plans and steps before the Lord.

Let us read verse 13. *"Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot" (Acts 20:13)*. The companions went ahead by ship, and Paul went on foot, as he himself had decided. While they were heading to the same destination, their ways of traveling differed. Here we see the fact that those who accompanied Paul moved ahead according to what Paul had arranged for them. When we serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit together, too, it is not that we are united only when everyone is always in the same place. There is the labor of knowing one another's assigned work, carrying it out with united hearts, and preparing the way to meet again.

Verse 14 records that meeting. *"And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene" (Acts 20:14)*. The companions, who met Paul at Assos and took him on board, went to Mitylene. The road Paul had walked continued here into the next leg of the journey by ship. Even a man who had the word to preach had to pass over actual distances and arrive at the appointed places in this way. If we, too, have hearts that treasure the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must show those hearts through actual time and labor. We must not leave it at merely saying that we will live for the Lord from now on, but must examine what we must carry out today and take a step forward.

Let us look at verse 15. *"We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to*

Miletus" (Acts 20:15). The places they went to after Paul joined his companions at Assos continue day after day. Where Paul intended to go after coming as far as Miletus in this way is revealed in the next verse. If we have read about the labor of passing by many places, we must now also see what work he sought to accomplish by making the most of his time. Only when we know for what purpose the days of traveling were spent can we, too, distinguish between our own busyness and the mission entrusted to us.

Having such labor does not make our salvation more complete. First comes the righteousness that Jesus gave us by having all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paying their price by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rising again from death; and those who have received that grace then give their time to serve. We easily mistake a busy schedule itself for faith, but if it is not clear what we are busy for, we cannot say that we are serving the work of the Lord. We must look back to see whether the desire to gain people's recognition or self-satisfaction comes first, and we must treasure the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Savior has entrusted to us. Those who lay each day's labor before the Lord first examine the purpose for which they must spend that time, rather than boasting of their own busyness.

Seeking to be at Jerusalem by the Day of Pentecost

Let us read about the destination of this journey in verse 16. *"For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost" (Acts 20:16)*.

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Paul decided to sail past Ephesus so as not to be delayed in Asia, and he hurried to reach Jerusalem by the Day of Pentecost if possible. Ephesus was a place where he had preached the word and served the disciples, but this time he chose a route that passed it by. We must not think that staying on in the same place and serving the Lord always mean the same thing. Even when we must leave for necessary work, we must not forget the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but must carry it out.

After Paul arrived at Miletus, he called for the elders of Ephesus and left them exhortations for the church. Passing Ephesus by did not mean that he had forgotten them. We easily separate our own schedules from the heart that cares for our brothers. Because a matter is urgent, we may neglect the word that people need, or we may think that we love them only if we stay for every request. When we look at Paul's journey together with the meeting that follows, we see that even while going the way he had to go, he had the work of giving the exhortation the church needed. We, too, must ask the Lord and examine what we have been entrusted with.

The mission he had received, which lay on the road he hurried along

At that meeting, Paul makes clear what he is living for. Let us look at verse 24, which tells us the heart behind this journey. *"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24)*. The work he sought to finish was the mission he had received from the Lord Jesus, that is, testifying of the gospel of the grace of God, which is the gospel

of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, the sea route we read about earlier and his hurried steps must also be seen as the road of a man who had this mission. Paul's purpose did not lie in traveling itself or in showing his own strong resolve, but in carrying out the testimony of the gospel that the Lord had entrusted to him. He was a man who strove only to preach the gospel from beginning to end, until he was martyred.

Why must that gospel of grace, which is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, lead our lives? It is because Jesus has saved us from sin and death. Jesus, the Son of God, actually came to this earth and had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, and even the sins that you and I will commit throughout our lives were all borne by Him without exception. Because of that sin, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving our judgment in our place, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. Since we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are people who have received life freely in this way, we must learn before the Lord for whom we will spend our lives.

When we believe the fact that the Lord had our sins passed on to Him, our purpose in living also appears new. Before, we weighed everything with our own satisfaction and safety at the center; but now we know that there are souls who must come to know the same remission of sins. Because the grace that saved us first is precious, a heart arises in us that seeks to make that Savior known. Because the Lord has given us such a great salvation, we cannot help but serve the Lord and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit; so labor for the gospel is not a price paid to obtain salvation, but service in gratitude for the life we have already received. Only when we make this relationship clear will even the making of schedules and plans not turn into piling up our own righteousness.

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The Holy Spirit, whom the Lord has given us, testifies of salvation in the hearts that believe this grace and causes us to know Jesus. Not only Paul, but we, too, who have received this gospel of the water and the Spirit, are people entrusted with a mission, responsible for preaching that gospel, and workers of God. Since we are not people who serve because we believe that our own zeal will always remain the same, even on days when we are tired or our plans change, we can ask the Lord for strength and set our hearts on His word. When we cannot discern what we must do, we must examine it together with the Church, and once the work entrusted to us has become clear, we must not put off what we must carry out today. The purpose for the gospel and the actual labor of each day must be connected in this way.

Paul met his companions at Assos and boarded the ship, and after many days had passed, he hurried along the road toward Jerusalem. Remember that at the center of that road was the mission he had received from the Lord. We, too, must not merely reckon where we go and how fast we move, but must look back on whom we believe in and for what we spend our time. I hope you will rely on Jesus, who has given us the remission of sins, entrust today's steps to Him, and join your hearts with those who serve together with you. Those who treasure the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has entrusted to them spend the day given to them in testifying of that salvation. ✉

Spend your time for the mission you have received from the Lord

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Church must hold on to the gospel of grace

< Acts 20:17–35 >

“From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: ‘You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

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For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."""

Repentance and faith preached without holding back

Paul called the elders of Ephesus to Miletus and spoke to them both of the word he had preached and of the work they would have to take on from then on. This was because there was something the church had to hold on to even after he left. The faith of the church cannot be kept by keeping one person continually at its side; rather, the church must stand on the gospel of the water and the Spirit that he preached, that is, the gospel of the grace of God, and on the word of the Lord. We too, when we say that we are working for the Church, must examine with what we are caring for souls and whom we are making them follow. In Paul's exhortation, that standard is clearly revealed.

Paul said that he had served the Lord with humility and tears, enduring trials, and that he had taught whatever was helpful, publicly and in each house, without holding back. Let us read in verse 21 what that testimony was. *"Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21)*. Repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ are not two separate matters. Repentance is turning around from the wrong path one was walking and returning to the true God, and complete repentance goes further from there, reaching even to believing in the salvation by which Jesus remitted sins. Merely begging and saying that one has done wrong is only a religious kind of repentance; if people only repeat words of sorrow over their sins and do not believe in the Savior, they do not reach complete repentance.

The sinner who has returned must believe the fact that Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of the world transferred to His own body once and for all, and the sins each of us commits throughout our whole lifetime are all contained in that sin of the world. Then, because of that sin of the world which He had borne, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. Therefore, those who tried to wash away their own sins by themselves must look at those very sins, which have already been passed on to the Lord. The One we must believe in when we return to God is the Savior who has accomplished the remission of sins in this way. Only when this gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached does the exhortation to repent also become a word that leads sinners to obtain the righteousness of Jesus.

Only when this grace is preached clearly do those who hear obtain a basis for believing. Wherever Paul preached the word, he never left out the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood

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of the Cross, and the resurrection, because if one leaves out the work by which He had sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and preaches only the Cross, or if, after speaking of the remission of sins, one adds human merit as a condition for salvation, the meaning of the gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes blurred. Paul said that he was clean of the blood of all men because he had preached all the will of God without holding back. That will of God is the work in which Jesus Christ, the Son, received baptism from John and thereby had our sins passed on to Him according to the Father's will, was sacrificed on the Cross, and rose again, thereby making us sinless. Hearing and believing is the listeners' part, but letting them know is the responsibility of the one who preaches; so we too must not pick out and preach only the words the listeners like, but must clearly testify of what sinners must believe in order to become righteous.

The ministry he had received, which he held more precious than his life

Paul said that he did not fully know what he would meet in Jerusalem, but that the Holy Spirit had testified in every city of chains and tribulations. In the face of such a path, he left the confession of verse 24. *"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24)*. What he sought to finish was not an honor he had built up for himself, but the work of testifying of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is, the gospel of grace, which he had received from the Lord Jesus. Because Paul was a person who had received the

remission of sins through the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and had received the Holy Spirit into his heart, he regarded the work the Lord had entrusted to him as precious even in the face of the prediction of tribulation. The grace that had saved him led his service.

As we hear this confession, we too must not turn it into a word telling us to regard our own lives as worthless. The heart of what Paul made clear is that the ministry he had received was so precious that he would lay down even his life for it. Because Jesus has delivered us from sin and death, the work of making that salvation known is greater than any temporary benefit. The work entrusted to us, too, must not be done as a competition to show our own strength; rather, we must rely on the Holy Spirit and follow the will of the Lord.

Paul said that he knew they would not see his face again. Therefore, his exhortation is not a word telling them to hold on to the one who is leaving, but a word teaching how the church that remains should stand before the Lord. We too should be thankful to the person who preached the word to us before, but we must not make that person's strength the basis of our salvation. The Church must help the souls who have received the same salvation to rely on that same Lord.

Take heed and care for the church He purchased with His own blood

Let us read verse 28. *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28)*. The church the elders had to care for is the church that God purchased with His own blood.

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The blood of the Cross exists because, before it, there is the baptism He received from John. Because Jesus bore our sins on His body by receiving baptism from John, He could pay the price of our sins with that blood, and by rising again from death He confirmed that salvation. Therefore, those who serve the Church must not treat people as if they were their own possession, but must value them as souls whom the Lord paid the price to save. The service the Holy Spirit has entrusted carries the responsibility to first examine one's own heart and to care carefully for all the flock, and we who have become the flock have the responsibility not to leave this church no matter what happens.

Paul warned that after he left, wolves that would not spare the flock would come in. Also look at the word of verse 30. *"Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:30)*. We must not only beware of opposition coming from outside, but must also discern the perverse words within the church that seek to make people follow the speaker. Even if such words use the name of faith, if they blur the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished and bind people to human claims, they are not teachings that follow the Lord.

Words that teach that Jesus' bearing of the sin of the world is only a theory and that one receives the remission of sins only by repenting every day are exactly such perverse words; that is not the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but a false gospel that leaves on people once again the sin the Lord has completely borne. A heart that draws people to follow one's own position also puts one's own benefit ahead of the benefit of the flock. That is why Paul told them to remember how he had warned everyone night and day with tears, and to stay awake. We too must not turn the work of stopping false teachings into feelings

of hatred toward particular people. Since we can tell whether a teaching is true or false by measuring every teaching against the written word, we must discern salvation by the word and together make the right gospel clear, so that not even one soul is caught by human greed.

Stand on the word of grace and help the weak

Let us read in verse 32 where Paul entrusted the church. *"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32)*. The Lord and the word of His grace build up the church firmly. The saying that one gradually becomes a righteous person is a teaching of religion; the sanctification the Bible speaks of is not obtained through our flesh little by little becoming a sinless person, but is the grace of being born again of the water and the Spirit by believing in the remission of sins given through the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. There is also an inheritance the Lord will give to those who have received that grace. Therefore, the word that builds up the church must not be words that drive people to pile up human merit anxiously, but a word that helps them believe in the completed salvation and rely on the Lord.

Paul said that he had coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing, and that with his own hands he had provided what he and his companions needed. He did not satisfy his own greed in the name of caring for souls; rather, he labored himself and helped those who were with him. This life is connected with the responsibility, mentioned earlier, of cherishing the flock. We too should each work to earn our living while serving the Lord; and

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we must not merely say with our lips that we value the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but in our daily lives as well must not use other people and must bring benefit to the souls the Lord has entrusted to us. Testifying of the right gospel and serving rightly must go together.

He told them to help the weak by laboring like this and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive. It is a blessing for those who have received the remission of sins to serve the Lord, and God gives blessings to those who serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is not trying to buy the remission of sins through acts of helping, but giving one's heart and labor to those in need while thanking the Lord, who has already saved us. Service that helps troubled souls with the word and also looks after what they lack in their practical lives must be present within the church.

Even after Paul left, the church must hold on to the gospel of the water and the Spirit that he preached, that is, the gospel of grace, and to the word of the Lord. The gospel the apostles preached and the gospel we preach are the same gospel, and the work the Church does today is also a continuation of the Book of Acts. Let us also turn away from the desire to keep souls bound to ourselves, and lead them to follow Jesus Christ. I hope you will clearly preach the remission of sins the Lord has accomplished, discern perverse words by the word, and help the weak through your labor. When we value the church He purchased with His own blood, the care entrusted to us also becomes a work of serving the grace we have received. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Even after we part, the Lord does not leave us as orphans

< Acts 20:36–38 >

“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.”

Kneeling down together after finishing his words

The farewell at Miletus is recorded as a scene of people weeping loudly. Because of the word that they would not see Paul again, the elders sorrowed all the more, and they accompanied him to the ship. These people had heard the word Paul preached, yet they also felt the sorrow of parting. Having faith does not erase the love and longing we feel toward those we have been with. What we should see in this scene is not only how great the tears were, but to whom all the people went together before they parted.

Let us read verse 36. *“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all” (Acts 20:36)*. After finishing his exhortation, Paul did not pray alone, but knelt down

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with everyone. Because he could not handle the road ahead and the church that would remain by his own strength alone, he went to God together with them. We too, after saying the words we need to say to one another, must not leave that person to his own judgment alone. We must ask together that the Lord would hold that soul up, and we must acknowledge that we ourselves are also people who need the Lord's guidance. Prayer is actually relying on the Lord for the people we love.

In his earlier exhortation, Paul entrusted the church to the Lord and to the word of grace. Let us look again at that word in verse 32. *"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace" (Acts 20:32)*. The scene of praying together is connected with this entrusting. The basis for guarding the church after Paul left does not lie in his continuing to be before their eyes, but in the word of grace the Lord has given. Therefore, a heart that is thankful to people and a faith that relies on God must go together. We should value the brother who served us with the word, but we must not forget that both that brother and we are people who belong to the Lord.

If we place the basis of the remission of sins in our own godliness, then even while praying for a brother's future, we hesitate to come before God because of our own shortcomings. Because we cannot hide the sin remaining in our hearts or cover it with the earnestness of our prayers, we must find in the remission of sins the Savior has given the righteousness by which we can boldly ask of God. When we come to the Father relying on Jesus, we come to acknowledge that both our beloved brother and we ourselves are people who live by the grace received from the Lord.

We can come boldly to the Father because when Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and those sins included all

the sins of our entire lifetime. Jesus, who bore those sins, shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we should have received, and He rose again from death and saved us. Therefore, we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not lose the basis on which God has accepted us as His children, even when we discover our own faults. Instead of relying on our inadequate selves, we believe in the Savior who has already washed away our sins, and so we come to the Father. Because there is this grace, we can entrust to God the path of the brother from whom we are parting and the work of the church that remains.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sins and testifies of that salvation. Because those who have received the remission of sins have received the Holy Spirit, they come to ask boldly and come before God the Father; so we do not need to make our own hearts strong by ourselves before we pray. Even when we are sad and weak, we can speak to the Father as children of God, and we can ask the Lord's help for a brother with whom we cannot be together. Though we cannot protect the future of every person by our own strength, we can entrust those souls to the Lord. Because we have this faith, a way to go to God together is open even at the place of farewell.

Tears shed at the word that they would not see him again

Let us look at verse 37. *"Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him" (Acts 20:37)*. The elders wept loudly, embraced Paul, and kissed him. The hearts of people who had heard the word together and served the Lord together, now

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parting from one another, are revealed in this action. We must not lightly push such love aside by calling it a human emotion. Since the fellowship we have received within the gospel of the water and the Spirit is fellowship with real people, it is natural to feel sad when such a person leaves. Faith does not teach us to treat beloved brothers indifferently.

Being sad at parting does not mean that we lose the remission of sins, and not being cheerful at heart does not mean that the Holy Spirit has left. This is because the salvation the Lord accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection is not something that changes along with our emotions. We should not hide our sorrow in order to look godly; rather, while telling the Lord that heart just as it is, we must hold on to the righteousness He has already given. Also, rather than hastily judging a brother who weeps with us, we should share the word with that person and pray. The fellowship of those who believe in the same salvation deepens as we listen to one another's hearts and help one another rely on the Lord.

When Paul leaves, the responsibility of caring for the church remains with the elders. They must not stop at missing the labor of the one who served before them, but must now help with the word the souls entrusted to them. The memory of love should not make us stay only in the past, but should lead us to share the grace we have received with the next person. Let us also, while giving thanks for the fact that we have received help, look after the brothers who still need help. Even amid the sorrow of one person leaving, we can together fulfill the service the Lord has entrusted to us.

Rely on the Lord even after seeing him off to the ship

Let us read verse 38. *"Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship" (Acts 20:38)*. They sorrowed all the more because of the word that they would not see Paul's face again, and they accompanied him to the ship. They did not do away with the path Paul had to take, but went with him to the very end and said farewell. We too cannot always remain in the same place with the people we love. But we should do with sincerity what we can do while we are beside them, and when we come to be apart, we should entrust that person to the Lord and do the work that remains for us. In all those moments, the Savior is the same Jesus.

Jesus said to His disciples, *"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18)*. After having our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood on the Cross to receive that judgment in our place, and rising again from death to save us, the Lord is not One who leaves us alone. He gives the Holy Spirit to the hearts that have received the remission of sins, confirming that we are children of God, and He holds us up by the word. Even if we feel empty after someone who was with us has left, we who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us are not orphans, nor are we souls abandoned by God. Because we believe that the Lord is present, we can ask of God, set our hearts on the word we have received, and serve together with the church. This promise lets us know clearly the Lord on whom we can rely even on the day we part from people.

The faith that the Holy Spirit is with us does not make other brothers unnecessary. Even born-again people easily become corrupt in heart if they do not gather together to worship, praise,

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and pray and do the righteous work of God; therefore, fellowship in which we share together the grace the Lord has given and pray is still necessary for us. So we must not go so far as to separate our hearts from the church just because one person has left, but must hear the word with the brothers who remain and serve the same gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we tell the Lord about each person's circumstances and together take on what needs to be done, we can share the comfort of faith that cannot be obtained merely through closeness to people.

The elders gathered at Miletus knelt down with Paul and went to the Lord before they shed tears. Let us also not try to bear the sorrow of farewell alone, but speak to the same Savior together. I hope you will entrust the one who leaves to the Lord and care with the word of grace for the brothers who remain. Be with one another with sincerity, like the love of those who accompanied him to the ship, but even after parting, rely on Jesus, who does not leave us as orphans. ✉

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CHAPTER

21

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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

Kneel down together with the brother who is leaving

< Acts 21:1–6 >

“Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.”

Paul sought out the disciples even in Tyre

The reason the ship stayed at Tyre was to unload its cargo, but Paul’s party sought out the disciples there who believed together with them. Verse 3 records that they *“landed at Tyre;*

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for there the ship was to unload her cargo" (Acts 21:3). While the ship that was unloading its cargo was at Tyre, the party spent seven days with the disciples, and on the day they left, the disciples saw them off all the way outside the city gate. Seeking out and meeting those who believed together with them, even in a place where they stayed only for a short while, led to the prayer on the shore. The brothers who saw them off did not board the same ship as Paul; then why would they kneel down and pray together at the end of the road where they were parting from one another?

The Bible does not merely list Paul's sea route; it also records the time he spent with the disciples in Tyre. They were people whom Paul's party went and found and met, and when the party left, they were brothers who knelt down and prayed together with them. Because they believed together in the salvation Jesus accomplished by having all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, paying the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rising again from death, they could share such fellowship even with people they met on the road. We tend to think of serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit only in terms of individual ability, but we must hear the word, pray, and share our hearts together with the brothers who have received the remission of sins. This is because if we neglect the fellowship the Lord has given us, we also lose the opportunity to look back on our own thoughts.

These disciples told Paul not to go into Jerusalem. Let us read verse 4. *"And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4)*. In these words, which the Holy Spirit caused them to say by moving people's hearts, there also lay the suffering that was to come. Since a prophecy about Paul's being bound and

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attempts to dissuade him appear again soon afterward in Caesarea, we must not read the journey of Paul's party as a series of visits that went on without difficulty. The people who were with him spoke of danger, and although Paul knew that it would turn out just as that word said, he continued on his way in order to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in Jerusalem as well. When we read without erasing that tension, we will not dismiss the prayer on the shore as a light farewell greeting either.

Brothers bound together by one salvation

Consider the basis on which these people were able to pray together. They did not become one in heart because their backgrounds or lives were the same; rather, the salvation Jesus gave to sinners bound them together as brothers. The reason the Book of Acts is also called the Acts of the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit who dwells in the hearts of those who have received the remission of sins and works together with them. On Pentecost Peter preached, *"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" (Acts 2:38)*. Therefore, if we speak of being moved by the Holy Spirit and yet do not know how Jesus removed sin, we miss the basis of faith. We must also confirm in the written word what it is that moves our hearts.

That salvation began when Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all as He received baptism from John, and since even the sins you and I commit throughout our lifetime are included in that sin of the world, our weaknesses are not left out of its scope either. To pay the price of the sin that had been passed on to Him in this way, Jesus shed His blood and

died on the Cross and so received in our place the judgment we should have received, and He rose again from death and completed our salvation. In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the One in whom we believe is Jesus Christ, who accomplished salvation for us in this way. When a heart that relied on human zeal believes in this salvation, it gains assurance of the remission of sins before God.

Verse 5 tells us that this fellowship continued until the moment they boarded the ship. The people who had welcomed Paul, even when parting from him, walked out with their wives and children all the way outside the city gate and saw him off. When we look at those who walked with them and saw them off in this way, we can see that fellowship within the gospel of the water and the Spirit went beyond time spent sharing affection together and led to entrusting a brother's future to the Lord. Because we believe that the Lord bore everyone's sins without leaving out anyone's, we come to accept the work of serving the gospel done by someone saved together with us as a matter that concerns us as well.

We do not have the ability to resolve all of one another's circumstances, but we can hear a brother's difficulties and ask together before God. We do not pile up prayers in order to receive salvation; rather, we ask while relying on the Father who has already given us the remission of sins. Since we have the assurance that the Lord has remitted all our sins, we have no need to draw back before God because of our own shortcomings. Also, because we do not rely on the other person by regarding him as a perfect person, even when we discover a brother's shortcomings, we do not easily abandon the relationship the Lord has formed for us. We need fellowship in which we hold one another up with the word we believe together.

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Let us also look at our own fellowship in the light of their praying together on the shore. When we are worried about a brother's future, if we only keep voicing our own anxieties, the one who listens must also bear that worry alone. But if we ask God together, we make the needed help known to the One who gave that brother life. Those who have received the remission of sins and have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them can boldly come before God the Father and ask, because their salvation has been secured, and we are not people who can pray only after our own circumstances have become perfect. We can ask the Father right there in the place where we have heard one another's weaknesses, and the salvation we believe in together becomes the basis of such prayer.

As we look at the disciples who worried about Paul's path, we too can look back on the heart with which we treat our brothers. When someone who serves the gospel of the water and the Spirit together with us goes through difficulties, we must not regard it as someone else's business. Rather than pressing him by saying that he has no faith at all just because he has worries, we must help him hear the word together with us, ask the Lord, and gain strength to serve the gospel. Since pushing one's own opinion through to the end is not unity, we must not lose the core of relying on the Savior even while listening to a brother's words. Their walking with Paul's party all the way outside the city gate makes us look back on this kind of care.

Asking together on the shore and going their separate ways

At the end of the farewell there is a scene of kneeling down together. *"They all accompanied us, with wives and children, till*

we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed" (Acts 21:5). Both the one who was leaving and those who were staying knelt down before the same God. What Paul needed was not people's cheers but the Lord's help, and the disciples who were sending him off also had to rely on God. Prayer is not a declaration that we know all of the future; it is entrusting our life and service from now on to the Lord, who saved us from sin through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. When we do not stop at sharing our worries with one another but ask the Lord, it becomes clear, even in the midst of those worries, whom we should rely on.

Let us read in verse 6 the scene after they prayed. *"When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home" (Acts 21:6)*. Not all of the people who prayed together boarded the same ship. Paul's party continued their journey and the disciples of Tyre returned home, but the salvation that had bound them together as brothers was not divided. There is also no reason to value only the steps of those who go far away and to look down on the lives of those who remain. Living by the life received from the Lord and serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit together with the Church is a matter that concerns both those who left and those who remained.

When we part from one another, let us also not think first of our own ability to hold on to a brother, but look to the Lord who saved him. If there is worry in our hearts as we send him off, we must not hide that worry but make it known to the Father, and ask together that he may rely on the word and serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Let us who remain also unite with the Church in the life entrusted to us and treasure the Lord's salvation. The ship left Tyre and the disciples returned home, but

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those who had knelt down together on the shore were brothers who relied on the same Savior. We too must meet with such a heart and send one another off with such faith. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The strength to be ready to be bound lies not in boldness but in the salvation received

< Acts 21:7–14 >

"And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, 'Thus says the Holy Spirit, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."' Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, 'What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.'"

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The prophecy that foretold his being bound

When Agabus took Paul's belt and bound his own hands and feet, what lay ahead for Paul's party was revealed before them in a visible form. They could not think that they would receive only a welcome if they went up to Jerusalem. How can we explain Paul's heart, which sought to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit there even though he knew he would be bound? If we read the text only as the story of one courageous man, we end up trying to produce that courage by our own strength. But only when we first see the fact that Paul lived for the name of the Lord Jesus can we know the strength on which he relied.

The party met the brothers in Ptolemais and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist in Caesarea. Verse 9 says of Philip, *"Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied" (Acts 21:9)*, and then records that the prophet Agabus came down from Judea. There were many people who prophesied like this in the early Church, because the words of the Bible had not yet all been written down, so a separate way of knowing the will of God was needed. The Holy Spirit spoke the will of God in advance through people. Let us read verse 11. *"Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:11)*. These words made known what would happen to Paul, and for those who were listening with him as well, they were words that could not be lightly ignored.

Agabus did not take hold of Paul's body and bind it; he bound his own hands and feet with Paul's belt. Then the party and the people of that place heard that prophecy and urged Paul not to go up. *"Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem"*

(Acts 21:12). Only when we read the prophecy about his being bound together with the people's attempts to dissuade him can we understand Paul's answer. There were voices speaking of danger, and there were also the tears of the people who loved him, but in the midst of these Paul declared that he was ready even to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.

What we need today is not to go around looking for new prophecies about our own future. Since this age is an age in which the word of God has been fully completed, God has made clear the salvation of sinners and the hope of believers through the written word, and we simply believe that word and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death. A heart that feels at ease only when it hears that there will be no difficulty at all is easily shaken in the face of suffering. Since the Bible shows that those who preached the gospel also suffered persecution, we must not immediately think that the Lord has abandoned us just because difficulties have come. Rather than considering what will be comfortable in the future, we must examine what the word already given to us teaches.

For the name of the Lord Jesus

When the party, worried about Paul's being bound, tried to dissuade him, he answered for whom he would live even in the midst of that suffering. Let us read that answer in verse 13. *"I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13)*. The One who changed Paul's life was Jesus Christ, and the One he sought to preach was

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also Jesus Christ. Since Paul himself declared that his readiness to be bound and to die was for the name of the Lord Jesus, we can understand this answer only when we know who it was that saved him. The weight of his words that he would endure suffering is also revealed in the salvation he believed in.

Paul was a man who knew the law, but he was not saved from his own sins through the strict teachings of that law. A man who had leaned on the zeal he had built up met Jesus and came to know that salvation does not come from himself. Within the name of the Lord Jesus is contained the fact that our sins were passed on to Jesus. When Jesus received baptism from John, the sin of the world was transferred to the Lord once and for all, and Paul's sins were also included in that sin. To pay the price of that sin, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received the judgment in place of sinners, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. In the name of the Lord Jesus on whom Paul relied, there was in this way the salvation that had given him life.

The sins of our whole lifetime, too, are included in all the sins of the world that Jesus bore through the baptism He received from John. Because Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross in place of Paul himself, Paul believed that death to be his own death, and he believed the Lord's resurrection to be the work that had given him life. Therefore, believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not imitating the boldness of someone like Paul; it is believing that the same Savior has cleansed my sins as well. Since it was a life given by the Lord and not a life obtained by his own merit, he could no longer regard that life merely as his own possession, separate from the Lord.

The Holy Spirit dwelt in the heart of Paul, who had received the remission of sins through this faith. Because the Holy Spirit caused him to testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he

could preach the salvation he had received even in the face of suffering. It was not that he first made a resolution to endure being bound and then obtained the Holy Spirit; rather, because he received the Holy Spirit by believing in the gospel of the remission of sins, he could do the Lord's work. If we get the order reversed, we come to think that we must become stronger people in order to be used by the Lord. But what we need is not to strain ourselves while looking at our own inadequacy, but to believe clearly in the salvation the Lord has given us and to rely on the help of the Holy Spirit.

There are times for us, too, when we are misunderstood or our hearts shrink back while we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. At such times, as we read of Paul's resolve, we should not stop at condemning ourselves; rather, we must look back on what he believed that enabled him to walk that path. The clearer the fact becomes that the Lord has saved me, the clearer what I am to preach to others also becomes. Since another person's response does not determine our remission of sins, there is no need to doubt even the salvation we have received just because we have been rejected. Also, we can seek the strength to bear it not from ourselves but from the Lord.

Seek the will of the Lord even in the midst of tears

In Paul's answer there are also the tears of the people who loved him. Paul, who asked why they were weeping and breaking his heart, was not a man who did not feel people's sorrow at all, and their tears became pain in his heart as well. Nevertheless, he said that he would go for the name of the Lord Jesus, so a life lived by faith is different from a life in which the heart does not ache. There is no reason to make light of the

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brothers' love, nor any need to pretend that suffering is not sad. The faith that relies on the Lord who has given us life holds us up so that we serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit even in the midst of that pain.

When Paul would not be persuaded in the end, the party stopped trying to dissuade him. Let us read verse 14. *"We ceased, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done'" (Acts 21:14)*. It was not an ending that put everyone's heart at ease, but the final words were not words that put their own thoughts first; they were words that sought the will of the Lord. We too, when we are worried about the path of someone who serves together with us, should not try to hold that person back by our own judgment alone, but must pray relying on the Lord. We need the faith that looks to the One who will take responsibility for a brother's life.

What was first placed before their eyes was hands and feet bound with a belt, but Paul did not abandon the name of Jesus, who had saved him, because of that binding. Rather than boasting that we are strong enough to overcome every danger, let us also engrave in our hearts the grace of the Savior, who received baptism from John, shed His blood on the Cross, and rose again, and so delivered us from sin and judgment. Following the word that the Holy Spirit testifies of within us, we must serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit and make known to the Lord even the tears of our loved ones and our own fears. The One to whom Paul looked, in the very place where he heard in advance of his binding, was the Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for Paul himself. Let us also offer our lives to the Lord for that name. ✉

The strength to be ready to be bound lies
not in boldness but in the salvation received

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Ordinary labor offered for the gospel

< Acts 21:15–16 >

“And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.”

Preparing to head to Jerusalem

Preparing for the journey and arranging a house to stay in seem ordinary compared with the prophecy of Paul’s being bound that they had heard earlier. But for Paul to reach Jerusalem, such preparation and companionship were actually needed. We value conspicuous sermons and bold answers, yet we easily overlook the people who bear those things together and their labor. In today’s two verses, instead of a long speech, what is recorded is the party who prepared for the road and the early disciple Mnason. Let us examine in this short scene where, concretely, the life of serving together the salvation received from the Lord lies.

Let us read verse 15. *“And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem” (Acts 21:15)*. Those who had heard Paul’s resolve did not arrive inside the city of Jerusalem right away. The days they stayed together passed, preparations for the journey followed, and the party, having finished those

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preparations, set out on the road. To say that we live for the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean erasing the things that must be done in real life. We who have been saved also have work to do by moving our bodies and spending time and labor, and the heart that serves the gospel together with the Church is revealed in that work.

This preparation is connected to Paul's answer in the preceding verses. After Paul said, *"I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13)*, his party actually headed toward Jerusalem. This means that the direction declared in words led to actual steps. If we too treasure our words that we will serve the Lord, we must look concretely at the work entrusted to us today. However, we must not think that we obtain the remission of sins through that labor; we must keep the order of faith, that we serve because of the salvation we received first—namely, the salvation Jesus gave by having all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, paying the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rising again from death.

The next record says, *"When we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly" (Acts 21:17)*, and so the brothers in Jerusalem welcome the party, and on the following day Paul meets James and the elders. Before that meeting, the party needed preparation for the road and a place to stay upon arrival. If we separate the work of preparation from the work of the word that followed, it looks like a trivial matter, but in reality it was the labor needed for one man to finish his journey and meet the brothers. When we serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the Church, we too must value both the word we preach and the labor of daily life that we bear for that work. Faithfully doing

the preparation entrusted to us is also something offered for the gospel we have received.

We go together because we have received the same life

Verse 16 reveals that some of the disciples from Caesarea went along on that road. If we read with eyes that see only Paul as great, these few people look like a nameless crowd passing by. But the salvation Paul preached gave the same life to the other disciples as well, and they shared the road as people who believed in the same Savior. The Church is not a place for watching the strength that one person has; it is a community in which those who have received the remission of sins believe the word together and serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Let us not take lightly the fact that we too have brothers to go together with.

The salvation that binds us together as brothers did not arise from human kindness or from the labor of a journey. When Jesus received baptism from John, He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* and through the baptism He received from John all the sins of the world were transferred to the Lord once and for all. Because He bore those sins, He went to the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and so received in our place the judgment for our sins, and He rose again from death and gave new life to sinners. All the sins that each one of us commits throughout our lifetime are also included in the sin of the world that was passed on to the Lord. The basis on which the disciples who accompanied Paul could serve together also lies not in any merit

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coming from one another, but in the grace of the Lord, who gave life to sinners in this way.

Since we have first received life in this way, our service is not paying a price in order to be saved. It is the sharing of the help that a brother needs by someone who has already received the same grace. Paul's preaching of the word and the other disciples' going along with him are both included in service for the same gospel of the water and the Spirit, even though the labors entrusted to each of them were different. We too must not compare our own work with the work of others and divide it into what is noble and what is lowly. The one who gives help should labor in gratitude for the grace received, and the one who receives help should value, through that labor, the heart of the brother who serves together with him.

Since the Holy Spirit whom the Lord has given us is the One who works for the spread of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, if we rely on the help of the Holy Spirit, we cannot go in a direction that distances us from the Church, saying that we will keep a faith of our own. We must hear the word with other brothers, share the work that needs to be done, and take part together in preaching the Lord's salvation. Not everyone needs to be entrusted with the same work, but the core of valuing the gospel we have received must be the same. When that core is clear, there is no reason to regard our own service as insignificant or to belittle the labor of others just because we are not doing conspicuous work.

In the preceding scene there were worries and tears over the binding Paul would suffer, and here there are disciples who go along the road together. The journey did not end with speaking of difficulties; actual companionship followed. If we too are concerned about a brother's circumstances, let us look at what help he needs for the work he must bear now. Spending time

together walking the road or arranging a place to rest is labor that cannot be replaced by words alone. We need not promise help we do not have, but we must not pass by work we know we are able to do. The heart that seeks to serve together the salvation Jesus gave through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection is revealed in this way as care in daily life.

The early disciple who offered his house as a place to stay

The name of Mnason is recorded together with those who accompanied the party. The disciples *"brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge" (Acts 21:16)*. It is not written what office he held or what he said, but the fact that the party intended to stay at his house is clear. While Paul was going to Jerusalem, he needed not only lips to preach the word but also a place to rest. Even though Mnason does not appear as the main figure of a sermon, he is recorded as someone connected with that journey. The relationship of serving the Lord's work thus also includes sharing actual life.

Mnason, who had lived as a disciple from long before, is recorded as one who took part in this journey as well. Because the account of the house where the party would stay follows the introduction of him as an early disciple, we see his past years and his present service together. The number of years we have believed does not itself make us righteous, but a life that treasures the salvation received and is with the Church even today is precious. We must not let talk of our past service take the place of our present heart; we must examine what work is

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entrusted to us now. Let us offer the heart with which we served the Lord yesterday to today's labor as well.

The help we can offer differs according to our circumstances. One may have a place for others to stay and another may have the opportunity to spend time accompanying others, but the worth of saved people cannot be divided by the size of what they have. Since the grace by which the Lord bore the sins of all of us is the same, we need only serve gratefully with what we have. Also, when we come to receive help from a brother, we must not take that labor for granted. Through the care we receive, we should see the heart that serves the same Lord, and we too must join our hearts for the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the place entrusted to us.

The short record of preparing for the journey, meeting those who would go with them, and heading to the house where they would stay shows that the steps taken for the gospel of the water and the Spirit continued within the lives of real people. Let us too not wait only for the day we will give a great speech, but look at the preparation and help needed today. That labor does not add to the price of salvation, but it can reveal a heart of gratitude to the Savior who gave us life freely. On the road up to Jerusalem there were not only Paul and his party but also the disciples who went with them and Mnason's house. Let us also bear the ordinary labor entrusted to us with a heart that serves the same salvation. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Distinguish the rituals of the law from the remission of sins

< Acts 21:17–26 >

“And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep

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themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.' Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them."

The church that hears what God has done

The brethren in Jerusalem gladly welcomed Paul and his companions, and before James and the elders, Paul reported what God had done through his service. But in that very place where they had given glory to God, the people who were zealous for the law and the rumor about Paul were soon brought up. Even while hearing the good news of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, people also had concerns about rituals and conduct in their hearts. We, too, easily regard the fact that we have done many religious things as the same as the faith by which we are saved from sin. In this scene, we must examine clearly what washed away Paul's sins and what we must believe.

Let us read verse 19. *"When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry" (Acts 21:19)*. Paul's service was real, but the One who accomplished the work through that service was God. Instead of advertising what an outstanding person he was, Paul reported what God had done among the Gentiles. Because the Holy Spirit works with those who have received the remission of sins, even when we speak of the labor a servant of the Lord has done, we must give glory to the Lord, who saved him and caused him to testify of the gospel of the water and the

Spirit. The salvation preached to the Gentiles was also grace given by the same God.

When the elders heard this, they gave glory to God, but, worried about the rumor concerning Paul, they made a proposal. It was the rumor that Paul was teaching people to forsake Moses and to abandon circumcision and the customs. Verse 20 introduces the believers there with these words: *"They are all zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20)*. Those who regarded the rituals of the law as important had been hearing that Paul was a man who was tearing those rituals down. But Paul had not opposed the God they believed in; he had only preached the Savior whom that God had sent. What circumcision points to is, in the end, also the fact that Jesus had all the sins of the world, including our sins, passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rose again from death. So the better people knew the Old Testament, the more they could understand this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, to understand the scene of the purification that follows, we must first examine that rumor and the reason the elders gave for their proposal.

If we, too, regard our zeal for familiar rituals as the whole of our faith, then even after hearing of the salvation Jesus has accomplished, we try to gain peace of heart again through deeds. The sin in our hearts does not disappear just because we have become skilled at performing rituals, nor does the power to overcome sin arise just because we have learned the law strictly. Paul himself was a man who knew the strict teaching of the law, but he was not saved from his own sins by that knowledge and zeal. The One who saved him was Jesus Christ, whom God had sent. Therefore, even as we read this event, we must hold on to the basis of that salvation before the rituals.

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Does the labor of the purification wash away sin?

The elders' proposal mentions four men who had taken a vow and their expenses. Let us read verse 24. *"Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads" (Acts 21:24)*. An explanation follows that if Paul performed the ritual with them and paid the expenses, people would know that what they had heard about Paul was groundless. Those four men were people who had taken a vow, as the Bible says, and Paul joined in their purification. It is clear that Paul performed the ritual, but that was not an event that produced the remission of his sins.

Paul took part in this purification rite even though he was not a legalist. The salvation that Paul always believed and preached lay in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. If we look only at a scene in which someone performs some religious labor and accept it as an act that removes sin, we end up shifting the basis of salvation onto Paul's actions. But we must distinguish between Paul's faith and the act of the ritual. Paying the expenses and performing a ritual with one's body does not mean the same thing as believing the word that Jesus has already remitted all of Paul's sins.

Verse 26 also contains the word "offering." Paul, who knew the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, knew the meaning of the sacrificial offering's death after sin had been passed on to it through the laying on of hands. Together with the law that reveals sin, God gave the sacrificial system by which sinners could receive the remission of sins. Since sin does not disappear merely because one has come to realize it, a sinner needed an offering to take his place. The salvation to which that Old Testament laying on of hands and sacrifice pointed was accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John, the

blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Rather than letting our hearts be captured by the procedures of purification, we must know the sin and the judgment that the Lord bore.

Just as sin passed on to the offering when hands were laid on it in the Old Testament, when Jesus received baptism from John, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus once and for all, and even the lifelong transgressions we want to hide are included in all those sins without exception. To pay the price of that sin, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and accomplished eternal salvation. A heart that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not lean on the expenses it has paid or on its efforts for purity, but relies on this Savior, who bore our sins and was judged. We receive the remission of sins by believing in what the Lord has accomplished.

Therefore, let us clearly distinguish between being zealous for the law and believing in God rightly. The law makes us realize that we have sin, but if we use that realization to establish our own righteousness, we cannot obtain the remission of sins. Only when we accept the word that Jesus bore that sin and was judged do we obtain the righteousness God has given. The God whom Paul served is not a different God from the God of the Old Testament; He is that very God who sent the Savior as He had promised. By faith in Jesus Christ we obtain the answer to the problem of sin that the law has revealed.

The same salvation for the Gentiles as well

While proposing the purification to Paul, the elders also mentioned again the letter they had sent to the Gentiles. Let us read in verse 25 to whom it was addressed. *"Concerning the*

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Gentiles who believe" (Acts 21:25). Then come the words that they had decided that the Gentiles should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. We must first see the fact that these Gentiles were people who believed in the Lord. We must not place the reason they came to belong to God in their participation in the rituals of a certain nation, but in the fact that they too believed in the same Savior. The remission of sins is not a reward obtained by accumulating one's own deeds, but grace received by believing in the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

God is not the God of the Jews only, but also the God of the Gentiles. Since the sin Jesus bore is the sin of all mankind, the gospel of the water and the Spirit by which we are saved does not become different just because people's origins are different. Those who know the sacrificial system of the Old Testament well need Christ, and those who never learned those ordinances need the same Christ. Let us not try to stand above others because of the way we have long lived our life of faith, either. We must treasure the remission of sins the Lord has given and treat one another as people who believe in that grace together.

The next day Paul performed the purification rite with the four men and went into the temple *"to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them" (Acts 21:26)*. The text records what was actually done, but it does not teach us to make Paul's actions the price of salvation. We must turn our hearts back to the first scene, in which the elders heard what God had done among the Gentiles and gave glory to Him. While giving glory to the One who removed our sins, we must not again hold on to our own religious zeal as the basis of salvation. Let us believe in Jesus Christ, who has cleansed us, and serve the Lord in gratitude for that grace. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Verify by the word even the thought that you are acting for God

< Acts 21:27–36 >

"Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, 'Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.' (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken

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into the barracks. When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, 'Away with him!'"

When what they supposed became an accusation

The people who seized Paul in the temple cried out that he had brought Greeks into the temple. Their words threw the whole city into an uproar and led to actions to kill Paul, but the Bible separately makes clear what they had actually seen. Even when we are surrounded by the convictions of many people, what we must truly verify is not the loudness of voices but the facts. In particular, when the thought that we are acting for God comes first, we can regard our own judgment as if it were God's will and accept even harming people as justified. In this uproar, we must clearly distinguish between the salvation Paul preached and the accusation against him.

Let us read verse 29. *"(For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple)" (Acts 21:29)*. What they had seen was the fact that Trophimus had been in the city with Paul. But in the accusation, this became the claim that Paul had brought Greeks into the temple and defiled the holy place. Although what they had seen and what they supposed were different, they did not examine that difference, and they branded Paul as a man who spoke against the temple and the law. This shows how dreadful it is to put one's own conjecture first when judging the work of God.

In many places Paul preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is, the news that Jesus had all the sins of the world

transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rose again from death; yet they regarded him as a man who was tearing down their own people and the law. There was a great difference between the Jesus Christ whom Paul preached and the words they had heard about Paul. We, too, upon hearing what is said about someone, try to judge right away even the content of what he believes and preaches. But matters of faith cannot be decided by rumor; we must verify in the written word what God says He has accomplished. Zeal in firmly holding on to one's own thoughts does not become the basis of truth.

Where the gospel is preached, commotion also arises

The accusation soon led to the people's actions. Let us read verse 30. *"And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut" (Acts 21:30)*. Seizing Paul and dragging him out happened quickly, but the truth of the charge against him was not brought to light. Under the pretext of guarding the holy place, an uproar arose to kill a man. We must not accept an action as right merely because it was done in the name of acting for God. We must see whether such words and actions follow the salvation God has accomplished.

When the apostles preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, there were people who seized them and imprisoned them. We must know that when the work of the gospel takes place, commotion also arises along with it; then as now, not everyone received the gospel gladly, and those who thought they believed in God well even persecuted the witnesses instead. The

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uproar Paul went through was also bound up with his faith and his spreading of the gospel. This event makes us look back on the fact that even in those who claim to serve God, their own thoughts can come before the truth. We ourselves, who put forward the name of faith, must also examine our hearts before the word.

If someone claims to treasure the law yet does not accept the Savior God has sent, he cannot solve the problem of sin that the law reveals. The law makes us realize that we ourselves are not righteous. That sin is remitted through the salvation Jesus Christ has accomplished. Paul did not preach another god who would tear down the God whom the people believed in; he testified that this very God had sent Jesus and saved sinners. Therefore, to understand his words, they had to hear what God had done rather than the deeds they themselves had kept. We, too, need the same turning around.

To remove that sin which the law revealed, Jesus received baptism from John, and at that time all the sins of the world passed on to the Lord once and for all. Because He had that sin passed on to Him, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross to pay its price, receiving our judgment in our place, and by rising again from death He completed salvation. Paul's sins and our lifelong sins are not left out of all those sins of the world either. Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is accepting with our hearts the work of the Lord, which He accomplished for sinners in this way. Instead of offering up the religious zeal we have kept, we must rely on Jesus Christ, who bore our sins.

If we accept the conjectures about Paul as fact, we will hear even this salvation he preached as if it were words spoken against the people and the law. But the testimony that Jesus bore the sin the law revealed is connected to the word God has given.

Therefore, we must clearly examine both the accusation against Paul and the content of the salvation he believed in, each on its own. For if we put forward unverified words about a person, we end up not hearing even the work of the Lord that we really need to hear. We must verify the event by following the Bible, which records the fact that Trophimus was in the city, and in the same word we must also come to know the Savior who brought sinners to life.

The misunderstanding that remained even at the moment the beating stopped

When they were trying to kill Paul, the commander heard the news of the uproar and came down with soldiers. Let us read verse 32. *"When they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul" (Acts 21:32)*. As the soldiers arrived, the beating stopped, and the commander ordered Paul to be bound with two chains and then asked who he was and what he had done. The binding that Agabus had foretold by the word of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled exactly in this way, and Paul had come to Jerusalem to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit even though he knew it would happen just as that word said. The people's claims had first put Paul in danger, but now the situation led to a scene in which the commander asked what the truth of those claims was. Paul had no strength in that place to protect his own body, but through the intervention of the commander and the soldiers, he escaped from the continuing violence.

Yet it is not that every misunderstanding was cleared up as soon as the soldiers came. Let us read verse 34. *"When he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him*

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to be taken into the barracks" (Acts 21:34). Because some said one thing and others said another, the commander could not find out the facts. Then Paul was carried up the stairs by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob, and the crowd behind him cried out to do away with him. Being rescued from danger and being acknowledged as right by everyone did not happen at the same time in this scene. We who live by faith must also know that difference.

The Lord takes care of His servants who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but we must not turn that care into a promise that no one will ever misunderstand us. Paul stayed alive and gained the opportunity to say his next words, but there were chains on his body, and the shouting of the crowd also continued. The fact that difficulties remain for us is no reason to throw away even the assurance of the salvation we have received. We must ask for the help we need, state the facts clearly, and rely on the Lord, who has given us life through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Because the Holy Spirit within us testifies of the Lord's salvation, we can build up our faith again through that word.

Finally, let us read the cry in verse 36. *"For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, 'Away with him!'" (Acts 21:36)*. At first it was only a matter of having seen Trophimus in the city, but in the end it became a cry to do away with a man. Let us look back on ourselves before the word, so that we, too, do not harden unverified thoughts as if they were faith and judge people. Moreover, even if we come to stand in the midst of such cries, let us not hand over even our faith in the Savior, who has given us the remission of sins, to the words of people. Though the voices that condemned Paul by conjecture were loud, the work of Jesus, who saved him, did not change. We, too, must

believe in the truth of the word rather than the loudness of rumors, and stand on it. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Do not keep your mouth shut, but testify of the Savior in words people can understand

< Acts 21:37–40 >

"Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, 'May I speak to you?' He replied, 'Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?' But Paul said, 'I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.' So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,"

The request made before entering the barracks

Just as the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, Paul asked the commander whether he could speak to him. A man who had just been beaten by the mob and had heard the shouts to do away with him opened his mouth again. The scene

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in which Paul asked for another opportunity to speak to the people who had been shouting against him makes us examine what someone who knows the Savior seeks to preach in the midst of difficulties. In the testimony that follows, Paul makes known Jesus, who met him, and how he himself became a witness. Therefore, this request to speak leads to answering the misunderstanding and testifying to the people of the Savior he believed in.

Let us read the commander's response in verse 37. *"Can you speak Greek?" (Acts 21:37)*. When Paul began to speak, the commander reacted to the fact that he spoke Greek and asked, *"Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" (Acts 21:38)*. The commander, who had not known Paul's identity from the crowd's accusations alone, also had a different idea. The misunderstanding surrounding Paul had not all ended with a single rescue. But Paul did not give up the conversation on the grounds that the other person had misjudged him; he made clear who he was and went on with his next words.

In this scene, the opportunity to speak had not already been comfortably provided. Paul asked the commander, and only after the commander gave permission could he stand before the people. We who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit also need to address people so that they can hear, and to seek opportunities. Believing the word that the Holy Spirit makes us witnesses does not mean keeping our mouths shut and saying nothing. Because the salvation that Jesus has given within us is clear—He had all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and rose again from death—we open our mouths, giving our hearts to the will of the Holy Spirit, who leads us to make that salvation

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known to people.

A heart that makes known who one is and seeks to testify of the Savior

Paul made known that he was a Jew and a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia. Let us read verse 39. *"I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people" (Acts 21:39)*. His explanation of where he came from was a word that corrected the commander's wrong idea. Next, Paul asked to be allowed to speak to the people. Since, after explaining himself to the commander, he sought permission to speak to the people, those who would hear his answer also changed. The words with which he answered the commander's misunderstanding will now lead to words that make his faith known before the people.

Through Paul's words that continue in the next chapter, we can know what he sought to testify of. Paul declares that he was *"at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today" (Acts 22:3)*, speaks of how he had once persecuted those who believed in the Lord, and testifies of Jesus, whom he met on the road to Damascus. That is not a testimony meant to have his own excellence recognized by the people, but a testimony of salvation about the Lord, who met him and saved him. His status as a citizen of Tarsus, which he made known to the commander, did not wash away Paul's sins, and the strict teaching of the law did not save him from sin either. The One who gave salvation to Paul was Jesus Christ.

The One whom Paul met on the road to Damascus was Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had been persecuting, that is, the Lord,

who received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose again in order to save sinners. Jesus received baptism from John in order to have all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and the sins Paul had committed in the past in opposing the Lord, as well as the sins you and I commit throughout our lives, are included in that sin of the world. And to pay the price of that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment in place of sinners, and He rose again and completed our salvation. The gospel of the water and the Spirit causes us to believe with our hearts in Jesus, who saved such sinners.

Paul received the remission of sins by believing in the salvation of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was in his heart. Because he knew the Lord, who had washed him, what he had to preach to people was clear. It is not special eloquence that first makes a witness; rather, the faith that Jesus has actually removed the witness's own sins becomes the basis of the testimony. We, too, cannot make clear what we preach if we try to acquire eloquence first without knowing what we believe. We must first confirm in the word the salvation Jesus has accomplished and believe in Him, and we must preach the work of the Savior, who has remitted my sins, to those who listen.

The Holy Spirit confirms the Lord's salvation in our hearts and leads us to testify of that fact. Therefore, if we measure the work of becoming a witness only by the size of our own courage, we will always draw back because of our own shortcomings. Nor is it that we have testified only when we have said everything we know at one time or have won against all of the other person's questions. It is enough to say clearly how Jesus bore our sins, what judgment He received in our place, and why we believe in Him as the Savior. Since this is not the work of establishing my own name but of preaching what the Lord has

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done, we can open our mouths, relying on the help of the Holy Spirit.

In words the people can understand

The commander granted Paul's request. Let us read verse 40. *"So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying" (Acts 21:40)*. After Paul motioned with his hand to the people, it became quiet all around, and from the stairs where he was standing, his words to the people began. The place where he stood was still the stairs where the uproar had taken place, but now he came to speak of his faith there. The people who had shouted against Paul now came to hear his words, and Paul went on with words that testified of the Savior to them. When we preach the work of the Lord, we, too, must speak while thinking about what the other person needs to hear and know.

Paul, who had addressed the commander in Greek, spoke to the people in Hebrew. He spoke to the Jews in the Hebrew language, which was their own language; so, unlike the words he had spoken to the commander, he testified to the people in a language familiar to them. When we testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, it is more precious that the other person understands the meaning of salvation than that we display how amazing our own words are. If we merely string together expressions of faith that are not explained, the work of Jesus that the hearer needs is hidden.

Speaking the gospel of the water and the Spirit clearly does not mean driving people into a corner with words that look down on them or insult them. Paul made known to the people who had

misunderstood him that he too was a Jew just like them, and he testified of the Lord, who had met him. We, too, must not try to show our own rightness by belittling others, but must preach the word so that they may turn their hearts to the Savior, who has cleansed sinners through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. This is because the hearer, too, must come to know that his own sins are included in the sin of the world that the Lord bore. Speaking that fact in a way people can understand is the work entrusted to the witnesses of the gospel.

Before entering the barracks, Paul asked once more for an opportunity to speak, and that request led to a testimony that began before the people. Let us, too, not hide the salvation we have received while waiting for everyone to become favorable first. Holding on to the assurance that the Lord has removed our sins, let us testify of the Savior in words people can understand to those who are able to hear. We must deal with our own fear and shortcomings while seeking the help of the Holy Spirit. What Paul asked for on the stairs was not a place to exalt his own name but an opportunity to speak of Jesus. We, too, must not keep our mouths shut, but must become witnesses who testify of the same Savior. ✉

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CHAPTER

22

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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 you believe in the baptism of Jesus? Then you shall wash away your sins

< Acts 22:1–16 >

“‘Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.’ And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: ‘I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” So I answered, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said to me, “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.” And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice

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of Him who spoke to me. So I said, "What shall I do, Lord?" And the Lord said to me, "Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do." And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, "The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."'"

Paul's testimony sermon before the Jews

The apostle Paul, while on his missionary journey, went into the church in Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem, which was in Israel, was a church that placed more importance on the rites of the law of God. At that time, Pentecost was an important Jewish festival, and many Jews living in various regions gathered in Jerusalem for the occasion. At that time, when the Jews had gathered, the Jews who had come from Asia saw the apostle Paul and accused him, saying that this man was one who was tearing down Judaism. At that time the nation of Israel was under the rule of Rome. Among the people of Judaism in Jerusalem an uproar arose because of the faith that the apostle Paul believed, and because of that incident Paul came to be in a difficult situation. At that time the Roman military commander learned

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of this, took several hundred soldiers with him, and suppressed this riot.

The commander rescued Paul, and while taking him into the barracks, he wanted to know who Paul was and what crime he had committed that the people were trying to kill him. At that time the apostle Paul asked the commander to give him an opportunity to speak to the Hebrew people. Paul received the commander's permission and came to give his own testimony sermon here in Acts chapter 22. After Paul finished this defense, the commander was about to have him scourged in order to examine him about his crime, but the apostle Paul escaped the crisis by protesting, asking whether they would scourge him, a Roman, without even asking what his crime was. That commander was not a Roman by birth, but a man who had bought Roman citizenship with money. He had tried to examine the apostle Paul, who held Roman citizenship, about his crime with a scourge, without even a trial. But he soon released Paul from his bonds.

Paul said, *"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today" (Acts 22:3),* and he said that at that time, for the sake of Judaism, he had been arresting and killing those who believed in Jesus, and that while he was on his way to arrest people who believed in Jesus, having received letters from the high priests and the elders, he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and was changed in this way. And he testified that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of kings, and the Messiah we have been waiting for, and that He is the Savior who, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for

all, shed His blood and died on the Cross for those sins, and saved us by rising again from death.

"Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"

The apostle Paul testifies here that Ananias said to him, *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16)*. That is, the apostle Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and heard this word through Ananias. *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16)*. This was the word Paul heard through Ananias. It means that both the apostle Paul and Ananias believed the word of the baptism Jesus Christ received from John. What kind of faith was the apostle Paul's faith? When the apostle Paul gave his testimony, he said that he had been *"at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law" (Acts 22:3)*, but he said that he could not be saved from his sins by that strict teaching of the law, and that instead he met Jesus, the Savior of mankind, and became one who believes. Testifying of the gospel of Jesus Christ, he said that Jesus Christ was born on this earth for sinners like him and washed away all sins when He received baptism from John, and that therefore all his sins had disappeared before God. That is why Ananias asked Paul why he was hesitating and told him to arise at once, call on the name of the Lord, and receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Because the apostle Paul was also a man well versed in the Old Testament, he testified that he had come to have the faith that believes that, just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament received the laying on of hands, had sin transferred

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to it, and died, Jesus received baptism from John, had the sin of the world transferred to Him, died on the Cross, rose again, and saved sinners like him from sin. Peter also said, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38)*. In the time of the early church, the remission of sins was always received by the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received from John and in His blood.

In the Bible, whether it was Paul's faith, Ananias's faith, or the faith of Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke, the faith by which they washed away their sins was the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received and in His blood. We must know Paul's faith well. Paul's faith was the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received from John and in His blood.

The baptism Jesus received has never been missing from the faith of the apostles

In Galatians Paul made a confession of faith in the baptism Jesus received, saying, *"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27)*. Jesus' disciple Peter also testified, *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. Their faith was the faith that the baptism Jesus received washes away the sin of the world.

Let us look at the word of Galatians. *"But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:25–27)*.

This means that a person who believes the fact that all our sins, all of his own sins, were passed on to Jesus when He received baptism from John is, after faith has come, no longer under the law, that is, no longer under judgment. True faith in the remission of sins is the faith that a person who has been saved by the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received and in His blood has, after faith has come, become a son of God and has escaped from under the law through faith.

The faith by which the disciples received the remission of sins never left out the baptism Jesus received. For us to be saved from the sin of the world, the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received is surely needed. *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27)*. The apostle Paul's faith was also like this. Let us look at the apostle Paul's faith in Titus. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5)*. Here, receiving the washing of regeneration refers to the faith by which we who believe in Jesus are made new. We are made new by the faith that believes the truth that Jesus Christ received baptism from John and bore all our sins. The apostle Paul always called the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received and in His blood the born-again faith. Let us also look at the faith of the writer of Hebrews.

Let us look at the word of Hebrews. *"Having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:21–22)*. Here, the pure water refers to the baptism Jesus received. The baptism of the remission of sins that Jesus received is the water that washes away all filthy sins. The water of this world cannot wash away the filthy sins of people's hearts,

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but the baptism Jesus received from John washed clean even that filthy sin of the world that is in people's hearts. Therefore, the apostle Paul and the disciples always recorded that they believed in the baptism and the blood of the Cross. And they said that they believed in the death on the Cross and the resurrection. They believed in the living Lord, and we too believe in this way. For us too, the baptism Jesus received is surely needed to receive the remission of sins, and you too must surely believe in the baptism Jesus received in order to receive the remission of sins. And through the baptism Jesus received, we come to have the faith that Jesus had all our sins transferred to Him, bore the sin of the world, and died in our place on the Cross. To receive the remission of one's own sins, one must surely have the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received and in His blood. We too must surely have the faith that Paul had.

People today do not know the meaning of the baptism Jesus received. It is said that a certain theologian says that one must believe in Jesus and be baptized, that only by believing in Jesus and being baptized are one's sins washed away. But that is not so. It is not that sins are washed away when a person is baptized; rather, sins disappear when one believes in the baptism Jesus received from John. It means that when Jesus received baptism from John, the sin of the world and our sins were washed away. Do sins disappear because a person is baptized in the name of Jesus? No, they do not. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist in order to bear my sins and your sins, and so had all the sin of the world transferred to Him, and it is by believing this truth that one's own sins are washed away. The word says, *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22)*. Truly, if we believe the word that our sins were passed on to Jesus when He received

baptism from John on this earth, we receive the remission of sins. The word says, *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22)*. Because we must not have sin when we draw near to God, the word said that we must draw near to God by believing that Jesus received that baptism for us and bore all the sin of the world.

The Holy Spirit comes upon the heart that has received the remission of sins

Today people long very much to receive the Holy Spirit, but I hope you will believe the fact that the Holy Spirit comes upon a person only when he has received the remission of sins. The apostle Paul also said that he believed that Jesus Christ bore all the sin of the world when He received baptism from John, was nailed to the Cross and died, rose again in three days, ascended, and is at the right hand of God. If a person does not believe this in his heart, the Holy Spirit of God cannot come upon his heart. The apostle Paul knew and believed the baptism of the remission of sins that Jesus received. Therefore, because he had the Holy Spirit in his heart, he said, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13)*. He carried out his ministry by the Holy Spirit and lived by the Holy Spirit until he departed this life. The reason the apostle Paul could have the Holy Spirit in his heart was that Jesus Christ bore all his sins through the baptism He received from John. Therefore, he was able to do missionary work by faith and was able to become a servant of God. If you truly want to receive that baptism of the Holy Spirit which the apostle Paul received, you receive the Holy Spirit only when you believe in the baptism Jesus received, just as the apostle Paul believed. Only then can you receive the

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same baptism of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul believed that he received the washing away of sin by believing in the baptism Jesus received, and that he received the judgment for all his sins by believing in the blood of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul believed that because Jesus Christ received baptism from John, bore the sin of the world, and died in Paul's place, Paul himself also died when Jesus died. He believed that Jesus rose again in order to give life to Paul himself. He believed the fact that Jesus ascended to the Father and that, when He comes back down, He will come again at His second coming to take those who believe as Paul did. This was the faith that the apostle Paul believed. If you truly want to receive the Holy Spirit, you must have the faith that the apostle Paul believed, that is, the faith that believed in the baptism Jesus received, the faith that believed in the Cross, the faith of being crucified with Christ, and the faith of living again with Jesus Christ. If a person wants to receive the remission of his sins, he must have the same faith as Paul. Let us look at the word of Colossians. *"Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12)*. Look here. It shows what kind of faith the apostle Paul's faith was. Being buried with Christ by believing in the baptism Jesus Christ received is the faith that believes that, when Jesus received baptism from John, Paul's own sins were also passed on to Him there together with the sin of the world. Therefore, Paul is a servant of faith who believes that Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred to Him and died. He is a servant who possesses the faith of receiving the remission of sins through faith in Jesus Christ, dying with Christ through faith, passing his sins on to Christ through faith, and living with Christ through faith.

For a person to receive the remission of his own sins, the baptism Jesus received is absolutely necessary. Let us look at the word of Ephesians. *"One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:5–6)*. Here, the word *"one Lord" (Ephesians 4:5)* means that God is one. Our faith is also one. The baptism of the faith we believe is also one. God is also one. Whoever does not believe in the baptism Jesus received cannot receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You must know that if people do not believe in the baptism Jesus received and so cannot have their sins washed away, they cannot receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The righteous who have received the remission of sins can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit from God. You too must have the same faith as the apostle Paul.

The Holy Spirit cannot be received through the holiness movement and prayers of repentance

Long ago, famous American revivalists and many denominations that followed them carried on the holiness movement. After the Civil War ended in America, a repentance movement arose within the church, and it is said that at that time the morals of young people in the world were in great disorder. It is said that because of that, the holiness movement was spread within Christianity. Because society was in disorder at that time, the holiness movement caught on. Even today there are churches that carry on a movement of resolving and pledging to live in holiness. But that was different from the faith of receiving the remission of sins by believing in the baptism Jesus received. They developed into a faith completely different from the truth of receiving the remission of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit, and so people misunderstand the Holy Spirit. Even in the

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churches today that carry on the Holy Spirit movement, they make people practice the holiness movement and the repentance movement very thoroughly. But the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not come upon people because they repent very thoroughly. In the past, a great many theologians and pastors once believed that a person receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit only after he has been sanctified through the holiness movement. Everyone uniformly understood it that way and believed it that way. But now that much time has passed, have people become holy through the holiness movement? Biblically, does the Holy Spirit come upon our hearts through the holiness movement? He does not. If the Holy Spirit were One who comes when Christianity carries on the holiness movement, then we should do so. Then what does it mean that Jesus, who came to this earth and remitted all the sins of sinners, received baptism from John and shed His blood? We receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit, and have been saved from all sins by faith, by believing in our hearts in the baptism Jesus received and in His blood. The Holy Spirit of God is given as a gift to those who have received the remission of sins. *"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" (Acts 2:38)*. We must believe this truth. Even now, some among those who carry on the Holy Spirit movement believe that if they offer prayers of repentance thoroughly, the Holy Spirit comes upon them because they repented thoroughly, even though there is still sin in their hearts, but that faith is a false faith and a faith of fleshly thinking like that of Cain.

Pentecostalism arose in America around 1901. Until then, Christianity had continued along the line of conservatism, but in Britain and America, through the wave of the Industrial Revolution in the 1800s, ethics and morals collapsed and

people's hearts began to be devastated by economic depression, and the word-centered movement that had continued until then through the Pietist movement could not help but collapse. At such a time the Pentecostal Holy Spirit movement arose. Prayer movements, repentance movements, and charismatic movements arose that claimed to experience a living Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit through things such as tongues, prophecy, visions, and shaking. This Pentecostal Holy Spirit movement became today's Pentecostal denominations. Even now the Pentecostal Holy Spirit movement continues to arise throughout the world.

This kind of Holy Spirit movement also arose within the Catholic Church. In the churches that carry on the Holy Spirit movement, they say that one receives the Holy Spirit by praying a great deal, so they make people offer fasting prayers and prayers of repentance. Their claim was that the Holy Spirit enters the heart of a person who fasts and offers prayers of repentance in this way. But the Holy Spirit of God does not enter a person's heart because the person carries on a Holy Spirit movement. The true baptism of the Holy Spirit is that when I believe that Jesus removed my sins when He received baptism from John, I receive the Holy Spirit of God at the same time as the remission of sins. When one believes in the baptism Jesus received and in His blood as one's own salvation, the sin in a person's heart becomes clean as white snow, and the Holy Spirit of God comes upon that heart. This is the true gospel. The Holy Spirit can enter and dwell in the heart of a person who has received the remission of sins.

Therefore, if anyone wanted to receive the remission of sins from God, he had to believe in the baptism Jesus received and in the word of the blood of Jesus' Cross. Christianity today is only a few hundred years old, even if counted from the time of Luther or Calvin. Yet the reason theology within Christianity has not

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yet rightly established the teaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that it lacked knowledge about the baptism Jesus received. If you want to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you must first believe in your heart in the baptism Jesus received from John and receive the remission of sins. If a person wants to receive the remission of his own sins, he must believe in his heart the word of the baptism Jesus received and His blood. The remission of sins given by the Lord has come upon the hearts of those who believe in the baptism Jesus received and the blood of the Cross. Do you believe the fact that Jesus bore all your sins through the baptism He received? Do you also believe that the blood Jesus shed on the Cross is your own salvation? Those who believe in their hearts in the baptism Jesus received and His blood have no sin in their hearts. Do you believe that God the Father has given the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a gift into the hearts of those who believe in the baptism Jesus received and His blood as their own salvation? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit is in the hearts of those who believe? Knowing and believing this truth is very important. Because those who have received the remission of sins have the Holy Spirit given by God, we are able to believe in Jesus and preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Wash away your sins and receive the Holy Spirit with the same faith as Paul

When I look back on the time when the Holy Spirit came upon me, there was a great lump of sin in my heart, but when I believed the word of the baptism Jesus received and His blood, my sins fell away, and a very faint ripple began to stir. The moment I realized, “There is no sin in my heart,” the ripple

began to stir and spread throughout my whole heart. Peace like a river began to sweep over me. After I met the Lord by believing the word of the baptism Jesus received and His blood, when the Holy Spirit came upon my heart, my heart was calm; truly, my heart was like a calm lake. The joy, like a ripple arising on that lake, was so clear. The joy of the Holy Spirit began to make ripples in my heart. I cannot forget that experience from that time. The Bible says that when Jesus received baptism from John, *"He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him" (Matthew 3:16)*, and the Holy Spirit came upon my heart quietly in that same way too.

The apostle Paul also received the Holy Spirit of God as a gift because he believed in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. You too must believe in the baptism Jesus received and wash away your sins. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The remission of sins to be preached to all nations

< Acts 22:17–29 >

“‘Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, “Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.” So I said, “Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.” Then He said to me, “Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.”’ And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!’ Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air, the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, ‘Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?’ When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, ‘Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.’ Then the commander came and said to him, ‘Tell me, are you a Roman?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ The commander answered, ‘With a large sum I obtained this

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citizenship.' And Paul said, 'But I was born a citizen.' Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him."

The word that said, "Get out of Jerusalem"

Paul's testimony of salvation did not end with the story of how his sins had been washed away. Paul made clear to his listeners even why Jesus, who had met him and saved him—namely, the One who had all the sins of the world transferred to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death—had sent him to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the Gentiles. When he said this before the Jews, fierce shouting arose, and Paul was placed in danger of being examined under scourging. In this word, both what a saved witness is to preach and the hardships he went through appear together. We must first see the Lord who sent Paul, and see to whom the salvation He has given must be preached.

Paul spoke of the time when he returned to Jerusalem and, while praying in the temple, saw the Lord in a trance. Let us read verse 18. *"And saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me'" (Acts 22:18)*. The Lord commanded Paul to get out quickly, saying that the people there would not listen to his testimony about the Lord. To Paul, who had returned to Jerusalem, the word given was not a word to stay but a word to leave. What Paul makes known to his listeners in this passage is the word the Lord spoke to him and the path he came to take by following that word.

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Paul told the Lord how he had formerly imprisoned those who believed in Him and beaten them in the synagogues. He said that when the blood of Stephen was shed, he too had stood by consenting and had guarded the clothes of those who were killing Stephen, and that the people of Jerusalem knew this fact. Paul did not hide what he had been in the past, but laid out even the things those people knew. But the Lord again told him to leave and made clear where He would send him. The fact that the listeners knew what kind of person Paul had once been was not the same matter as where he would testify from then on. Now the Lord had told him the place where he was to go as a witness.

The Lord sent him to the Gentiles

Let us read verse 21. *"Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles'" (Acts 22:21)*. Paul came to work as the apostle to the Gentiles because the Lord sent him. Paul testified that the God he believed in had sent Jesus as the Savior, and that through that Jesus he had become one who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the Gentiles. He had not gone against his own people and made up a different path; rather, he was doing the work entrusted to him by God, who had sent the Savior. The work given to him was to make known the salvation of Jesus even to the Gentiles who were far away.

The reason Jesus, who saved Paul, received baptism from John was to have all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and that sin of the world includes both the sins of the Jews and the sins of the Gentiles, and also contains the sins that you and I commit throughout our lives. Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross in order to receive the judgment for all those

sins in our place, and by rising again from death He became the One who saved us. To receive the remission of sins by believing in this salvation revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, no work of salvation that differs from nation to nation is needed. Because Jesus, who bore all the sins of the world, is also the Savior of the Gentiles, Paul had a gospel to preach to them.

After Paul had his sins washed away, he was not entrusted with a task unrelated to the One who had saved him; rather, he was sent as a witness to make known the salvation the Lord had accomplished to people who had not yet heard of it. Because the fact of being saved and the content to be preached are connected in this way, the remission of sins we have received is also not news to be locked up only in the peace of our own hearts. If the basis of my salvation lies in all the sins of the world that Jesus bore, then I can preach that very Savior to people of other nations as well. As we read the word by which the Lord sent Paul far away, we too must not limit those who are to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the people familiar to us.

The right he made known amid fierce shouting

The listeners listened until Paul said that he had been sent to the Gentiles, and then they shouted. *"And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!'" (Acts 22:22)*. The people made an uproar, tearing off their clothes and throwing dust into the air. Paul had only spoken of the Savior sent by the God he believed in and of how that Savior had sent him to the Gentiles, yet the listeners shouted that he could not be allowed to live. This word shows, just as it is, the fact that the response that came back to Paul, who testified of the Savior, was

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a shout to kill him.

The commander ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks. He wanted to find out why the people were shouting against Paul, and as the way to do so he ordered that Paul be examined under scourging. The mere fact that he had been taken away from the crowd did not mean that Paul was no longer in danger. When his body was bound with thongs and he was placed in a situation where he would be scourged, Paul made known to the centurion standing by that he was a Roman. *"Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts 22:25)*. Paul protested against the attempt to scourge a man whose guilt had not even been determined, and so escaped that crisis.

Paul used the right he had at this time. He did not stay silent before an unjust scourging on the grounds that he was suffering as a witness of salvation; rather, he asked the centurion who was beside him whether what they were about to do was right, and his words were conveyed to the commander. Paul's faith did not come from his Roman citizenship, but he used that right to keep his own body—the body of one who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit—from being harmed.

Follow the mission you have received from the Lord

The centurion heard Paul's words, went to the commander, and told him that Paul was a Roman. When the commander came himself and asked whether he was a Roman, Paul answered that he was, and then an exchange about citizenship followed. *"The commander answered, 'With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.' And Paul said, 'But I was born a citizen'" (Acts*

22:28). The commander had obtained his citizenship by spending a great deal of money, but Paul had held citizenship from birth. After this exchange, those who had been about to examine him immediately withdrew, and the commander too was afraid because of the fact that Paul was a Roman and because he had had Paul bound. The situation between the man who had ordered the scourging and the man who was bound was changed by the fact Paul made known.

Citizenship protected Paul's body from the scourge, but what he would take to the Gentiles was not the rights of a Roman but the remission of sins the Lord had given. Paul merely escaped danger by making known the right he had before men; the One he was to testify of had been, from the beginning, Jesus Christ, who had saved him—namely, the One who bore all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death. A person who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, while using the rights he needs in difficult situations, must not forget whom the testimony entrusted to him is about. The One who sent Paul was not the commander who had bound him, but Jesus the Savior.

Remember why Paul's testimony continued into the story of his being sent to the Gentiles. Jesus, who saved us, is the Savior who bore all the sins of the world. Therefore, we must not hold on to the news of the remission of sins as belonging to only one nation, but must preach it to the people who need the same salvation. When Paul's citizenship came to light, the people drew back the hands with which they had been about to scourge him, but before that the Lord had already told Paul to whom he must go. Following the will of the Lord, who sent him far away, let us also keep clearly in our hearts the news of the remission of sins that is to be preached to all nations. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

A witness of salvation who is accused

< Acts 22:30 >

"The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them."

Paul, who stood before the council while being accused

Paul's bonds were loosed, but the accusation against him had not yet ended. The commander, in order to find out why the people were accusing Paul, assembled the priests and all the council and set Paul before them. Although the fact that he was a Roman citizen came to light and he avoided scourging, Paul still came to stand as a person opposed because of his faith. As we read of this scene, rather than fixing our eyes only on the loosing of his bonds, we must see whom Paul, standing before people, believes in and what he testifies of.

In verse 30, the commander convened the council *"because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews" (Acts 22:30)*. This was because the fact that people had shouted loudly and the question of whether Paul was actually guilty were different matters. While releasing Paul from his bonds, the commander set him before the council in order to look further

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into the content of the accusation. There still remained for Paul the task of answering the people's accusations, but those accusations did not thereby prove that the gospel of the water and the Spirit he had preached was wrong.

We too, when people's words are many, can easily be pressed down by the loudness of those words and fail to examine the word of God. We must not doubt the gospel of the water and the Spirit because someone criticizes it, or believe some teaching because many people agree with it. Since the basis of the remission of sins lies not in people's opinion but in the salvation Jesus accomplished by having all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shedding His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rising again from death, we must confirm through the word the content of what we believe and preach. We must not stop at looking at the uproar surrounding Paul, but must listen to his testimony of why he came to testify of Jesus.

A man who had persecuted became a witness

Paul was not a person who had followed Jesus from the beginning. He too had received the strict teaching of the law and was zealous toward God, but he bound those who believed in Jesus and delivered them into prison. At that time he thought his own zeal was right, but on the road to Damascus he came to know that Jesus, whom he had been persecuting, was alive. What changed Paul was not greater zeal or higher knowledge, but Jesus Christ, who met him, and the salvation He gave.

Let us read verse 15 of chapter 22. *"For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:15)*. This word, conveyed through Ananias, made clear for

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whom Paul would live from then on. He was a witness who would stand before all men as one who had seen and heard who Jesus is and what salvation He has given. It was not a calling to boast of his past deeds, but a calling to make known Jesus, who had saved him. Therefore, when we look at Paul standing before the council, we must also see the One who took hold of him and called him as a witness.

Formerly, Paul had received letters from the high priest and the elders and had gone to arrest believers. But now he had come to stand before the priests and the council because he believed in Jesus. He testified, without hiding his former persecution, that Jesus had saved him, because the righteousness he was to testify of did not lie in his own deeds but in the salvation Christ had accomplished. That salvation was also what Paul, standing before the council, relied on. We too, in the face of people's criticism, rather than trying to exalt ourselves, must clearly know through the word how our own sins have been washed away.

The remission of sins that people's accusations cannot change

In his earlier testimony, Paul conveyed the word he had heard from Ananias, namely, the word telling him to receive water baptism and wash away his sins. When we know this passage, it becomes clear what salvation Paul, standing before the council, believed in. What he relied on was not the fact that he himself had been baptized with water, but the fact that Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, bore not only Paul's own sins but all the sins of the world, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again. The water baptism Paul received was a confession of the faith that believed

in that salvation. Therefore, we too must not make the act of water baptism, which we receive upon believing, the basis of the remission of sins, but must set our hearts on Jesus, who accomplished that salvation for our sins.

John the Baptist testified of Jesus, pointing to Him and saying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. Because Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sin of all mankind transferred to Him once and for all, He became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and the sins Paul committed while persecuting people, as well as the sins of my whole life and of yours, are included in that sin of the world. Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross to pay the price of that sin, and so received in our place the judgment for sin that we should have received, and by rising again from death He became our Savior. So Paul believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which says that the living Savior had washed away Paul's own sins.

Paul, who believed in this salvation, was not a person to be condemned before God for his past deeds, but a person who had received the remission of sins through Jesus. The commander assembled the council to examine the accusation against him, but the basis on which Paul stood righteous before God did not depend on the approval of that council. Since that basis lay in Jesus, who bore not only Paul's sins but all the sins of the world and received the judgment for them, there was no reason to doubt the remission of sins the Lord had given, even if people's accusations increased. We too must not confuse being released from the bonds of the flesh with being saved from sin, and before God we must rely on the salvation Jesus has accomplished.

Concerning this faith, Paul testified, *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26)*. He placed the basis of having become a child of God not in people's approval

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or in his own record, but in Christ Jesus. We too must not lose the object of our faith while looking at our own circumstances. If sin still remains in your heart even while you strive to wash away your sins, examine what you are believing in as the basis of salvation. We must confirm through the word and believe that our Savior is truly Jesus, who bore even those sins and received the judgment for them, and not our own righteous deeds. The Holy Spirit comes as a gift upon the heart the Lord has washed, and that Holy Spirit gives those who believe in salvation the power to testify of Jesus.

Wherever you stand, testify of the same salvation

The commander's order had set Paul before the council, but Jesus had already told Paul the purpose for which he was to live. Let us read verse 21 of chapter 22. *"Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles'" (Acts 22:21)*. Paul incurred the anger of the crowd while preaching this word, but the Lord's calling did not become wrong just because his preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the Gentiles met with people's opposition. Since it was clear that Jesus, who had saved him, had sent him, there was no reason for him to deny that calling in order to be recognized by people.

What we need as well, before any bold claim that we will not fear people, is a faith of salvation like Paul's. If we are not clear about how we ourselves received the remission of sins, we easily waver at other people's words and change what we preach. But a person who believes in the Lord, who washed away sin through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and who has received the Holy Spirit as a gift, is not someone who testifies of Jesus relying only on his own

strength. Because the Holy Spirit is with us, we open our mouths relying on the word and can explain the facts of salvation so that the other person understands. We must not stop at imitating Paul's courage but must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that made him live as a witness.

The commander, who had wanted to know the truth of the matter, set Paul before the priests and the council. The one who stood before them was Paul, who had a past of persecuting Jesus, and at the same time a witness who had received the remission of sins through the salvation of Jesus and had received the Holy Spirit. Even at the moment he was being accused by people, that salvation was Paul's true hope. When our hearts are shaken by people's evaluations, let us also remember who the Savior is who washed away our sins. To believe in and testify of the salvation He has accomplished, wherever we stand, is the life of a person called by Jesus. ✉

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CHAPTER

23

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

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The hope of the resurrection to hold on to firmly rather than the uproar of the council

< Acts 23:1–10 >

“Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’ And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, ‘God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?’ And those who stood by said, ‘Do you revile God’s high priest?’ Then Paul said, ‘I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, “You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.”’ But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes

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of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, 'We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.' Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks."

Saying before the council that he serves God

Paul, looking at the council, said that he had served God according to his conscience. When he had finished speaking, the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike Paul on the mouth. In the very place where a confession of serving God was being made, a man who claimed to serve God commanded others to strike another person. Just because words about faith are being exchanged, it does not mean that all those words and actions follow the will of God. This scene makes us look back on whom we rely on as we serve God and what we believe. We must find the basis of that faith in the hope of the resurrection that Paul went on to make known.

Let us read verse 1. *"I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1)*. Paul was saying that he, too, believed in the God in whom the council believed; he was not a person who opposed the God they believed in. As he had testified before the people in Jerusalem, the Jesus whom he had met was the Savior sent by the very God in whom the fathers had believed. Because Paul's former life contained the sin of having persecuted those who believed in the Lord, we must not take these words as the boast of a perfect man who had never committed sin. We must look together at the salvation he

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received and the life he lived serving God by believing in that salvation.

When we come before God as well, we cannot remove sin merely by saying that we are confident in our own conscience. Anyone can consider his own actions right, but before the law we come to realize that we are people who cannot wash away sin with our own righteousness. Paul, too, was not saved from his sins through the strict teaching of the law; rather, he met Jesus Christ and believed. Those who believe that Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death have no sin in their hearts; therefore they can be unashamed both before God and before people. Because the basis of the faith by which we stand unashamed before God is not our own blameless record but the remission of sins we have received from the Lord, our faith in serving God, too, stands upright only when we clearly know how the sin in our hearts was washed away.

The place where one broke the law while speaking of the law

Paul protested against the command to strike him on the mouth. Let us read his question in verse 3. *"You sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" (Acts 23:3).* This is a rebuke pointing out that the high priest, while sitting in the seat of judging according to the law, had given a command that broke the law. What is revealed here is the act of trying to stop Paul's mouth by force before examining whether the judgment against him was right.

Those who persecuted the gospel of the water and the Spirit were people who, at that time, claimed to believe in God well. Because the office of having been entrusted with the word and actually following the word are distinguished in this way, we, too, must not think that the work entrusted to us or the knowledge we have learned for a long time makes all our own judgments right.

Those who stood by said to Paul that he was reviling the high priest, but Paul answered that he had not known that the man was the high priest, and he continued his answer by citing the written word. Let us read the end of verse 5. *"You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people" (Acts 23:5)*. In Paul's answer, too, the written word appears as the basis of judgment. While claiming to point out a wrong, we easily pour out our hearts in words that insult the other person, but in an answer of faith we must not forget that we ourselves are also people who stand before the word. We cannot think that there is no restraint at all on our lips just because we have seen the other person's wrong.

Before the law becomes knowledge with which to attack other people, it makes us realize our own sins. When we learn what God has told us to do and what He has told us not to do, we see ourselves as people who, being descendants of Adam, cannot fully carry out His will. But the mere fact of having realized our sin does not make our hearts clean; sinners need the salvation that God has prepared. That is why God gave the law of sacrifice along with the law, and in the Old Testament sacrifices that Paul knew well, hands were laid on the sacrificial offering to pass sin on to it, and that offering died. Only when we know both the law that reveals sin and the sacrifice that takes the place of the sinner can we know how our own sin is to be resolved.

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Jesus accomplished the salvation to which that sacrifice pointed. Just as the Old Testament offering had sin passed on to it through the laying on of hands, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John. Because of those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and completed our salvation. Paul's sins and the lifelong sins of each one of us are all included in the sin of the world that the Lord bore. To come before God by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to accept the fact that this Savior has removed my sin, instead of soothing one's conscience with one's own zeal.

Even after we have received the remission of sins, there are shortcomings in our flesh. But every time we discover those shortcomings, we must not take our own transgressions back out of the range of the sins Jesus bore. We must stand by faith in the word that the Lord bore the sins of my entire lifetime and also received the judgment for those sins in my place. At the same time, we must not take our conduct lightly on the pretext of the grace we have received; rather, we must acknowledge our wrongs before the word and serve rightly. If the life of a person who has received the remission of sins goes astray, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we are to preach to people is also obscured; therefore we must treasure both the assurance of the remission of sins and a life of following the Lord.

What Paul held on to was the hope of the resurrection

Paul knew that the council was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees, and he made known the issue at stake in his faith.

Let us read verse 6. *"Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" (Acts 23:6)*. Even though he made known his background as the son of a Pharisee, that background did not remit his sins. Even while speaking of his own origins as one who had learned the law, Paul cried out that he was being judged because of the hope of the resurrection. For him, the resurrection was not a subject for vaguely imagining what comes after death, but the event in which Jesus Christ, who had saved him, actually came to life again from death. Earlier, too, Peter and John had been seized and brought before the same council because they preached the doctrine of the resurrection: that Jesus, who received baptism from John and had our sins passed on to Him and then died on the Cross, rose again on the third day.

Paul believed the death of Jesus to be the judgment He received in Paul's place, and he believed His resurrection to be the salvation that gave Paul life. Therefore, in speaking of the resurrection, we cannot leave out whose sins Jesus bore through the baptism He received from John and whose judgment He received on the Cross. Because this work continued on until new life was given to us, the hope of the resurrection is not a separate theory detached from our salvation. We, too, must leave behind the thought that death ends everything, believe in the life given by the Lord who has given us life, and live as people who belong to Him.

When the council heard those words, a dissension arose. The Sadducees said that there is no resurrection, no angel, and no spirit, and the Pharisees said that there are all of these; and some scribes of the Pharisees' party said that they found no evil in Paul. But when the dissension grew, the commander, fearing that Paul might be pulled to pieces, sent soldiers. Let us read verse 10. *"Take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks" (Acts 23:10)*. The council, divided in its opinions

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about the resurrection, could not protect Paul's safety, and Paul was moved back into the barracks. We cannot place the assurance of our faith in the support of people, which changes like this.

Paul, who at first had said before the council that he served God, was, even in the midst of the dissension, a person who belonged to the Savior who had given him life. We, too, must not try to prove our claim to serve God by our own careers or offices; let us believe in our hearts the remission of sins and the new life that Jesus has given us. On that faith, we must serve the Lord by examining our lips and conduct according to the written word. Even when people who supported us turn away and the arguments grow fierce, Jesus Christ, who has given us life, does not change. Let us hold firmly to the hope of the resurrection that He has given us, rather than to the uproar of the council. ✉

The hope of the resurrection to hold on to firmly
rather than the uproar of the council

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Since what the Lord has done is clear, testify boldly

< Acts 23:11 >

"But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.'"

The Lord, who stood by Paul after a tumultuous day

"Be bold." The word that Paul heard that night, after he had been rescued from the dissension in the council and confined in the barracks, began with this single phrase. Now he, who during the day had been listening to people's arguments and accusations, heard the word of the Lord whom he served. People who have gone through a hard ordeal easily become weighed down in heart as they think about what more may happen from now on, and at such times the boldness that holds us up does not come from rating our own strength highly. When we hear what the Lord, who came to Paul in his night, said, we, too, come to know with what faith we must do the Lord's work.

Let us read verse 11. *"But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have*

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testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome'" (Acts 23:11). The words of the people who had caused the commotion did not become the last word on Paul's life. The Lord whom he served stood by Paul and spoke to him directly. People were holding Paul as a prisoner, but Jesus spoke of him as a person who had testified of His work. Even when we are evaluated by people as we serve the Lord, we must not forget this relationship. We must confirm again from the word of the Lord to whom we belong and whose work we preach.

The first thing the Lord said was the word "Be bold." He did not exhort Paul on the grounds of how much physical strength Paul had left or how much stronger he was than others. Since the Lord, who stood by him, went on to say that just as Paul had testified of His work in Jerusalem, he must also testify in Rome, the basis of boldness is not separate from this word. We, too, instead of forcibly driving our hearts so as not to be afraid, must look to the Lord, who saved us and made us His witnesses. That Lord is the One who, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment for those sins in our place, and rose again from death, and who now stood by Paul.

In the midst of suffering, we easily think that we can regain strength only when everyone acknowledges what we say. But Paul did not hear this word after the opinions of the council had come together as one and taken his side. When we see the fact that the Lord stood by Paul and spoke, we can know who it is that we must rely on before gaining the support of people. Because the Savior who has given us life is there and His word is there, we must not lose the basis of our faith amid people's reactions. Even when our hearts grow weak, we can believe that word and ask for the Lord's help.

What must be testified is the work Jesus has done

The Lord said that Paul had testified of His work in Jerusalem. What Paul testified of was not achievements that would establish his own name, but the work of Jesus. In his testimony in the previous chapter, Paul conveyed just as it was the voice he had heard on the road to Damascus. *"I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 22:8)*. Paul preached that the very Jesus of Nazareth whom he had persecuted is the Son of God and the Savior we had been waiting for, and he told how he had become a witness of the Lord. Boasting at length about one's own past is not a testimony of salvation. Only when we clearly preach who Jesus, who met sinners and saved them, is and what work He accomplished can those who hear also believe in the same Savior.

The Jesus who appeared to Paul was not One who remained in death. That Jesus, who at the age of thirty received baptism from John and Himself had the sin of the world passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the Cross because of that sin, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again three days after His death and is still alive now. The sins of the people who persecuted Paul, the sins of Paul, who had formerly opposed the Lord, and the lifelong sins of all of us are contained in the sin of the world that Jesus bore. We cannot reduce the scope of this salvation as we please.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit makes us believe in Jesus Christ, who bore that sin and its judgment. Because Paul believed the fact that Jesus had removed his sins, he did not put forward his former zeal and merits as the basis of salvation. He believed that the death of Jesus was a death in his place, and that His resurrection was the work that gave him life. Therefore, in what Paul testified, it was clear how sin was passed on to the

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Lord and how the judgment for that sin was brought to an end. We, too, rather than speaking only of how we ourselves have changed, must preach the Lord's salvation, which made that change possible.

The Holy Spirit dwells as a gift in the heart that has received the remission of sins by believing in that salvation. In Damascus, the Lord spoke to Paul through Ananias as follows: *"For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:15)*. Paul preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit by that Holy Spirit, and today we, too, believe in the same salvation and receive the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not incite people to show off their own power, but makes them testify of the salvation Jesus accomplished. If we ask only for boldness without knowing what we must preach, our voices may grow louder, but salvation does not become clear to those who hear. We must first know and believe the Lord's work in the word, and devote our hearts to preaching that fact.

Preach the same salvation in Rome as well

The Lord also spoke of Paul's next testimony. This means that Paul must also preach in Rome the work of Jesus that he had preached in Jerusalem. After meeting the Lord, what Paul most desired was to go to Rome and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and the Lord told him that he would testify there as well. Even though the place changed, the Savior Paul was to preach was not a different One. Because Jesus, who gave life to sinners in Jerusalem, is the Savior for the people of Rome as well, the content of the testimony had to be the work of the same Lord. The word the Lord spoke as He ascended also points in the same direction. *"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all*

Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The gospel preached in Rome was the gospel going to the end of the earth.

At the end of the Book of Acts, what Paul actually preached in Rome is recorded. *"Persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23)*. He spoke of the law, which makes people realize sin, and preached Christ, who bore that sin. While preaching the death on the Cross and the resurrection, he did not leave out the event before that, in which the sin of the world was passed on to the body of Jesus; so wherever Paul went, there was never a time when he did not speak of the baptism Jesus received from John. Because all mankind needs the same salvation, we must not change the content of salvation depending on what kind of person the listener is. When we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, too, we must not reduce the work the Lord has accomplished by choosing only words that people like to hear.

Paul's road to Rome was in fact very difficult. Even amid the plots that followed, the escort, the trials, and the journey by sea, the word the Lord had spoken continued to lead toward his testimony. Today we, too, have times when we become weary and worn out while serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but if we try to take responsibility for everything by our own strength, we cannot endure for long. We must ask the Lord, who has given us salvation, and rely on the new strength the Holy Spirit gives. Because we preach not to gain people's praise, but preach the work by which the Lord remitted sins, the salvation we have received holds our hearts up again.

In Paul's night, after the tumultuous day had passed, the Lord stood by him and told him to be bold. Let us, too, not chew over the hard things we have gone through and measure only the size of our own faith, but look to Jesus Christ, who saved us. Because

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the work He has done is clear, the fact we are to preach is also clear, and because the Holy Spirit is with us, we can ask for the strength to open our mouths again. What held Paul up in his night was not the praise of the crowd but the word telling him to testify of the same Lord in Jerusalem and in Rome, and that word makes us, too, boldly preach the work of Jesus in the encounters given to us today. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

God protects the servant of the gospel through the hands of people

< Acts 23:12–30 >

“And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, ‘We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near.’ So when Paul’s sister’s son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, ‘Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him.’ So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, ‘Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you.’ Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, ‘What is it that you have to tell me?’ And he said, ‘The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as

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though they were going to inquire more fully about him. But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you.' So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, 'Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me.' And he called for two centurions, saying, 'Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor.' He wrote a letter in the following manner: Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell."

What the oath to kill had prepared

On the very next day after the Lord had said that Paul would testify in Rome as well, an oath was made by more than forty people not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. Far from disappearing, the threat came more concretely to the man who had heard the word of the Lord. We, too, are bewildered as to

why such a thing has happened when we meet difficulties on the path of believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and serving the Lord. But even though the Lord's word did not remove the threat, the threat could not overthrow the Lord's word. As we follow the hand of God that protected Paul during that one day, we must learn the faith that relies on the Lord even while seeing the threat just as it is.

Let us read verse 12. *"And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul" (Acts 23:12)*. Their oath was not a promise to offer their lives to God, but a resolution to kill Paul. They also went to the chief priests and elders and told them to make a request to the commander as though they were going to look into the facts more closely. While putting forward a procedure for bringing the truth to light, in reality they had prepared to kill Paul before he came near. Even a religious cause and a firm resolve become words that cover up evil deeds if we do not examine what they are aimed at.

Paul preached Jesus, but those who hated him regarded him as a person who was tearing down Judaism. Those who persecuted the gospel of the water and the Spirit in this way were people who, at that time, claimed to believe in God well, and anyone who preaches straightforwardly, exactly as the word says, receives such opposition wherever he is. Therefore, we must not judge that we have preached the Lord's salvation wrongly merely because people strongly oppose it. At the same time, we cannot consider all our own words and actions right merely because we have received opposition. What Paul preached was the salvation that Jesus accomplished by having all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He

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received from John, paying the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rising again from death. We must confirm that what we preach is this salvation that is in the word, and while keeping that salvation, we must ask for the help we need.

Paul, who made known the words he had heard and asked for help

The plan to kill Paul became known to Paul's sister's son, and that young man entered the barracks and told Paul. Let us read verse 16. *"So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul" (Acts 23:16)*. The son of Paul's sister did not keep what he had heard to himself, but told Paul, who was in danger. When Paul heard that news, he called one of the centurions and asked him to take the young man to the commander. A man who had heard from the Lord the word that he would testify in Rome heard words about a real danger and asked for help.

Living by faith does not mean making light of danger and taking no action. Paul said what he could say in the situation he was in, and he sent the young man to the commander to make the plan known. Even while saying that we rely on the Lord, there are times when we regard asking for needed help as shameful. But when we know the fact that our bodies and lives are used in serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we also come to treasure caring for that life and making known a brother's crisis; therefore there is no reason to think that receiving help is abandoning faith.

The commander took the young man by the hand and asked him privately. Let us read verse 19. *"Then the commander took*

him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, 'What is it that you have to tell me?'" (Acts 23:19). The young man told him of the plan to ask that Paul be brought down to the council the next day, and of the fact that men who meant to lie in wait and kill him were making ready. When the commander heard this, he sent the young man away, telling him not to tell anyone that he had made this known. Unlike the earlier scenes, in which words shouted openly in public put Paul in danger, here preparations to move Paul were made according to news that was heard privately and confirmed. When we deal with the affairs of a brother who is in difficulty, we, too, must clearly inform the people who need to know rather than spread unconfirmed words. The faith that God takes care of the servants who serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not make us take such concrete labor lightly.

The commander, who prepared the escort

The commander called two centurions and ordered them to prepare soldiers, horsemen, and spearmen. Let us read verse 24, which follows. *"'And provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor'" (Acts 23:24)*. Mounts to set Paul on and soldiers to escort him were provided, and a letter to the governor was also prepared. Those who wanted to kill Paul were waiting for him on his way down to the council, but the commander had him sent to Caesarea by night. Through the words one young man heard and the judgment of one official, Paul escaped from the hands of those lying in wait; in this way God protects, in whatever form, the servants who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We who read this event with the eyes of faith must ask for the Lord's care and also receive

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such help with thanks.

Let us not turn the faith that the Lord protects His servants into the thought that every road will become easy according to our own will. Paul was escorted so that he escaped the plot to kill him, but next he had to await trial before the governor. Even if not everything is resolved immediately after we get through one difficulty, we, too, must keep relying on the Lord who saved us. Because that Lord is the One who received baptism from John and had our sins passed on to Him, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment for them in our place, and rose again from death, the Holy Spirit testifies of this fact of salvation in the heart that has received the remission of sins and gives strength to serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Asking for that help, let us take the measures needed today and carry out the service given to us.

The salvation the innocent prisoner was to stay alive to preach

The commander's letter reports the following about the charges against Paul. Let us read verse 29. *"I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains" (Acts 23:29)*. In fact Paul had committed no crime, yet because of the accusation of the Jews he became a prisoner; and even though there was a judgment that nothing deserving of death had been found, the plan to kill him remained. Earlier, the Lord had told this Paul that he must testify of His work in Rome as well. Therefore, as we see the hand of God that protected him, we must also consider what the Lord's salvation is that Paul was to stay alive to preach.

Just as sin was passed on to a sheep or an ox through the laying on of hands, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to His body by receiving baptism from John. Because of that sin, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in their place the judgment that sinners were to receive, and He rose again from death and completed our salvation. Within that sin of the world are contained Paul's sins, the sins of the people he would meet, and our lifelong sins. This salvation was contained in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Paul preached, and because the Lord bore without exception not only the sins of Paul alone but also the sins of the people he would meet, Paul had to testify of the same Savior to them as well. The life given to Paul was being used in this way to preach the work of the Lord.

Because we, too, treasure the life we have received from Jesus, we cannot lightly dismiss the danger to a person who serves the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is not that we ignore a threat that has come upon the body on the grounds that the salvation of the soul is certain; rather, we ask for the help needed so that the person may stay alive and carry out the work entrusted to him. Because the Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts, leads us to preach the salvation we have received, the labor of caring for our brothers and the heart that serves the gospel are connected to each other. Asking the Lord for protection, let us make the danger known and find the work we can carry out together. When it is clear what we will serve with the life we have received, our care, too, comes to be directed toward that gospel.

The news that came as the day broke was an oath to kill Paul, but that plan was not all that happened on that day. Paul's sister's son made it known, Paul made a request of the centurion, and the commander prepared the escort; thus God protected His

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servant through all these hands. We, too, must not surrender our hearts while looking only at the size of the threat, but must rely on the Lord, who has given us life, and ask for the help we need. Also, when we learn of a brother's danger, we must not turn away from it but must carry out the words and actions entrusted to us. Even on a day when there is a plan to kill, the person who believes in the Lord can do what he must do on the assurance of salvation; so, seeing the hand of God that protected Paul, we, too, should become people who take care of one another by faith. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

What did Paul, who was awaiting his trial, believe?

< Acts 23:31–35 >

“Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia, he said, ‘I will hear you when your accusers also have come.’ And he commanded him to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.”

The place the night escort reached

When the escort that had set out by night reached Caesarea, what was Paul believing? He was not released and set free right away. The governor said that he would hear Paul when those who accused him came, and he commanded that Paul be kept in Herod’s Praetorium; so a man who had escaped the plan to kill him was placed once again in the position of having to wait. We, who hope that everything will soon be over once a crisis has

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passed, find that our hearts that rely on the Lord are also tested when the waiting continues. Yet even in his circumstances of being moved from one city to another, the salvation Paul believed in and the word of the Lord did not change. That Jesus had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death was a salvation already accomplished, wherever Paul was. Following this short record, we must see that faith.

Let us read verse 31. *"Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris" (Acts 23:31)*. Earlier, the commander had made soldiers ready to send Paul safely to the governor, and the soldiers moved by night just as they had been commanded. It was not that only news was passed along; Paul himself was actually moved under protection. In a life of serving the Lord there are also times like this, of traveling a road, receiving help, and going through necessary processes. When we say that we live by faith, we must not think only of the conspicuous moments of testimony, but must accept the life before and after them, too, as a life that belongs to the Lord.

The next day the horsemen escorted Paul, and the soldiers went back. Let us read the end of verse 32. *"Returned to the barracks" (Acts 23:32)*. The soldiers' duty ended there, but Paul had to keep going to Caesarea with the horsemen. Though he had come through the night escort, there was still a place to reach, and after reaching it he had to hear what the governor would say. When we follow Paul's journey, we come to distinguish between one matter ending and all matters ending. When we, too, must carry out the next task after getting through one difficulty, we

must be thankful for the help we received before and rely on the Lord in the time that follows as well.

However, we cannot take the fact that we have received help to mean that our whole future has opened up as we wish. The place Paul was going was not the next lodging of a free journey, but the place where his case would be dealt with before the governor. On that road, the fact that his physical safety had been protected and the fact that he had to await trial existed together. Because those who rely on the Lord, too, pass through each day carrying matters that have not yet been resolved in this way, we must not forget the Lord's help we have already received on the grounds that problems remain, but must ask again for the strength we need today.

Believing in the same Savior even before the governor

Because the soldiers delivered the letter in Caesarea and presented Paul before the governor, Paul now had to answer for his case in a place different from the council in Jerusalem. Let us read verse 33. *"When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him" (Acts 23:33)*. Along with the commander's letter, Paul's case was laid before the governor. Because those who had accused Paul had not yet come, the lawsuit did not end that very day. Paul, who had earlier made known his faith before the council, now came to wait for the time to answer before the governor, but the salvation he had believed and preached was something the Lord had already accomplished.

Jesus cleansed the sins that Paul himself had been unable to resolve by his zeal for the law. The Savior of whom Paul had

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testified in Jerusalem was still alive, and Paul believed in the remission of sins he had received from Him. Unlike the lawsuit that was still awaiting an answer, his salvation was not something that might or might not be accomplished someday. When unresolved matters remain for a long time, we, too, easily postpone even the peace of our hearts until the day the outcome comes out. But only when we know what Jesus has already done can we ask God with the assurance of the remission of sins even today, while we wait.

The fact that Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the world passed on to Him did not change even while Paul was confined. Because of that sin, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. Within that sin of the world are contained, without exception, Paul's sins and our lifelong sins. The gospel of the water and the Spirit makes clear that the salvation on which we rely today is the work Jesus has already accomplished. Because I believe that He has remitted my sin without exception, I can come before God with a clean heart even on days when the waiting grows long.

The Holy Spirit is in the heart that believes the word that the Lord bore sin, and He confirms that salvation. Therefore, even if our own thoughts grow weak during the waiting, we do not need to decide anew, according to that day's feelings, whether we have been saved. Because what Jesus has accomplished is the basis of faith, let us hold on to the word He has already made clear rather than to outcomes we cannot yet know. Whatever procedures we go through, we can believe in the Lord who saved us and ask Him for the strength to carry out today. The grace that has given us life is not a grace to rely on only on days when matters are resolved quickly.

What did Paul, who was awaiting his trial, believe?

Hold on to the word of the Lord even while waiting

The governor read the letter and asked about Paul's origin. Let us read verse 34. *"And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia" (Acts 23:34)*. The governor, having received the letter, asked Paul and learned his origin, but he did not conclude the case with that answer alone. Because the governor said that he would hear Paul when those accusing him came, there remained for Paul a waiting that he himself could not end right away. Living by faith does not mean that we can always make such times short; so we must speak rightly the words we can answer now, and while we must still wait, we must lay our worries before the Lord. Let us not let even the salvation we have received be shaken because the outcome is slow, but rely on the living Savior.

Let us read in verse 35 what the governor said. *"I will hear you when your accusers also have come" (Acts 23:35)*. Then the governor commanded that Paul be kept in Herod's Praetorium. After these words lies a waiting, and in the next chapter the actual accusers come down and accuse Paul. For Paul there still remained the process of hearing the accusations and answering them, but in the trials that follow, too, he makes known his faith and the hope of the resurrection. If today we are in the midst of matters that have not yet ended, let us not think that we can serve the Lord only if we first know every conclusion. We must believe in our hearts the salvation already given, speak rightly the words for today, and live the life the Lord has entrusted to us.

Earlier, the Lord had told Paul that he must testify of His work in Rome as well. After meeting the Lord, the place Paul most wanted to go to was also Rome, but arriving in Caesarea

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was not arriving in that Rome, and even at the end of this chapter Paul was waiting for his trial. Having the Lord's word does not mean that all the time in between disappears, and the journey until he reached Rome was very difficult. When we do not see results quickly, we consider that nothing is being accomplished, but Paul's journey went on through such times. We, too, must rely on the word the Lord has given us, and instead of trying to figure out the whole future at once, carry out by faith the days entrusted to us.

Though the night escort had ended, Paul's waiting had not ended. Yet the Lord who had saved him was alive, and His word that He would have Paul testify in Rome as well remained as it was. We, too, must not withdraw our hearts from the Lord just because, after getting through one crisis, there is yet another thing to wait for; rather, we must lay today's worries before the Savior who has already given us the remission of sins, and faithfully carry out the words and labor given to us. Paul in Caesarea still had a verdict to hear, but the Savior in whom he was to believe was clear; and that Jesus Christ upholds our waiting today, too. ✉

What did Paul, who was awaiting his trial, believe?

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CHAPTER

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Not the name people attached to Paul, but the remission of sins he preached

< Acts 24:1–9 >

“Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul. And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: ‘Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him.’ And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.”

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The accusers who stood before the governor

Tertullus spoke long words of thanks to the governor and then accused Paul. Praise toward the governor and condemnation toward Paul followed one after another within a single accusation. Hearing pleasant words first does not make the accusation that follows them true, but people's hearts are easily moved by the attitude of the speaker and by the agreement of those around them. In this accusation, we must look at what Paul actually preached rather than at the name given to him. People made Paul out to be a man who stirred up dissension, but the Jesus whom Paul preached was the One who, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross and paid the price of those sins, and rose again from death to save sinners. If we miss that difference, we too will end up judging the gospel of the water and the Spirit by people's assessment.

Let us read verse 1. *"Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul" (Acts 24:1)*. The attack on Paul now led to an accusation before the governor. The high priest and the elders came down, and Tertullus conveyed their words; those who accused Paul were people who, at that time, claimed to believe in God well. Paul had already been seized in the temple and beaten and had also gone through the dispute in the council, but the opposition against him continued here as well. We must not think of the hardships that come upon the witnesses of the gospel of the water and the Spirit as a single incident. This is because a person who preaches salvation exactly as the word says can face opposition even from people who say they believe in God.

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Tertullus said that through the governor they enjoyed peace and that things had been improved in many ways. Let us read the end of verse 3. *"We accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness" (Acts 24:3)*. These are the words that Tertullus, who began the accusation, spoke to the governor. The fact that Tertullus skillfully spoke words of thanks to the governor does not prove the accusation against Paul, so we must distinguish between hearing praise and confirming the truth of a matter. We too sometimes have our hearts captured by words that are pleasantly explained and fail to examine the very basis of our faith. When we judge the salvation God has accomplished, we must confirm whether those words are the same as the written word, rather than looking at the position the speaker holds or his skill in dealing with people.

The charge of being a man who stirs up dissension

The first point of the accusation was that Paul stirred up dissension among people who were widely scattered. Let us read that part in verse 5. *"A creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world" (Acts 24:5)*. In the words of Tertullus, Paul is singled out as the cause of the dissension. But what had happened earlier in Jerusalem was not an incident in which Paul gathered people and committed violence; it was an incident in which those who recognized him stirred up the crowd and seized him. The commotion arose as people opposed the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Paul believed and preached, and that opposition turned into words accusing Paul of being a man who creates dissension. Since dissension also arises wherever the

work of the gospel takes place, we must distinguish between the charge against him and what actually happened.

Tertullus also singled out Paul as the ringleader of the group that followed Jesus of Nazareth. His accusation also contained the fact that Paul believed in and preached Jesus, but what that Jesus had done for sinners was not revealed in it. Knowing the name Jesus of Nazareth does not mean knowing the salvation He accomplished as well, so we must know why Paul believed in Him as the Savior. If we stop at repeating the name the accuser gave, we will miss the very content of the salvation we are to believe. What we need is to confirm the work of Jesus in the word.

Paul himself had once been zealous for the law and persecuted those who believed in Jesus. That zeal did not make him righteous or save him from sin; rather, it was used in opposing the Lord. But the One who called him on the road to Damascus was Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had been persecuting, and what Paul preached after that was not his own former zeal but the work of Jesus, who had saved him. Paul himself, who had opposed the Lord, was also a person who needed the remission of sins, and because he believed that Jesus had borne that very sin of his together with all the sins of the world, he now preached the same Savior to others as well. We too need the faith that knows the Lord, who washed away sin, before we put forward our own zeal.

Everything He did is contained in the name Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who grew up in Nazareth, received baptism from John at the age of thirty and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and those sins include both the sins Paul committed while opposing the Lord and the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives. Because of those sins, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and

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thereby received the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and became the Savior who is still alive now. In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we do not try to wash away our sins by our own conduct; instead, we believe in Jesus Christ, who accomplished salvation for us in this way. The salvation Paul preached was also this work that the Lord did for sinners.

When we believe in this salvation that the Lord accomplished for sinners, we do not put forward our own righteousness as the basis for the remission of sins. A person who has learned the strict teachings of the law needs the remission of sins, and a person who has not learned those teachings needs the same remission of sins. Because Jesus also bore the sins of the Gentiles together within all the sins of the world, Paul preached the Savior to them as well. Opposition arose against Paul, who preached such salvation, but people's hatred cannot change the scope of the sins Jesus bore. We too must not try to alter the content of salvation in what we say so as to be approved by people, but must clearly preach the salvation the Lord actually accomplished.

The accusation that he tried to defile the temple

Tertullus also accused Paul of trying to defile the temple. Let us read verse 6. *"He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law" (Acts 24:6)*. Earlier, Paul had followed the suggestion of the church in Jerusalem and taken part in the purification with four men who had taken a vow, but those who saw him thought that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple, and they stirred up the crowd. Even before the governor, the charge that he had tried to

defile the temple continued; a judgment that had been attached to a person without confirming the facts was carried over again into another setting. We must not miss the explanation of the Bible, which made clear what those people had seen and what they had supposed in the earlier scene.

The accusers say that Paul tried to defile the temple, but in the answer that follows, Paul makes clear that he serves the God of his fathers and believes the law and the writings of the prophets. The Jesus he preached was the Savior whom that God had sent. Therefore, if we listen only to the words of the accusers and judge that Paul preached a teaching that went against God, it amounts to not listening to what he believes and confesses. We too, when we examine someone's faith, must not accept only the criticism about that person, but must hear what he believes and hold it up to the written word. Both confirming the facts behind the temple accusation and listening to Paul's faith require such diligence.

When Tertullus finished speaking, those who had come with him also agreed with the accusation. Let us read verse 9. *"And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so" (Acts 24:9)*. Many people maintained that the same words were true, but that claim itself cannot take the place of evidence that Paul had actually committed a crime. In faith, too, we must not determine the meaning of salvation on the grounds that many people agree; we must confirm in the word whose sins Jesus bore and what judgment He received. That fact does not become true when the people on our side grow in number and false when they become fewer.

The accusation that began with words praising the governor ended with the charges against Paul and the agreement of many people. But if we follow only the names they gave him, we will miss the very Savior of the remission of sins whom Paul

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preached. Let us also not entrust our hearts to people's words and reputations, but know and believe through the word Jesus Christ, who saved us. Even when we are misunderstood while testifying of the salvation we have received, we must state the facts correctly and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit. What we must confirm to the end, at the place where we hear accusations, is not the name people gave Paul, but the salvation Jesus accomplished to give life to sinners. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in the salvation that is written and serve with a conscience without offense

< Acts 24:10–23 >

"Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: 'Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. They ought to have been here before

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you to object if they had anything against me. Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day."' But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, 'When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case.' So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him."

The faith Paul made known while answering the accusation

Before the governor, Paul did not stop at denying the content of the accusation, but confessed what he believed. To the charge that he had stirred up the crowd, he asked whether they had actually seen such a thing, and regarding his faith, he made clear that he served the God of his fathers and believed the written word. For Paul, this defense did not stop at being words to protect himself; it was an opportunity to testify of the salvation he had received. He did not try to hide everything simply because it was unfavorable to him; rather, he answered by distinguishing between accusations that were not true and the salvation he firmly believed. We too must know what to correct and what to confess when we are misunderstood because of our faith. In Paul's answer, both the salvation God promised and a life that believes that salvation appear together.

Paul said that it had been no more than twelve days since he went up to Jerusalem to worship. An explanation also follows that the accusers had not seen him stirring up the crowd in the temple, in the synagogues, or in the city. Let us read what he made clear in verse 13. *"Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me" (Acts 24:13)*. Paul was in fact not guilty, and so he did not accept the charges as if they were facts but asked what the accusers could present. The answer of faith must not be words that blur the facts; we must clearly make known the things we have not actually done.

After asking for evidence of the charges, Paul clearly confessed what he believed regarding the Way. Let us read that content in verse 14. *"I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14)*. The God whom Paul served was not a different God from the one the accusers spoke of. Paul's confession was this: "I too believe in the very God you believe in, and that God sent the Savior He had promised and saved us." That Savior, Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross and paid the price of those sins, and rose again from death to save us from sin. Paul did not say that he was a man who abandoned the law and the writings of the prophets; he made clear that he believed what was written in them. This means that faith in Jesus did not come from personal thoughts unrelated to the written word. We too must not base our faith on our own experiences or on people's assessment, but must confirm it in the word.

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The salvation accomplished according to the word of the law and the prophets

To believe the law is not to boast that one has become righteous by keeping the law perfectly. Through what God has commanded us to do and what He has commanded us not to do, the law reveals our sins. Paul learned its strict teachings, but he was not saved from his sins by them; he received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ. Even while acknowledging that the law is right, we easily hide the sins revealed in us or use the law to judge that we are better than others. But a person who has come to realize his sin must know where the salvation that will give him life is found.

Together with the law, God also gave the sacrificial system for sinners. When a sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering, sin was passed on to that offering, and the offering that had received the sin died and became a sacrifice in place of the sinner. So that a person who realized his sin could receive the remission of sins, God gave an offering to which sin would be passed on and a sacrificial system in which that offering was judged in the sinner's place. The words of the prophets also testified of the work by which the Christ who was to come would save sinners. Therefore Paul, who believed the law and the writings of the prophets, preached the salvation of Jesus, who came just as those words said, bore sin, and died as a substitute. We must look at the written word and the work of Jesus together.

The passing on of sin that the laying on of hands in the Old Testament pointed to was fulfilled when Jesus received baptism from John. At that time Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all, and because of those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving in our place the judgment we should have received, and He rose again

from death and completed salvation. All those sins include the sins that you and I commit throughout our lives. Faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit relies on Jesus, who accomplished such salvation, and so it does not look for the basis of the remission of sins in one's own works of the law.

Paul then made known his hope of the resurrection. Let us read verse 15. *"I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15)*. This hope is a hope in God, and Paul did not say that everything ends with death. The Jesus whom he himself believed in was the Savior who died in the place of sinners and then rose again from death. Paul believed that the Lord's death was His receiving, in Paul's place, the judgment for Paul's own sins, and that His resurrection was what gave Paul life; therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is the very living again of you and me. We too, when we think of our own end, must not rely on works that cannot resolve sin, but must believe in Christ, who has given new life.

Next, Paul asked the accusers what wrongdoing they had seen when he stood before the council. And before the governor he again made known that he had cried out that he was being judged concerning the resurrection. While he demanded evidence for the charge that he had caused a commotion, he himself acknowledged that he had spoken out of belief in the hope of the resurrection. Because he believed in Jesus, who gave the remission of sins and new life, that hope was not something to hide in order to avoid an unfavorable accusation. We too, even while correcting what we have not done, must not hide the Savior we believe in. Let us make clear both our answer about the facts and our confession of faith.

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A heart that has received the remission of sins and a life without offense

After making known his hope, Paul also spoke about his life. Let us read verse 16. *"This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16)*. Believing in the remission of sins received from the Lord and examining one's own life are not separate from each other. Because we have faith that Jesus removed sin, we come before God with a clean heart, and before people we must also live so as not to obscure the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If we think that it does not matter if we harm others because we have received the remission of sins, we go against the grace we have received from the Lord. While confessing what he believed, Paul also made known the life he was striving to live.

We must not change his words that he strives to have a conscience without offense into the meaning that sins disappear little by little as much as we strive. Those who believe in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection have no sin in their hearts, but those who leave out the baptism Jesus received and believe only in the blood of the Cross have sin bound in their consciences, no matter how much they say they have no sin. The sin of the heart is washed away by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished, and the Holy Spirit dwells in that clean heart and testifies of the remission of sins. At the same time, if our life goes astray, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach to others is also obscured, so we must examine our conduct with care. Only when we rightly know the relationship between these two can we acknowledge and correct our own wrongs without losing the assurance of salvation. The reason Paul could be a person who was unashamed both before God and before people was also that

he relied not on his own works but on the righteousness of the Lord, and such a person has no reason to hide his own works.

Paul explained that he had come bringing alms and offerings and that he was carrying out the purification without any gathering or commotion. He also said that if those who first saw him had anything to object to, they should have come in person and brought charges. The governor adjourned the case, saying that he would deal with the matter when Lysias the commander came, and in verse 23 he commanded as follows: *"To keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him" (Acts 24:23)*. The case was not yet over, but there was a way for Paul to receive help. We must also value the labor of those who cared for him as a life of serving together for the sake of the salvation received.

Paul, who was answering the accusations, was not a man who only made clear what he had not done; he was a man who made clear, according to the written word, whom he believed and how he lived. Let us also not merely correct the words that are unfavorable to us while hiding the very salvation Jesus accomplished. Let us come before God with a heart that believes in the Savior who bore sin, and let us examine our conduct so as not to obscure the gospel of the water and the Spirit before people. Even if the verdict is still pending, the object of our faith must be clear. Just as Paul confessed before the governor, let us also believe in the salvation accomplished according to the word and in the hope of the resurrection, and live worthily of that faith with a conscience without offense. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

What does the heart that hears the gospel seek?

< Acts 24:24–27 >

“And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’ Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.”

Sending for Paul to hear the word

Felix, together with his wife Drusilla, sent for Paul and heard about the way of believing in Jesus Christ. Now the governor and his wife came to hear the word of faith from the mouth of Paul, who was on trial. But the fact of having heard the word and the fact of having believed that word in one’s heart are not the same. Because we have heard sermons many times and grown familiar with them, we easily think that we believe rightly. This short scene makes us look back at what our hearts, as we listen, are truly seeking. We must examine whether we accept the

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remission of sins Jesus has given, or whether we try to gain something else even while hearing the word.

Let us read the end of verse 24. *"He sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ" (Acts 24:24)*. The governor, who was in charge of the trial, sent for Paul the prisoner, but what he heard there was the word about Christ Jesus, in whom Paul believed. Paul preached everywhere the work by which Jesus saved sinners. Who the Savior he had met was, and by what work He had remitted sin, was the content of that faith. Even when Paul preached the way of believing in Christ before the governor, he had to make known who the Savior is and what He accomplished, so we too must make clear the content of what we mean when we say that we believe in Jesus.

A person can hear and know the name of Jesus and yet not know how his own sins have disappeared. This is because the sin in the heart is not washed away merely by often talking about faith. Paul believed that Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross and paid the price of those sins, and rose again from death, and by that faith Paul knew that he had no sin. We too must confirm that salvation in the word. We must not stop at listening to other people's explanations as if we were onlookers, but must know how Jesus bore my sins and rely on that Savior.

When we hear about righteousness and the judgment to come

Verse 25 reveals what Paul reasoned about. *"As he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come"*

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(Acts 24:25). In the setting where the way of believing in Christ Jesus was being heard, words about righteousness and judgment followed. We want to hear only words about good things happening to us, but we must know who is a righteous person before God and how one is saved from the judgment of sin. Since one cannot resolve the sin of the soul by correcting one's behavior a little and receiving a better assessment from people, an answer arises in the heart only when one knows what righteousness Jesus, who has given the remission of sins, has fulfilled.

The righteousness of God was fulfilled when Jesus received baptism from John, and that work continued with the blood of the Cross and the resurrection. These are the words the Lord spoke when He received baptism from John. *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, so the sins of our whole lifetime are also contained within that sin of the world. And when we speak of judgment, we must speak of the Cross: because of that sin, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our place the judgment we were to receive, and He rose again from death and completed salvation. Our righteousness does not lie in our having become good enough people to endure judgment, but in this salvation by which Jesus has made us clean. Those who have received the righteousness the Lord has given by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are not under the judgment to come.

If one speaks only of the blood of the Cross and the resurrection, leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John, one ends up leaving sin in one's conscience without knowing how one's own sins were passed on to Jesus. Also, if one speaks of the work in which He had sin passed on to Him but leaves out

the Cross, where He received in our place the judgment for that sin, how the price of sin was paid becomes unclear. And because Jesus, who died in our place, rose again from death, we who believe in Him stand before God as those who have received the remission of sins and new life. Therefore, rather than holding on to our sins as a burden we must still resolve ourselves, we must believe in our hearts in Jesus, who bore those sins and was judged. This is exactly why we listen to the word that explains salvation.

Felix heard that reasoning and was afraid. But he told Paul to go away for now and said that he would call for him again when he had time, so we must not regard the feeling of fear as the same as a heart that believes in salvation. Let us also not regard the very experience of having our hearts pricked or being afraid as faith. Turning our own thoughts around through the word we have heard, we must go on as far as believing in the Savior who remitted sin.

Turning around in faith is not increasing the number of times we say that we have done wrong; it is turning away from the direction of relying on our own works and thoughts and accepting the salvation Jesus accomplished. When that salvation becomes clear in our hearts, the Holy Spirit confirms the remission of sins and leads us to live following the Lord. We must clearly draw a line and decide in our hearts whether we will believe and follow according to the word of God or believe carelessly and follow along, and we must not treat receiving that word into our hearts as a small matter that can be put off at any time. We must examine now whether sin remains in our own souls and whether we truly believe the fact that the Lord bore all that sin.

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The heart that sent for Paul more often but hoped for money

The Bible does not hide the reason Felix sent for Paul again. Let us read verse 26. *"Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him" (Acts 24:26)*. If we look only at the fact that he sent for Paul more often, it seems as though he wanted to keep hearing the word, but the Bible reveals that he hoped for money. Even if the number of conversations increases, if the heart is directed toward a different place, the meaning of hearing the word becomes different. We too need the same examination. This is because, while drawing near to the things of faith, we may in fact be harboring in our hearts calculations about what benefit we can gain.

We must honestly look back at why we seek Jesus. We must ask whether we seek Him for material things or for the sake of our hearts; there are things we may ask for the sake of our bodily circumstances, but if we try only to obtain material things while leaving the sin of our own souls as it is, we will miss the salvation the Lord has given. To be pleased only when the body prospers while the heart is sick is not a right life of faith; above all, the heart must prosper. Because Jesus Himself came to remove our sins, had those sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood on the Cross and received judgment in our place, and rose again from death, a heart that seeks Him must first know this salvation of the remission of sins. We must not consider our faith good merely because our circumstances have improved, but must examine whether we believe in Jesus according to the written word. Let

us return to a heart that values the salvation we have received and serves the Lord together with the Church.

Two years passed and Festus took over the duties of Felix, but Paul remained in custody. Let us read the end of verse 27. *"Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound" (Acts 24:27)*. Felix, who first appeared as a man who heard the word, in the end keeps holding Paul in order to win people's hearts. Being afraid upon hearing about righteousness and judgment, conversing often while hoping for money, and keeping Paul in custody to win people's hearts are all placed within a single record. These scenes show that we cannot regard someone's heart as having turned toward salvation merely because he had many opportunities to hear the word. We too must not stop at counting how often we have heard, but must examine whom we are relying on now and what we are trying to gain.

This record began with the scene in which Felix sent for Paul to hear the word, but it ends by showing where the hearer's heart was directed. Let us also not reassure our hearts with the fact that we have heard much, but examine what we are seeking now and what we believe. Rather than depending on the feeling of fear or on another opportunity to hear, we must accept into our hearts Jesus Christ, who has delivered us from sin and judgment. Let us also ask the Lord, who has given us salvation, for help in our circumstances, and live following His word. What our souls need is not one more conversation hoping for money, but a heart that believes in the salvation of the remission of sins that the Lord has already let us hear. ✉

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CHAPTER

25

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Even long imprisonment cannot nullify the salvation one has received

< Acts 25:1–5 >

“Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him. But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly. ‘Therefore,’ he said, ‘let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him.’”

The intent to kill hidden behind the words of accusation

When the new governor took office, the people who accused Paul moved again. Paul was still confined in Caesarea, and the high priests and the prominent men asked Festus, who had come to Jerusalem, to hand Paul over to them. Even though the person who would judge him had changed, their intent to get rid of Paul did not disappear. In this scene, where the man who preached

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the gospel of the water and the Spirit is kept confined for a long time while those who oppose him freely come and go before the men in power, what should we look at as we keep our faith?

Let us read verse 2. *"Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him" (Acts 25:2)*. These were people who claimed to serve God, yet they accused Paul, who testified of Jesus, whom God had sent. The Jesus of whom Paul testified was the Savior who, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, which include the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death. The fact that a person's religious position is high and the faith that accepts the word of God are not the same thing. Even work done in the name of serving God cannot please God if it goes against the salvation the Lord has accomplished; therefore, we must look not at a person's position but at what he believes and preaches.

The petition they put forward and their actual purpose were different. Verse 3 reveals that they asked this *"while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him" (Acts 25:3)*. Behind their words asking that Paul be moved to Jerusalem lay hidden a plan to kill him. Since they sought to get rid of Paul first rather than to make clear whether he had any guilt, this petition was the exact opposite of an attitude that seeks to determine the facts. In this word we see that the work of opposing the gospel of the water and the Spirit sometimes appears in the form of a fair demand.

When we meet such opposition, if we are drawn along by a heart that hates people, quarreling comes before the salvation we must preach. As we look at the actions of those who hated Paul, rather than looking for a pretext to attack particular people, we must look back on whether we ourselves are pushing away the

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Lord's word in order to hold on to our familiar ideas. For the error of calling on God's name while not accepting what God has done is not resolved by criticizing other people's positions or names.

The news of salvation that put Paul in chains

The reason Paul received such accusations was not that he had done something that harmed people, but that he had preached the salvation of Jesus Christ. In fact he had no guilt, but because of this gospel of the water and the Spirit he was accused by the Jews and became a prisoner. Later in this chapter, Festus says that he did not find in Paul the evil deeds he had supposed, and he makes clear that the heart of the charge was the question *"about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Acts 25:19)*. This is why we must not judge, just by looking at Paul in confinement, that even the word he preached was wrong. Even if the circumstances of the one who preaches the gospel become difficult, the fact of the salvation the Lord has accomplished does not change.

To know Paul's testimony, we must know the Jesus in whom he believed. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and because of those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place. And He rose again from death and gave new life to us, who were bound by sin and death. Since the sins of our entire lifetime are also included in the sin of the world that Jesus bore, the remission of sins that we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have received does not depend on people's agreement or on the outcome of a trial.

Man cannot remove his own sins with the religious righteousness he has built up, but Jesus Himself bore the sins that we cannot remove and removed them. Therefore, faith is not exalting one's own zeal; it is accepting, just as it is, what the Lord has done. Even though those who accused Paul had position and power, that power could not become the basis of salvation. It is the person who preaches straightforwardly, exactly as the word says, who meets opposition; the person who speaks only of the Cross, leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John, meets no opposition. If we, too, leave out the baptism Jesus received from John or blur the meaning of the Cross and the resurrection in order to gain people's approval, we cannot fully preach the Lord's salvation to those who are suffering because of sin.

Paul had originally been a man who persecuted those who believed in Jesus, but he met the living Savior and became a witness of the Lord. What changed him was not an effort to set up his own righteousness more firmly, but Jesus, who had saved him from sin. Therefore, what we, too, need as we look at the accusers is not to have a sense of superiority, but to believe clearly in the grace of the Lord, who gave life to sinners. We must not lose the heart that seeks to preach that grace to people who need the same salvation.

The path of a witness that continued even in confinement

Festus did not send Paul to Jerusalem right away. Saying, as verse 4 records, that *"Paul should be kept at Caesarea" (Acts 25:4)*, he had those who accused Paul come down together with him and bring their charges. Paul's confinement continued, but

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the petition to kill him on the road was not carried out as they wished, either. The faith that God protects His servants is different from the expectation of always being released at the time we want. Because God takes pleasure in His servants' preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, He protects them in one form or another, and Paul, even as a man in bonds, kept walking the path of a witness that the Lord had entrusted to him.

Let us read verse 5. *"Accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him" (Acts 25:5)*. The petition to hand Paul over was not accepted, and the accusers had to go down to Caesarea and prove the wrongdoing they were claiming. Not all of Paul's danger disappeared, but neither did things go according to the plan they had made to kill him. When the will of those who oppose us looks strong, we easily think that they decide everything. But the path that a servant of the Lord is to walk cannot be measured by their will alone. Rather than fearing them and giving our hearts over to them, we must entrust our lives to the living Lord.

When accusations start again, even past difficulties come to mind, and our hearts easily grow weary. Because Paul was undergoing the same opposition even though the governor had changed, he could not put all his hope in the change of a single person. We, too, have times when old problems arise again. If at such times we first doubt whether the Lord has saved us, the words of those who oppose us come to rule even our faith. Turn your hearts to the word of Jesus, who bore our sins and removed them. The Lord holds us fast with the salvation He has already accomplished, and within that grace we can ask for the help we need now.

Faith that relies on God is not an attitude of pretending not to see threats. Paul was actually in danger of death, and the time of his confinement grew longer, but he did not make those

circumstances a greater standard of judgment than the word of salvation. When opposition arises for us, too, we must first take hold again of the fact that the Lord has removed our sins. Because the Holy Spirit, who confirms the remission of sins, is with us, rather than holding out alone while harboring fear, we can share our hearts with the Church, ask for the Lord's help, and carry out the work entrusted to us.

Before the new governor, the accusers looked for a way to kill Paul, but they could not bring Paul's life and his path as a witness to an end as they had petitioned. Even the fact that he was confined for a long time did not nullify the salvation he had received. Even if opposition and threats appear before us again, Jesus, who removed our sins, is alive; so entrust your hearts to Him and keep the word of salvation even in the midst of fear. I hope you will pass through this time with a faith that is not ashamed of the Lord, who gave us life. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Salvation greater than the heart that fears death

< Acts 25:6–12 >

“And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, ‘Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.’ But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, ‘Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?’ So Paul said, ‘I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.’ Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, ‘You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!’”

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A defense in the face of accusations that could not be proved

Paul was brought out to the judgment seat and surrounded by many people. The words of those who accused him were serious, but they could not prove them, and Paul made his defense, saying that he had done no wrong. Here, we must not understand Paul's boldness as the loudness of his voice or as an unbending character. Because he believed in the Lord, who had saved him from sin, even as he made the facts clear, he could walk the path entrusted to him without being swept away by people's demands. That Lord is the One who, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, which include the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death.

Let us read verse 7. *"The Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove" (Acts 25:7)*. The weight of an accusation and the certainty of evidence are different matters. Since no one can judge that Paul had committed a sin merely from the fact that he was hated by many people, the Bible records that they could not prove it. When we, too, hear words about someone, rather than immediately agreeing with the conviction of the one speaking, we must examine what that person actually did. Criticism directed at those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also be checked by the same standard.

Paul made his defense, saying, *"Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all" (Acts 25:8)*. The Jews hated Paul as a man who destroyed the law and tore down Judaism, but

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preaching God's salvation was not a crime that destroyed the law or went against the order of the world. For God established the law to teach us that we are sinners, and He sent Jesus for the sinners who had come to realize their sin through that law. Therefore, Paul's believing in Jesus was not abandoning God; it was accepting the salvation that God had promised and accomplished. He himself also believed in the very God in whom the Jews believed, and he only preached that the Savior whom that God had sent is Jesus. This is why Paul's faith must be distinguished from the words of the false accusation.

We, too, cannot justify bad deeds while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Anyone who believes in the grace of the Lord, who has given us the remission of sins, must acknowledge and correct his wrongs rather than hide them, and must answer untrue criticism according to the facts. If we do not distinguish between our own wrongs and the opposition we receive because of the gospel, we end up using Paul's boldness as the grounds for our own stubbornness. The exhortation to live uprightly before God and man is not a claim that one has the ability to wash away one's own sins; it is a word telling us to live rightly, as saved people, the life entrusted to us.

Salvation greater than the heart that fears death

Even in the middle of a trial meant to make the facts clear, Festus, wanting to win the favor of the Jews, asked Paul whether he would be judged in Jerusalem. Paul did not go along with that proposal and answered, *"I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged" (Acts 25:10)*. In the preceding passage, those who had asked that Paul be sent to Jerusalem had sought to lie in ambush on the road and kill him. When we read

Paul's answer within this flow of events, we come to know that believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not an attitude of making no judgment at all in the face of danger.

In verse 11, Paul said, *"If I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying" (Acts 25:11)*. It means that if he had actually committed a sin deserving of death, he would not avoid that responsibility. He did not try to overturn the facts in order to protect his own life, nor did he try to escape all responsibility on the grounds that he preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit. At the same time, he clearly said that if the accusations were not true, no one could hand him over to his accusers; so faith that is prepared for death is not the same as accepting an injustice just as it is.

The Jesus on whom Paul relied is not One whose story ended in death. Just as in the Old Testament a sinner who had come to realize his sin through the law laid his hands on the sacrificial offering to pass on his sins, and that offering died in his place, Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sin of mankind transferred to Him once and for all, and because of that sin of the world He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment for the price of sin. The Lord, who rose again from death in three days, delivered us from sin and death and gave us new life. The salvation that held Paul fast was not accomplished by Paul's courage but was the work Jesus accomplished; therefore, even when Paul's life was threatened, the basis of his faith did not collapse.

Our past, present, and future sins are also contained in all the sins of the world that the Lord bore. Therefore, a person who believes in the remission of sins obtained through the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not put off the assurance of salvation until his own deeds become perfect. The Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that this salvation is true and gives us

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strength to serve the Lord. The Holy Spirit could dwell in Paul's heart because Paul had received the remission of sins by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection; and because that Holy Spirit was there, he could stand as a servant of God, prepared even for martyrdom. We, too, rather than striving to become strong people on our own, must rely on the Lord, who gave us life.

Rome, toward which Paul headed by appealing to Caesar

At the end of verse 11, Paul said that he appealed to Caesar. As a Roman, he used the way by which he could receive the emperor's verdict, and the citizenship and the opportunity for a trial that he had were not meaningless things separate from his faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Paul wanted to go to Rome because he believed that if he went to Rome and preached the word of God, it would spread to the whole world; and after this appeal, the road toward Rome actually opened. Rather than clinging only to his own life and drawing back, he looked to the way he would serve the Lord in the days ahead.

The decision Festus made after conferring with the council was *"you have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!" (Acts 25:12)*. Paul did not immediately become a free man but remained a prisoner on his way to be tried. Therefore, this decision was not a promise that his suffering was over; it shows where Paul, a man in bonds, was now to be headed. But his desire to testify of the Lord continued even in circumstances where he was bound in chains. A difficult journey awaited him until he reached Rome, but because of those difficulties neither the salvation Paul believed in nor the work of a witness entrusted

to him disappeared.

We easily expect that the way to serve the Lord will always open up comfortably. When our circumstances do not work out, we think that the work entrusted to us has been blocked; but Paul preached the word even during the time he was waiting for his trial, and in Rome, too, he welcomed those who came to him and taught them the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The fact that the conditions given to us are few does not mean that what we have to preach about the work the Lord has done also becomes less. We who have received the remission of sins already have a salvation to preach, and the Holy Spirit leads us to speak of that fact.

Paul considered both making clear the facts of the accusation and the way he would serve the Lord in the days ahead. He could request a trial before the emperor, and by that way he came to head for Rome, where he had sought to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. For us, too, there are times when an opportunity to explain the facts is given and a way to seek help opens. Use that opportunity honestly while asking the Lord for wisdom. If, when judging what to choose, we weigh only whether it is convenient for ourselves, the heart to serve the salvation received from the Lord is easily pushed aside. We must also examine by which way we will offer our lives to the Lord, who gave us life.

At the trial where many accusations poured out, Paul made his defense according to the facts, and by appealing to Caesar he opened the way he would go. Even at the very moment he faced danger, he kept the desire to serve the Lord, who had saved him. Let us, too, not lose our judgment or hide the word because of fear, but ask Jesus, the Lord of life, for wisdom and use the opportunities given to us honestly. I hope that even in the choices we make today, we may offer our lives to the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in the living Savior whom Paul preached

< Acts 25:13–22 >

“And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus. When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying: ‘There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. To them I answered, “It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.” Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar.’ Then Agrippa said to Festus, ‘I also would like to hear the man myself.’ ‘Tomorrow,’ he said, ‘you shall hear him.’”

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Paul's testimony that the judge did not understand

To Festus, Paul was one prisoner whom the previous governor had left behind. The high priests and the elders asked him to condemn Paul, but when he actually opened the trial, the evil deeds Festus had supposed did not come out. To the one hearing the case, it was not clear what the problem was. Yet in the words with which Festus explains this matter to Agrippa, the content that Paul preached even under threat to his life is revealed. Paul was testifying of the work in which Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, which include the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death.

In verse 16, Festus said, *"It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him" (Acts 25:16),* explaining that an accused person must have an opportunity to answer. In other words, he did not accept the demand to condemn Paul before even hearing what Paul had to say. Earlier, too, Paul had asked whether they would scourge him, a Roman, without a trial; and this time as well, the procedure for making clear whether he was guilty concerned his life and his opportunity to speak.

What was revealed through that opportunity was not any evil deed of Paul's. Festus said, *"They brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed" (Acts 25:18)*. The fact that the accusers held high positions and demanded condemnation did not mean that guilt had been proven. We, too, must examine this difference when we judge someone. In particular, if we put rumors about the gospel of the water and the Spirit ahead of the actual content of the gospel, then even as we

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hear people's criticism, we will fail to come to know what Jesus actually did.

Festus' explanation ties Paul's faith and the accusers' opposition together as a matter of religion. But to Paul, Jesus was not a subject of disputed opinions within a religion; He was the living Savior who had saved Paul from sin. When we explain the gospel of the water and the Spirit to others, we must not lose this center. For if we speak only of the state of the dispute and do not make known Jesus, who accomplished the remission of sins, the listener ends up weighing which side is more right and never meets the word of salvation given to him.

The matter in which Paul affirmed that the One who had died was alive

Verse 19 presents the heart of the case: the accusers *"had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Acts 25:19)*. From the mouth of Festus it sounds like a claim that is hard to understand, but Paul testified of the living Jesus whom he had met. Paul did not regard the Jesus he preached as a figure of the past whom he could no longer meet. Because he knew that the Lord, who had called him and set him up as a witness, is alive, he did not take back that fact even in the face of opposition. When we read the Book of Acts, we see that the apostles were persecuted because they preached the doctrine of the resurrection, and the charge brought against Paul also arose because of that very thing. When we preach the word, too, we must look first to the living Savior rather than to our present difficulties. The fact that Jesus rose again from death is news of life for us, who believe in Him, as well.

That resurrection is not a separate story, apart from the baptism Jesus received from John and from the Cross. Jesus of Nazareth, whom Paul met, came to this earth in a human body, had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross because of those sins, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and rose again from death and is alive even now. So wherever Paul went, there was never a time when he did not speak of the baptism Jesus received from John, and he always spoke of the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and His death and resurrection together. Believing in Jesus, then, includes believing in the work of the Lord, who removed our sins, and the salvation Paul held on to was also the very salvation that this Lord accomplished.

The sins of our entire lifetime are not left out of the sin of the world that Jesus bore. Because the Lord received the judgment in our place because of that sin and rose again from death, we have no reason to strive to complete again by our own efforts the salvation He has already accomplished. Jesus, who overcame death, is the living Savior on whom we can rely today as well. Accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit into your hearts. We do not persuade ourselves that we have no sin; rather, we believe in what Jesus, who took away our sins, actually did.

For a person who has come to know his own sin through the law, God's promise to save sinners is desperately needed. Paul testified that Jesus had fulfilled that promise which the prophets had preached. The fact that Jesus, who called Paul, is alive shows that the hope God has given is not in vain. So if we hear Paul's words merely as a religious opinion, we miss the Savior, who removed our sins and gave us new life. We must get away from comparing who lives a religious life more zealously, and believe in Jesus, whom God sent, as our own Savior.

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The word to unfold before those who want to hear

Festus says that he was uncertain how to look into this matter, and he explains that because Paul appealed to be kept until he received the emperor's decision, *"I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar" (Acts 25:21)*. Paul still had time left to wait for his trial, but God protected in this way His servant who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and even in the meantime someone appeared who would hear the word. For Agrippa said that he wanted to hear Paul's words directly. The conversation that had been explaining Paul's confinement now leads into a conversation that provides Paul an opportunity to speak.

After hearing Festus' explanation, Agrippa said, *"I also would like to hear the man myself" (Acts 25:22)*, wanting to hear directly from Paul; and this becomes the occasion on which, the next day, Paul stands before him and tells of his meeting with Jesus. The audience will now hear directly from Paul the testimony of the resurrection that Festus mentioned, and those who had been deliberating over a prisoner come face to face with the Savior whom that prisoner preaches. In this flow, where an opportunity to hear the word has opened, we, too, must examine what we should open our mouths to say so that people can hear it.

Around us, too, there are people who do not fully know the gospel of the water and the Spirit but are willing to listen to it. The very people who search here and there, again and again, for how they can receive the remission of sins are waiting for us, and if only we preach the remission of sins to them, they receive the remission of sins. What we must preach before them is not how fiercely we have quarreled with other people, but how Jesus removed our sins. Only when we speak accurately of the Lord,

who received baptism from John, and of the blood of the Cross and the resurrection, does the listener also come to know what he must believe. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in hearts that have received the remission of sins, leads us to testify of the salvation we have received just as it is, rather than shutting our mouths under the weight of people's evaluation.

Such testimony requires that we ourselves first believe the word clearly. If we tell others that the Lord removed all sins while our own hearts still rely on our own righteousness, what we preach is easily shaken by even a little opposition. We must confirm the Lord's work through the written word and believe that our own sins, too, were included in that work. Only then can we explain step by step, before those who ask us questions, the salvation the Lord has accomplished, without greatly embellishing our own experiences or filling the gaps with words that lack assurance.

In the case of the prisoner that Festus explained, the One we must not miss is Jesus, who rose again from death, and because that Savior is alive, the testimony of Paul in his confinement also continued. We, too, must take care not to obscure the Savior who gave us life while talking about the circumstances in which we are misunderstood. If someone wants to hear what we have to say, the way of those who believe in the Savior Paul preached is to unfold the same word of life step by step to that person as well, just as we believe the remission of sins accomplished by the living Jesus to be our own salvation. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

There is only one Savior to preach, even to people of high position

< Acts 25:23–27 >

“So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus’ command Paul was brought in. And Festus said: ‘King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.’”

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A prisoner before people arrayed in dignity

In the auditorium were gathered the king, Bernice, the commanders, and the prominent men of the city. These people came in with great pomp, but Paul was a prisoner brought out at Festus' command. If we compare only outward appearances, it seems clear who has the authority to speak and who must be examined. But when we examine this scene according to the word, a different question arises: What sin does the man they intend to examine actually have, and who is the Jesus whom that man preaches?

Let us read verse 23. *"Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp" (Acts 25:23)*. Along with the dignity these people displayed, the Bible records that Paul was brought into that place. Paul was not in a free situation where he could gather people by himself, but now he came to speak before many people of high position. The salvation Paul testified of was the work in which Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, which include the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death. The fact that the situation of the one who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit is humble does not mean that the value of this salvation of which he testifies becomes smaller. What we must examine first is not a person's outward appearance but the content of the word he preaches.

Introducing the demand of the crowd of accusers, Festus said that *"the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer" (Acts 25:24)*. The fact that many people wanted Paul's death and the fact that Paul had committed a sin deserving of death are not the same. It had happened before, too, that when

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Paul testified of Jesus as the Savior, people sought to kill him. Since preaching the Lord's word just as it is is not something that everyone welcomes, we must not decide whether the gospel of the water and the Spirit is right or wrong by looking at people's reactions.

Now Paul came to stand before people whom he usually could not freely go and see. Even the king, the governor, and those who commanded the soldiers gathered at a place where they would hear his words. For Paul it was a matter of being examined, but his defense in the next chapter becomes words that testify of Jesus before these very people. We, too, must not judge only by outward appearances the form in which an opportunity to speak is given to us. For even in a difficult place where we must defend ourselves, we can make known, according to the facts, the Savior whom God sent and the grace we have received from Him. When the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts causes us to testify, the one who speaks, in whatever place it may be, is a witness of the Lord.

An examination that found no sin deserving of death

In verse 25, Festus says, *"I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death" (Acts 25:25)*. After introducing the loud outcry of the accusers, he himself makes clear that he did not find any sin deserving of death. In this way, there was a difference between the label of prisoner attached to Paul and the deeds actually confirmed. The explanation in the preceding passage, that the accusers could not present any evil deeds, also shows the same fact; therefore, we must not judge the situation Paul was in to be his own wrongdoing.

Paul appealed to the emperor, and Festus decided to send him, but there were no certain facts to report to the emperor. The words in verse 26, *"I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him" (Acts 25:26)*, reveal that situation. Even after gathering many people of high position, the charge on which Paul was to be sent was not clear. Festus hoped to obtain something to write after examining him before Agrippa, but what Paul makes known in the next chapter is Jesus, who called him, and the hope that God promised. The governor had no certain facts to report to the emperor, but Paul had facts to testify of, for a witness is a person who testifies that facts are facts.

The fact that Paul did no wrong in this case is not the basis that accomplished his remission of sins. For a trial makes clear whether the words that accused him are true, but washing away the sins of a person's entire lifetime is not accomplished by a human verdict. Paul was a man who opposed Jesus even while living according to strict teaching, and he met the living Lord and believed in the grace that had saved him. We, too, must not think that we have resolved our own sins before God merely because we think we have done nothing wrong to people. Even people of high position or those praised for upright living cannot wash away their own sins by their own strength. That is why the salvation Jesus accomplished is needed both by the people of high position who would hear Paul's words and by us, who hear the word as we look at him.

The clear salvation that a witness in bonds possessed

Jesus did not save sinners merely to the extent of acknowledging people's innocence. When Jesus received

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baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all, and because of those sins He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving the judgment in our place. And He rose again from death and delivered us from sin and death. Because the Lord bore and removed all the sins we commit throughout our lives, we can stand before God without sin through the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

However many words a person may have to defend himself before people, his own sins do not disappear by his own words. Conversely, failing to obtain a sufficient opportunity to explain before people does not make the remission of sins the Lord has given disappear. The Holy Spirit is with the hearts that have received the remission of sins and testifies that the Lord's salvation is true. Whether before people of high position or before people who misunderstand us, what we must hold on to is that salvation. When we make known Jesus, who gave us life, rather than striving to exalt ourselves and be recognized, what we preach also becomes clear.

Let us read verse 27. *"For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him" (Acts 25:27).* Festus knew that sending a prisoner without charges was unreasonable. In Paul's bonds there was thus the unresolved problem of the trial, but in the salvation Paul believed in there was content to preach. The defense in the next chapter, which makes known who Jesus is and how He called Paul, turns our eyes from that unclear charge to the living Savior.

When we live as witnesses of the Lord, we, too, must not think that all misunderstandings must first be cleared up and everyone must acknowledge us before we can open our mouths. Answer according to the facts and keep your life upright, but when there is an opportunity to preach the word of salvation,

make known what the Lord has done. If we fill that opportunity with words meant to vent our own feelings, the listener comes to know only our sense of being wronged; but if we testify of the Lord, he comes to hear the word by which he can be saved from sin. The boldness we need comes not from an attitude that disregards the other person, but from a heart that clearly believes in salvation.

People arrayed in dignity gathered in the auditorium, but those gathered in that place were also all people who needed to hear the salvation God has given. The gospel of the water and the Spirit preached to people of high position is not different from the gospel preached to ordinary people. The Savior on whom we rely is only One, and He is Jesus, who bore the sins of all people. Therefore, rather than adjusting the content of the truth to gain people's approval, we must explain the Lord's work clearly and honestly so that the listener can understand it.

Those who came into the auditorium arrayed in dignity had Paul called in and set before them, but from that prisoner they come to hear the word of salvation that they, too, needed. For human authority cannot wash away our sins, and Jesus, whom Paul believed in and preached, has saved us completely. When you face people of high position, remember that there is a Savior to preach to them as well. Do not blur the truth to gain that person's approval, and I hope you will clearly testify of the work of Jesus, who gave life to all of us. ✉

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CHAPTER

26

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The grace that raised up a persecutor as a witness has saved us too

< Acts 26:1–23 >

"Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You are permitted to speak for yourself.' So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: 'I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead? Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote

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against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities. While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So I said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.'"

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The confession of a man who had been a zealous opponent

When Paul, before Agrippa, received permission to speak for himself, he testified of how he had lived and how he had met Jesus. This defense was not so much words defending himself as a testimony of salvation that made clear how he had met the Lord. He did not use that opportunity to speak badly of those who had accused him, but made it known that he, too, had once been a person who opposed the name of Jesus. Paul, who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and Saul, who persecuted that gospel, are not two different people. When we know the reason the same person changed so greatly, we turn around from believing in our own zeal and come to look to the Lord, who saved sinners.

Paul said that from his youth he had lived the strict life of a Pharisee, and that this background was a fact people knew. However, having learned strict teachings was not the same as having been saved from his own sins. The law makes us realize that we are sinners before God; it does not remove that sin. To remove that sin, Jesus came and, by receiving baptism from John, had all the sins of the world, which included our sins, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death. Even a person who knows the law can oppose the salvation God has accomplished if he does not believe in this Jesus as the Savior. Paul speaks of his past not to boast of his religious career, but to make clear his error of not having known the Lord even in the midst of such a life.

Let us read verse 9. *"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9)*. Paul zealously did what he regarded as right, but that thinking

was directed toward opposing Jesus. He received authority from the chief priests, shut up believers in prison and punished them, and went even to other cities to persecute them. At that time Paul persecuted the Church not as one who did not know God, but as one who claimed to believe in God well. We must see from Paul's confession that our own thoughts cannot be called right even before God merely because they are firm. The standard of faith is not the strength of our conviction, but the word God has spoken.

Paul said that even now he was being examined because he hoped for what God had promised to the fathers, and he asked why they could not believe that God raises the dead. His testifying of Jesus was not an act of abandoning the God of the fathers, but an act of believing in the Savior whom that very God the Jews believed in had sent according to His promise. We must not reject the Lord's salvation in order to hold on to familiar religious thoughts. Like Paul, we must acknowledge that our own judgment can be wrong, and we must confirm in the word what God has actually accomplished.

The Lord, who met the persecutor and raised him up as a witness

On the road to Damascus, at midday, Paul saw a light brighter than the sun, fell to the ground, and heard a voice calling him. The Lord asked Saul why he was persecuting Him. When Paul asked who He was, the answer he heard was *"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 26:15)*. The Jesus whom Paul had thought must be done away with was alive, and that very Lord met Paul. The reason Paul cannot boast of his own zeal lies in this encounter.

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Jesus told Paul to rise, and said that He had appeared to him to make him a minister and a witness. Paul was not a person who became a witness of the Lord by creating his own qualifications. It was because the grace of the Lord, who met the one who had opposed Him and sought to use him, came first. Just as the words *"to make you a minister and a witness" (Acts 26:16)* in verse 16 show, the One who raised him up as a witness is Jesus. Since a witness is a person who tells exactly what he has seen, at the center of a witness there must be what the Lord who called him has done, rather than his own ability.

That mission was to be sent to Israel and to the Gentiles to cause them to return to God. Verse 18 makes this clear: "*That they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18)*. What people need is not to make their religious zeal stronger, but to receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus. Those who have turned to Jesus are made holy by the salvation the Lord has accomplished, and they receive the inheritance given to those who belong to God. It is not that they enter that company by washing away their sins through their own deeds; they enter by faith.

How was this remission of sins accomplished? Just as in the Old Testament hands were laid on the sacrificial offering to pass sin on to it, and that offering died, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Because Jesus bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us. Paul's sin and the sins of our whole lifetime are also included in that sin of the world. Therefore, the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to lay down the heart that relies on its own deeds and to accept what Jesus has done.

Preach the salvation you have received according to the word

Paul was not disobedient to what had been shown from heaven, and he preached in Damascus, in Jerusalem, throughout the land of Judea, and to the Gentiles. The exhortation to repent and return to God carries the meaning of turning around from the direction in which one had been believing wrongly. The person who had regarded his own zeal as righteousness and opposed the Lord was now preaching to people that they should believe in the Savior. We, too, must not entrust our salvation to efforts to remove our own sins, but must return to the word that Jesus has removed our sins.

The words telling them to do works befitting repentance must also be heard within the flow of this turning around. While claiming to believe in the Lord, one cannot call a wrong life right just as it is; but it is not that one obtains the remission of sins after first making one's life perfect. The Holy Spirit is with the heart that has received the remission of sins, and He leads it to follow the Lord and to serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If the life of a person whose sins have been removed goes astray, the credibility of the gospel he preaches may also be undermined. Therefore, in gratitude for the grace we have received from the Lord, we must speak honestly, refrain from harming others, and live as those who have been saved should in the place entrusted to us.

Because of such testimony, Paul was seized in the temple and faced the danger of death, but he said that with the help of God he stood to this day. He did not exalt himself by saying that he had survived because he was strong, but made it clear that God had helped him. Even this moment in which Paul stood before the king was within that help. We, too, when we look back on

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the road we have traveled while serving the Lord, should give thanks to the Lord, who gave us the remission of sins and upheld our faith, rather than merely calculating our own labors. That gratitude becomes the basis for carrying out the work entrusted to us from now on.

Paul made it clear that he was testifying of what the prophets and Moses had said would surely come to pass. The end of that content leads to the word *"that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23)*. The law of Moses taught the sacrifice in which a sinner passed his sin on to the sacrificial offering and that offering died in his place, and the prophets spoke in advance of the Christ who would in this way bear the sin of the world and die in the place of sinners. Therefore, the suffering of Christ that Paul preached was not a suffering separated from the baptism Jesus received from John. He shed His blood on the Cross because, before that, there was the work of His having the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and that suffering led on to His rising again from death. Preaching the Savior of suffering and resurrection was not a new idea Paul had made up; it was preaching the salvation God had promised. We, too, when we speak of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must not try to prove that our own emotions and experiences are right, but must make clear the work Jesus accomplished according to the word.

That salvation is not news needed by only one particular group. God, who sent Paul to Israel and to the Gentiles, is not only the God of the Jews but also the God of the Gentiles, and He has removed all the sins of the people of the whole world. Like the path of Paul, who testified of the same Jesus before both small and great, we, too, must preach the salvation we have received from the Lord to anyone, exactly as it is.

Paul, standing before Agrippa, made clear both his past of opposing Jesus and his encounter with the living Lord. Acknowledging that his own zeal had been headed in the wrong direction, he testified of Jesus, who had accepted him as he was. We, too, must look back to see whether we are pushing away the word of the Lord in order to hold on to familiar thoughts. Turn around from the stubbornness that insists you are right, and believe in Jesus, who removed our sins. The grace of the Lord, who saved the persecutor and raised him up as a witness, is the same as the grace He has bestowed on us; so let us also testify, without hiding anything, of the salvation we ourselves have received. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Paul's heart, longing for the salvation of all his listeners

< Acts 26:24–29 >

"Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, 'Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!' But he said, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.' Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You almost persuade me to become a Christian.' And Paul said, 'I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.'"

True words made clear even in the face of a loud outcry

When Paul testified of the suffering and resurrection of Jesus, Festus said with a loud voice that he was mad. It was not that Festus had found out that Paul had committed some crime; he cried out like that because he could not accept the word Paul was

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preaching. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, preached straightforwardly, exactly as the word says, meets this kind of opposition anywhere. However, instead of being carried along by that outcry and raising his own voice along with it, Paul made it clear that he was speaking true words. In this passage we see what we must hold fast to when we encounter words that oppose the gospel. The fact of the salvation we are preaching must be clear, rather than our desire to be acknowledged by the other person.

Let us read verse 25. *"I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason" (Acts 26:25)*. While keeping the courtesy of addressing Festus properly, Paul did not take back what he had preached. It is not that faith is bold only when one treats the other person roughly, nor is there any need to change the content of the word on the grounds that one is treating others politely. Since the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach is not an assertion produced by being swept away by emotion, but the salvation God has accomplished, we must make its content clear with calm and clear words.

Paul did not speak of a way of salvation that differs from person to person, but testified of the Jesus of whom Moses and the prophets spoke. The fact that the Christ whom God had promised suffered and rose again from death was the center of his testimony. Even if the listeners strongly oppose it, this fact does not thereby become wrong. We, too, when we meet opposition while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must not blur the content of salvation or exaggerate our own experiences because we are pressed by the other person's words; we must make clear by the written word what the Lord has done.

To do so, our hearts must first stand clearly on the word of the Lord. If we ourselves are not clear, how can we preach to others? If we only tell others to believe without knowing how

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Jesus removed our sins, the content we preach easily becomes blurred in the face of questions or opposition. Saying that we believe in the Lord is not a vague liking or a religious habit; it is accepting as fact the salvation Jesus accomplished by having all the sins of the world, which included our sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, by shedding His blood on the Cross and receiving the judgment for those sins in our place, and by rising again from death. The boldness of a person who has received the remission of sins comes not from a talent for speaking well, but from believing in that salvation with the heart.

The Savior to be met in the words of the prophets

Paul said that Agrippa knew about these things, and he testified boldly to the king. Just as the words *"this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26)* in verse 26 say, he did not put forward what he was preaching as a private thought that no one could confirm. He was making clear what Jesus came and did, and the promise the prophets spoke of. We must observe that Paul testifies in this way on the basis of the word, and we must not turn that boldness into a self-confidence that whatever we ourselves say is right.

Let us read verse 27. *"King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe" (Acts 26:27)*. Paul turned the king's attention to the words of the prophets. Earlier he had made it clear that he was testifying of what the prophets and Moses had said, that is, the suffering and resurrection of the Christ. Those who knew the Old Testament knew the sacrifice in which sin was passed on to the sacrificial offering and the offering was made to die in the sinner's place; so if only they

accepted the Christ whom the prophets had promised, they could also know how He bore sin. Therefore, the question of whether the king believed the prophets was an exhortation urging him to accept that Savior according to the word he already knew. We, too, must not keep our distance from the Jesus whom that word conveys while claiming to know the word. We must believe the work of the Lord, who gave life to sinners, as our own salvation.

The Jesus in whom Paul believed is the One who received baptism from John at the Jordan River and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Because Jesus bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. The sins of our whole lifetime are also included in that sin of the world. Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not trying again by our own strength to remove the sins the Lord has borne and removed, but accepting that salvation in our hearts.

If we leave out the baptism Jesus received from John, how He had our sins passed on to Him becomes blurred; and if we leave out the blood of the Cross and the vicarious judgment, how He paid the price of those sins becomes blurred. The faith that believes in the Savior who rose again from death accepts this work of salvation without separating any part of it. We must not reduce or change the Lord's work on the grounds of making it easier to hear. For what a soul needs in order to be delivered from sin is not the skill of the speaker, but the content of the salvation that removed sin.

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That all the listeners may obtain the same salvation

Let us look at verse 28. *"And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian – ASV" (Acts 26:28)*. At that time Paul answered that, whether with few words or many, he wished to God that all who heard him might become as he was. For this gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear news by which, even with few words, one receives the remission of sins right away, as long as one knows it accurately and believes. Even after hearing the king's reply, Paul's concern lay in the salvation of those listeners. To him, the listeners were not people to be attended to only after he had finished his defense, but souls whose salvation he had to long for throughout his testimony. Paul, who was on trial, had many things he needed to attend to at once, but he urged the souls before him to believe in Jesus.

Here is the word of verse 29. *"I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds –ASV" (Acts 26:29)*. Paul did not wish them to be bound as he was; he wished that they, too, would believe in the Savior he believed in and receive the remission of sins. The salvation he had received was grace needed equally by the king, by the governor, and by those listening together. Therefore, this wish must not be read as meaning that we should acquire a strong character or high learning like Paul's.

Becoming as Paul is means having the same faith as Paul, that is, the faith that believes in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. That faith accepts, instead of our own efforts, the remission of sins the Lord has already accomplished as our own salvation; and in the heart

that has thus received the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit is present as a gift and confirms that our sins have been washed away. If, while looking at Paul's life, we only count the talents we lack, we will miss the grace of salvation that is given to anyone. Believe the word that the Lord who saved Paul has also borne all our sins. The life of a witness comes, first of all, from the faith that receives that salvation.

This faith also makes us care about the salvation of others. When a person who has been delivered from the burden of his own sins meets a soul who is still suffering because of sin, he comes to want to preach the work of the Lord who saved him. Just as Paul wished that all people would be saved, including even Festus, who had opposed his words, we, too, must not regard a person who opposes us merely as someone to defeat with words. Since he, too, needs the word by which he can believe in Jesus, who has washed away his sins, we must preach the fact of salvation rather than putting our emotions first.

We cannot pick out in advance who will believe, but we can know clearly what to preach. We must make known, without leaving anything out, the Savior who bore the sins of all people; and it is not only those close to us or those of high position who need the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Do not regard one person's question as a bother, but explain the word so that he can understand it. More important than whether our explanation is long or short is whether the salvation the Lord has accomplished is contained in that explanation, and whether that person has come to know what he must believe.

Even after Festus's loud outcry, the wish that remained in Paul was the salvation of all the listeners, including Festus. When our hearts are captured by opposing words, we easily forget the fact that the other person is someone who needs to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Remembering the

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grace of the Lord who saved you, bring that soul before God. We must be able to ask that the people who hear our words today may also receive the remission of sins. Just as Paul wished to God for the salvation of his listeners, I hope that you, too, will make the word clear so that the listener may enjoy together with us the grace Paul received, and that you will continue in prayer and labor for that person. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Keep serving the Lord in circumstances of being in chains

< Acts 26:30–32 >

“When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, ‘This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.’ Then Agrippa said to Festus, ‘This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.’”

A trial that found no charge, and the chains that remained

The king, the governor, and those who sat with them, having heard Paul’s words, rose from their seats. They went aside and said that Paul had done nothing deserving of death or chains. Then was Paul soon to return as a free man? Agrippa said that he could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar, and Paul still remained a person headed for Rome. In this conclusion, where the judgment that there was no charge against him and the circumstance of his confinement exist together, we must examine what Paul relied on to keep serving the Lord.

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Let us read verse 31. *"This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains" (Acts 26:31)*. This is the judgment actually made by the people who heard Paul's defense. Although he was a man who had been accused, they could not find in the words he spoke any crime for which he should be killed or bound. Since Paul was in fact innocent but came to go all the way to Rome as a prisoner because of the accusation of the Jews, we, too, when we read about Paul, must not take his appearance as a prisoner as our first basis for presuming that he must have done some great evil. For the Bible records the words of accusation and what was actually confirmed, distinguishing between them.

This judgment means that Paul had not committed a crime deserving of death in that case. We must not turn this into a statement that Paul never committed any sin before God throughout his whole life. Since Paul had earlier confessed that he had opposed the name of Jesus and persecuted those who believed, he, too, needed the salvation of the remission of sins. That salvation was accomplished by Jesus, who, through the baptism He received from John, had all the sins of the world, which included not only Paul's sins but also our sins, transferred to Him once and for all, shed His blood on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and rose again from death. When we distinguish innocence in a trial from the salvation of the soul, we can give thanks to Jesus, who saved us, without exalting as our own righteousness the fact that we are blameless before people.

However, even after the people rose from their seats and withdrew, Paul did not immediately obtain freedom. Just because someone has come to understand our situation does not mean that our circumstances are resolved that very day. At such times, our hearts easily grow weary as we look only for more words of explanation. We must turn our eyes to the Lord whom

Paul preached, and see what Paul believed that enabled him to urge his listeners toward salvation even while he was bound.

The basis of the remission of sins that Paul believed in

What held Paul's heart was not so much the king's goodwill or the assessment that he was innocent as the Lord who had saved him. He wished to God that all who heard him might become as he was, except for his chains. The wish *"I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am –ASV" (Acts 26:29)* in verse 29 contains the assurance of the salvation he had already received. As to what those chains were for, Paul later said this in Rome: *"For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20)*. Release from the chains still lay ahead, but the grace of the remission of sins was something he had already received. That is why, even in the position of being examined, he could urge his listeners toward the same salvation.

Where did the sins Paul committed go? When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sin of all mankind passed on to Him once and for all, and both Paul's sins and the sins we commit throughout our lives were contained in that sin of the world. Because Jesus bore that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death and became Paul's Savior and our Savior as well. Therefore, the remission of sins is not obtained by having one's innocence acknowledged by a judge, but is received by the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart.

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This difference is also important for us when we hear unjust words. When we must clear up a misunderstanding about ourselves, we should answer truthfully, but we must not seek people's recognition in order to remove the sin in our own hearts. For people do not know all our inner circumstances, and even the good deeds we put forward cannot wash away the sins of our whole lifetime. If we believe that the Lord Himself bore and removed the sin of the world, then even if people's assessment has not yet changed, the remission of sins we have received before God is certain.

In the heart that has received the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit is present as a gift and confirms the Lord's salvation. Therefore, the way we gain strength to serve the Lord also does not lie in dressing ourselves up as perfect people. While acknowledging our shortcomings, we must believe in the righteousness Jesus accomplished, ask for His help, and carry out the work entrusted to us. The reason Paul lived as a witness of the Lord even while going through hardships was not that his own deeds were flawless, but that he believed in the living Savior and received the help of the Holy Spirit.

Do not merely wait for the time of release, but serve the Lord

In verse 32, Agrippa said, *"This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (Acts 26:32)*. Although the judgment was given that Paul could have been set free, there also remained the circumstance that he had already appealed to Caesar. So his story does not close with a scene of release, but continues into the journey toward Rome. We must also look at the road that remained for Paul after the king and the governor

had withdrawn. For the end of people's conversation did not mean the end of the work of salvation that the Lord would cause to be preached through him.

When those who accused him opposed him, Paul appealed to Caesar, and he wanted to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in Rome as well. When we read about where he was going, we must remember this desire as well. Hardships of storm and shipwreck awaited him on that road, but in the end he reached Rome, met people, and preached the word. He was not a person who thought he could serve the Lord only after his present bonds came to an end, but a person who, even in his bound circumstances, preached salvation according to the opportunities the Lord gave.

Paul had earlier explained his life by saying, *"Having obtained help from God, to this day I stand" (Acts 26:22)*. That he stood before the king and spoke was also something brought about by the help of God, and on the road afterward, too, he had to rely on the same God. If we think that we endured past hardships only by our own will, we, too, will weigh only our own strength in the face of hardships to come. When we remember the Lord who has given us life until now and led us by the word, we can ask Him for help even in circumstances that are not yet resolved.

For a person who serves the Lord, waiting is not empty time in which nothing can be done. While waiting for his trial, Paul testified of Jesus before many people, and in Rome as well he taught the word to those who came to him. The things we can do according to our circumstances differ from one another, but the fact that a saved person has a word to preach and souls to look after is the same. Rather than merely counting the limitations placed on us, we must explain to the people we meet now the salvation Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received

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from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and find service that we can do together with the church.

Living this way does not mean liking to be treated unjustly or not seeking rightful help. Paul, too, made his defense truthfully and used the path of appeal given to him. While answering false accusations with facts and seeking the help we need, we must not set our whole hearts only on when our circumstances will be resolved. If we believe that we are people who belong to the Lord, we can offer our lives to the Lord even now, and with that faith we can help the brothers and sisters who are going through hardships together with us.

The king and the governor withdrew, saying that Paul had committed nothing deserving of death, but they could not release Paul from his chains. If we ask only whether he obtained freedom that day, this conclusion looks frustrating. But Paul had the remission of sins he had already received and the word of salvation he would preach from then on. You, too, must not put off offering your life to the Lord with the thought that all your problems must first come to an end. To rely on Jesus, who removed our sins, and to respond to that grace with the service we can do even today, while limitations still remain, is the way the bound Paul showed us. ✉

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CHAPTER

27

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Keep your desire for the gospel during a slow voyage

< Acts 27:1–8 >

"And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment. So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care. When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board. When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea."

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Heading for Rome as a prisoner

The road to Rome that Paul had longed for had begun, but he was not a free traveler. He boarded the ship together with other prisoners after being delivered to a centurion, and he could not decide by his own will alone where to stay or when to leave. This scene, in which a man who wanted to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit sets out on his way as a prisoner, shows that we must not judge a life of serving the Lord only by its outward circumstances. Paul's body was bound, but the salvation he believed in and the word he sought to preach did not change.

Let us read verse 1. *"They delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment" (Acts 27:1)*. The fact that Paul was with prisoners does not mean that the gospel of the water and the Spirit that he preached became a crime. In the earlier trials, his accusers could not prove their claims, and no crime deserving death was found either; but Paul appealed to Caesar and so came to go to Rome. In fact he was not guilty of any crime, but because of this gospel he had become a prisoner bound in chains, going to stand trial before Caesar. Therefore, we must not look only at his situation as a prisoner, but must also see why he was accused and what word he preached.

Rome was the place Paul most wanted to go after he met the Lord. This was because he believed that if he preached the word of God there, it would spread to the whole world; and what he wanted was not to exalt his own name in a famous place, but to preach the Lord's salvation to people who did not yet know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Because the Savior whom both Jews and Gentiles need is the same Jesus Christ, Paul could not stop at preaching the word only to the people he was familiar with. When we serve the gospel, we too must set our hearts not

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on how well we will be treated, but on which souls need to hear this word.

Then what is it that Paul sought to preach, even while enduring such a road? It is not a teaching that sin decreases if human zeal or religious rituals are added. When the law exposes our sins, we come to know that we cannot become righteous by ourselves, but God sent a Savior for such sinners. That Savior, Jesus, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our entire lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and accomplished the remission of sins by rising again from death. Because Paul believed that Jesus, who had saved him, is also the Savior of all other people, he kept in his heart the desire to preach that salvation even in his bound circumstances.

The road we travel together by the same salvation

The salvation Paul sought to preach was not something he made up, but something God had promised beforehand through the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets. Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John; in the body in which He had borne those sins, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving the judgment for sin in our place; and He rose again from death, delivered us from sin and death, and gave us new life. Since the sins of our entire lifetime are also included in that sin of the world, faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit leaves no room for us to have to deal with our own sins again by our own strength. What Paul would preach wherever he went was this fact of salvation.

Those who believed in the Lord together with Paul also accepted this salvation. The word Paul would preach was not knowledge that he alone knew, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which those who had received the remission of sins would believe and serve together. Because the souls he would meet in Rome also needed the same news of salvation, the labor of going with him on the road there and caring for the needs of the worker was also precious. This is also the reason we unite for the gospel. If we know that the Lord has given us life by the same grace, we cannot dismiss the hardships of those who preach the word as something that has nothing to do with us.

There were also people who went along on this road; the record in verse 2, *"Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us" (Acts 27:2)*, shows that Paul had companions on his voyage. Just as there was someone who boarded the ship with him even though he set out as a prisoner delivered to a centurion, on our road of serving the Lord there are also people who believe the word and labor together with us. Rather than closing our hearts and trying to handle every hardship alone, we must be thankful for those who believe with us, help one another in the work each has been entrusted with, and look carefully at the road we are to travel together.

Serving together is also shown in understanding the other person's circumstances. This is because what Paul needed as he set out was not only opportunities to speak, but also time to care for his body and regain strength. Verse 3 records, *"Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care" (Acts 27:3)*. Paul's custody had not ended, but permission was given for him to meet his friends and receive hospitality. Seeing that there was such help even on the road of suffering, we too must not take lightly the actual needs of those who serve with us.

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The salvation that does not change even on a slow journey

After leaving Sidon, the ship could not sail straight ahead against the wind, so it sailed under the shelter of the coast of Cyprus. After crossing the sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia and arriving at the city of Myra, they boarded another ship bound for Italy, but changing ships did not end the difficulties of the voyage. The word that records this process in order shows that the journey to Rome was not something accomplished immediately after a single resolution. That Paul wanted to go to Rome and that the road there was easy are two different matters.

Verse 7 records, *"When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus" (Acts 27:7)*. Even while it went slowly, the ship continued its voyage, but the wind did not change according to their will; passing Salmone and following the coast of Crete, they took difficult steps again and again until they reached Fair Havens. On this road that Paul actually traveled, we see that having a desire to serve the Lord does not mean that everything in reality will speed up to fit our plans.

When things are not accomplished at the time we want, we sometimes feel as if even our faith has gone wrong. But what we must examine first is not how quickly things get done, but what I believe and by which will I am living. The fact that Jesus removed our sins through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection is complete even in the time of waiting, and the Holy Spirit, who confirms the remission of sins, leads our hearts to the Lord. Rather than giving our hearts over to impatience, we must confirm the written word and carry out the service we can do today.

While the journey goes slowly like this, it is easy for the hardships right in front of us to feel greater than the destination.

Verse 8 records, *"Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens" (Acts 27:8)*, and even when the ship reached Fair Havens with such difficulty, the salvation Paul sought to preach did not change. The hardships of the voyage had to be endured in reality, and the salvation he had received was a fact to keep in his heart even during that time. If we meet brothers and sisters who are now laboring without rest, rather than speaking as if we knew the outcome, we must hold on to that faith together with them. That is, rather than urging them to hurry and get the work done, we listen to what they are laboring for, ask the Lord for His help, and share the burdens that need to be shared.

Here the responsibility given to us also becomes clear. In those days it sometimes took one, two, or three months just to reach one place, so compared with the time when Paul preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, now is a very good age for preaching the gospel. We must not give up because the waiting is long; rather, we must look after those who are with us, rightly order the life entrusted to us, and look for opportunities to serve the word. Even if we cannot determine every circumstance of the road, we can decide before the word with what heart we will follow the Lord today. Just as Paul needed kindness, other workers also need actual help, and the small service of each one of us can become strength for others to keep walking by faith.

Paul, who had set out after being delivered to a centurion, was still a prisoner even at Fair Havens, and the road to Rome still remained before him. But the slow ship could not diminish the value of the salvation he sought to preach. We too must not regard as small the grace we have received from the Lord because of waiting. Look after those who go with you, and share the labor needed today. I hope that you will keep the desire to

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preach Jesus, who saved you from sin, and that even if it is slow, you will rely on the Lord and walk the road entrusted to you. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

I believe God that it will be just as it was told me

< Acts 27:9–26 >

“Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, ‘Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.’ Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there. When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon. So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the

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ship. On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up. But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, 'Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you." Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island.'"

The tempestuous wind that came after the gentle south wind

The people on the ship saw the south wind blowing softly and thought they had obtained their desire, but not long after, they were driven by a tempestuous wind. On the same sea their circumstances changed drastically, and they could not even steer the ship in the direction they wanted. While they struggled for many days, even the hope of surviving disappeared, but Paul stood in the midst of the people and told them to take heart. What made those words possible was not that he had seen in advance the wind dying down, but that he believed the word God had spoken to him.

When sailing became dangerous, Paul warned that there would be loss even of their lives, but the centurion believed the

words of the helmsman and the owner of the ship more. There were also more people who said they should go to another place, because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in. When the south wind blew softly after they had made this judgment, they considered their own opinion to be right, but that judgment could not remove the danger that would follow. In the order of these events, we see that we cannot consider ourselves to know everything ahead only by the advantages visible to our eyes now.

The sailors held out by throwing away the cargo and the ship's tackle, but verse 20 records, *"When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up" (Acts 27:20)*. The hope said to have disappeared here was the hope of the people on the ship surviving physically; it does not mean that even the Lord's salvation had disappeared. This is because the work in which Jesus had all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and removed our sins by rising again from death is not canceled, no matter how great the physical danger becomes.

Paul, too, did not comfort the people from a safe place outside the storm. Since he was on the same ship as they were and was going through the same danger, Paul's words were not light consolation from someone who knows nothing of suffering. Those who serve the Lord also struggle greatly in suffering and need comfort, and Paul, too, served the gospel of the water and the Spirit and served the Lord while receiving God's comfort in the midst of extremely hard and painful tribulations. Rather than easily saying to struggling brothers and sisters that they will be fine because they have faith, we too must look after the

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hardships they are going through together with them and help their hearts with the word God has spoken.

The God to whom Paul belonged and whom he served

After saying that they would have escaped the loss if they had listened to his advice earlier, Paul now urged them to take heart. While stating truthfully the loss that had come from the wrong judgment, he did not end there by rebuking the people. Verse 22 records, *"There will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship" (Acts 27:22)*. Since it was a word saying that the ship would be damaged but their lives would be preserved, Paul's reassurance was different from the optimism that there would be no loss at all.

Calling Him *"the God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23)*, Paul told them of the word that an angel of this God had conveyed while standing by him. To Paul, God was not someone to seek briefly in order to avoid difficult things, but the Lord who had saved him and called him as a witness; and Paul was a person who believed that his life was no longer his own, but Christ's. The faith that we belong to God turns us away from the heart that tries to decide our own lives and futures by our own will alone. Because those who belong to God are people who have already come to live by the Lord's grace, they can rely on the One who holds them up even in difficult things.

Paul became a person who belonged to God in this way not because of his own zeal, but because Jesus had delivered him from sin. Paul's sins were also included in all the sins of the world that were passed on to Jesus, the Son of God, once and for all when He received baptism from John; and because the Lord

had borne those sins, He received the judgment for sin in Paul's place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and He rose again from death and gave Paul new life. The sins of our entire lifetime are also included in that sin of the world. Because we, who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, belong to the Lord who has given us life, we can rely on that Lord even when our own strength is exhausted.

The Holy Spirit was with Paul, who had received the remission of sins, and he lived serving the Lord with the help of the Holy Spirit. What we also need is not the ability to force out strong words in the face of a crisis, but a heart that clearly believes the work of the Lord who saved us. The Holy Spirit confirms that our sins have been washed away and helps us to live according to the word. Even if we cannot explain every situation, we can believe in the salvation God has accomplished, ask the Lord for help, and carry out the work entrusted to us today.

The faith that it will be just as He has said

The word conveyed by the angel of God contained the rest of Paul's road; verse 24 says, *"You must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you" (Acts 27:24)*. Paul had to stand before Caesar, and the lives of those sailing with him would also be preserved. Rome, where he was going, was still far away and the waves were still fierce, but God had not forgotten the purpose of that road or the people who were with him.

Paul did not keep the word he had heard only in his own heart, but conveyed it to the people on the ship. This was because what

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the people who were afraid, unable to find a way to survive, needed was what God had said about this situation. Look at Paul's attitude: rather than rejoicing only in the safety of his own life, he urged those sailing with him to take heart as well. If we too have received the Lord's salvation and comfort, we must not stop at only our own hearts being at ease, but must look after those who do not yet know the word or who are afraid.

Verse 25 clearly shows the reason Paul believed. *"I believe God that it will be just as it was told me" (Acts 27:25)*. Paul did not insist that God would surely accomplish the outcome he hoped for; rather, he believed that it would be just as God had said. The object and basis of his faith were not his own wishes, but God, who had spoken. People tend to believe easily according to their own thoughts rather than according to the word, but true faith is believing according to God's written word. Today, we too must not reduce or alter the salvation that Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection to fit our own thoughts; rather, we must believe it, confirming in the written word what the Lord has accomplished.

We must not stretch the promise given on this voyage into saying that the bodies of all believers will always suffer no harm at all. What was conveyed to Paul was a specific word about his road to stand before Caesar and about the people sailing with him. The remission of sins given to all of us in common is based on the perfect work of salvation of Jesus that we examined earlier. Therefore, rather than demanding as our own experience a special scene that someone else received, we must clearly believe in the salvation that has already been written down and given to us.

Paul also conveyed the word that they would run aground on an island. The word he had heard contained both the hardships

they would go through and the promise to keep their lives. Therefore, the fact that the ship kept being tossed and the people were growing weary did not become evidence that God was not keeping His word. Paul, too, had to pass through those hardships within the faith of one who had heard the promise. We too must not judge the salvation God has accomplished all over again by our present suffering alone. Keep in your heart the word that says the Lord has removed our sins, and lay your fearful circumstances before Him just as they are and ask for His help.

Both the gentle south wind and the tempestuous wind changed people's hearts, but the basis on which Paul told them to take heart was the word God had spoken, and even while the ship was still being tossed, he believed that it would be just as that word said. If we wait only to see things turn out as we hope, our hope also wavers every time circumstances change, so we must examine what is holding our hearts now. Those who have confirmed in the word what Jesus, who removed our sins, has accomplished can, with hearts that believe in that salvation, lay their fears before the Lord and also comfort those who are with them. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Give thanks to God first even when danger remains

< Acts 27:27–44 >

"Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, 'Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.' Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, 'Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.' And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and

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threw out the wheat into the sea. When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land."

Paul's counsel that enabled them to survive together

On the fourteenth night, the ship was still being driven up and down on the sea. Land seemed to be near, but there was a danger of running aground on the rocks, and while they were waiting for day to come, the sailors let down a small boat and tried to escape. Even after they had heard God's promise to keep their lives, actual dangers and things that had to be done still remained. Paul attended to those things and spoke for the lives of those sailing with him, and in the end they all reached land without a single person missing.

The sailors let down the skiff into the sea under pretense of putting out anchors, but Paul informed the centurion and the soldiers that they were trying to leave. Let us read verse 31.

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"Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31). Here, being saved means the people surviving in the storm, and it must be read as distinct from the salvation of the remission of sins, in which Jesus had all the sins of the world transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for those sins in our place by shedding His blood on the Cross, and removed our sins by rising again from death. Paul did not simply let the men who handled the ship leave, and the soldiers cut the ropes of the skiff, removing the way for those men to escape on their own. It was not that Paul failed to watch for the dangers of reality because he had heard the promise.

Paul did not merely assign tasks to the people; he also looked after their weary bodies. Because people who had not eaten for a long time needed to gain strength from food in order to reach land, he urged them to eat food as day was about to dawn. To people who, gripped by fear, could not even eat, Paul's counsel was help for their actual lives. We too must not say that we are helping someone and yet speak only words that comfort the heart while passing over the needs of the body. Serving people by faith is also actually looking after their circumstances.

In verse 34 Paul said, *"I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival" (Acts 27:34)*, and telling people who had been hungry for a long time to eat food was in fact helping them survive. Because they had to lighten the ship after eating and make for the shore, Paul, while conveying the promise that their lives would be preserved, also gave the help needed on that road. We too must not separate saying that we rely on God from the labor of caring for the people beside us; we must look carefully at what weary people need now and actually share the work to be handled together.

The thanksgiving offered in the presence of them all

After urging them to eat, Paul himself first took bread, gave thanks to God, and began to eat. Let us read verse 35. *"Gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat" (Acts 27:35)*. He gave thanks to God not after the ship had safely reached a harbor, but while the danger still remained. Because Paul believed the promise God had conveyed to him, he showed even before the people that he relied on Him, and the others also took heart and received the food and ate.

Thanksgiving is not something offered only after confirming that everything has ended as we wanted. If we believe who God is and what He has done for us, we can give thanks to Him and ask Him even at a time when we now need His help. Paul stood in the midst of people in peril, believing in the God to whom he belonged and whom he served. Rather than merely repeating words telling those who are going through difficulties to cheer up, we too must, while relying on the Lord who saved us, give the service we can share with them now.

Our thanksgiving has a basis of salvation deeper than physical survival. This is because what God wants to give sinners first of all is not the reviving of the body, but the remission of sins in the heart. So Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John; in the body in which He had borne those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place; and He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. Since the sins we commit throughout our lives are also included in that sin of the world, the thanksgiving of us who believe in

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the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not boasting that our own deeds are perfect, but a confession of faith that the Lord has removed sin.

If we believe in this salvation, we can give thanks to God even on days when we are still lacking and weak. This is because Jesus, who bore the sins of a whole lifetime, has already received the judgment for sin in our place and given us life. The Holy Spirit confirms in hearts that believe that this remission of sins is a fact, and He helps us to live according to the grace we have received. Do not put off thanksgiving, thinking you can give thanks only after all the difficulties of the body have been resolved. You can give thanks to the Lord who saved you and lay your painful circumstances before Him now. If we also look after the suffering of others within that grace, our thanksgiving will not stop at words but will lead to a life of laboring together.

To land, through the shipwreck and the threat of death

Those who had eaten threw out the wheat to lighten the ship, and when it was day, they discussed whether they could run the ship into a bay with a sloping shore. They cut away the anchors, hoisted the sail, and headed for the shore, but the ship ran aground at a place where two waters flowed together. The prow could not move, and the stern was being broken up by the great waves, so on the way to survival there were urgent events to the very end. The word that God would preserve their lives did not mean that even the ship would remain intact.

Then the soldiers, worried that the prisoners would swim away and escape, said it would be good to kill them. Since Paul was also on that ship as a prisoner, if this plan had been carried

out, Paul's life would also have been in danger. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept the soldiers from their purpose and commanded that those who could swim should go to land first. We must see together both that Paul, who served the Lord, actually passed through the danger of death and that his life was preserved in the midst of that danger.

The rest went out relying on boards or on things from the ship. Verse 44 records the end as follows: *"So it was that they all escaped safely to land" (Acts 27:44)*. Of the two hundred and seventy-six people on the ship, it was not only the good swimmers who survived; the rest also all came to land. The preservation of life spoken of to Paul was actually fulfilled. We need only accept with thanksgiving, just as the text says, this conclusion that although the ship was broken up, the people all survived.

Verse 43 records that *"the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose" (Acts 27:43)*, and after that, all the people were able to get to land. A decision concerning the life of Paul alone was also connected to the lives of the other prisoners. We tend to regard as important only those who stand out greatly in our own eyes, but not carelessly abandoning one person can also be urgently needed help for the people nearby. We, who believe in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, also have one person to look after now. We must value the labor of listening to that soul's difficulties, praying to the Lord together, and preaching to that person the word he needs and giving him the help he needs.

The fact that Paul went through such hardships until he reached Rome makes us look back on our own hearts as we serve the Lord as well. If we set our hearts only on avoiding all hard things, it is difficult to pay attention to the people beside us; but

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if we believe that we are people who belong to the Lord, we can speak the words needed by those who are with us and give them real help even in the midst of suffering. Do not take lightly the faith and service of each one of us. Because one person is alive by faith, many people come to live through him, so we cannot say that each one of us is nothing; and through those who have received the remission of sins, other souls can hear the word of salvation, and weary brothers and sisters can gain strength to rely on the Lord again.

After passing through the night of waiting for day to come in fear of the rocks, all two hundred and seventy-six people went up onto land. There was a danger of losing their lives until the last moment when the ship was breaking up, but the word God had spoken to Paul was fulfilled exactly. Remember Paul, who gave thanks first in the midst of danger and fed the people. We too must not try to give thanks only after everything is finished; we must rely on the Lord who saved us and share the help needed today. I hope that you will look after those who are going through difficulties together with you and give thanks for the salvation and help the Lord has given. ✉

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CHAPTER

28

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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 accuse people or exalt them, but rely on the Savior

< Acts 28:1–6 >

"Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.' But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god."

The danger met after escaping the sea

Those who had passed through the storm and the shipwreck and come up onto land found out that the island was Malta. Even

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after the joy of having survived, they needed a fire to warm their bodies because the rain was falling and the weather was cold, and the people of the island kindled a fire and welcomed them. But while Paul was gathering sticks and putting them on the fire, a viper came out and bit his hand. After they thought the danger of the sea was over, another danger appeared. The words of the people, who first called Paul a murderer and then called him a god, did not change Paul in the least, so we must see who it was that protected Paul in the midst of all that.

Let us read verse 1. *"Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta" (Acts 28:1)*. Since in the previous chapter all the people on board the ship came ashore and survived, the statement here that they were saved also means that they rescued their lives from the danger of the sea. They lost the ship, but they preserved their lives, and now, with the help of the people of the island, they escaped the cold. The word does not hide the fact that on Paul's path of serving the Lord, too, there actually were dangers to his life and needs to take care of his body. But the salvation that Paul believed and preached is different from this. That salvation is the work in which Jesus had all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved us from sin.

The people of the island showed special kindness to those who had come out of the ship. Verse 2 records that *"they kindled a fire and made us all welcome" (Acts 28:2)*, showing that they looked after the actual needs of people who were wet from the rain and cold. Paul, too, among them, gathered sticks and put them on the fire, helping with the work of escaping the cold together. Although he was a man who had been confined for a long time and had come through a rough voyage, he did what he

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could for those who were with him now. We, too, must not limit the life of serving the Lord only to the work of preaching great words, but must be able to give the help that the people beside us need. Just as one prepares a fire to warm the body, the labor of looking after the needs before our eyes is also something to be carried out with the life we have received from the Lord.

But a viper hung on the hand of Paul as he was putting the sticks on the fire. The people who saw it said this: *"No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live" (Acts 28:4)*. They did not judge after hearing what Paul had done, but drew a conclusion about his past sin by looking at the danger before their eyes. Since the very people who had shown kindness hastily regarded him as a murderer, we see that a heart that helps people and right judgment do not always go together. We, too, must not conclude that someone must have committed some hidden evil deed just because a disaster or an illness has come upon him. This is because the difficulty that appears on the outside does not explain the whole life of that person.

The Lord's care, which is more certain than the judgment of people

In verse 5 it is recorded that *"he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm" (Acts 28:5)*. The people waited, expecting that Paul's body would swell up or that he would suddenly die, but no such thing happened. The fact that nothing wrong happened to Paul did not fit the judgment they had made earlier. Since God protects in whatever form the servants who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must lay down

the attitude of measuring the circumstances of other people by our own thoughts.

Paul was a man who had been accused while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit and was going to Rome as a prisoner. In fact, he had committed no crime, but he had become bound because of the accusation of the Jews. So just because he appeared bound to people, they could not say that he had committed a crime, and just because he was bitten by a viper, they could not say that he was a murderer either. For a person who serves the Lord to suffer difficulties and to be forsaken by God are not the same thing. We, too, when we come to hear even the reproaches of people in the midst of suffering, must return to the word of the Lord, who saved us, rather than making those words the basis of our faith.

The salvation Paul believed in was certain, unlike the guesses of people. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of the world passed on to His body once and for all; Jesus, who bore those sins, received the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross; and He rose again from death and saved us from sin and death. Paul's sins and the sins of our whole lifetime are also included in that sin of the world. Therefore, the remission of sins obtained by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not based on the fact that no danger at all comes to the body, but on the work in which Jesus removed our sins.

The people of the island, without knowing Paul, tried to explain his life by the danger before their eyes. We, too, sometimes look at the difficulties that have come upon us and hastily conclude how God regards us. But the work in which the Lord removed our sins is more certain than such guesses. The Holy Spirit confirms that remission of sins in the hearts that believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and helps us to

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rely on the Lord. When our hearts are weighed down by the words of people, we must not put on ourselves the past that they have guessed, but must believe in the word of Jesus, who saved us, and ask for the help we need.

Turn your heart to God, who gave protection

When nothing wrong happened to Paul even after they had waited a long time, the words of the people changed again. Let us read verse 6: *"After they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god" (Acts 28:6)*. They now called Paul, whom they had called a murderer a little while before, a god. Just because the earlier judgment was wrong does not mean that the later judgment becomes right. The fact that Paul was not harmed was not a reason to exalt Paul himself as a god, but something that should make us look to God, who protected him.

When amazing things appear through the apostles, we easily think that the person who did those things has the power of salvation. But even the healing of the sick was not accomplished by the personal godliness or strength of the apostle; it was the work of God, who worked so that the gospel of the water and the Spirit might be preached. The strength of what Paul did also came from the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in his heart. The fact that we have seen Paul's special experience does not make Paul a savior, so the One who removed our sins is Jesus Christ, and our faith and reliance must also be clearly directed toward that Savior.

Rather than going around looking for amazing things and unconditionally believing the words of the person who saw them, we must examine the content of the salvation that he preaches.

If we only exalt a person without knowing how our sins were passed on to Jesus and how the judgment for those sins was finished, the sin in our hearts still remains unresolved. God protects and helps our bodies, but more than the healing of a person's flesh, He wants that person's heart to be saved from sin. Therefore, even when we give thanks for the help we have received, that thanksgiving must lead to believing the word of salvation more and following the Lord.

A life of caring for people in this way requires us to stop making hasty judgments. If we accuse a suffering person of being someone with hidden sin or exalt a person who gives help as if he were a savior, we easily lose the Lord, on whom we should actually rely together. Words that recklessly condemn others drive away even the hands that wanted to help, so we must first listen to that person's circumstances, share the help needed, and examine the word together. If we believe in the salvation in which Jesus had the sins of all of us passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, paid their price with the blood of the Cross, and rose again, there is no reason to fear the power of man or to entrust our souls to that person.

When a viper hung on the hand of Paul, who had survived the sea, the people of the island regarded him as a murderer, and when he was not harmed, they called him a god. But Paul did not become a different person according to their judgment. Jesus, who saved him and established him as a servant, protected him. We, too, must not judge people only by the difficulties and amazing things before our eyes. Giving thanks to God, who protected His servant, I hope you will clearly believe in and rely on the word of the Savior, who removed our sins, rather than on words that exalt or accuse people. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The remission of sins in the heart, which is greater than the healing of the body

< Acts 28:7–10 >

“In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.”

The healing that came to the house that welcomed people

On the island of Malta, Paul and his companions were welcomed by Publius. He kindly gave those who had lost their ship and come up onto the island a place to stay for three days. In that house there was a father lying sick with a fever and dysentery, and Paul went in to him, prayed, laid his hands on

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him, and healed him. God, who healed the sick body, wants a person's heart to receive the remission of sins more than He wants that person's flesh to be healed. So in this scene, in which Paul, who had received help, looks after a sick person, we must also see who the One who healed the body is and what greater grace He wants to give.

Let us read verse 7, which speaks of Publius as the one *"who received us and entertained us courteously for three days" (Acts 28:7)*. Publius is introduced as a high-ranking man on the island, but the action that catches our eyes before his position is the kindness with which he welcomed Paul and his companions. He gave the help that was actually needed to people who had to rest and take care of their bodies. When we serve people, too, we must not stop at only offering good words, but must look into what they need. When the words saying that we care are shown in actual labor and sharing, the difficulties of the other person can also be lightened.

The father of that house was lying sick. Even though the family had a high position and land, the pain of the sick father remained as it was. If we look at people's circumstances only on the outside, they may seem to lack nothing, but when we actually go near, we come across situations in which help is needed. Paul went in to the place where that father was lying. We, too, rather than evaluating people by their outward appearance and staying far away, must listen to their difficulties and be with them with the help and prayer that we can give.

Verse 8 records what Paul did as follows: *"Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him" (Acts 28:8)*. Paul approached the sick man and prayed to God. We must not read the fact that the man was healed as meaning that Paul personally had a power of his own to remove illness. The power of the healing of the sick through the apostles was in

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God, and God revealed the work of Jesus through them so that the gospel of the water and the Spirit might be spread. That work is the work in which Jesus had all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved sinners. The One we must look to is also the Lord, who used a person as an instrument.

The remission of sins, which is deeper than the healing of the body

When a person who had been lying sick is healed, it becomes a great joy to that person and the family. God looked after the pain of the father, which had not been resolved even amid the kind welcome of Publius. However, even if a person obtains the recovery of the body, he must know how he will resolve his own sins before God. Earlier, after Peter had healed the sick man in front of the Beautiful Gate, he said this before the council: *"By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole" (Acts 4:10)*. The One who healed the sick man was that Jesus Christ, who received baptism from John, hung on the Cross and shed His blood, and rose again, and the Lord, who healed the sick through Paul, also established him as a witness to preach the news of the remission of sins. Therefore, as we read about Paul healing the sick man by praying and laying his hands on him, we must also examine what Jesus, who sent that apostle, did for our sins.

What God gives first of all to sinners is the remission of sins. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sins of

the world passed on to His body once and for all, and in His body, on which He bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place. And He rose again from death and delivered us from sin and death. Because the sins of our whole lifetime are included in that sin of the world, we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not entrust the problem of our sins to the ability or the hands of man, but believe in the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

The healing of an illness is a great joy to a person in pain. But the fact that the body has recovered does not remove even the sins of the soul, so we must not think that we have fully achieved the purpose of our faith by receiving healing from illness. God wants people's hearts to be washed from sin and saved. Even while we ask for help for our bodies, we must first know Jesus, who removed our sins. This is because the way to escape the judgment of sin does not lie in the fact that we have obtained health, but in the Lord's atonement.

On the other hand, we also cannot say that a person who believes in the Lord has no remission of sins just because his illness continues. If we put the condition of the body and the remission of sins accomplished by the Lord on the same level, a sick person will look at the condition of his body and come to doubt even his salvation. We must confirm our faith by the word that Jesus bore and removed all the sins of the world. The Holy Spirit is with the hearts that believe in that salvation and confirms the remission of sins. When this assurance is clear, we can also entrust the difficulties of our bodies to the Lord and honestly ask for the help we need.

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The help shared by those who received grace

After the father of Publius was healed, the other sick people of the island also came. Let us read verse 9. *"So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed" (Acts 28:9)*. The work God had done did not end in one house but appeared to other people as well. They came carrying their illnesses and were healed, so what Paul went through on Malta was not only the incident of being bitten by a viper and not being harmed. The Lord protected Paul and helped the sick through him.

As we see the joy of those who were healed, we must regard as precious the grace of God, who takes care of our bodies. When people suffering from illness came, Paul did not turn away from them. We, too, must have a heart that listens to the pain of sick people, prays to the Lord, and shares the help they need. At the same time, we must not neglect the work of preaching the word of the remission of sins for people's souls either. This means asking for the grace of the body's recovery and at the same time examining the word together so that they may know and believe in Jesus, who is the Master of that body. The Lord wants people's hearts, too, to be washed from sin and to live again.

The people of the island who had received help treated Paul and his companions generously, and when Paul and his companions departed, the islanders put the things they needed on the ship. In the words of verse 10 that say *"when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary" (Acts 28:10)*, we again see the hands that provided for the needs of those who were going to sail again. The gratitude of those who had been healed did not stop at the hospitality during the stay on the island but continued even to the labor of preparing the things needed

for the departure. We, too, when we remember the help we have received, can go further than saying “Thank you” and look into what labor that person needs now.

In such service, the one who receives and the one who gives are not always divided and fixed. Paul and his companions first received kind hospitality, Paul went in to the sick man and prayed, and the people of the island in turn helped them prepare to leave. There is no need to try to remain a strong person who only gives help, or to be ashamed of receiving help. Relying on the Lord, we must look after one another’s shortcomings and live together as people who give the labor we can give.

In the house of Publius, who welcomed the weary group, there was a sick father, and God healed him through Paul. The house that had given help received help, and the people of the island in turn helped the group that was leaving again, so we, too, must ask for the grace we need and look after the needs of other people. But the greatest grace that the Lord, who healed the body, wants to give us is the remission of sins that He accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Let us believe in that remission of sins with our hearts, tell the Lord about the painful circumstances of our bodies as well, and, thankful for that grace, serve one another with the time and labor we can share. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Meeting brethren in faith becomes the strength to walk on again

< Acts 28:11–15 >

“After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island. And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome. And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.”

The journey that continued until they met the brethren

After spending three months on the island of Malta, Paul and his companions again boarded a ship and headed for Rome. Even after they had come through the danger of the shipwreck, there still remained the way they had to go to their destination, and the trial he had to undergo in Rome awaited Paul. But in Puteoli they

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met the brethren and stayed with them, and the brethren in Rome heard the news and came out to meet them. The word that when Paul saw them, he gave thanks to God and took courage shows how great a help the meeting of those who believe together is to one who serves the Lord.

Let us read verse 11. *"After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island" (Acts 28:11)*. After spending three months on Malta, Paul and his companions boarded a ship that had wintered there, and having passed through the help they had received on the island, they now had to cross the sea again. Even for a person who carries out the work of the Lord, there are actually times he must spend and roads he must move along, but we easily miss that person's labor while looking only at the results of his preaching of the word. When we look at the meetings that follow, we see that Paul, too, needed places to rest on the way and people who would welcome him gladly. Therefore, when we look after workers, we must take into account not only the work they will carry out but also the time they must pass through for that work.

The ship stayed three days at Syracuse, passed by Rhegium, and arrived at Puteoli. Verse 13 records that schedule in order as follows: *"The south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli" (Acts 28:13)*. In this way, Paul came near Rome through the labor of staying and departing. The fact that when the brethren came out to meet him at the end of that road, he gave thanks and took courage is not a light matter. When we read the long journey together, we come to think that even one person whom we welcome may have labors that are not all visible on the outside.

After meeting the Lord, the place Paul most wanted to go was Rome. This is because he believed that if he went to Rome

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and preached the word of God, it would be spread to the whole world. That word was the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which says that Jesus had all the sins of the world, including our sins, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again from death. Now, because of this gospel, he had come, bound in chains, near that very Rome, and the trial he had to undergo there also remained. Knowing the work one has to do and obtaining the strength to carry out that work are not separate matters. The sight of Paul taking courage when he saw the brethren shows that even a person whose will to serve the Lord is clear needs the fellowship of faith. We, too, must not assume that someone will carry all the labor alone just because there is work entrusted to him, but must have a heart to be with him on his way as people who believe in the same Lord.

The brethren with whom they stayed in Puteoli

In verse 14 it is recorded, *"Where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome" (Acts 28:14)*. Paul and his companions, who had arrived at Puteoli, stayed together for seven days at the invitation of the brethren. If we look only at the travel schedule, it was a time of staying and then leaving, but the fact that brethren in faith were with him was a precious help to Paul on the road. Welcoming a person who serves the Lord goes further than treating him as a guest; it is being with him as one who has received the same salvation.

The basis on which they could meet as brethren is the salvation they received from the same Jesus. Just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament received the laying on

of hands, had sin passed on to it, and died, Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him, and because He bore those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment for sin in our place. And He rose again from death and gave us new life. Since Paul's sins, the sins of the brethren, and the sins of our whole lifetime are also included in that sin of the world, those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit do not divide one another by their own merits, but meet by the grace received from the same Savior.

Therefore, we must not think of the meetings within the Church only as gatherings of people whose personalities match well. We have weaknesses and different circumstances, but we are together in the salvation by which the Lord removed our sins. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in hearts that have received the remission of sins, leads us to value the same gospel of the water and the Spirit and to serve together. Just as the knowledge Paul had or the greatness of his service was not a reason for him to keep the brethren at a distance, we, too, must not take lightly a person's faith and existence just because the work that person can do is small.

The brethren invited Paul and his companions to stay, and Paul and his companions accepted that invitation and stayed with them. They made time and stayed by the side of those who were on the road. We, too, while saying in our hearts that we will help people, must not always put off the time to meet them and the labor needed. This is because listening to a person's story, thinking about the word of the Lord together, and sharing his actual needs can give a person who is going through difficulties alone the strength to keep walking by faith.

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The thanksgiving and courage gained by seeing the brethren

The brethren in Rome heard the news of Paul and his companions and came out onto the road. Let us read verse 15. *"And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage" (Acts 28:15)*. Because the brethren came out onto the road to meet the one who was coming, their heart that valued Paul appeared as an actual meeting that gave him strength. We, too, when we hear news of those who believe together with us, must be able to pray for their labor and, when we need to meet, make time to stay by their side. When what we were worried about in our hearts leads to the labor of walking together, the other person comes to know that he is not alone.

When Paul saw them, he gave thanks to God. Although he received help through the brethren coming out to meet him, he gave his thanks to God. It was not that he took the labor of people lightly, but that he relied on God, who was helping him in that meeting. In the midst of a journey that had been so difficult, God comforted His servant in this way. We, too, while thanking the person who helped us, can give thanks to the Lord, who upheld that person and caused him to be with us. In this way, the fellowship of faith makes us look to God beyond a heart that leans only on people.

The word that Paul took courage shows that he, too, needed comfort and help. Even a person who had gone through many difficulties and preached the word in many places was not always sufficient by his own strength alone. The servant of the Lord, too, gains strength through meeting the brethren, gives thanks, and carries out the work ahead. We, too, when we are

struggling, rather than closing our hearts in shame at the fact that we are weak, must believe in the word, pray, and share the help we need together with the Church.

Courage is not a strength to treat others roughly, but a heart to preach the word entrusted to us without being ashamed of it. There was still time for Paul to wait for his trial, but he testified of Jesus to the people who came to him in Rome. The comfort he gained through the brethren coming out to meet him was something that helped him continue on the path of serving the Lord. We, too, when we give strength to one another, must not stop at encouraging one another to gain a good reputation in the world, but must help one another believe in Jesus, who saved us through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and carry out the work entrusted to us.

Even if one person's service is not very visible, it is precious if it is work for the same gospel of the water and the Spirit. The brethren who came out onto the road to meet Paul did not undergo that trial in his place or preach all the words, but through meeting them, Paul took courage. We, too, must not think, "Only when I do all the work myself am I serving the gospel." When I serve the gospel in union with those who have gone before and with the Church, I, too, become a person who serves the gospel well. So caring for those who preach the word and going forward together in faith is a life of not leaving the work of the Lord as someone else's work, but carrying it out together with the grace we have received.

Paul, who had boarded a ship again at Malta, still had the road to Rome and the coming trial before him, but he met the brethren who had come out onto that road, gave thanks to God, and took courage. We, too, rather than hiding our weary hearts alone or taking lightly the help of those who believe together

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with us, must give thanks to the Lord, who helps us through those meetings, and share our hearts. The time and steps we give today can also become, for someone, the strength to rely on the Lord and walk on again. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The right spiritual life of faith

< Acts 28:16–31 >

“Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him. And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: ‘Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.’ Then they said to him, ‘We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.’ So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. So when they did not agree among themselves,

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they departed after Paul had said one word: 'The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, "Go to this people and say: 'Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'"' 'Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!' Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."

"Concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere"

Because of this gospel, the Apostle Paul was bound with a chain and went to Rome to be tried before Caesar, the emperor in Rome. The Apostle Paul in fact had committed no crime, but because of the accusations of the Jews, he came to go all the way to Rome as a prisoner. When he arrived in Rome, the Apostle Paul was not locked up in a prison. Until his trial, on the condition that he not go beyond a set boundary, he rented a house and lived in that house. While living in that house—at that time many Jews had come and were living in Rome—he invited all the elders of those Jews, their leading men. "*Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: 'Men and brethren, though I have done nothing*

against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain'" (Acts 28:17–20). With a heart that longed for the nation of Israel to receive salvation before God, so that the people of that nation would truly be saved, the Apostle Paul preached the gospel to the Jews, and as a result he truly came to be in the form of a criminal bound with a chain.

But it is said that those Jewish elders, the leading men in Rome, knew nothing about Paul. They had heard nothing about Paul and knew nothing, but since he had invited them, they wanted to hear his thoughts; and concerning the gospel he preached, they said they knew one thing clearly: that it was spoken against everywhere, by any kind of person. They were saying that the thought he preached was spoken against everywhere—in Rome, by the Gentiles, and by the Jews as well. Look at the word: *"But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere" (Acts 28:22)*. The Apostle Paul was preaching the gospel, and they were saying that they knew that the sect preaching this gospel was spoken against everywhere. The Apostle Paul preached nothing else. He preached only this one thing: that Jesus bore all the sins of the world once and for all through the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and received the judgment on the Cross because of that sin, and rose again from death to save us. The Apostle Paul was truly a person who was upright before God and before men. The Apostle Paul

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invited many leading men of the Jews to the house where he was staying, and they came. *"He explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: 'The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, "Go to this people and say: 'Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'"'" (Acts 28:23–27)*. If you ask what the Apostle Paul preached after inviting the Jews, he testified of the kingdom of God. If you ask how he preached its content—how one goes to the kingdom of God—he persuaded them with the work Jesus did when He came to this earth, using the law of Moses and the words of the prophets.

"Persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets"

So, if you ask what the Apostle Paul did all his life—whom he testified of, using the law of Moses and the words of the prophets, that is, what the Psalms and all the prophets spoke and prophesied in the Old Testament, and the law of Moses—it is said that he preached this: "Our Lord came to this earth, removed sin in this way, rose again in this way, and ascended into heaven. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ receives salvation, but one

must believe according to the ordinance of God. God promised in this way and saved in this way." What does it mean that he preached the law of Moses? The law of Moses said, *"The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11)*, and the commandments God gave to us human beings number 613.

Now, the law of God tells us to do these things and not to do those things, but because we are descendants of Adam, we cannot keep that law. Therefore, the law is what makes us realize and know sin. What God says about the law is that He tells us not to do such things because we are doing them, and that it is to make us realize and know sin. Therefore, God established the law to teach us that we are sinners before God. And as for what the prophets all spoke of, what all the prophets said—whether in Isaiah or Ezekiel or Jeremiah or Zechariah—was that the Messiah Jesus Christ would come in the future and save us. They said, "Jesus Christ will come to this earth and remove sin in this way; He will bear it. Just as sin is passed on by laying hands on a sheep or a bull, the Messiah will come to this earth and receive baptism from John, and by this method He will bear all the sins of this world; and just as this animal dies, the Messiah will suffer death in our place and rise again; and He will remove sin in one day." The Apostle Paul preached with what these prophets said. Citing the Old Testament—the words of the prophets, that is, the words of the prophets in which it was promised how Jesus Christ would save us; then the law and ordinances of God, the things that say "Do this" and "Do not do that"; and also the testimony of the prophets about Jesus Christ—he preached this: that in the New Testament Jesus Christ came to this earth and saved us in this way. The Apostle Paul preached in this way, and this sect—the sect that, on the basis of the words of the prophets and the law, preaches Jesus by saying that what Jesus Christ did when He came to this earth was the remission of sins that removed all

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our sins—was spoken against everywhere. That is why they said, "Concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."

Those who preach according to the word suffer persecution

Think about why people opposed the Apostle Paul so much when he preached in this way long ago. It is written, *"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12)*. In our life of faith, there is living spiritually and there is living fleshly. There are two kinds of life of faith. Now, even if one preaches the gospel, if one does not testify according to the law, according to the promises of the prophets, and exactly as Jesus Christ did when He came to this earth, one does not suffer persecution. The strange thing is this: there is a spiritual life of faith and a fleshly life of faith, and to preach the gospel by citing the law and the words of the prophets, quoting them as they are, and saying, "Jesus Christ accomplished it just as written; He saved us in this way," is a spiritual life of faith; but to preach simply by saying, "We are sinners; Jesus Christ came to this earth and died on the Cross in my place," is a fleshly life of faith. And if you ask who suffers persecution, those who preach exactly according to the word suffer persecution, while those who do not preach in that way but simply preach, "Jesus died on the Cross; if you believe, you will be saved," never suffer persecution.

Why are they not opposed? They are not opposed because, in the eyes of Satan the devil, it is all right for people to believe in that way. Just imagine the devil gathering his underlings and holding a council. One says, "Can't we make the people who

believe in Jesus these days stop believing? Let's persecute them, seize them, and kill them." Then another says, "When the Son of God first came, how many people who believed in Jesus did we seize and kill? Yet even as they died, they said that the Lord had saved them, and they sang hymns as they hoped for the resurrection. Killing them did not work, and we persecuted them in the time of the early Church, but even that did not work." "Then what shall we do? Since they believe in Jesus even more and preach Him even more when we persecute them, let us not give them suffering but give them bodily comfort. If we let them live comfortably, they will become corrupt on their own and will not preach Jesus because they like the world. So let us tell people, 'Believe in Jesus, but just believe. Never believe exactly in the way that, citing the law and what the prophets promised as the word of God in the Old Testament, shows how it was fulfilled in the New Testament.' Those who preach this must be stopped." Satan the devil gives comfort to those who believe in Jesus and no longer hinders them. But the one thing that is a problem for Satan the devil is this: those who preach the gospel exactly as the law and the prophets said must be stopped and opposed. This is because with this gospel, it is not that people believe in Jesus and still go to hell; even if they believe in Jesus for just one day, even if they hear for just a few minutes, as long as they know it accurately and believe, they receive the remission of sins at once. So the devil says, "This will not do. This must be stopped." It is said that whatever other way people believe in Jesus, the devil gives them comfort, but believing according to the word and preaching it just as it is must absolutely be stopped.

The Apostle Paul did not preach anything else. He simply preached this. Just as we preach, the Apostle Paul preached the work Jesus Christ accomplished, citing the law, citing the Old Testament, and according to the word of the New Testament.

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And among those who heard, there were some who believed and some who opposed; they were divided into two kinds of people. When we preach the gospel, because we are human, we are often tempted. What kind of thought comes into our hearts? When we preach the gospel, the thought comes into our hearts, "Isn't there some other way besides exactly this way? Isn't there some way of making people believe in Jesus by using a somewhat different method instead of this one?" People are being led astray. If we preach exactly what Jesus did when He came to this earth, according to the law and according to the writings of the prophets, people receive the remission of sins just as it is.

But if we preach in this way, it is the same for us as the Jewish elders said: *"Concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere" (Acts 28:22)*. If we preach just as it is, according to the word, we are opposed even by people who believe in Jesus. They come at us again, saying, "Is that all there is?"

A spiritual life of faith and a fleshly life of faith

It is actually easier to speak to people who do not believe in Jesus. When the Apostle Paul preached in this way, these people did not accept it, and Paul said, *"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (Acts 28:28)*. He preached this word just as it is to the Jews, and some accepted it and some did not. And the word says that the reason the Jews did not accept it was so that God would have the Apostle Paul spread the gospel to the Gentiles instead of the Jews. That is right. If we preach like the Apostle Paul in this way, people who believe in Jesus seldom accept it. Seen spiritually, all those today who believe in Jesus but have

not been born again are like these Jews who did not accept Paul's words. They do not accept it, and they oppose it. But if you ask who accepts it, it is those who know nothing at all about God, who do not know much about Jesus—in any case, people who know nothing. If we tell them that the Old Testament says in this way that we are sinners and that in the New Testament He took away sin in this way, do they believe or not? They believe. It is rather when we speak to people who do not believe in Jesus that they believe. After hearing the whole story, they believe in Jesus. On the other hand, among those who say they believe in Jesus, many religions all live a life of faith while saying that they believe under the name of Jesus. Yet the strange thing is that when we testify just as it is, according to the word, these people oppose it. That is what is strange.

It is one of two things: whether you live your life of faith spiritually or fleshly. To live it spiritually is to believe what He promised in this way in the Old Testament and accomplished in this way in the New Testament, according to the law and the words of the prophets spoken of in the word, and according to the word of this Bible; to believe according to the word that Jesus Christ has concretely given us the remission of sins—this is a spiritual life of faith. Otherwise, to believe simply, "If you believe in Jesus, you go to heaven; Jesus died on the Cross in our place; He died in place of us sinners; I believe," to believe in this way is a fleshly life of faith. We must wait and see about such people. Truly, a person's complete remission of sins comes only through the word. But among those who believe in Jesus Christ, who hung on the Cross, countless changes for the worse occur. They believe well for one year, two years, three years. They believe well even for ten years. But as the years go on, unless these people make some frantic effort every day, when you look at the result of their faith, they are sinners. They

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themselves are sinners. Will we believe in our life of faith truly spiritually, according to the word, or will we preach easily and believe easily? Which way of believing is right? Believing according to the word is right. It is right for us to preach and believe just as Jesus Christ came to this earth and accomplished what the law and the prophets said. Then how does one believe easily? "Jesus died on the Cross; I believe. How painful it must have been for Him to be nailed to the Cross for a sinner like me! I believe."

That is believing easily. It is not believing according to the word, but believing easily according to one's own thoughts. Even while believing in that way, one can shed tears and can even lay down one's own life and love the Lord. It is completely beyond understanding. There are many people who have not been born again, yet who serve the Lord faithfully, love Him faithfully, and love Him so very much. When we look at that, does it make sense to us? Can we say, "That person has not received the remission of sins"? When you ask such a person in the present tense, he says that he has no sin; then can we say that he has not received the remission of sins? It is truly difficult to say until we have fellowshipped with him a little more. We must draw a clear line on this matter: whether we will live our life of faith spiritually or fleshly. We must decide in our hearts whether we will believe and follow according to the word of God, or roughly believe in Jesus and roughly follow Him. We must draw a line.

When we preach the gospel, we can make people believe in Jesus. Even if we cannot cause them to be born again, we can usually make ordinary people believe in Jesus. We can make them say, "I believe in Jesus." Even if that is not easy, we can still usually make them believe. But it is said that we are not good at causing them to be born again. Jesus must always be in

our hearts. We must think of Jesus in our hearts, often entrust our hearts to Him, and have fellowship with Him. But the question comes to each one of us, "Must we really preach in that way?" While following Jesus, the question is whether we must speak exactly as Jesus came to this earth and accomplished what the law and the prophets said. The answer is that if we do not do so, people cannot receive the remission of sins. When it was not done that way, people did not receive the remission of sins. They could believe in Jesus. They could believe well for ten years, believe well for twenty years, and believe well even for a hundred years. But they were not born again. This is because it was not clearly preached according to the word. We too, while following Jesus, think when things are hard, "Must we really do it this way?" How difficult is the gospel we preach! When we preach it, it is easy, but when they accept it, they find it so very difficult. Especially when we preach it to those among the believers in Jesus who have not been born again, it is so very frightening. In our hearts too there is the thought, "I wish we could change the method and preach differently instead of doing it this way." And if we do not do it exactly this way but just do it vaguely, it goes well at first. The number of people who believe in Jesus in the church also grows tremendously. It would be very good.

But our hearts are not at ease. The Holy Spirit within us is not pleased. It means that we are not following the Lord with our hearts or serving the Lord, but simply rejoicing at the visible phenomena. Even though it is hard and difficult for us and we seem like odd people in the eyes of worldly people, we must hold fast to this—the work in which Jesus Christ came to this earth and saved us just as the law and the prophets said and accomplished it—and we must speak of it until the end of the world and preach in just this way, according to this method.

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If we preach according to this method, the number of believers does not grow quickly. How hard it is for even one person to barely receive the remission of sins and barely grow! And after receiving the remission of sins, isn't it even harder to come into the church, follow this word, and serve and preach according to this flow? If self-denial does not take place, one cannot follow. So, as time passes, self-denial takes place and the heart becomes good. It means that what has not yet been set right is corrected until the word is engraved in the heart. It is not just correcting the flesh; it is a matter of whether Jesus Christ is truly in the heart, whether Jesus Christ is truly my Savior in my heart, whether our hearts believe according to the word, whether Jesus Christ will truly come to take us, whether we have truly been born again, whether we confirm it in our hearts, and whether we believe with our hearts and follow with our hearts. We must follow in the spirit. We must believe with our hearts and follow with our hearts. We must have fellowship with God in our hearts, within the word of truth. It means that we must believe His word with our hearts and have fellowship within this word.

Paul always spoke of baptism before speaking of the Cross

It seems that wherever the Apostle Paul went, he truly preached exactly as it is. The Apostle Paul was more meticulous than we are. Wherever he went, there was never a time when he did not speak of baptism. If you look at the epistles of the Apostle Paul, there was never a time when he did not speak of baptism. Paul's epistles are all about that. Look at Romans. Look at Galatians, Titus, and Ephesians. If you look at the epistles of the Apostle Paul, there was never a time when he did not speak

of baptism. How nice it would be to speak while leaving baptism out! "If you believe in Jesus, you will be saved"—how easy that is! So we could talk to people all the way through and say, "Do you have sin? You are a sinner. Believe in Jesus. Jesus died on the Cross for you in this way. Do you believe? Amen! Hallelujah!" How easy that is!

But it is said that when the Apostle Paul preached the Cross, before the Cross he always spoke of the part where sin was passed on to the body of Jesus Christ through the baptism He received from John. Because he spoke in this way and then spoke of how Jesus Christ suffered death, the judgment, on the Cross in our place in this way—because he spoke so clearly in this way—those who accepted it accepted it with certainty, while those who had many thoughts of their own said, "Good heavens, people are saved if they believe; why be so literal about it?"

If our brothers and sisters have received the remission of sins, they must examine themselves once: whether there is a heart in them that believes in Jesus Christ, whether Jesus Christ truly dwells in their hearts, and whether they truly believe in their hearts that Jesus Christ has removed sin. And they must confirm that part once again.

If we want to believe in Jesus easily, we can believe as easily as we like. Frankly speaking, there are very few places that speak as literally as we do. If you go elsewhere, you can believe comfortably. They simply say that if you believe in Jesus, it works unconditionally. Even preaching the gospel goes as follows: they bring someone to church and ask, "Do you believe the gospel?" "I believe." "Ah, you are saved." And it is over. They do not touch on the matter of the gospel any further. Once someone says he believes in Jesus, from then on, in the matter of growth, they look only at how well he serves, whether he does well or not in the flesh, and they do not touch at all on what state

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his heart is in. So how comfortable that is! The heart would be comfortable and good, wouldn't it? It is good, all right, but your hearts rot.

Even if our life of faith is somewhat opposed and hard, I want us to be a church that believes in Jesus Christ with the heart, believes the word of truth of Jesus Christ, and follows Jesus Christ with the heart—the Church of God. I want us to be a church that truly believes and follows with the heart. God wants you and me to live not a life that, in some respect, believes in Jesus in the flesh and is pleased with what is visible, but a life that truly believes in the Lord from deep within the heart, follows the Lord, testifies of the Lord, and testifies of this word just as it is. God wants us to believe sincerely with our hearts, know the truth, accept the truth, follow the truth, and serve. Because each person who has received the remission of sins is so precious, I do not feel that their number is small.

Go by the narrow way

Among those who believe in Jesus, there are many who believe in Jesus very comfortably. They do not suffer persecution, and they seem very wise. In a way, it seems that we should learn a thing or two from them and do exactly as they do. But let us suppose we did so. If we did so, all of this would disappear from our hearts: truly rejoicing and feeling delight because of the Lord. As time goes by, we would come to rejoice and grieve according to the actions of our flesh. Our hearts would become corrupt.

When I see people who believe in Jesus trying to believe so comfortably, I too am tempted and want to do so. If I did it that way, believed in Jesus properly, and simply went to heaven,

there would be nothing to be persecuted for, so I cannot tell you how good that would be. But in the Bible our Lord says, *"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).*

What kind of way is the narrow way? Believing and going according to the word is the narrow way, and following God is the narrow way; can there be a narrow way in human thoughts? Believing according to one's own thoughts is always the broad way. "If you believe in Jesus, you go to heaven"—is this the broad way or the narrow way? It is the broad way. "If you just believe in Jesus, you go to the kingdom of heaven"—is this the narrow way or the broad way? When you look into it, it is the broad way. But "If you believe in Jesus, you go to the kingdom of heaven, but because Jesus bore sin in this way, there is no sin, and so you believe in Jesus and go to the kingdom of heaven"—this is the narrow way. To preach the gospel by saying, "Just believe in Jesus, and then you will go to the kingdom of heaven," is the broad way; but to say, "You must not believe in Jesus in that way. He removed sin in this way and this way. Is it only that way? There is no way but that way; there is nothing else to say," is to believe in Jesus narrowly. How did He remove sin? Jesus had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and He bore that sin, shed His blood on the Cross, and received the judgment. Believing just as this gospel of the water and the Spirit is, is the narrow way.

Truly, what we must know on this earth is that a person who truly believes the word exactly as it is, believes the words of the Old Testament and the New Testament just as they are revealed, and believes and follows the will of the Lord as it is revealed—such a person is a spiritual person. He is a person who believes

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with the heart, serves with the heart, and follows with the heart. But a person who simply says, “If you believe in Jesus, you will be saved,” and evangelizes people to believe in Jesus, and who, when the line should be clearly drawn, does not draw the line but says, “You only have to believe in Jesus; if you only believe in Jesus and say you have no sin, that is all it takes”—that is going by the broad way, and going by the broad way is destruction. And that heart is never pure. If we confirm our faith by what is visible to the eye and our self is alive in that way, that is not a spiritual life of faith.

The heart must first prosper

Someone might say, “Even if my heart is wrong right now, I eat well, live well, and sleep well right now, so why make a fuss about it?” But that is not so. Even if you eat well, live well, and sleep well, if your heart is wrong, you are sick; if your heart is wrong, it is the same as being admitted to a hospital. No matter how well the body prospers, if the heart is sick, one is sick. Knowing this, one should ache over one’s own heart, ask for it to be healed, be restored again through the word, hold on to the word and pray, and have one’s heart renewed and made healthy; but if one’s heart is sick and one is happy only if the body prospers, what kind of life of faith before God is that? That is not a life of faith. In this age, countless people believe in Jesus Christ, yet they look at us and criticize us, saying that we believe in Jesus in an odd way.

Do the Jews not believe in God? They believe in God, yet the Jews said openly, “How is Jesus the Savior? How can a man born in Nazareth be the Christ?” They said, “How can that man be the Savior or the Son of God?” It is said that Christians today,

even while believing in Jesus, think they have been blessed if only their bodies prosper. Even born-again people think they have been blessed if only their bodies prosper. But that is not it. One can say one has been blessed because one's body has prospered. Since one cannot say one has not received what was given, one can say one has received it. But although one should receive that too, one must know this spiritual principle: if the heart prospers first, everything in the body prospers. If the heart has been healed before God, if the heart is truly pure before God, if the heart has right faith, and if there is a spirit that is truly fellowshipping with the Lord in the heart, that spirit is rich, and that person will later become healthy in body as well and prosper in all things. If even one thing in the heart goes wrong, the heart becomes sick, and if one keeps living while leaving the heart unhealed, nothing goes well.

Therefore, the heart must prosper. Our hearts must prosper above all else. Truly, you and I need to grow spiritually a little. It means that we should not try to prosper only in the body, but our hearts must grow by faith. How much have our hearts grown? Our hearts believed in Jesus Christ. Do our hearts believe in Jesus Christ? Do our hearts seek Jesus? Our hearts seek Jesus, but for what reason do they seek Him? Do they seek Him for material things, or do they seek Him for the heart? Do we seek our Lord for spiritual salvation? The heart must prosper. If every one of us prospers, much fruit can be borne through each one of us; and if the heart of each one of us goes wrong, everyone is ruined.

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Only when one person stands upright do the souls coming after live

And the countless people who would be saved through us go to hell. The fate of countless people is decided according to our hearts, according to the state of our faith. Please keep in mind the fact that the souls of your families, your friends, and all people—all the people on the earth—depend on none other than each and every one of us, the saved brothers and sisters, the servants of God. It means that they depend on none other than you, and they depend on me. They depend on my heart and on your hearts. They depend on your faith and on my faith.

That is why we cannot say that one of us is nothing. We must know how important one of us is, and how great a misfortune it is if one of us goes wrong. It means we must know how great a thing it is for each person to go wrong. God can do so much work through that person and save so many souls; but if that one person becomes corrupt, his heart becomes sick, he quits his life of faith, pursues material things, is led astray, and leaves the church, we must look by faith at how many people who would have received the remission of sins come to an end. We must look far ahead and truly feel sorrow over it. One of us is important. One may say, “What does it matter if a nobody like me dies off? What does it matter if a nobody like me is ruined?” But if each and every one of us dies off, everyone in our church dies. Because one person is alive, everyone is alive. Each one of us must pay close attention. Each must carefully examine whether his own soul is going wrong or going well, whether his own heart is truly right or not, and whether it has become sick or not.

If a person who has received the remission of sins pursues fleshly things, your body may become rich for a while, but your

heart dies. The joy of having received the remission of sins, the joy of having no sin—everything disappears. Later, one does not even know whether one has received the remission of sins or not. One does not know well what the gospel is. One knows it vaguely, yet one comes to oppose it. If your heart has become sick, you must bring it before God and be healed. We must firmly believe the fact that Jesus Christ has removed the sin of each of us, deny our own thoughts once again, and give thanks for and believe the fact of what God has done for us. The heart must be restored. By what is it restored? The power that heals the heart does not come from ourselves, but from holding on again in our hearts to the fact that Jesus bore our sins, died on the Cross, rose again on the third day, and removed all that sin. Because the Lord rose again, our dying hearts also come to life again.

I may think that it is nothing much if I alone go wrong. But if I think about how many people go wrong if I alone go wrong, I simply cannot do as I please because of other people. If one person goes wrong, it is visible to the eye how many people go wrong. That is why my one soul is precious, and each and every one of your souls is precious. If only a person grows and becomes one who truly believes in God with the heart and follows Him, I look forward with expectation to how many works God will do through that one soul. He will surely do them.

Do you know how many people can receive the remission of sins through one person like you? Do you know how many people, through you—if only your faith grows—are stretching out their hands to you and waiting everywhere? Do you have such eyes? Do you know the fact that they are waiting for you? It means that they are waiting at work, waiting at school, and waiting for you and me in every place on this earth. It means that the people who have not been saved and are searching and

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searching in this alley and that alley, in this group and that group, wondering how they can receive the remission of sins, are waiting for none other than us. It means that they are waiting for those people: people who have certainly received the remission of sins, people whose hearts have not become corrupt, people whose hearts became corrupt but were healed again, people who have been restored by faith, people who pursue God with their hearts and believe in God and follow Him with their hearts. But what happens if we die, if our hearts die and we become people of the flesh? If even one of us, you or I, becomes a person of the flesh, what are all those people supposed to do? If only we preach the remission of sins to them, those people receive the remission of sins. It is only that they have not met us, only that there are countless obstacles in front of them; if only we remove the obstacles and meet them one-on-one and talk to them, they receive the remission of sins. Then what will we do about those people? We must keep our faith for the sake of such people. We must keep our hearts. It means that we must heal what is sick in our hearts. It means that we ourselves must keep our hearts with the word of God and go forward before God with faith. If one of us is ruined, it does not end with that one of us.

Satan the devil says, "What is a nobody like you worth?" But we must know the fact that Jesus came to this earth to save my one soul, received baptism from John, bore all our sins, and suffered that terrible agony on the Cross. He intended to save each and every one of us; it is not that He intended to save only the special people among us and did not intend to save the others. It was precisely because of you, one person, and me, one person, that Jesus Christ came to this earth and saved us. Let us awaken spiritually a little. Let us know how important one of us is. It is not that one of us is nothing. Our Lord said, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in*

his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches" (Matthew 13:31–32). A mustard seed is so small that it can hardly be seen. If you blow on it, it all flies away. When you plant it in the ground and water it, at first it grows just like a vegetable. It comes up like grass. But as time passes and it grows, its trunk becomes thick and its branches spread out, so that birds nest under that blazing sun and people can escape the heat under it. It means that it can give benefit. If only we keep well and nurture well the faith that saved us, if only we raise it, countless people will come into our faith, receive the remission of sins, and receive help.

We must know how precious each one of us is; we preach this gospel for the sake of souls, for the sake of spiritual things, not to make our church building bigger. To save one soul, we are keeping this church building and holding fast to this sect. Otherwise, if it has nothing to do with saving one soul, we could put up the same name as other churches right away and do exactly the same as they do. Then there would be no one to pick a quarrel with us. When that time comes, we would suffer no persecution, believe in Jesus, offer worship and praise every day, and call our brothers and sisters by their church titles; how harmonious and how good that would be!

But please know the fact that if that happens, not a single person will receive the remission of sins. Not a single one of your children will receive the remission of sins either. If our hearts become exactly like that and the church becomes exactly like that, it will be corrupted, and not a single person will receive it. The joy of having received the remission of sins will completely disappear as well. The Holy Spirit will not work. It will be over. Therefore, we must guard our souls, each and every

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soul. Each of us must pray before God for his own soul, hold on to right faith, and live in that way.

Please cast away the heart that tries to do things quickly in order to prosper. I hope that you will all become servants who simply believe purely just as the word says, who keep, nurture, raise, and preserve well the salvation with which our Lord saved us, and who, when our Lord truly wants to use our faith, say, "Lord, here I am," offer their hearts to the Lord, and attend to the precious work of God. ✉

◇ 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.

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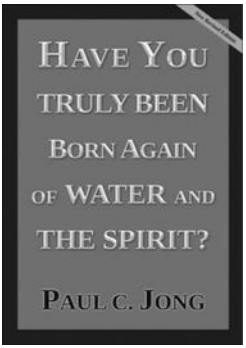
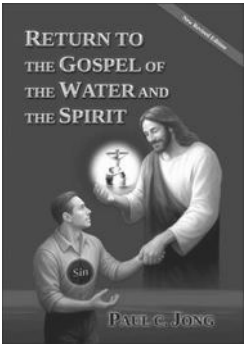
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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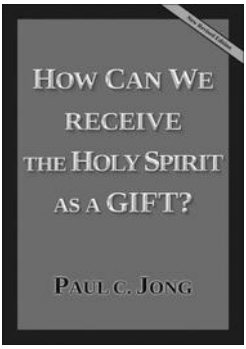
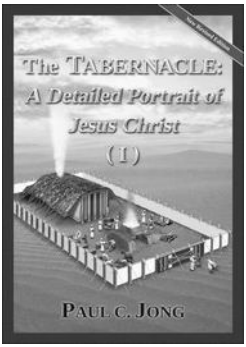
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



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.

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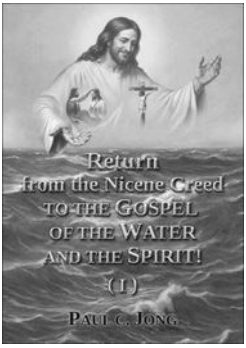
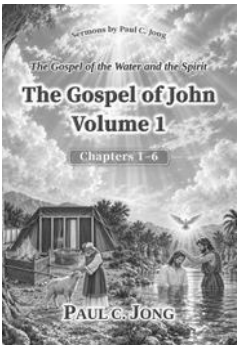
Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit?
The early church preached that Jesus took upon Himself and washed away the sin of the world through His baptism by John, fulfilling the sacrificial law of the laying on of hands.

Yet this truth was omitted from the Nicene Creed and has remained obscured for about 1,700 years. Many believers still struggle with guilt, unaware of when their sins were transferred to Jesus. This book calls us back to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, through which we can receive the removal of our sins and find 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.

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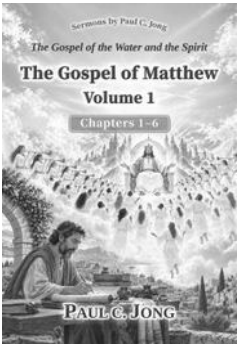
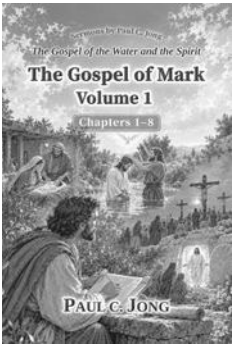
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Matthew (4-Volume Series)



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.

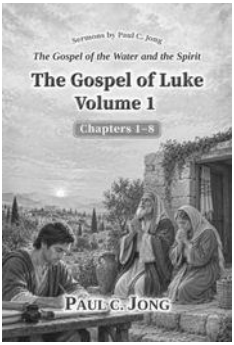
The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Mark (2-Volume Series)



Mark chapters 1–8 lead us to the confession, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). Christ means 'the Anointed One.' Jesus is the King who rules over us, the High Priest who remits sins, and the Prophet who preaches the truth of salvation. Jesus, the High Priest, had all the sins of the world, including the sins of our whole lifetime, transferred to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, thereby receiving the judgment for sin in our place, and He rose again from death. I hope that, through the word of the Gospel of Mark, you will accept Jesus Christ, the Savior who is the King of kings, into your hearts.

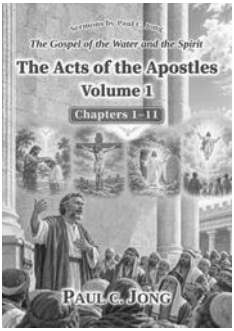
Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Gospel of Luke (3-Volume Series)



Where does the assurance that we have received the remission of sins come from? This book, which follows Luke chapters 1–8, looks at the birth of the Savior and the beginning of His work, and finds the answer in the written word. Jesus, who called sinners, is the One who came to take those sins upon Himself. Because all the sins of the world were passed on once and for all to the body that received baptism from John, Jesus received the judgment for our sins on the Cross by shedding His blood, overcame death, rose again, and accomplished salvation. When we know and believe this work He did for us, the assurance that wavered according to the state of our hearts becomes grounded in the word.

The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit: The Acts of the Apostles (2-Volume Series)

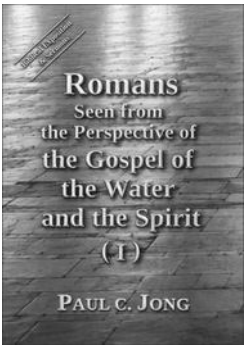


"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8) Acts chapters 1–11 trace the spread of the gospel, beginning with the promise given by the risen Jesus to His disciples, His ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and continuing through the healing of the lame man at the temple gate, the martyrdom of Stephen, the great joy in Samaria, the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, and the household of Cornelius. What the apostles preached was the fact that Jesus, who had the sin of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, received its judgment by shedding His blood on the Cross and rose again. And the Holy Spirit came upon those who believed in this salvation and received the remission of sins. The way of the witnesses that continued to the end of the earth is the story of those who have received the remission of sins.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

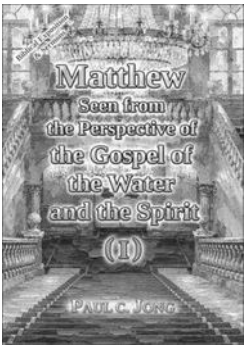
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



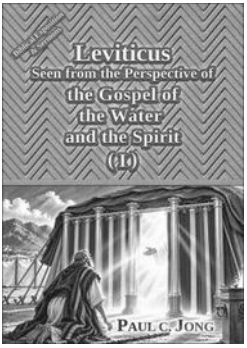
Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

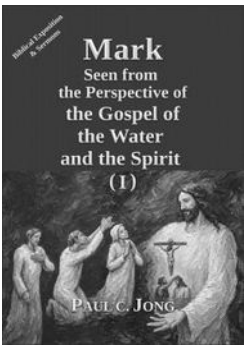


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the consecration ceremony of the priests, Aaron's first sacrifice, and the incident of Nadab and Abihu.

The author, Pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and in this book, he also explains the eternal atonement Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, connecting it to the sacrifices of Leviticus.

How can a sinner be made sinless? This book gives a clear answer to that question through the Bible.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



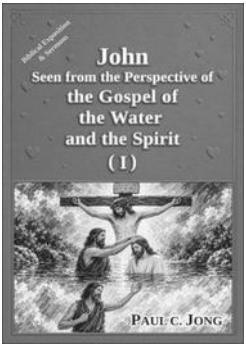
Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

John Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

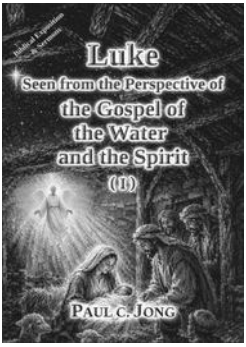


John seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) is a book that examines, through the entire Gospel of John, how the Word, who is God, came to this earth clothed in flesh and saved sinners from sin.

The author, pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached, through the word of the Bible, "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" that Jesus Christ completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. This book does not explain the signs and words of the Gospel of John as mere knowledge of the Bible or records of miracles, but guides readers to the faith by which they are saved from sin and obtain everlasting life by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

May everyone who opens this book meet Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible testifies, and obtain true life.

Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

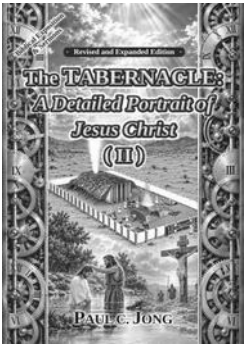


"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central message conveyed by this book is clear. Salvation is not accomplished by human goodness or merit. Rather, Jesus, who is God, received the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross to pay the price for those sins, and rose from the dead, thereby giving complete salvation from all sins to those who believe in this truth.

Pastor Paul C. Jong of The New Life Mission is a servant of God who has devoted his life to preaching the true gospel. Through the Word he preaches, this book will lead souls held captive by sin to the joy of the remission of sins and to eternal life in Jesus.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

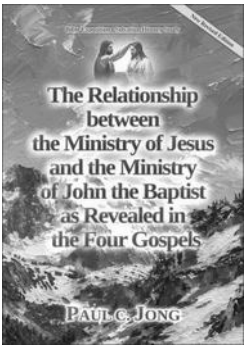
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



God had the tabernacle set up in the wilderness in order to dwell among the people He had delivered out of Egypt.

Through the Biblical Exposition of Exodus chapters 25–31 and the sermons on the tabernacle, this book conveys the heart of God, who wants to make His sinful people holy and keep them near. The promise of salvation contained in the tabernacle was fulfilled when Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again. Looking into the utensils and sacrifices of the tabernacle and the office of the high priest, we come to know the meaning of the remission of sins received by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and of the eternal atonement. Through the tabernacle, we seek to know God's love for us and to share the joy of living together as His people.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels [New Revised Edition]



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

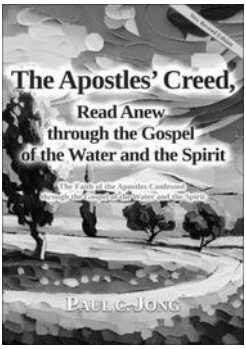
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

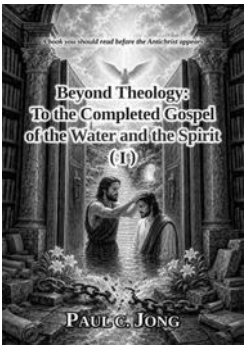


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



Even as we confess that we have been saved, why does the weight of sin still remain in one corner of our hearts?

Countless saints live carrying this question. Each denomination has a different answer, but the Bible testifies to one story from beginning to end.

This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed our eternal salvation through His resurrection from death.

This book does not condemn any church. It only invites you to lay down your familiar theology for a moment and to discover anew, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where unshakable assurance begins.

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Sincerely,
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Pastor PAUL C. JONG

Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he had long been suffering because the problem of his sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this suffering, he came to believe that Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist, had the sin of the world passed on to Him once for all, received its judgment in our place through His blood on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

For about 40 years since then, he has been preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who only believe in the Cross, documenting his actual sermons in writing, and publishing sermon collections and Biblical Exposition Series that expound the Bible chapter by chapter, based solely on the Word of God.

His works continue to be published and have been translated into more than 110 languages, reaching readers in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available free of charge at www.bjnewlife.org, while paperback editions can be purchased on Amazon.

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

When we believe in the baptism Jesus received, we receive the Holy Spirit

"Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3)

In Ephesus there were disciples who said that they believed in Jesus yet had not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. The question Paul put to them was not how much they had prayed, but into what they had been baptized. This was because all they knew was the baptism of repentance that John had administered, and by turning around alone they could receive neither the remission of sins nor the Holy Spirit.

John told people to believe in Jesus, who would come after him, and that very Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all by receiving baptism from John. When we believe in Jesus, who bore that sin, died on the Cross, and rose again, we receive the remission of sins, and God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to that heart whose sin has been washed away. Since the Holy Spirit testifies that there is no sin in that heart, whether one has received the Holy Spirit is known by the remission of sins. The person who knows and believes in the baptism Jesus received receives the Holy Spirit.

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