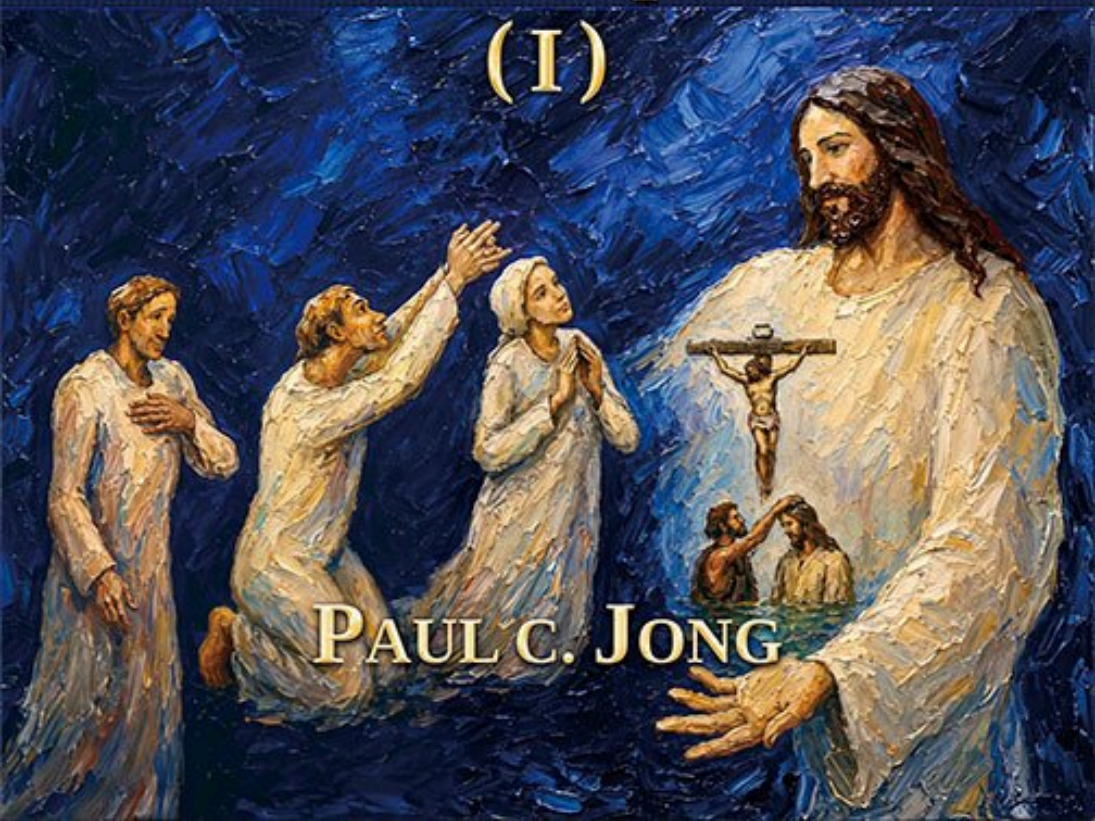
Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Mark

Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)



Paul C. Jong





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

If you know Jesus only as the powerful One who healed the sick and cast out demons, you have not reached complete salvation. He is the Son of God who has the authority to remit sins.

People heard the same Word, yet their responses differed. Some received the remission of sins and followed the Lord, while others clung to their own righteousness and religious standards and opposed Him.

To take over the sins of the world in the place of sinners, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, paid the wages of those sins on the Cross, and rose again to overcome sin and death. Whoever believes this fact, even though his deeds fall short, receives the remission of all his sins at once by the righteousness Jesus accomplished, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not stop at miracles or religious knowledge. Lay down your own righteousness and stubbornness, and believe the gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit that the Son of God has fulfilled, and be saved.

This is a book that everyone must seek out

and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

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

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Mark
Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit
(I)

PAUL C. JONG



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Mark seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)

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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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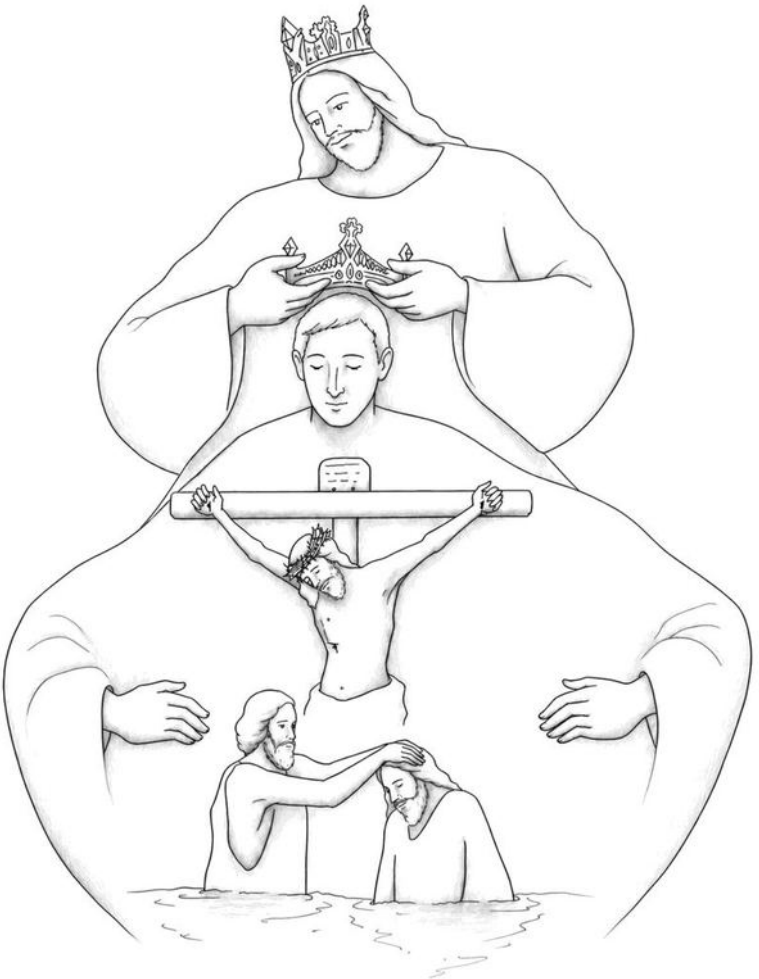

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Preface

Dear readers, the Gospel of Mark opens its door proclaiming *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"*. Here we must first of all look back at who we believe Jesus to be. Do you know Jesus only as a great teacher or as One who heals the sick? Or do you believe in Him as the Son of God, who took upon Himself all your sins and accomplished perfect salvation? The gospel that the Gospel of Mark delivers is not a moving story about Jesus, but the power of God, by which a sinner receives the remission of sins and eternal life.

To fulfill this gospel, God first sent John the Baptist. John the Baptist exposed people's sins and testified of the Christ, who was coming after him. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself, onto His own body, the sins of all the people of the world. Then, carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving all the judgment, and in three days He rose from the dead. This is the gospel of the remission of sins that God has accomplished with the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

What we must know plainly is the fact that the baptism of Jesus and the Cross are not events separated from each other. Jesus did not receive the baptism because He had sin. He received the baptism to take over all sins in the place of sinners, and He paid on the Cross the price of the sins He had so taken upon Himself. The person who believes this fact, though his deeds are lacking, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all by the righteousness Jesus has fulfilled, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

But the proclamation of the gospel of God does not mean that

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everyone receives it. A person can hold religious knowledge and tradition and yet refuse the word of God on the ground that his own thought is right. One can keep outward ordinances zealously and yet oppose the Lord, who saves life, and one can see the power of Jesus and yet not believe the salvation He accomplished. Religious familiarity cannot take the place of faith.

Jesus held the authority to remit sins, and He ruled over Satan, disease, and uncleanness. But the most important purpose for which He came to this earth did not lie in easing bodily pain for a moment. It was to save the person who had gone far from God because of sin, to give him true rest, and to have him live as one of the people of the kingdom of God. Therefore we must not stop at marveling at the miracles, but must believe in the Son of God, whom those miracles testify to.

This volume also asks how important the heart with which we hear the word of God is. Even when the same seed of the gospel is sown, a hardened heart pushes the word away, a shallow heart is shaken when hardship comes, and a heart seized by desires and cares bears no fruit. The heart like the good ground is not a heart originally good and without sin. It is the heart that lays down its own thoughts and receives the judgment and the salvation of God just as they are.

In the seed of the gospel there is life. Even though a person does not know the whole process of its growth, God makes faith grow through the word and makes it bear fruit. The serving and obedience of the saved person are not a price paid to obtain the remission of sins. They are the fruit of thanksgiving that appears in the person who has already gained new life. The person who preaches the gospel also must not try to make souls born again by his own ability, but must deliver the word of life rightly and rely on the work of the Holy Spirit.

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On the way of faith, windstorms also come. Even while we are with the Lord, there are times when the circumstances before our eyes look great. But Jesus, who rules the wind and the sea, is greater than any windstorm we meet. Faith is not a state with no hardship at all; it is exalting the word of the Lord above our own fear, even in the midst of hardship.

Dear readers, do not read this book merely to add knowledge. Before the word, examine what kind of field your heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Believe with your heart in Jesus Christ, who has completely removed your sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. This gospel will give you the assurance of the remission of sins and true rest, and will lead on to the abundant fruit of delivering the light of life to other souls. ✉

CONTENTS

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

General Introduction ---------- 15

Mark Chapter 1

• Biblical Exposition

Summary of the entire content • The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit ---------- 85

The beginning of the gospel: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to seek out sinners ---------- 110

• Questions and Answers ---------- 154

• Sermons by Paul C. Jong

The gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1–8) ---------- 180

The Lord who has us carry out the role of John the Baptist (Mark 1:1–8) ---------- 188

The ministry of John the Baptist (Mark 1:1–11) ---------- 197

The ministry of John the Baptist in salvation (Mark 1:1–15) ---------- 210

The Son of God is revealed before the word of authority (Mark 1:22–31) ---------- 227

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Mark Chapter 2

• **Biblical Exposition**

Summary of the entire content • The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit ---------- 243

Jesus Christ, who calls sinners and gives true rest ------- 267

• **Questions and Answers** ---------- 288

• **Sermons by Paul C. Jong**

Only Jesus remits our sins (Mark 2:1–12) ---------- 308

Jesus Christ, who saved the paralytic (Mark 2:1–12) ---- 319

Jesus, who holds the authority to remit sins (Mark 2:1–12) ---------- 329

Solve the sins of your heart by faith (Mark 2:1–12) ----- 350

The Lord who calls sinners, and the new wine (Mark 2:13–22) ---------- 365

Mark Chapter 3

• **Biblical Exposition**

Summary of the entire content • The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit ---------- 381

Jesus Christ, who makes plain the will of God and saves life ---------- 402

• **Questions and Answers** ---------- 428

• **Sermons by Paul C. Jong**

Those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:1–6) ---------- 452

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This world must abandon religion and hold true faith (Mark 3:1–6) ---------- 459
Join your heart to the word of the Lord, agree with it, and be qualified (Mark 3:1–6) ---------- 471
By believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Let us not commit the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:7–30) ---------- 480
The Savior who bound the strong man, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:20–30) ---------- 494

Mark Chapter 4

• **Biblical Exposition**

Summary of the entire content • The perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit ---------- 509
Jesus Christ, who sows the seed of the gospel and calms the windstorm ---------- 534

• **Questions and Answers** ---------- 580

• **Sermons by Paul C. Jong**

Our life of faith seen through the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1–9) ---------- 637
Take heed not to stumble over the deceitfulness of riches (Mark 4:10–20) ---------- 649
The seed sown on the stony ground (Mark 4:1–9) ------- 663
Admit your evil now and live by faith (Mark 4:1–9) ---- 676
Who is this, whom even the wind and the sea obey (Mark 4:35–41) ---------- 688

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General Introduction

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General Introduction

Who wrote the Gospel of Mark?

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels of the New Testament, and yet the book with the quickest breath. The person who reads this Gospel feels a vividness, as though he were following the footsteps of Jesus breathlessly across the fields and along the lakeshore of Galilee. Yet the person who left this powerful and concise Gospel in our hands was, surprisingly, not one of the twelve apostles. The long tradition of the early church uniformly points to a young man called 'John Mark' as the author of this Gospel. He did not belong to the band of Jesus' immediate disciples, but he was a man who, at the side of the Apostle Peter, heard his preaching and faithfully wrote down that testimony. In this first question we look at who the author of this book is, and why the early church acknowledged him as the author so unwaveringly.

The text itself does not name its author

Like the other three Gospels, the Gospel of Mark does not directly give the author's name within the text. From the first verse to the last, this book concentrates only on proclaiming *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1),* and makes no attempt to display the writer himself. This was the constant, humble attitude of the Gospel writers. They did not seek to exalt themselves, but hid themselves thoroughly behind the story, so that Jesus alone would be its main figure.

Therefore, to know the author of this Gospel, we must look

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together at two kinds of evidence outside the text's silence: the external tradition of the early church, and the internal circumstances left within the text. These two streams of evidence point, remarkably, to one man, and he is John Mark. The Bible has hidden the author's name in silence, but that silence makes the truthfulness of this Gospel shine all the more.

The unanimous testimony of the early church

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, a church father of the early second century, passing on what he had heard from an elder of the generation before him, testified that 'Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, as he remembered, the things the Lord said and did.' This one short sentence is counted the oldest and weightiest external evidence establishing the authorship of the Gospel of Mark. After the testimony of Papias, the leaders of the early church—Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and on to Tertullian—acknowledged with one voice that the author of this Gospel was Mark.

The very fact that the ancient church, in naming the author, did not put forward some nameless believer or a great figure of apostolic rank, but pointed to Mark, a young fellow worker who was not an apostle, powerfully supports the truthfulness of this tradition. If people had invented an author to raise the authority of the Gospel, they would surely have attached the name of Peter or of another apostle. But the church held unwaveringly to the name of Mark, who was not an apostle. This tells us that the tradition did not spring from human fabrication but from fact.

The reason we should value this external testimony is that it came from a generation not far removed from the time of Jesus and the apostles. The elder's testimony that Papias passed on is

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considered to be directly linked with the Apostle John, so it is a trustworthy tradition rooted in the generation of the eyewitnesses. As the years passed, the churches of many regions each read and taught this Gospel, yet nowhere was any other name ever proposed for its author. That the whole early church pointed unshakenly to one man itself testifies that this tradition was not a later invention but a firm fact the church had shared from the beginning.

Peter's interpreter and spiritual son

At the end of his first epistle the Apostle Peter wrote, *"She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son" (1 Peter 5:13)*. Here Peter calls Mark his *"son."* This means not a son of the flesh, but a spiritual son begotten in the gospel. This one short phrase shows well how deep a father-son relationship of faith there was between Peter and Mark.

Mark heard Peter's preaching at his side for a long time. When Peter, the fisherman who had lived with Jesus by the Lake of Galilee, vividly testified to the words and deeds of Jesus that he had seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears, Mark engraved that testimony deep in his heart and wrote it down accurately. Therefore, though the Gospel of Mark was written by Mark's hand, its content is in fact rooted in the eyewitness testimony of the Apostle Peter, who followed Jesus most closely. The vivid sense of being on the scene and the detailed description this Gospel carries spring from this very source.

Here we see the amazing providence of God. He enabled Peter, an unlearned fisherman of Galilee, to deliver to the whole world the testimony of Jesus held in his heart, through the young Mark, who was fluent in two languages. Peter's

burning testimony and Mark's accurate record met, and one of the oldest Gospels in the world was born. This shows the truth that this was not accomplished by the gift of one person alone, but that when two different people become one for the gospel, God accomplishes amazing things.

The one man the internal evidence points to

Inside the text also there remains an interesting trace supporting Mark as the author. In the record of the night Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, there is one scene that appears only in the Gospel of Mark: *"Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked" (Mark 14:51–52).* Many Bible scholars regard this story of a nameless young man, absent from the other Gospels, as a trace like a signature that the author Mark quietly left behind.

This humble attitude—hiding his own name and yet quietly testifying that he was present on the scene that night—fits well with the figure of John Mark. The author did not set himself up as the main figure of the story. So that Jesus alone would be exalted, he appears only briefly, in the shameful figure of a young man who abandoned his linen cloth and fled. This humility is the very heart of one who delivers the gospel truthfully.

The gospel that flowed through the channel called Mark

What we must not miss here is the fact that God used as His instrument, in recording His gospel, a young man who was not an apostle. Mark was once a weak man who left Paul and Barnabas in the middle of the ministry and went back. But God raised up and restored that man who had been weak, and at last

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had him write with his own hand one of the oldest Gospels in the world. This is a great comfort to us.

The Gospel of Mark begins from the event in which Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, took the sins of all the people of the world upon Himself (Mark 1:9–11), and moves toward its climax with the declaration that the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). That is, this Gospel holds the gospel of the water and the Spirit at its beginning and at its end. What the author Mark wanted to deliver to us was not his own name, but the gospel of Jesus Christ, who has delivered us from sin. That gospel, which has flowed down to us today through this humble channel called Mark, is the true treasure this first question points us to.

Explain the life of Mark and his background of faith

John Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark, is a figure whose name and footprints appear scattered through many parts of the New Testament. He was not one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, but in the formative years of the early church he was a precious fellow worker who labored beside the apostles and gave his whole body for the gospel. Gathering his traces scattered through the Acts of the Apostles and several epistles, we sketch out from what background this one man was born, what failure he passed through, and how he was restored and finally came to be used as a precious vessel of the gospel.

A man with two names

This figure's full name is 'John Mark.' The Acts of the

Apostles repeatedly calls him *"John whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:12)*, *"John whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:25)*, and *"John called Mark" (Acts 15:37)*. *"John"* is his original Hebrew name, and *"Mark"* is his Roman name. In the land of Judea at that time, people who had dealings with the Gentile world commonly carried two names: one the Hebrew name used before their own people, and the other a name current in the Roman world.

The fact that he carried both a Hebrew name and a Roman name lets us suppose that he was a Jew who was also in broad contact with the Gentile world. And this very background of his became, in the providence of God, a well-prepared channel for the work he would later do: writing a Gospel addressed to the Gentile believers of Rome. God does not leave even a person's name and the environment in which he grew up lying idle, but uses them for the gospel.

Within these two names we see the identity of the man Mark. He was a man who had inherited the faith heritage of the Jews, and at the same time a man open toward the Gentile world. Such a character fitted him exactly to become a channel through which the salvation of the LORD, the God of the Jews, would flow out even to the Gentiles. When God prepares a person, He does not leave even his name, the environment he grew up in, and the culture soaked into him lying idle, but uses them wholly for the gospel.

The son of Mary of Jerusalem

Mark was the son of Mary, who lived in Jerusalem. Acts chapter 12 records that Peter, after being led out of prison by the angel, *"came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12)*. This short verse shows that Mark's

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house was used as a place of prayer for the Jerusalem church. His mother Mary was a woman of faith who gladly gave up her own house as a place where the saints gathered to pray.

Mary's house was the place where the saints of the early church gathered to pray together in a time of crisis. Mark thus belonged to a family close to the early church, and this environment of faith became an important background for his later standing as a workman of the gospel. However, the claim that the upper room where Jesus shared the Last Supper with His disciples was this very house is not a fact recorded in the Bible but only a conjecture.

The cousin of Barnabas and companion of Paul

Mark was the cousin, a close kinsman, of Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus. The Apostle Paul mentions *"Mark the cousin of Barnabas" (Colossians 4:10)* in his letter to the church of Colossae. Barnabas was a man so generous and able to embrace people that in the early church he was called the 'son of encouragement,' and Mark was this Barnabas's close kinsman. This relationship would later play a very important role in Mark's life.

When Paul and Barnabas set out on the first missionary journey, Mark went with them as an assistant to help them. The Acts of the Apostles records, *"They also had John as their assistant" (Acts 13:5)*. He set foot on the front line of the gospel together with Paul and Barnabas. But the road he had to walk was not to be so smooth.

A weak man who passed through failure and discouragement

On Mark's life there remains the mark of a painful failure. In the middle of the first missionary journey, when the party

reached Perga in Pamphylia, the Bible records briefly, *"and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:13)*. The exact reason is not given; the Bible records only that he left the party in the middle of the ministry and returned to Jerusalem. This affair later stirred up great waves.

Paul kept this matter in his heart. When the second missionary journey was being prepared, Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them again, but Paul thought it right *"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)*, and opposed it. In the end the two apostles contended so sharply that they parted, and Barnabas took Mark and sailed off to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). Thus Mark was once a man so weak that he became the cause of a conflict between apostles.

This failure of Mark gives us deep comfort. Even a person called for the gospel was not perfect from the beginning. Even the great Gospel writer was once a weak man who could not endure the rough ministry and turned back midway. But the Bible does not hide this failure; it records it just as it was. This is to show that God is not a God who uses only perfect people, but the God of grace, who raises up again even the one who has fallen and uses him.

A man restored and made a vessel of the gospel

But Mark's story does not end in failure. After years had passed, Paul, imprisoned, charges Timothy: *"Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11)*. The very Mark he had once refused to take along, Paul now calls a useful man he wants without fail at his side. What an amazing restoration this is. The one who had fallen stood up again, and the one who had almost been cast aside was set up again.

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Mark also served at Peter's side as his interpreter and spiritual son (1 Peter 5:13), and at last came to receive Peter's testimony and write this Gospel. The young man who once fled became the Gospel writer who left the gospel of Jesus' ransom to all later generations. The life of Mark speaks plainly to us. Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, took all our sins upon Himself and paid the full price of those sins on the Cross, and even the one who has fallen is wholly restored within this gospel of the water and the Spirit and used by God. What the figure of Mark points us to today is precisely the gospel of grace, which raises up again the one who has failed.

When was the Gospel of Mark written?

The question of when the Gospel of Mark was written is an important key to understanding the background and character of this Gospel. The Bible itself does not state the exact date, but when we put together the tradition of the early church, the various circumstances contained in the text, and the historical events of the time, we can narrow the time of writing down considerably. The majority of Bible scholars hold that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome in the AD 60s, that is, between AD 60 and 70. This period was a turbulent age in which the early church was meeting great waves of trial.

The first Gospel to be written

It is the view of many scholars that among the four Gospels, the Gospel of Mark was written first. Because Mark is the shortest and most concise, and because Matthew and Luke share a considerable part of Mark, it is thought very possible

that Mark became the basis of those two Gospels. If this is so, the Gospel of Mark is the firstborn of the four Gospels, the precious firstfruit that first wove the life and ministry of Jesus Christ into a single narrative.

One of the reasons the Gospels began to be written was that the apostles who had directly witnessed Jesus began, one by one, to be martyred or to leave the world. As time passed, the need became urgent to set the eyewitness testimony down in writing and deliver it whole to later generations. The Gospel of Mark was the precious fruit that answered that call of the times, holding fast in an accurate record the living testimony of the Apostle Peter before it should disappear.

The connection with the last years of Peter's life

The tradition of the early church tells us that Mark, as Peter's interpreter and fellow worker, wrote down his preaching. If so, the date of the Gospel of Mark is naturally tied closely to the period of Peter's activity. The Apostle Peter is reported to have been martyred in Rome in the mid-60s AD, amid the persecution of the Roman emperor Nero. This fact provides an important clue for reckoning the date of the Gospel of Mark.

The testimonies of the church fathers diverge a little at this point. One tradition says that Mark received Peter's testimony and wrote it while Peter was still alive, and another says that he set that testimony down in writing right after Peter was martyred. But either way, they share the point of connecting the writing of the Gospel of Mark with the years around the end of Peter's life. According to this tradition, the Gospel of Mark was written so that Peter's testimony would be delivered to later generations.

The fact that the testimony of Peter, who followed Jesus

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closely, was preserved for later generations through Mark's record is important. God caused the apostle's eyewitness testimony to be recorded as a Gospel and delivered to people of many generations and regions. In this process we see the providence of God, who preserved the gospel and passed it on.

Written before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple

Another important criterion for fixing the date of the Gospel of Mark is the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70. This enormous event, in which the Roman army captured Jerusalem and demolished the Temple, left a deep scar on Jewish history and on the history of the early church. In Mark chapter 13 is recorded the word in which Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Temple: the solemn prophecy, *"Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mark 13:2)*.

On the ground that in the text this prophecy is described as something yet to happen, and that the destruction of the Temple is nowhere mentioned as an event already past, many scholars hold that the Gospel of Mark was written before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. That is, this Gospel was written before Jesus' prophecy of the Temple's destruction was fulfilled, in that tense period when its shadow was slowly drawing near. The prophecy was later fulfilled to the letter; there was not a hair's breadth of error in the word of Jesus.

The darkness of the age: the persecution of Nero

In AD 64 a great fire broke out in the city of Rome. The emperor Nero shifted the blame for the fire onto the Christians, and because of this the saints of Rome were thrown into the flames of a cruel persecution. Countless believers were wrapped in the skins of beasts and torn to death by dogs, or

nailed to crosses, or burned as torches to light the night. This atrocious period of persecution is regarded as the very background of the age in which the Gospel of Mark was written.

This situation of the times greatly helps us understand the character of the Gospel of Mark. Mark stresses the Messiah who came as a suffering servant, Jesus, who gave His life as a ransom (Mark 10:45). To the saints of Rome, suffering in the flames of persecution, this gospel—that Jesus Himself walked the way of suffering and gave up His own life—must have been an unspeakable comfort and strength. The deeper the darkness of the age, the more brightly shone the gospel of Jesus, the suffering servant.

The darkness of that age helps us understand the seriousness and weight the Gospel of Mark carries. This Gospel was not a book written at leisure in an easy age, but a book of life recorded in a desperate age when the threat of death pressed upon the saints daily. That is why there is no idle word in any sentence of this Gospel; it is steeped only in an urgent love that would save the saints and set them up firmly. The age of darkness itself molded this Gospel into something all the purer and more precious.

The gospel engraved amid turbulent years

Putting all these circumstances together, the Gospel of Mark is understood to have been written around the AD 60s, against the background of Peter's last years and the persecution of the church of Rome. The world was dark and the future uncertain, but at that very time God, through this Gospel, held the gospel of Jesus Christ fast and unshaken.

In the background of this date we see one important truth: however the powers of the world tried to trample the church,

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the gospel of God was recorded and preached all the more firmly in the very midst of that persecution. The gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, took the sins of all mankind upon Himself and paid the full price on the Cross—was the true gospel of life that no flame of persecution could put out. What the date of the Gospel of Mark points us to is the power of this gospel, which is never extinguished even in darkness.

Where was the Gospel of Mark written?

The question of where the Gospel of Mark was written also gives an important clue to understanding the character and the audience of this Gospel. When we examine the long tradition of the early church and the various features contained in the text, the most widely accepted view is that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome, the heart of the empire. That the gospel of Jesus, the suffering servant, was recorded for persecuted saints in that very city, which stood at the summit of worldly power, carries deep meaning in itself.

The Rome that the early church tradition points to

The fathers of the early church uniformly testify that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome. Clement of Alexandria relates that Mark, at the request of Peter's hearers in Rome, recorded the teaching of Jesus that Peter had delivered. Irenaeus likewise testifies that after Peter and Paul had preached the gospel in Rome and departed this world, Mark set Peter's testimony down in writing.

That the testimonies of several church fathers point to the one city of Rome raises the credibility of this tradition. When

we consider together that Peter spent the last years of his life in Rome and was martyred there, and that Mark served at his side as interpreter and fellow worker, the conclusion that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome is very natural.

The traces of Rome contained in the text

In the text of the Gospel of Mark itself there remain many traces showing that this Gospel was written for readers in Rome. Several words of Latin origin appear in Mark: expressions used in the Roman world appear, for example, in units of the army, units of money, and various terms of daily life. This lets us suppose that the readers of this Gospel were people familiar with the language and culture of Rome.

The Gospel of Mark also adds careful explanations of Jewish customs and geography, which shows that the author had in mind Gentile readers unfamiliar with those customs. For example, explaining the Jewish rites of purification in detail (Mark 7:3–4), and translating the meaning of Aramaic expressions into Greek whenever they appear, was a careful consideration for the Gentile readers of Rome, to whom Jewish culture was strange.

Such careful consideration shows that the Gospel of Mark was by no means a book shut inside the narrow fence of Judea, but a Gospel opened wide toward the Gentile world. The author reckoned in advance with everything his readers might find strange, and explained it. This reveals well that the gospel is not the possession of any one people but news for all the people of the whole world. So that even the Gentiles of Rome might know Jesus fully through this Gospel, Mark did not spare the labor of love.

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The connection with Peter's ministry in Rome

The Apostle Peter, in his first epistle, passes on the greeting of *"She who is in Babylon" (1 Peter 5:13)*. Here *"Babylon"* is widely understood not as the literal city, but as an expression pointing to Rome as the symbol of worldly power and sin. That is, Peter wrote this letter in Rome, and passed on with it the greeting of Mark, who was at his side. This one verse strongly suggests that Mark was with Peter in Rome.

If Peter proclaimed the testimony of Jesus in Rome, and Mark at his side wrote that testimony down, then the conclusion that the place of writing of the Gospel of Mark was Rome becomes still firmer. In the heart of the empire, where the power of the world stretched at its strongest, the gospel of Jesus—the true King who overcame the world and the suffering servant—was being recorded, quietly but mightily.

The gospel that rang out in the city of persecution

Rome was, for the Christians of that day, the city of persecution. The cruel persecution of the emperor Nero began there, and countless saints shed their blood in that city. That the Gospel of Mark was written in such a place carries deep meaning. For in the very heart of the power that tried to trample the gospel, the story of Jesus, the true King of the gospel, was being recorded and preached.

To the saints of Rome in their suffering, the Gospel of Mark proclaimed this: the Jesus we believe in and follow is not One seated on a comfortable throne, but One who Himself walked the way of suffering and came as a serving servant. He, by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, took the sins of all the people of the world upon Himself and paid the full price of those sins on the Cross. This gospel of the water and the Spirit was the only hope that the saints facing

death in the city of persecution could hold on to without being shaken.

The power of the gospel that the place testifies to

The fact that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome teaches us one truth: the gospel of God does not grow only in safe and quiet places; rather, it takes root the more strongly in the places where worldly power and persecution rage fiercest. This Gospel, recorded in the heart of the empire called Rome, testifies that no power of the world can block the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What we must engrave on our hearts as we consider this place of writing is the fact that the gospel is not confined to any place. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished, flowed from Jerusalem to Galilee, from Galilee to Rome, and from Rome to the ends of the whole world. What the place of writing of the Gospel of Mark points us to is the power of this gospel, which surely triumphs in any dark city of the world.

For whom was the Gospel of Mark written?

Every letter and every book is written with its readers in mind. The Gospel of Mark is no different. The author Mark wrote this Gospel picturing particular readers in his heart, and knowing who those readers were greatly helps us understand why this Gospel was written in the way it was. The various features contained in the text and the tradition of the early church show that the primary recipients of the Gospel of Mark were the Gentile believers living in Rome—especially the saints of Rome who were under persecution.

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Careful consideration for Gentile readers

The clearest evidence that the Gospel of Mark was written for Gentile readers is that the author explains Jewish customs and culture in detail. Concerning the rites of purification, which any Jew would have known, Mark kindly adds the explanation, *"For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders" (Mark 7:3)*. For a Jewish reader such an explanation would not have been needed.

Such careful explanation shows plainly that the readers of the Gospel of Mark were Gentiles unfamiliar with Jewish culture. So that his readers could fully understand the words and deeds of Jesus, Mark did not spare the labor of making plain, one by one, the Jewish background they did not know. This is the posture of love that anyone who delivers the gospel ought to have: considering the position of the hearers and delivering it so that they can understand.

The devotion that translated the Aramaic

In the Gospel of Mark, Aramaic expressions Jesus used appear several times just as they were spoken, and each time the author faithfully translates their meaning into Greek. To the words *"Talitha, cumi,"* spoken when He raised the dead girl, he attaches the interpretation *"Little girl, I say to you, arise" (Mark 5:41)*; and to the cry from the Cross, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"* he adds the translation *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34)*.

The reason the Aramaic was translated word by word like this is that the readers were people who did not know Aramaic. If the readers had been Jews of Palestine, Aramaic was their everyday language, and no translation would have been needed. The author's careful translation confirms that the readers of the

Gospel of Mark were people of the Greek-speaking Gentile world, that is, the Gentile believers of Rome.

The saints of Rome under persecution

The recipients of the Gospel of Mark were not merely Gentiles; they were saints in the agony of persecution. As we have seen, this Gospel was written in the period when the cruel persecution of the emperor Nero was falling upon the Christians of Rome. That the Gospel of Mark especially stresses Jesus, who came as a suffering servant and gave His life as a ransom (Mark 10:45), was precisely to comfort and encourage these suffering readers.

The Gospel of Mark also speaks honestly about the cost of discipleship. The word of Jesus, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*, was a word that gave the saints shaken before persecution the strength to bear the way of suffering. Because Jesus Himself walked that way of suffering first, those who follow Him could also walk that way without fear.

Thus the Gospel of Mark was written not for believers of a comfortable age, but for saints standing before the threat of death. Therefore this Gospel carries not cheap comfort, but the strength to face the reality of suffering honestly while never losing the hope beyond it. The truth that Jesus Himself walked the way of suffering and at the end of that way reached the glory of the resurrection planted in the saints who stood in the flames of persecution a boldness that could overcome even death.

The gospel's way of showing by action

That the Gospel of Mark was written for Gentile readers in

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Rome also shows in the way it tells its story. Rather than long discourses or complicated doctrinal arguments, Mark strings together, quickly and vividly, the actions of Jesus and the events of His power. It is a manner well suited to the temperament of the Romans, who were practical and valued action. The weight falls not on what Jesus taught, but on what Jesus did.

Thus the Gospel of Mark powerfully portrays Jesus acting with power: healing the sick, casting out demons, and ruling the forces of nature. Through this Lord of power, the readers in Rome could realize that the Jesus they believed in was greater and stronger than any power of the world. However the powers of the world trampled them, their Lord was the One who had overcome all those powers.

The gospel toward all the Gentiles

The primary recipients of the Gospel of Mark were the Gentile saints of Rome, but the news this Gospel delivers does not stay with them. This gospel, which flowed over the fence of the Jews into the Gentile world, finally became news for all the nations of the whole world. The Gospel of Mark proclaims not a Messiah for the Jews only, but the Savior Jesus, who gave His life a ransom for all mankind.

Here we see the wide embrace of this gospel. The sins Jesus took upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River were not the sins of the Jews only but the sins of all the people of the world, and the price He paid on the Cross was for all mankind. This gospel of the water and the Spirit broke down the boundary between Jew and Gentile and was given freely to all. What the fact that the recipients of Mark were Gentiles points us to is the grace of this gospel, opened wide toward all the people of the whole world.

In what social and political circumstances was the Gospel of Mark written?

To understand a book fully, we must breathe together the air of the age in which it was born. The world of the AD 60s, when the Gospel of Mark was written, was the period when the vast Roman Empire ruled the whole Mediterranean coast, and at the same time a turbulent age in which, in the heart of that empire, Christians were being thrown for the first time into the flames of organized persecution. Looking into the social and political background of this Gospel is a key to understanding why Mark portrayed so powerfully Jesus, who came as a suffering servant.

The shadow of the Pax Romana

The world of that day was the age called the 'Pax Romana,' the peace of Rome. The Roman Empire bound its vast territory into one with strong military power, well-paved networks of roads, and a unified currency and law. Wherever one went along the Mediterranean coast, the law of Rome held and the roads of Rome ran on, and the common language of Greek made communication possible. This unified world later became an unexpected channel through which the gospel could spread quickly.

But behind this outward peace a deep shadow lay. The peace of Rome was built upon the tears of conquered peoples and the sufferings of slaves, and the idolatry that worshiped the emperor as a god covered the whole empire. Outwardly prosperity and order abounded, but the souls of the people, not knowing true peace, wandered in darkness. It was into this age that the gospel of Jesus, the true King of peace, began to be preached.

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The emperor Nero and the persecution of the Christians

The Roman emperor at the time the Gospel of Mark was written was Nero. In AD 64, when a great fire broke out in the city of Rome and a large part of the city was reduced to ashes, Nero looked for someone on whom to fasten the blame, and in the end the arrow turned upon the innocent Christians. From this time the saints of Rome were thrown into the flames of a persecution cruel beyond imagining.

According to the records of the historians, Nero's persecution was truly horrific. Believers were wrapped in the skins of beasts and torn to death by fierce dogs, nailed to crosses, and even burned as human torches to light the emperor's gardens. The Apostles Peter and Paul also are reported to have been martyred in Rome in this period. The Gospel of Mark was written in this very age, when the shadow of death hung over the saints.

This darkness of persecution explains why the Gospel of Mark portrayed the sufferings of Jesus in such detail. What the saints living daily under the threat of death needed most was the assurance that the Lord they believed in had passed through that suffering first. Because Jesus Himself bore the mocking, the scourging, and the agony of the Cross, the saints who suffered for following Him could know that they were by no means abandoned and alone. The deeper the darkness of the age, the greater the comfort this truth became.

The political turmoil of the land of Judea

Meanwhile the land of Judea, where the ministry of Jesus had unfolded, was also under extreme political tension. Judea lay under the rule of Rome, and the Jews harbored deep resentment against the rule of Gentile conquerors. Heavy taxes and the stationing of Roman troops added to the people's

suffering, and the longing to escape Rome's oppression one day and recover their freedom seethed in the people's hearts.

This tension finally exploded in AD 66 into the Jewish War, and came to its terrible end in AD 70, when the Roman army captured Jerusalem and demolished the Temple. The period in which the Gospel of Mark was written was the very time when the mood of this war was ripening. The word in which Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Temple (Mark 13:2) pressed upon its hearers all the more heavily against the background of such turbulence of the age.

The distorted expectation of the Messiah

The expectation of the Messiah that the Jews of that day cherished was deeply colored by politics. They longed for a Messiah as a political and military liberator, who would drive out the oppression of Rome by force and raise up the kingdom of David again. The Messiah they dreamed of was a victorious king who would trample their enemies with sword and army and restore worldly power to Israel.

But the figure of the Messiah that Jesus came and showed was entirely different from their expectation. Jesus did not take up the sword, nor raise an army; rather, He came as a serving servant and gave His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). This misplaced expectation was the root cause of the people's failing to recognize Jesus and rejecting Him. The Gospel of Mark corrects this distorted expectation and plainly reveals what kind of person the true Messiah is.

This distorted expectation gives a lesson of warning to us today as well. People commonly paint God in the image they themselves want, and when He does not fit that frame, they reject Him. Just as the Jews, expecting a political liberator, failed to recognize the true Savior, so we too, if we measure

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Jesus by our own desires, can miss His true form. The Gospel of Mark invites us to lay down our expectations and meet, just as He is, the true Jesus whom the Bible testifies to.

The true King who shone in an age of darkness

Thus the age that formed the background of the Gospel of Mark was an age of darkness in which, while the peace of Rome shone outwardly, persecution and war, oppression and despair were tangled together within. The powers of the world seemed to pierce the heavens, and the people of God were harassed from without and within. Into the very midst of that darkness the Gospel of Mark proclaimed Jesus Christ, the true King.

The Jesus that the Gospel of Mark portrayed was not a king who imitated the powers of the world, but the true King, who, though well able to overcome all those powers, came down of His own will to the place of a servant. He, by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, took the sins of the whole world upon Himself, and by paying the full price on the Cross, He delivered people from the power of sin and death. This gospel of the water and the Spirit was the true hope that neither the oppression of Rome, nor the persecution of Nero, nor the war of Judea could ever break down. What the background of the age of the Gospel of Mark points us to is Jesus Christ, the King of this gospel, unshaken in any darkness of the world.

What was the religious situation when the Gospel of Mark was written?

The age in which the Gospel of Mark was written was turbulent not only politically but also religiously—a very

complicated and confused time. In the land of Judea, where the ministry of Jesus unfolded, several religious factions held to differing beliefs and lines, and the system of Judaism, centered on the Temple and the synagogue, closely governed the life of the people. At the same time the Gentile world overflowed with every kind of idolatry and mystery religion. Understanding this religious background helps us grasp why Jesus collided so fiercely with the religious leaders.

A Judaism centered on the Temple and its sacrifices

At the center of the Judaism of that day stood the Temple of Jerusalem. The Temple was the holy place where God was worshiped, the place where sacrifices were offered daily, and the faith and life of all the Jews gathered toward it. At the feasts, pilgrims streamed to the Temple from every region, and the priests slaughtered the animals and offered the sacrifices on behalf of the people. This system of sacrifice had been established by God through Moses, a channel of grace providing the way for a people who had sinned to have the price of sin paid in their place.

But as the years passed, this holy institution became stained with formalism and vested interests. The Temple had degenerated into a place of trade, and the priestly class had turned into a position that coveted power and wealth. When Jesus entered the Temple, drove out those who bought and sold, and rebuked them, *"Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves'" (Mark 11:17)*, it was a solemn judgment upon the real state of the Temple so corrupted.

Here we must consider the true meaning of the sacrificial system God established. The sacrifice in which an animal was slain and its blood offered showed the principle of substitution:

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the one who sinned must surely die, yet the animal bore that death in his place. But because the blood of animals could not wash away man's sins completely, the sacrifices had to be offered again year after year. This system of sacrifice was not complete in itself; it was a shadow showing in advance Jesus, the true sacrificial offering of substitution who was to come.

The legalism of the Pharisees and the scribes

Within Judaism there were several factions, and among them the Pharisees were a company respected by the people for keeping the Law strictly. They tried to keep in detail not only the Law of Moses but also the many traditions handed down from the fathers, and the scribes were the experts who studied and taught that Law. Outwardly they looked like the most godly and faithful of men.

But Jesus saw through their faith as a mere shell. They clung to outward forms such as the washing of hands and the Sabbath regulations, yet they had lost the heart that loves God and has compassion on one's neighbor. Jesus, quoting the word of Isaiah, rebuked them: *"This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Mark 7:6)*. The Gospel of Mark vividly records the repeated collisions between Jesus and these legalists, and these collisions became, in the end, the cause that drove Jesus to the Cross.

Jesus collided with these legalists not because He denied the Law itself, but because He would set right their shell of a faith, which had lost the true meaning of the Law. An important purpose for which God gave the Law is to make a person realize his sin and his helplessness and seek Jesus Christ, the Savior. But they did not realize their sins before the Law; they held to outward forms and their own righteousness. Through this contrast the Gospel of Mark teaches that true faith

lies not in relying on one's own legal deeds, but in believing in Jesus Christ, who has saved sinners.

The secularization of the Sadducees and the Herodians

Besides the Pharisees, there was in Jewish society a faction called the Sadducees. They were made up mainly of the priestly class and the rich aristocracy, and they held the real power over the Temple sacrifices. They did not believe in the resurrection (Mark 12:18), and they were a worldly company, much concerned with protecting their vested interests under the rule of Rome. Their hearts were set more on present profit and power than on faith.

There was also a company called the Herodians, political supporters of the house of Herod. Interestingly, the Pharisees and the Herodians, who opposed each other like enemies, became of one mind in the work of killing Jesus. The verse, *"Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6)*, shows this. Religious power stained by the world and political power joined hands and opposed the true Messiah.

The idolatry of the Gentile world

Meanwhile, the world in which the Gentiles of Rome, the readers of the Gospel of Mark, lived was filled with every kind of idolatry. They served countless gods, worshiped the emperor as a god, and had their hearts stolen by mysterious rites and divination. Not knowing the true God, people bowed before images made by human hands, trying to soothe the emptiness of their hearts. In this darkness their souls were thirsting for true salvation.

It was toward this very Gentile world that the Gospel of Mark proclaimed Jesus, who acts with power. The figure of

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Jesus casting out demons, healing the sick, and ruling the forces of nature plainly showed the Gentiles, harassed by all their vain gods, who the true Son of God is. The scenes in which the powers of darkness fall on their knees before Jesus became the news of true freedom to the Gentiles crushed under idolatry.

The true salvation that surpasses every religion

Thus the religious background of the Gospel of Mark was a world of darkness in which a corrupted Temple system, a legalism of empty shells, secularized religious power, and the idolatry of the Gentile world were tangled together. No religion of any kind truly solved the problem of man's sin, and people still groaned under the burden of sin. Into the very midst of this Jesus came, carrying the way of true salvation.

Jesus fundamentally solved the problem of sin, which no religious system made by man could wash away. He, by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, took the sins of all the people of the world upon Himself, and on the Cross He paid the full price of those sins without remainder. Unlike the Temple sacrifices, which had to be offered again year after year with the blood of animals, Jesus solved the whole problem of sin forever with one perfect ransom. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the way of true salvation that surpasses every religion. What the religious background of the Gospel of Mark points us to is Jesus Christ, who accomplished this perfect salvation.

Explain the motive for which the Gospel of Mark was written

When a man takes up his pen and leaves a writing behind, there is always a reason worthy of it. There was a clear motive behind Mark's writing of this Gospel. When we consider that motive, it becomes plain that this Gospel was not merely a documentary project to leave a record of the life of Jesus, but a book of life born in answer to the urgent needs of its age. To look into the motive for the writing of the Gospel of Mark is to understand the burning heart this Gospel carries.

To hold fast the vanishing eyewitness testimony

The period in which the Gospel of Mark was written was the time when the apostles who had directly witnessed Jesus were beginning, one by one, to leave the world and to be martyred. In particular, the Apostle Peter, whom Mark served at his side, was moving toward the end of his life. If the testimony of those great eyewitnesses were not set down in writing, the living words and deeds of Jesus were in danger of being blurred and distorted with the passing years.

It was this very sense of crisis that made Mark take up his pen. According to the tradition of the early church, the saints of Rome earnestly begged that the testimony of Jesus that Peter delivered be left in writing, and Mark, answering that request, accurately recorded what he had heard from Peter. That is, the Gospel of Mark was born of the urgent desire to hold the apostle's eyewitness testimony fast forever, before it should vanish from the world.

To comfort the persecuted saints

As we have seen, the time when this Gospel was written

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was the period when the persecution of the emperor Nero was falling upon the saints of Rome. Believers were seized and put to death daily, and the saints groaned in the fear of not knowing when their own turn would come. To give these suffering saints a ground of faith that would not be shaken—this was another important motive for writing the Gospel of Mark.

Mark sought to comfort the saints by portraying Jesus, who came as a suffering servant. The truth that the Lord we follow also walked the way of suffering Himself and gave His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45) became unspeakable strength to the saints facing death. Because Jesus walked the way of the Cross before them, those who followed Him could walk that way without fear.

The comfort the Gospel of Mark delivers was not a promise to remove suffering, but the planting of a ground that would not be shaken even in suffering. As the way of suffering Jesus walked led to the glory of the resurrection, this Gospel testifies that the sufferings of the saints who follow Him are not in vain but lead to glory. Because this hope was theirs, the saints of Rome did not forsake their faith even in the face of death, but rather testified to Christ by martyrdom.

To preach the gospel to the Gentiles

The Gospel of Mark explained Jewish customs in detail and translated the Aramaic for Gentile readers unfamiliar with Jewish culture. This shows that this Gospel carried a clear motive of delivering the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world. The gospel opened not to the Jews only but to all the nations of the whole world—Mark sought to deliver it in a way the Gentiles could understand.

This motive is joined to the great commission Jesus

Himself gave: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)*. This command opened the way of the gospel that goes beyond the fence of Judea into all the world. Following this very command, the Gospel of Mark flung wide open the door of the gospel toward all the nations, in the heart of the Gentile world called Rome.

To reveal plainly the true Messiah

Many people of that day cherished wrong expectations about the Messiah. They longed for a Messiah as a political and military liberator, and because of that distorted expectation they failed to recognize Jesus, the true Messiah. Mark sought to correct this wrong expectation and to make plain what kind of person the true Messiah is.

The Messiah the Gospel of Mark portrayed was not a conqueror with a sword but a serving servant; not a king wielding worldly power but the Lord of ransom, who gives up His own life. The reason Jesus was careful about revealing Himself as the Christ also lay in His not being swept up into the people's distorted expectations. By revealing plainly this figure of the true Messiah, Mark sought to have his readers know Jesus rightly and believe.

To testify to the power of the gospel

All these motives for writing the Gospel of Mark gather at last into one center: to testify to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the saving power that delivers people from sin. Mark's aim was that, by testifying to who Jesus is and what He accomplished, everyone who reads might believe that gospel and come to salvation.

The Gospel of Mark opens with the proclamation, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark*

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1:1). And it presses on toward the event in which Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, took the sins of the whole world upon Himself (Mark 1:9–11), and, by giving His life a ransom on the Cross (Mark 10:45), paid the full price of those sins. To testify to this gospel of the water and the Spirit—that was the ultimate motive for which Mark took up his pen. What the motive of the Gospel of Mark points us to is the power of this gospel, which brings people to life.

What does the Gospel of Mark intend to deliver?

If the motive is the fire in the heart that made him take up the pen, the purpose is the clear direction in which that pen pressed on. The Gospel of Mark was written with a distinct purpose. The very declaration of its first verse, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)*, holds the purpose of this Gospel in compressed form. Mark sought to make plain who Jesus is, to deliver the gospel He accomplished, and to build up those who believe that gospel. Let us now look at that purpose point by point.

To testify that Jesus is the Son of God

The most fundamental purpose of the Gospel of Mark lies in testifying that Jesus is the Son of God. This Gospel opens its door proclaiming *"Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)* in its first verse, and completes that testimony in the scene where, at the last moment when Jesus breathed His last on the Cross, the Roman centurion confesses, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)*.

These two confessions, set side by side at the beginning and the end of the Gospel, show that the whole of Mark runs

toward the one purpose of testifying that Jesus is the Son of God. That everyone who reads this Gospel, whether Jew or Gentile, might realize and believe that Jesus is truly the Son of God—this was the first purpose of the Gospel of Mark.

This testimony demands a decision from everyone who reads the Gospel of Mark. If Jesus is truly the Son of God, His word is the word of God that must be obeyed, and the salvation He accomplished is the way of life that must be held fast. The Gospel of Mark leads its reader not to stop at regarding Jesus as a great teacher or a man who worked amazing miracles, but to believe in Him as the Savior, the Son of God, and to kneel before Him.

To reveal the Messiah who came as a serving servant

While testifying that Jesus is the Son of God, the Gospel of Mark also makes plain how that Son of God came to this earth. Jesus came not as a king wielding worldly power, but as a serving servant. The word, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45),* reveals this purpose most plainly.

Through this figure of the serving servant, Mark sought to impress upon his readers what kind of person the true Messiah is. Not the political liberator people expected, but the Lord of ransom, who humbled Himself, came down to the place of a servant, and at last gave up His life on the Cross—He was the true Messiah. The Gospel of Mark reveals this truth plainly, to set right the distorted view of the Messiah.

This purpose gives a deep challenge to us today as well. If the Jesus we believe in and follow came as a serving servant, then we who follow Him are also called to the place of serving. The world contends to be exalted, but the disciple of Jesus finds true greatness in lowliness and serving. Through this

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figure of the serving servant, the Gospel of Mark teaches plainly what kind of life we ought to live.

To establish the suffering saints firmly

The Gospel of Mark also carried the purpose of establishing firmly the saints who were under persecution. As Jesus Himself walked the way of suffering and took up His own cross, this Gospel says honestly that those who follow Him must also be prepared for suffering: *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*.

This word awakened the saints of Rome, shaken before persecution, to the truth that suffering is by no means a curse but the fitting way of those who follow the Lord. As Jesus reached the glory of the resurrection at the end of the way of suffering, glory beyond suffering was prepared also for those who follow Him. By planting this hope, the Gospel of Mark sought to establish the saints facing death firmly upon an unshakable faith.

To urge the preaching of the gospel to the whole world

The Gospel of Mark also had the purpose of urging the saints to preach the gospel to the whole world. After His resurrection Jesus commanded His disciples, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)*. This great commission adorns the close of the Gospel of Mark and awakens everyone who reads this Gospel to the mission of preaching the gospel.

The very fact that the Gospel of Mark was a Gospel opened toward the Gentile world beyond the fence of the Jews shows this purpose of preaching well. The gospel of Jesus could not be shut up within one people. It was news that had to be

preached to all the nations under heaven. The Gospel of Mark engraved this mission on the hearts of its readers, urging them to let the gospel they had received flow out again into the world.

To bring people to salvation by faith

All these purposes of the Gospel of Mark move ultimately toward one point: that everyone who reads may come to salvation by believing in Jesus Christ. To know that Jesus is the Son of God, to believe that He came as a serving servant and accomplished the ransom, and to live holding fast that gospel—this was the final purpose toward which this Gospel pressed.

The Gospel of Mark testifies to the event in which Jesus, by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, took the sins of the whole world upon Himself (Mark 1:9–11), and, by giving His life a ransom on the Cross (Mark 10:45), paid the full price of those sins. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and comes to salvation. What the purpose of the Gospel of Mark points us to is the way of true salvation: by believing this gospel, to be released from sin and become a child of God.

Where in the Gospel of Mark are the Old Testament prophecies about Christ fulfilled?

The Gospel of Mark is a short Gospel, yet engraved throughout it is the way the words prophesied about the Messiah in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Because this Gospel was written for Gentile readers, its Old Testament quotations are not as frequent as Matthew's; but at every decisive moment it draws in the prophecies of the Old

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Testament and testifies that Jesus is the fulfillment of those very prophecies. Here we will look in detail, just as they stand, at the several places in the Gospel of Mark where the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled.

The prophecy of the messenger who prepares the way

The Gospel of Mark opens its door quoting the prophecy of the Old Testament from its very beginning. The word, *"As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You'" (Mark 1:2)*, holds together the prophecies of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. This prophecy was that before the Messiah came, a messenger would first appear to prepare His way.

The Gospel of Mark makes plain that this prophecy was fulfilled through John the Baptist. Just as the word of Isaiah says, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight'" (Mark 1:3)*, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance and preparing the way of the Messiah (Mark 1:4). The preparer of the way whom the Old Testament prophesied was John the Baptist, and by the way he prepared, Jesus came.

The prophecy of the suffering Servant

In the Old Testament, especially in the book of Isaiah, is contained the amazing prophecy of the suffering Servant. Isaiah chapter 53 says, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities,"* prophesying the Messiah, who would suffer and be put to death in the place of sinners. The Gospel of Mark testifies that this prophecy of the suffering Servant was fulfilled wholly in Jesus.

When Jesus said, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"*

(Mark 10:45), it was the declaration that He was fulfilling exactly the figure of the suffering Servant Isaiah had prophesied. This word, that He would give His life a ransom for many, matches exactly Isaiah's prophecy of the Servant, who would carry the sins of many and suffer.

The suffering Servant Isaiah prophesied was not one who suffers for His own sin, but the Servant of substitution, who carries the sins of others and suffers in their place. Jesus came exactly according to this prophecy: though He had no sin of His own, He carried the sins of all the people of the world and suffered. That Isaiah's prophecy and the actual ministry of Jesus match so exactly confirms that Jesus is truly the Servant of salvation whom God had prepared long before.

The prophecy of betrayal and abandonment

In the Gospel of Mark there are several scenes where Jesus, prophesying that He will be betrayed and abandoned, quotes the Old Testament. On the way to the Mount of Olives after the Last Supper, Jesus said, *"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered'" (Mark 14:27)*. This was His quotation of the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7.

Indeed, according to this prophecy, when Jesus was seized, the disciples all abandoned Him and fled (Mark 14:50). The Shepherd was struck, and the sheep were scattered. Thus even the betrayal of Jesus and the scattering of the disciples had been prophesied long before in the Old Testament, and that prophecy was fulfilled without a hair's breadth of deviation.

The prophecies fulfilled on the Cross

In that terrible hour when Jesus hung on the Cross, several prophecies of the Old Testament were also fulfilled. On the

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Cross Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"* (Mark 15:34), which means, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*—the word of Psalm 22:1. This psalm, which David had sung long before, was a prophecy of the suffering the Messiah would undergo.

Also, the soldiers dividing the garments of Jesus and casting lots for them (Mark 15:24) was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 22:18, *"They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."* Even these small details that took place amid the suffering of the Cross had been prophesied in the Psalms hundreds of years before; this testifies that the death of Jesus was not an accident but the plan of salvation God had prepared long before.

The prophecy of the rejected stone become the chief cornerstone

After speaking the parable of the vineyard and the farmers, Jesus quoted Psalm 118: *"The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes" (Mark 12:10–11)*. This prophecy was that the Messiah, rejected by men, would become the most important chief cornerstone in God's history of salvation.

This prophecy was fulfilled just so in Jesus. The religious leaders of Judea rejected Jesus and nailed Him to the Cross, but God raised that rejected stone from the dead and made Him the chief cornerstone of the salvation of all mankind. What man rejected, God established; what man condemned, God exalted. This was the amazing history of salvation the Psalm had prophesied.

The true Messiah, who fulfilled all the prophecies

Thus the Gospel of Mark testifies, beginning from the prophecy of the messenger who prepares the way, through the suffering Servant and the betrayal, to the cry from the Cross and the rejected chief cornerstone, that the many prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus. This fulfillment confirms that Jesus is the true Messiah the Old Testament had long awaited.

Above all, the Gospel of Mark makes plain that Jesus completed the prophecy of the suffering Servant that Isaiah foretold, through the event in which He took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9–11), and paid the full price as the suffering Servant, giving His life a ransom on the Cross (Mark 10:45). All the prophecies of the Old Testament ran toward this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and were fulfilled wholly in Jesus. What the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in Mark points us to is Jesus Christ, who came according to those very prophecies and accomplished our salvation.

How does the Gospel of Mark present Jesus Christ?

Every Gospel testifies to Jesus Christ, but each Gospel portrays with special emphasis one particular aspect of Him. The figure of Jesus Christ that the Gospel of Mark portrays is, above all, the serving servant and the Son of God, who works with power. When we look one by one at the aspects of Jesus revealed throughout the Gospel of Mark, we come to know fully what kind of Christ this Gospel shows us.

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The Christ who came as a serving servant

The most striking figure of Jesus that the Gospel of Mark portrays is the serving servant. The word, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*, best sums up the Christ of this Gospel. Jesus did not come wielding worldly power to be served; rather, He humbled Himself and came to serve.

This figure of the serving servant flows through the whole of Mark. Jesus heals the sick without rest, feeds the weary crowds, and embraces the outcast. He lived not for Himself but only for others. And at last, at the summit of that serving, He gave up even His own life as a ransom. The Jesus of the Gospel of Mark is the Lord of true serving, who began in the place of a servant and completed His ministry with the death of a servant.

The Son of God, who works with power

While portraying Jesus as a serving servant, the Gospel of Mark at the same time powerfully reveals that this Servant is in fact the Son of God, possessed of amazing power. With a word Jesus casts out demons (Mark 1:25–26), cleanses a leper (Mark 1:41–42), stills the wind and the sea (Mark 4:39), and raises a dead girl (Mark 5:41–42). These deeds of power testify that Jesus is truly the Son of God.

The reason the Gospel of Mark stressed the power of Jesus so much was so that the readers of this Gospel would know plainly what kind of Lord they believed in. Though He humbled Himself as a serving servant, He was the Son of God, greater and stronger than any power of the world. To the saints under persecution, this Lord of power became unspeakable strength and comfort.

The Christ who possesses true humanity

The Gospel of Mark portrays the human aspects of Jesus more vividly than any other Gospel. Jesus was true man: He was angry (Mark 3:5), He sighed (Mark 8:12), He had compassion (Mark 6:34), He was hungry (Mark 11:12), and He slept in weariness (Mark 4:38). In the Garden of Gethsemane He passed through extreme anguish: He *"began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death'" (Mark 14:33–34).*

This figure of true humanity shows that Jesus knows our weakness fully and passed through temptation and suffering just as we do. He, the Son of God, put on a body like ours and passed through pain like ours, and became the true Redeemer, who carried our sins in our place. The Jesus of the Gospel of Mark is not One far off in heaven only, but the Lord, Immanuel, who came to our side and ached together with us.

The Christ who walks the way of suffering

The latter half of the Gospel of Mark focuses on the way of suffering Jesus walks. Three times Jesus prophesies His death and resurrection (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33–34), and of His own accord He presses on toward the Cross. This was not a road He was dragged along against His will; it was the voluntary way of suffering He chose and walked for the salvation of all mankind.

In the Gospel of Mark, the suffering of Jesus is never failure or frustration. It was the way of salvation ordained from the beginning. Jesus, knowing fully what that suffering meant, did not draw back a single step, but set His face firmly toward Jerusalem. The Jesus of the Gospel of Mark did not avoid suffering but walked into its very midst, and so showed the love of the true Shepherd, who saves us.

Here we must consider the deep meaning of the suffering of

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Jesus. His suffering was not a passive suffering endured for lack of strength, but an active suffering of love, chosen of His own will to save us. He was the Son of God, who could well have avoided that suffering, but because He loved us, He did not refuse that way. The way of suffering the Jesus of Mark walked was the very footprint of His great love toward us.

The Christ who accomplished salvation by His death of ransom

The Christ of the Gospel of Mark at last completes salvation by giving His life a ransom on the Cross. Jesus paid on the Cross the full price of the sins of all mankind, and at the moment He breathed His last, the veil of the sanctuary was torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). This means that by the death of Jesus, the wall of sin that had blocked the way between God and man crumbled completely.

At that very moment, the Roman centurion standing before the Cross confessed, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)*. This confession from the mouth of a Gentile testifies that the ransom death of Jesus was not for the Jews only but for all the people of the whole world. The Jesus of the Gospel of Mark is the true Savior, who completed the ransom on the Cross and opened the door of salvation to all mankind.

The Christ who accomplished the gospel of the water and the Spirit

All these figures of Christ that the Gospel of Mark portrays—the serving servant, the mighty Son of God, the Lord of suffering with true humanity—come to us at last as the One who accomplished the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When Jesus began His public ministry, He took the sins of all the people of the world upon Himself by being baptized by John

the Baptist in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9–11); and when He finished His public ministry, He paid the full price of those sins by giving His life a ransom on the Cross (Mark 10:45).

That is, the Gospel of Mark opens its door with the baptism of Jesus and completes its story with His death of ransom, and so holds the gospel of the water and the Spirit whole at its beginning and its end. Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him in the Jordan River, and the price of those sins was paid without remainder on the Cross. What the Christ revealed in the Gospel of Mark points us to is Jesus Christ, the serving servant, who has saved us wholly with this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Briefly compare and explain the Christology of the four Gospels

Among the four Gospels of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels, in the sense that their contents and structure are so alike that they can be set side by side and viewed together. These three Gospels testify to the same Jesus, yet each portrays with special emphasis a different aspect of Him. When we add the Gospel of John and compare what Christ each of the four Gospels stresses, the rich figure of Jesus Christ is revealed all the more fully. Let us look at the Christology of these four Gospels in turn.

Matthew: the Messiah of the Jews, who came as King

The Gospel of Matthew portrays Jesus as the King of the Jews and the promised Messiah. By recording the genealogy of Jesus in the order that begins from Abraham and passes through David to Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1–16), this Gospel

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makes plain that Jesus is the One who fulfilled the promises given to Abraham and David. In Matthew there are strikingly many passages that declare, with the expression *"it is written,"* that the prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled; this was to prove to Jewish readers that Jesus is the very Messiah the Old Testament promised.

The Gospel of Matthew proclaims Jesus as the King of the kingdom of heaven. Introducing at length, several times, the great teachings of Jesus, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount, it makes plain the laws of the kingdom of God that Jesus the King establishes. Written toward Jewish readers, this Gospel focuses on testifying that the King they had long awaited is Jesus.

Mark: the Messiah who came as a serving servant

The Gospel of Mark, as we have looked at in detail, portrays Jesus as a serving servant. The word, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*, compresses the Christology of this Gospel. If Matthew portrayed Jesus the King, Mark stresses the amazing humility of that King, who came down instead to the place of a servant.

A servant needs no genealogy, so the Gospel of Mark enters straight into the public ministry of Jesus without one. A servant is one who serves by work rather than by words, so the Gospel of Mark weaves its story around the mighty deeds of Jesus rather than long discourses. Written toward the Gentile readers of Rome, this Gospel testifies to Jesus, before those who valued practice, in the figure of the servant who serves diligently and at last gives up His own life.

Mark's stress on the serving servant was also deeply joined to the situation of its readers, the saints of Rome. To the saints

brought low and suffering under persecution, the truth that their Lord also was brought low, served, and suffered became unspeakable comfort. Thus the Gospel of Mark discerned closely the position of its readers and portrayed the figure of Jesus they needed most.

Luke: the perfect Man, who came as the Son of Man

The Gospel of Luke portrays Jesus as the Son of Man, the One who came as true man to save us. Luke, a Gentile physician, traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam (Luke 3:38), making plain that Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jews only but the Savior of all mankind. The Gospel of Luke gives special prominence to the human aspects of Jesus and His warm compassion, portraying everywhere His love toward the poor and the sick, sinners and the outcast.

The Gospel of Luke is rich in stories that hold the love of Jesus, who seeks the lost: the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son (Luke chapter 15). Luke also gives special stress to the praying figure of Jesus and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, who came as perfect Man, knows fully the weakness of all mankind and shows the wide love of God, who would save every person.

John: the Christ who came as the Son of God

The Gospel of John, distinguished from the Synoptic Gospels, portrays Jesus as the Son of God—the Word, who was with God from the beginning. Opening with the majestic declaration, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1)*, this Gospel testifies most plainly to the divinity of Jesus.

The Gospel of John introduces the words in which Jesus reveals Himself—*"I am the bread of life," "I am the light of*

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the world," "I am the resurrection and the life"—and makes plain that Jesus is truly God. This Gospel was written with the distinct purpose *"that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).*

The whole Christ, whom the four Gospels testify to together

Thus the four Gospels each give prominence to a different aspect of Jesus. Matthew portrays the Messiah-King; Mark, the serving servant; Luke, the perfect Man; John, the Son of God. These four figures do not contradict one another; they are like four lights, each shining from a different angle on the rich wholeness of the one Jesus Christ.

What is amazing is that all four of these aspects gather into one gospel. Jesus—King and Servant, perfect Man and Son of God—took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and saved us by paying the full price on the Cross. In this gospel of the water and the Spirit, all the Christology of the four Gospels meets as one. What the Christology of the Synoptic Gospels and of John points us to is Jesus Christ, the whole and perfect Savior.

What distinguishes the Gospel of Mark from the other Gospels?

Each of the four Gospels carries its own distinctive color and character. Among them the Gospel of Mark is the shortest and the fastest and most vivid—a book of marked individuality. When we look one by one at the features of this Gospel, which reads like a breathlessly advancing documentary, it becomes plain with what heart Mark wrote it, and why it has been loved

by people through so many long years.

The shortest and most concise Gospel

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest in length among the four Gospels—only a little more than half the length of Matthew or Luke. But being short by no means makes its content poor. Rather, by clearing away all that was superfluous and concentrating on the essential ministry and deeds of Jesus, Mark packed the life of Jesus Christ into a short compass in compressed form.

This conciseness gives special power to the one who reads it. Without being caught in long explanations or complicated arguments, the reader follows quickly the mighty deeds of Jesus and comes to experience directly what kind of person He is. The conciseness of the Gospel of Mark is not a lack; it is rather the virtue that makes us go straight toward Jesus.

The quick tempo led by "immediately"

One of the most striking features of the Gospel of Mark is that the word *"immediately"* appears amazingly often. This word, 'euthys' in the original, is used more than forty times in the whole of Mark. As in *"immediately, coming up from the water" (Mark 1:10)* and *"Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12)*, scarcely has one event ended before the next follows breathlessly on.

The repetition of this word *"immediately"* breathes a quick tempo and urgency into the whole of Mark. Jesus does not delay a moment: He works without rest, healing the sick, casting out demons, and preaching the gospel. This breathless advance makes the reader feel vividly how urgently and how powerfully the ministry of Jesus unfolded. The Gospel of Mark is, above all, the Gospel of Jesus in action.

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This quick advance is not merely a feature of style; it carries in itself the urgency of the ministry of Jesus. This unresting movement vividly conveys the burning love of Jesus, who would save the people groaning bound in sin and death, and the urgency of His saving work. Jesus did not spend a single moment in vain, but poured out His all on the one work of seeking and saving the lost. This tempo of the Gospel of Mark engraves the urgency of that love upon our hearts.

A Gospel centered on action

The Gospel of Mark puts its weight on what Jesus did rather than on what He taught. Unlike Matthew, which introduces the long discourses of Jesus several times, Mark weaves its story around the mighty deeds of Jesus rather than long addresses. Healings, the casting out of demons, the ruling of nature, the raising of the dead—events of power fill this Gospel.

This action-centered narration suited well the temperament of the Romans, who prized practice. Through the mighty deeds of Jesus, the readers of Rome could be assured that the Lord they believed in rules the world not by words only but by actual power. The Gospel of Mark powerfully portrays Jesus as the Son of God, who works with power.

The vivid portrayal of the humanity and emotions of Jesus

Another striking feature of the Gospel of Mark is that it portrays the human aspects and the emotions of Jesus very honestly and vividly. The emotions of Jesus that the other Gospels handle cautiously or pass over, Mark reveals just as they were. It records in detail Jesus being angry (Mark 3:5), sighing (Mark 7:34), having compassion (Mark 1:41), even being hungry (Mark 11:12) and sleeping in weariness (Mark 4:38).

This vivid portrayal of His humanity shows most tangibly that Jesus truly became a man like us. He, the Son of God, knew hunger and weariness just as we do, felt sorrow and anger, and His heart was moved with burning compassion toward people. This figure of His humanity makes us realize that Jesus is the true Servant, who knows our weakness fully and walked the way of suffering for us.

This human figure of Jesus takes nothing away from His divinity. Rather, it makes shine all the more the amazing truth that He who is true God became true man. He who hungered and wearied and sorrowed just as we do is the true Redeemer, who knows our weakness fully and could suffer in our place. This vivid portrayal of His humanity in Mark conveys most tangibly that Jesus is not One far removed from us, but the Lord, Immanuel, who came to our side and ached together with us.

Detailed description full of life

The Gospel of Mark excels in detailed description that paints the scene of an event as though before our eyes. Small details absent from the other Gospels appear often in Mark: such vivid touches as Jesus sleeping on a pillow in the stern of the boat (Mark 4:38), or the people sitting down in groups on the green grass when He fed the five thousand (Mark 6:39).

Such living detail strongly suggests that this Gospel is rooted in the testimony of an actual eyewitness. For everywhere in it live the small scenes that only one who was on the spot could remember. If, as the tradition of the early church holds, this Gospel was grounded on the eyewitness testimony of the Apostle Peter, we can see that the source of this vividness was that very testimony.

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All the features point to the serving servant

All these features of the Gospel of Mark—its conciseness and quick tempo, its action-centered narration and vivid portrayal of humanity—gather at last into one focus: Jesus, who came as a serving servant. A servant is not one of many words but one who works diligently; not one who displays himself but one who serves in silence. Every feature of the Gospel of Mark matches exquisitely this figure of the serving servant.

This serving Servant, who worked without rest, had compassion on the people, and at last gave His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and paid the full price on the Cross. What all the features of the Gospel of Mark point us to is Jesus Christ, the serving servant, who accomplished this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

What is the central theme that runs through the whole Gospel of Mark?

Every book has a central theme that pierces through the whole. The central theme of the Gospel of Mark is Jesus Christ, who came as a serving servant and a suffering Messiah. This theme, flowing from the beginning of the Gospel to its end, sums up in a word who Jesus came as and what He accomplished. When we look at the theme of Mark from several angles, we take full hold of the core message this Gospel would deliver to us.

Jesus Christ, who came as a servant of serving

The word that holds the theme of Mark in its most compressed form is, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*. Jesus came not to be served but to serve. In this one verse the theme of the whole Gospel of Mark is contained.

The kings of the world seek to be served and to exalt themselves, but Jesus, the true King, came down instead to the place of a servant, humbling Himself. This amazing humility is the true figure of Jesus that the Gospel of Mark would deliver. By portraying this serving servant consistently from beginning to end, the Gospel of Mark teaches us what true greatness is.

The way of the suffering Messiah

The theme of Mark moves on from serving to suffering. In this Gospel Jesus lives as a serving servant and then at last presses on toward the Cross as the suffering Messiah. Three times Jesus prophesies His suffering, death, and resurrection (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33–34), and according to that prophecy He walks the way of the Cross of His own accord.

The Messiah that Mark portrays is not One seated at ease on a throne of glory, but One who walks the way of suffering in silence. Yet this suffering was never failure; it was God's ordained plan to save all mankind. Through the suffering of Jesus, the Gospel of Mark testifies that true salvation was not given cheaply, but was accomplished at the price of Jesus' life.

Before this theme of suffering in Mark, we come to realize how precious is the salvation God has given us. Our salvation was not obtained at a low price; it was accomplished by the Son of God Himself suffering and giving up His life. To receive this precious salvation with thanksgiving, and not to count it as nothing, is the fitting response given to everyone

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who reads this Gospel. The way of the suffering Messiah was the way of love toward us.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Deep within the theme of Mark lies the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. This Gospel opens its door with the declaration, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1),* and completes its testimony with the scene in which the centurion before the Cross confesses, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39).*

That He who humbled Himself as a serving servant and walked the way of suffering was in fact the Son of God—this truth makes the theme of Mark all the more amazing. The Son of God, greater than anything in the world, came down for us to the place of a servant and bore the suffering of the Cross; where is there a greater love than this? The Gospel of Mark sets this love of the Son of God at the center of its theme.

The proclamation that announces the beginning of the gospel

The theme of Mark is compressed already in its first verse. The declaration, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1),* makes plain that the whole of Mark is a book proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel here is the good news: the news that to people bound in sin and death, the way of salvation has been opened.

The Gospel of Mark proclaims that this gospel began with Jesus Christ. With the coming of Jesus the kingdom of God drew near, and with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection Jesus completed the way that saves sinners. This proclamation of the gospel is the central theme Mark cries out to the whole world, and the earnest hope of this Gospel is that

everyone who believes this gospel may come to salvation.

The call to the way of the disciple

The theme of Mark also holds the call to the way of the disciple who follows Jesus. Jesus said, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34)*. Those who follow Jesus, who came as a serving servant and a suffering Messiah, are themselves called to the way of serving and suffering.

The Gospel of Mark records honestly the weakness and the failures of the disciples, and yet shows together with them the unchanging call of Jesus toward them. Jesus does not give up on His stumbling disciples but holds them to the end with patience. This call continues to us who read this Gospel today. The Gospel of Mark calls us all to the way of the true disciple, who bears serving and suffering.

The theme points to the gospel of the water and the Spirit

All these themes of Mark—the serving servant and the suffering Messiah, the Son of God and the proclamation of the gospel, and the call to the way of the disciple—gather at last into one gospel: the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished. Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9–11), lived as a serving servant, and at last paid the full price of sin by giving His life a ransom (Mark 10:45).

The theme of Mark holds this gospel of the water and the Spirit whole, at its beginning and at its end. This gospel, which begins with the baptism of Jesus and is completed by His death of ransom, is the central truth Mark would deliver to us. The person who believes this gospel realizes that his sins were

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already passed on to Jesus and their price paid in full, and is released from sin and becomes a child of God. What the theme of Mark points us to is Jesus Christ, the serving servant, who saved us with this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Summarize the contents of the Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark is the Gospel that portrays the public life of Jesus Christ quickly and vividly. Unlike the other Gospels, it enters straight into the beginning of His public ministry without the story of His birth, and follows the footsteps of Jesus breathlessly, from His mighty ministry in Galilee to His suffering and death in Jerusalem, and on to the resurrection. When we survey the whole content of this Gospel in its broad flow, we understand fully how Mark wove the life of Jesus into a single story.

The beginning of the gospel and the preparation of the public ministry

The Gospel of Mark opens its door with the declaration, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)*. Then comes the scene in which John the Baptist appears in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance and preparing the way of the Messiah. And then is recorded the decisive event in which Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The heavens parted, the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, and the voice from heaven was heard: *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11)*.

After His baptism, Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days, and then went into Galilee proclaiming, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and*

believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15), and so began His public ministry. And by the Lake of Galilee He called fishermen and made them His first disciples. Thus the Gospel of Mark, after a brief preparation, enters straight into the mighty ministry of Jesus.

The mighty ministry in Galilee

The first half of the Gospel of Mark portrays the mighty ministry of Jesus unfolded around Galilee. Jesus casts out demons (Mark 1:25–26), heals the fevered and the leper (Mark 1:31, 41), and proclaims the remission of sins to a paralytic and makes him walk (Mark 2:5–12). And amazing events follow breathlessly: the Sabbath disputes and many parables, the stilling of the wind and the sea (Mark 4:39), the raising of the dead girl (Mark 5:41–42), the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:41–44).

In this period the ministry of Jesus drew great crowds to Him, but at the same time it aroused the hostility of the religious leaders. The Pharisees and the scribes began to find fault with what Jesus taught and did, and at last they joined hands with the Herodians and plotted to kill Him (Mark 3:6). Thus the Galilean ministry held together the glory of His power and the approaching shadow of His suffering.

The confession of His identity and the prophecies of suffering

At the midpoint of the Gospel of Mark stands the great event that becomes the turning point of the whole book. When Jesus asked His disciples, *"But who do you say that I am?"* Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29)*. From this confession on, the focus of Mark moves from who Jesus is to what Jesus came to accomplish.

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Right after Peter's confession, Jesus prophesies for the first time His suffering, death, and resurrection (Mark 8:31). And He repeats the same prophecy twice more (Mark 9:31, 10:33–34), teaching His disciples to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Him (Mark 8:34). In this period Jesus leaves Galilee and presses on toward Jerusalem, preparing at every step for the approaching way of suffering.

Peter's confession was right, but that confession did not at once become full understanding. When Jesus prophesied His suffering and death, Peter tried instead to prevent it, and was rebuked for it (Mark 8:32–33). This shows that even the disciples needed a long time before they fully realized the true meaning of the serving servant and the suffering Messiah. By portraying honestly the slow understanding of the disciples, the Gospel of Mark shows us how true faith grows.

The last week in Jerusalem

The latter half of the Gospel of Mark gives great weight to the last week after Jesus entered Jerusalem. Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a colt (Mark 11:7–10), cleanses the Temple (Mark 11:15–17), and carries on many disputes with the religious leaders. He also speaks the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple and of the last days (Mark chapter 13), and through the Last Supper He makes plain to His disciples the meaning of His death.

Then Jesus prays in extreme anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–36), and is seized through the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. The disciples all abandoned Him and fled (Mark 14:50), and even Peter denied Jesus three times. Thus the Gospel of Mark portrays, with an aching heart, Jesus walking the way of suffering alone.

The death of the Cross and the victory of the resurrection

The climax of the Gospel of Mark is the death of Jesus on the Cross and His resurrection. Jesus is interrogated in Pilate's court (Mark 15:1–15), scourged and mocked, and nailed to the Cross at Golgotha. After crying out on the Cross, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34)*, He breathed His last; the veil of the sanctuary was torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38), and the centurion confessed, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)*.

But death was not the end. At dawn on the first day of the week, when the women sought the tomb, the tomb was empty, and a young man clothed in white announced, *"He is risen! He is not here" (Mark 16:6)*. Jesus had risen. The risen Jesus commanded His disciples, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)*. Thus the Gospel of Mark closes its story with the victory in which the suffering of the Cross is completed in the glory of the resurrection.

The gospel of salvation that the contents point to

The whole content of the Gospel of Mark is one story of salvation, beginning with the baptism of Jesus and completed by His ransom death and resurrection. Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9–11), lived as a serving servant in Galilee and Jerusalem, and at last paid the full price of sin by giving His life a ransom on the Cross (Mark 10:45). And by rising from the dead He overcame the power of death.

All this content testifies to one gospel, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus received our sins passed on to Him at His baptism; the price of those sins was paid without remainder on the Cross; and by the resurrection that salvation was confirmed. What the contents of the Gospel of Mark point

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us to is Jesus Christ, who accomplished this perfect salvation, and everyone who believes this gospel is released from sin and comes to eternal life.

State the overall outline of the Gospel of Mark, divided according to its contents

The Gospel of Mark is composed with a firm structure that follows a clear flow. When we divide the main stream of this Gospel, it comes into view at a glance in what order the ministry of Jesus unfolded and how the story presses toward its climax. We divide the outline of Mark into several great parts, according to its geographical flow and the character of the ministry, and look at their contents in detail.

The first part: the beginning of the gospel and the preparation

The first part of the Gospel of Mark deals with the course of preparation up to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Here are contained the declaration announcing the beginning of the gospel (Mark 1:1), the ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:2–11), the temptation in the wilderness (Mark 1:12–13), and the opening of the Galilean ministry with the calling of the first disciples (Mark 1:14–20).

This first part is short, but it decides the direction of the whole Gospel. In particular, the event in which Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River is the decisive scene that opens the door of this Gospel, showing that Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself and so began His public ministry. Through this preparation, Jesus goes forward to the ministry of proclaiming the gospel of the

kingdom of God.

The second part: the ministry in Galilee

The second part of the Gospel of Mark deals with the mighty ministry of Jesus unfolded around Galilee. In this part are contained countless healings and castings out of demons, the teaching of many parables, the miracles that rule nature, the feeding of the five thousand, and the extension of the ministry into Gentile regions. The power and authority of Jesus were revealed through all Galilee, and great crowds followed Him.

In this second part, while the glory of Jesus is plainly revealed, the conflict with the religious leaders deepens step by step. The hostility of the Pharisees and the scribes grows, until at last they plot to kill Jesus (Mark 3:6). It is the mark of this part that as the ministry of power rises, the approaching shadow of suffering thickens with it.

The third part: the turning point and the prophecies of suffering

The third part of the Gospel of Mark, taking Peter's confession of faith as its turning point, deals with the course in which Jesus presses on toward the suffering of Jerusalem. From the confession of Peter, *"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29)*, Jesus prophesies three times His suffering, death, and resurrection (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33–34).

In this third part Jesus teaches His disciples to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Him, making plain what the true way of the disciple is. The glory of the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2–8) and the teaching on serving (Mark 10:45) are also contained in this part. This journey, walking from Galilee toward Jerusalem, serves as the bridge by which this Gospel presses toward the climax of the suffering.

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The fourth part: the last ministry in Jerusalem

The fourth part of the Gospel of Mark deals with the ministry of Jesus after His entry into Jerusalem. In this part are contained His entry into Jerusalem riding on a colt (Mark 11:1–11), the cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:15–17), the many disputes with the religious leaders, and the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple and of the last days (Mark chapter 13). The tension between Jesus and the religious powers reaches its height at last.

In this fourth part Jesus gives His last teachings in the Temple of Jerusalem and prophesies the coming judgment and the end. The solemn word of judgment toward the Temple and the prophecy of the last days proclaim that all the powers of this world will in the end be placed under the judgment of God. This part sets the stage for the suffering and death of Jesus that follow at once.

The fifth part: the suffering, the death, and the resurrection

The last part of the Gospel of Mark, and the climax of this Gospel, is the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Last Supper (Mark 14:12–25), the prayer of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–42), the arrest and interrogation (Mark 14:43–15:20), the death on the Cross (Mark 15:21–41), the burial (Mark 15:42–47), and the resurrection (Mark chapter 16) are recorded in turn.

This fifth part is told in such detail that it takes up a considerable portion of the whole length of Mark. This shows that the Gospel of Mark counted the suffering and death of Jesus the most important part of this Gospel. The death of the Cross is completed in the victory of the resurrection, and the risen Jesus gives His disciples the mission of preaching the

gospel—so the Gospel of Mark closes its story.

That this last part is told in the greatest detail is deeply significant. Some have even called the Gospel of Mark a passion story with a long introduction. So much does this Gospel set the suffering and death of Jesus at its center. Even the mighty ministry of Jesus, even His amazing teaching, was in the end the road pressing toward this death of the Cross. For it was the purpose for which Jesus came to this earth: to take the sin of the world upon Himself with His baptism, to pay the price of sin on the Cross, and, by rising again, to complete salvation.

The outline points to the completion of the gospel

These five parts of the Gospel of Mark are woven along a single stream. Setting out from the beginning of the gospel and the preparation, passing through the Galilean ministry and the turning point, they press on to the last ministry in Jerusalem, the suffering of the Cross, and the victory of the resurrection. This whole flow runs toward the completion of the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Above all, this outline begins with the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9–11) and is completed with His death of ransom (Mark 10:45, chapter 15) and the resurrection (Mark chapter 16). That is, the whole structure of the Gospel of Mark itself holds the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus took our sins upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, paid the full price on the Cross, and confirmed that salvation by the resurrection. What the outline of the Gospel of Mark points us to is this perfect gospel of salvation.

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Which is the key verse that contains the theme of the Gospel of Mark?

In every book of the Bible there is a central key verse that holds in compressed form the essence of the whole book. The key verse of the Gospel of Mark is, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*. Within this one verse is contained everything of the Jesus that Mark would deliver. When we meditate deeply on this key verse from several angles, we take full hold of what the heart of the Gospel of Mark is.

Jesus, who called Himself the Son of Man

This key verse begins with Jesus calling Himself *"the Son of Man."* This was the title Jesus loved to use of Himself: a word that means a son of man, and at the same time points to the Messiah possessed of heavenly authority prophesied in the book of Daniel. Through this title Jesus humbly revealed that He is the Son of God, who truly became man.

That He, the Son of God, came as the Son of Man is itself an amazing humility. That He left the throne of heaven and put on the lowly body of a man was because of the love that would save us. The title *"the Son of Man"* in this key verse already holds the self-humbling of Jesus and His heart of serving.

The declaration that He did not come to be served

The core of this key verse lies in the declaration that Jesus did not come to be served. The kings and the powerful of the world seek to be served and to exalt themselves. But Jesus, the true King, chose the exactly opposite way. He did not come to be served. This declaration is an amazing truth that overturns every scale of value the world holds.

Just before saying this, when there had been a dispute among the disciples over who was the greatest, Jesus taught them: whoever desires to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever desires to be first must be the slave of all (Mark 10:43–44). And Jesus Himself showed that example in person. The truth that true greatness lies in serving stands at the center of this key verse.

The Servant who came, instead, to serve

Jesus came not to be served but, on the contrary, to serve. In this short word His whole life is contained. Through His whole public life Jesus served without rest. He healed the sick, comforted the weary, fed the hungry, and embraced the outcast. There was not a single moment He lived for Himself; He lived only for others.

This serving was the manner of Jesus' life running through the whole of Mark. That the Gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as a serving servant is grounded on this very verse. The world counts the one who is served great, but Jesus, by living as the One who serves, showed in His own person what true greatness is. This life of serving is the true figure of the Christian, which we ought to imitate.

The love that gave His life a ransom

The climax of this key verse is the word that Jesus would give His life a "*ransom*" for many. A ransom means the price paid in another's place. The sinner cannot pay the price of his own sins and so be saved, and the wages of sin is surely death. Jesus paid in our place, by giving up His own life, that price of sin which we could never pay.

The serving of Jesus did not stop at healing and comfort; it went all the way to giving up His own life. This was the most

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complete and ultimate serving. He gave His life a ransom for *"many,"* and among those many are included we also, who believe this gospel today. This key verse testifies most compressedly to the ransom love of Jesus.

Before this truth of the ransom we kneel in humility. We could never wash away our sins by our own strength, and before the price of sin, which we could not pay, we could only despair. But Jesus paid that price in our place. The death we deserved to die, He bore in our place. The person who believes with the heart this amazing love and the ransom Jesus completed is released from the heavy burden of sin and enjoys true freedom and peace.

The key verse that pierces the whole of Mark

The reason this verse is the key verse of Mark is that this one verse pierces the whole of the Gospel. The first half of Mark shows by the ministry of power that Jesus came to serve, and the latter half shows by the suffering of the Cross that Jesus gave His life a ransom. That is, the front part and the back part of this verse correspond to the first half and the latter half of Mark.

Therefore this key verse is like a key that compresses at once the structure and the theme of Mark. Jesus, who came as a serving servant and a suffering Messiah—Jesus the Savior, who gave His life a ransom—is contained whole in this one verse. The one who reads the Gospel of Mark, by engraving this key verse on his heart, takes hold at a glance of what the whole Gospel delivers.

The key verse points to the gospel of the water and the Spirit

This word, the key verse of Mark, points in the end to the

gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished. The word that Jesus would give His life a ransom for many is joined exactly to the event in which Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9–11) and paid the full price of those sins on the Cross.

Jesus received our sins passed on to Him at His baptism, and the price of those sins was paid without remainder on the Cross with His own life. This is the ransom, and this is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. What the key verse of Mark points us to is the love of Jesus Christ, the serving servant, who gave His life as our ransom and so delivered us wholly from sin. The person who holds this verse by faith knows that the price of his sins has already been paid in full, and, released from sin, enjoys true peace.

What Old Testament passages does the Gospel of Mark quote?

Because the Gospel of Mark was written for Gentile readers, it does not quote the Old Testament as often as Matthew; nevertheless, at every decisive moment it draws in the Old Testament and testifies that Jesus is the fulfillment of its prophecies and promises. When we look in order, just as they stand, at the Old Testament passages directly quoted or plainly reflected in Mark, it becomes clear how deeply this Gospel is joined to the Old Testament. Here we describe in detail the Old Testament passages quoted in the Gospel of Mark.

The quotations at the opening of the Gospel

The Gospel of Mark begins by quoting the Old Testament

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from its very opening. The word, *"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You" (Mark 1:2)*, is a quotation of Malachi 3:1. This was the prophecy that before the Messiah came, the messenger who would prepare His way would come first, and it was fulfilled through John the Baptist.

Next, the word, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight'" (Mark 1:3)*, is a quotation of Isaiah 40:3. Weaving these two prophecies together, the Gospel of Mark makes plain that John the Baptist is the prophesied preparer of the way. Thus from its first chapter, the Gospel of Mark builds the gospel of Jesus upon the prophecies of the Old Testament.

The Law and the Prophets quoted amid the disputes

Jesus quoted the Old Testament several times amid His disputes with the religious leaders. Citing the case of David eating the showbread when he was hungry (Mark 2:25–26), He made plain the true meaning of the Sabbath, quoting the event of 1 Samuel chapter 21. And in the dispute over purification He quoted Isaiah 29:13, rebuking the hypocrites: *"This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Mark 7:6)*.

When He was asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5 and answered, *"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:29–30)*, and then quoted Leviticus 19:18: *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31)*. Thus Jesus made the Law of the Old Testament fully plain as the commandment of love.

The quotations of the prophecies about Himself

Jesus several times quoted the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Himself. At the end of the parable of the vineyard He quoted Psalm 118:22 and 23, saying, *"The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone" (Mark 12:10),* and made plain that He would be rejected by men but become the chief cornerstone to God. And when He discussed the relation of the Christ and David, He quoted Psalm 110:1 (Mark 12:36).

On the way to Gethsemane He quoted Zechariah 13:7, saying, *"I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered" (Mark 14:27),* prophesying that the disciples would abandon Him and be scattered. And when He was interrogated before the high priest, He quoted Daniel 7:13 and revealed His identity: *"And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).*

The fact that Jesus quoted the Old Testament prophecies about Himself so often shows that He understood His whole ministry as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Jesus did not come by chance; He came according to the plan prophesied long before. He knew that every word of the Old Testament pointed to Himself, and in obedience to that word He walked the way of suffering. This awakens us to the fact that the whole Bible is one book, testifying of Jesus Christ.

The quotations about the Temple and the end

When Jesus cleansed the Temple, He quoted two Old Testament passages together. Quoting Isaiah 56:7, He said, *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17),* and then, quoting Jeremiah 7:11, He rebuked them, *"But you have made it a 'den of thieves'" (Mark 11:17).*

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With the words of the Old Testament He solemnly exposed how the Temple had lost its original holy purpose and been corrupted.

In the discourse on the end in Mark chapter 13, the prophecy of the book of Daniel is deeply reflected. The word, *"when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (Mark 13:14)*, stands against the background of the prophecies of Daniel chapters 9, 11, and 12. The prophecy of Jesus concerning the coming tribulation and judgment thus stands upon the prophecies of the prophets of the Old Testament.

The quotation of the Psalm fulfilled on the Cross

On the Cross also the word of the Old Testament was quoted and fulfilled. On the Cross Jesus cried out, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"* (Mark 15:34), which was the word of Psalm 22:1: *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* This psalm, sung by David long before, was a prophecy of the extreme suffering the Messiah would undergo, and it was wholly fulfilled on the Cross of Jesus.

Also, the soldiers dividing the garments of Jesus and casting lots (Mark 15:24) was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 22:18. Even the small details that took place amid the suffering of the Cross had been prophesied in the Psalms hundreds of years before; this testifies that the death of Jesus was not an accident but the plan of salvation God had prepared long before.

The one gospel that the quoted Old Testament points to

Thus the Old Testament quoted in the Gospel of Mark embraces the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings: beginning with Malachi and Isaiah, and reaching Deuteronomy and

Leviticus, 1 Samuel, the Psalms, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Daniel. All these quotations of the Old Testament testify that Jesus is the very Messiah the Old Testament long awaited. The whole Old Testament ran toward Jesus Christ, and in Jesus its prophecies and promises were wholly fulfilled.

Above all, the Old Testament quoted in Mark gathers its focus into the prophecy of the suffering Servant and the promise of the ransom. Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and, by giving His life a ransom on the Cross (Mark 10:45), completed the ministry of ransom the Old Testament prophesied. What the Old Testament passages quoted in the Gospel of Mark point us to is Jesus Christ, who came according to all those prophecies and has saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

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CHAPTER

1

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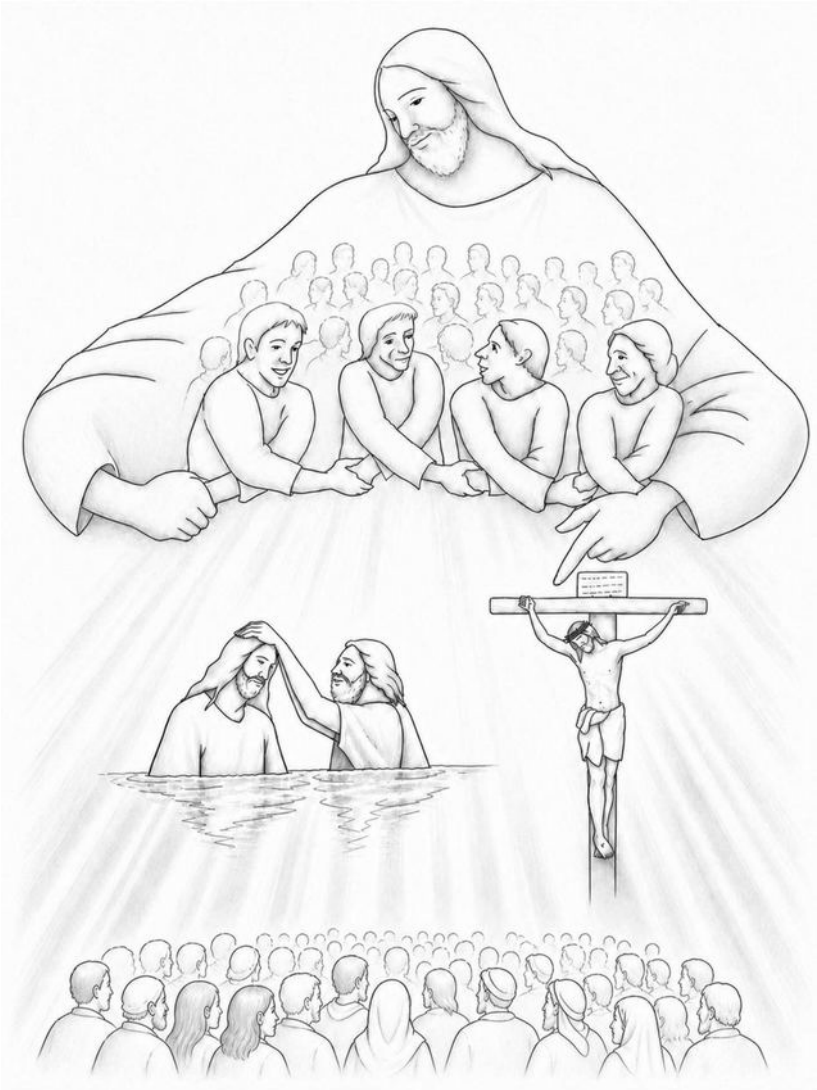

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Mark Chapter 1

< Mark 1:1-45 >

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

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Repent, and believe in the gospel.' And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him. Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, 'Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.' And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to

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Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for You.' But He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.' And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons. Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction."

1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 1 proclaims *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)*, and it is the chapter that shows how the public ministry of Jesus began. First, John the Baptist appears in the wilderness, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins and preparing the way of the Lord. He testifies that One mightier than he is coming, and that this One will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus comes from Nazareth of Galilee and is baptized by John the Baptist. When He comes up from the water, the heavens are parted and the Spirit descends on Him like a dove, and a voice from heaven declares that Jesus is the beloved Son of God. Then the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, and Jesus is tempted by Satan for forty days.

After John the Baptist is put in prison, Jesus preaches the gospel of God in Galilee, proclaiming that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, and calling people to repent and believe in the gospel. By the Sea of Galilee He calls Simon and Andrew, James and John, saying that He will make them fishers of men. They leave their nets and immediately follow Jesus.

Jesus teaches the word with authority in the synagogue of Capernaum, unlike the scribes, and rebukes an unclean spirit and casts it out. He then raises Simon's mother-in-law from her fever, and in the evening He heals the many sick and demon-possessed people who are brought to Him. Even while so many people are seeking Him, Jesus goes to a solitary place at dawn to pray, and He travels throughout Galilee to preach the gospel in other towns as well. Finally, He has compassion on a leper and touches him and makes him clean. This chapter shows that Jesus is the Son of God, that He holds the authority to rule over

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the word, demons, and diseases, and that He is the One who has compassion on people and spreads the gospel of God far and wide.

1. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (verse 1)

Mark opens his record with the declaration, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* The Gospel of Mark is not a book that merely introduces the human life of Jesus; it is a book that testifies of the gospel accomplished by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The *"gospel"* means good news. The good news that the Gospel of Mark delivers is the salvation of sinners, which Jesus completed with His baptism, His word and ministry, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection. Mark chapter 1 therefore sets the direction that every event to be recorded from here on must be read from the standpoint of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Unlike the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which record the birth and the genealogy of Jesus, the Gospel of Mark introduces the ministry of John the Baptist and the public ministry of Jesus right away. Through a rapid unfolding of events, Mark shows who Jesus is and what He does.

2. John the Baptist, who prepared the way of the Lord (verses 2–8)

Just as had been prophesied through the prophets of the Old Testament, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness as the messenger who prepares the way of the Lord. He preached to the people the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Many people from the land of Judea and from Jerusalem came out to him, confessed their sins, and were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

John the Baptist was clothed with camel's hair, wore a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. This appearance shows that his ministry was not grounded in the splendor or power of the world. He preached the word of God in the wilderness and prepared the people to receive the Lord.

John the Baptist did not let people's attention rest on himself. He said that the One coming after him was mightier than he, and that he was not worthy even to stoop down and loose His sandal strap. He testified that he himself baptized with water, but that the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist did not exalt himself as a savior, but pointed to Jesus Christ who was coming after him. A true servant of God is not a person who displays himself, but a person who turns people's eyes toward Jesus.

3. Jesus, who was baptized by John the Baptist (verses 9–11)

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens were parted and the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. A voice came from heaven, saying, *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11)*.

In this scene God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit appear together. God the Father testifies that Jesus is His beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus. Who Jesus is, is made plain at the very start of His public ministry.

The voice heard from heaven shows that the identity and the ministry of Jesus are not determined by people's recognition. Many people did not yet know who Jesus was, but

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God Himself testified that Jesus was His beloved Son.

Therefore the teaching, the miracles, and the authority of Jesus that appear afterward are not simply the activities of an outstanding teacher or prophet. They are the saving work that Jesus, the beloved Son of God, carries out according to the will of God.

4. Jesus, who was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (verses 12–13)

The Holy Spirit immediately led Jesus into the wilderness. Jesus stayed in the wilderness for forty days and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to Him.

Mark does not record the specific content of the temptations in detail as the Gospels of Matthew and Luke do. Instead, he conveys concisely the fact that Jesus faced the temptation of Satan from the very start of His public ministry.

The event of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness shows in advance the spiritual battle that would follow. Jesus casts out an unclean spirit in the synagogue of Capernaum, and sets free those who are demon-possessed throughout Galilee. The ministry of Jesus is joined to the work of delivering people who suffer under the power of Satan.

The record that the angels ministered to Jesus shows that God’s protection and care were with Him even in the temptation of the wilderness. Jesus did not begin His ministry by avoiding temptation; He passed through the temptation and fulfilled the will of God.

5. Jesus, who preached the gospel of God (verses 14–15)

After John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus began to preach the gospel of God in Galilee. Even in a situation where

the ministry of John the Baptist was being suppressed, the word of God and the work of the gospel did not stop.

Jesus proclaimed, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15)*. This means that the time appointed by God had come, and that through the coming and the ministry of Jesus the reign of God had drawn near.

The proclamation of Jesus calls for repentance and faith. Repentance does not stop at merely regretting wrong deeds; it is turning from one's own thoughts and the way of sin and returning to God. To believe in the gospel is to accept and rely on what God does through Jesus.

Jesus did not call people merely to have their worldly problems solved or to experience miracles. Proclaiming the kingdom of God, He called them to change the direction of their lives before God and to believe in the gospel.

6. Jesus, who called four fishermen as His disciples (verses 16–20)

As Jesus passed by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea. The two men were fishermen. Jesus told them to follow Him, saying that He would make them fishers of men.

Simon and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed Jesus. Going a little farther, Jesus saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John mending their nets in the boat, and He called them as well. James and John left their father Zebedee and the hired servants in the boat and followed Jesus.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus begins with the call of Jesus. The four men did not first make their own plans and choose Jesus; Jesus first saw them and called them.

That they left their nets and their boat does not mean that

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their occupation itself was evil. It shows the fact that the call of Jesus took priority over their existing life. A disciple is not a person who attaches Jesus to his own plans, but a person who believes in Jesus as the Master of his life and lives following His will.

The word that He would make them *"fishers of men"* means that they would from then on take up the work of preaching the gospel to people and leading them to Jesus. Jesus called ordinary fishermen and had them participate in His gospel ministry.

7. Jesus, who taught with authority in the synagogue (verses 21–28)

Jesus and His disciples went into Capernaum. When the Sabbath came, Jesus entered the synagogue and taught the people. The people were astonished at His teaching, for Jesus taught as One having authority, not like the scribes.

The scribes taught mainly by citing the interpretations and traditions of earlier teachers of the Law. But Jesus spoke as the One who holds direct authority over the word of God. The people were astonished not only at the content but at the authority of Jesus who was speaking.

In that synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit. The unclean spirit called Jesus "Jesus of Nazareth" and recognized the fact that Jesus was the Holy One of God. But Jesus did not accept the testimony of the demon; He commanded it to be quiet and to come out of the man.

The unclean spirit convulsed the man, cried out with a loud voice, and came out. The people were astonished not only at the new teaching of Jesus but at the authority that commanded the unclean spirits and made them obey. The fame of Jesus immediately spread throughout the whole region around

Galilee.

Jesus did not compromise with the evil spirit or cast out the demon through a long ritual. There was authority in the very word of Jesus, and the unclean spirit obeyed His command. This event shows that Jesus did not proclaim the kingdom of God in words only, but actually defeated the power of the evil spirits.

8. Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law of the fever (verses 29–31)

After Jesus came out of the synagogue, He entered the house of Simon and Andrew together with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and the people told Jesus about her situation.

Jesus came near to the sick woman, took her by the hand, and lifted her up. Then the fever left at once, and the woman served Jesus and His disciples. That she could rise and serve right away shows that her recovery was real and complete.

Jesus did not display His power only in public places where many people were gathered. He did not turn away from the illness of one person inside one home. Jesus, who had cast out the unclean spirit in the synagogue, cared for the sick woman in the house.

That the healed woman served Jesus and His disciples shows the natural response of a person who has received grace. She did not regard her recovery as something for herself alone, but with her restored body she served Jesus and the community.

9. Jesus heals many sick and demon-possessed people (verses 32–34)

At evening, when the sun had set, people brought to Jesus all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. Once

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the Sabbath ended and people could move about freely, the whole city gathered at the door.

Jesus healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. The authority of Jesus was not limited to one kind of disease or to one person. It was shown to people suffering from various diseases and spiritual afflictions.

Jesus did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. Jesus did not reveal His identity through the testimony of evil spirits. Who Jesus is had to be made known through His word and ministry and through the way God had appointed.

The text does not say that Jesus regarded demons as the cause of all suffering. It records the sick and the demon-possessed separately. Jesus healed those who had physical diseases, and from those who were bound by evil spirits He cast the demons out.

10. Jesus prays in a solitary place and goes to other towns (verses 35–39)

In the morning, long before daylight, Jesus rose, went out to a solitary place, and prayed there. The day before, He had healed many people and received great attention, but Jesus counted fellowship with God the Father more important than popularity with people.

Simon and his companions searched for Jesus and told Him that everyone was looking for Him. The people would have wanted to experience more of the teaching and miracles of Jesus. But Jesus did not stay in Capernaum merely to satisfy the demands of the people.

Jesus said, let us go into the other nearby towns and preach the word there also. Saying that He had come forth for this purpose, He preached the gospel in the synagogues throughout

all Galilee and cast out demons.

The ministry of Jesus was not dragged about by the popularity and demands of people. Through prayer He made clear the direction of His ministry, and He went out to other regions that had not yet heard the gospel. Jesus also healed the sick, but He set the purpose of His ministry on preaching the word of God and the gospel.

Prayer and the preaching of the gospel were not separated from each other. After praying, Jesus went to other towns, and He kept preaching the gospel according to the will of God.

11. Jesus has compassion on a leper and makes him clean (verses 40–45)

A leper came to Jesus, knelt down, and implored Him, saying, *"If You are willing, You can make me clean" (Mark 1:40)*. He believed the fact that Jesus had the power to make him clean, but he asked whether Jesus was willing to do so.

Jesus was moved with compassion for him, stretched out His hand, and touched him. In those days a leper was quarantined from the community and treated as an unclean person. But Jesus did not avoid him; He touched him with His own hand.

Jesus said, *"I am willing; be cleansed" (Mark 1:41)*. Immediately the leprosy left the man and he was cleansed. The uncleanness did not pass over to Jesus; rather, the cleansing authority of Jesus restored the man.

Jesus commanded him to say nothing to anyone, but to go and show himself to the priest and to offer what Moses commanded, as a testimony to the people. Jesus made it possible for him to go through the confirmation procedure established in the Law and return to the community.

But the man who was healed went out and proclaimed the

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matter widely. As a result, Jesus could no longer openly enter the city and had to stay outside in deserted places. Even so, people came to Jesus from every direction.

The healed man's act of spreading the news widely may look, humanly speaking, as though it came from gratitude and joy, but it was not obedience to the command of Jesus. It shows the fact that even good intentions and deep emotion must not run ahead of the word of Jesus.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 1

First, the Gospel of Mark introduces Jesus as the Son of God and as the Christ who is the center of the gospel.

Second, John the Baptist did not exalt himself, but preached repentance to the people and prepared the way of Jesus Christ.

Third, after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended, and God the Father testified that Jesus was His beloved Son.

Fourth, Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God had drawn near, and He required people to repent and believe in the gospel.

Fifth, Jesus first called ordinary fishermen to follow Him and established them as fishers of men.

Sixth, there was in the word of Jesus an authority distinguished from the teaching of the scribes, and even the unclean spirits obeyed His command.

Seventh, Jesus had compassion not only on the people in the synagogue, but also on the sick woman in one home and even on the leper who had been cast out of the community, and He restored them.

Eighth, Jesus did not remain in the popularity and demands of many people, but prayed in a solitary place and then preached the gospel in other towns as well.

Ninth, the person who has experienced the grace of Jesus must obey the word of Jesus rather than follow only his own zeal or feelings.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 1 is the chapter in which, after John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord, Jesus Christ the Son of God appeared, proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God, called His disciples, and began the ministry of saving and restoring people with the authority that rules over the word, demons, and diseases.

2) Mark chapter 1 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 1 makes plain *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)*, and shows that this gospel began together with the ministry of John the Baptist. John the Baptist preached repentance to the people and led them to Jesus Christ, and Jesus took on the sins of all mankind through the baptism He received from John. He then carried those sins, was judged on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so completed salvation.

Whoever believes in the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection is washed of all his sins and comes to receive into his heart the Holy Spirit whom God gives. Therefore *"the beginning of the gospel"* in Mark chapter 1 does not stop at meaning simply that the activity of Jesus had begun. It means that the gospel of the water and the Spirit—by which God sent John the Baptist, and by which Jesus took charge of the sins of mankind, was judged on the Cross, and rose again to save sinners—began to appear within history.

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1. The gospel of Jesus Christ that began together with John the Baptist (verses 1–3)

After declaring, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,"* Mark immediately introduces the ministry of John the Baptist. This shows the fact that the ministry of John the Baptist cannot be left out of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Through the prophets of the Old Testament, God promised that He would send a messenger before the Messiah to prepare the way of the Lord. According to that promise, John the Baptist was born before Jesus and prepared the way of the Lord in the wilderness. He was not the savior himself, but the man who testified of Jesus Christ who was coming after him.

John the Baptist was the messenger sent by God and the servant who prepared the way of Jesus as the representative of all mankind. He made people realize their sins and led them to Jesus, and he served so that the saving work by which Jesus took on the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John would be accomplished.

Therefore in Mark chapter 1 the beginning of the gospel and the appearance of John the Baptist are not separate events. Through the ministry of John the Baptist, God prepared the way of the salvation that Jesus would accomplish.

2. John the Baptist, who made people realize their sins and led them to Jesus (verses 4–8)

John the Baptist preached in the wilderness the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Many people from the land of Judea and from Jerusalem came out to him, confessed their sins, and were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Here we must understand the distinction in purpose between the baptism of repentance that the people received and

the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist. The baptism of repentance that John gave the people was a baptism that prepared them to acknowledge their sins, turn from their wrong way, and receive Jesus Christ who was to come. That baptism itself did not actually remove all the sins of the people.

John the Baptist testified, *"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8)*. He made it clear that he was not the Christ who saves sinners. His role was to make people realize their sins and to lead them to Jesus, who was mightier than he.

That Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit does not mean that He gives the Holy Spirit unconditionally while sin remains as it is in the sinner's heart. It means that Jesus removed all sins with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, and that He gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to everyone who believes this fact and has received the remission of sins.

John the Baptist cried out to the people, "You are sinners, and you must be washed of your sins." And he did not bind people to himself, but led them to Jesus. True repentance does not end with acknowledging one's sins; it must go as far as returning to Jesus Christ who removed our sins and believing in the gospel He accomplished.

3. Jesus, who took on all the sins of mankind (verse 9)

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee to the Jordan River and was baptized by John the Baptist. That Jesus, who has no sin, was baptized along with sinners was not in order to wash away any sin of His own.

This event is directly connected with the sacrifices of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, a sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sins onto it,

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and the offering that received those sins shed its blood and died in the sinner's place. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest, representing the people of Israel, laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed the people's sins onto it.

In the same way, John the Baptist stood before Jesus as the servant sent by God, and Jesus took the sins of all mankind onto His own body through the baptism He received from John. Jesus was baptized not because He had sin, but in order to take on all the sins of sinners and be judged in their place.

Mark chapter 1 verse 9 records the historical fact that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. The words of Matthew 3:15, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,"* and the testimony of John 1:29, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* make the meaning of this event plain.

Because Jesus took charge of the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He could be nailed to the Cross. The Cross is not an event separated from the process by which the sins passed over to Jesus; it is the event in which Jesus received in our place the punishment for those sins.

Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not make light of the blood of the Cross. On the contrary, it explains clearly why Jesus had to shed His blood and die on the Cross. Jesus had no sin, but He took on the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, and because of those sins He was judged on the Cross. And He rose from the dead and became the perfect Savior who overcame sin and death.

4. The descent of the Holy Spirit and the testimony of God the Father (verses 10–11)

When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens were parted and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. A voice was heard from heaven, saying, *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11)*.

In this scene God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit appear together. God the Father planned the salvation of mankind, the Son Jesus accomplished that salvation with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, and the Holy Spirit testifies of the salvation that the Father and Jesus accomplished.

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus does not mean that Jesus was washed of sin and born again. Jesus is the Son of God who has no sin from the beginning. The descent of the Spirit and the voice from heaven reveal that Jesus had begun the work of salvation according to the will of God, and that He is the Son in whom God the Father is well pleased.

This event also shows the saving truth that the Holy Spirit comes upon the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person washed of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and testifies of the fact that Jesus has completely removed that person's sins.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit does not mean only a great emotional experience or a special phenomenon. It is receiving the remission of sins by believing with the heart in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, with the Holy Spirit sealing that faith and testifying that one has become a child of God.

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5. Jesus, who was tempted by Satan after taking on the sins of mankind (verses 12–13)

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, and Jesus was tempted by Satan for forty days. Jesus took on the sins of mankind, but He did not become a sinner by committing sin Himself. Jesus was the flawless Lamb of God who bore in the place of sinners all their sins.

Jesus did not yield to the temptation of Satan. The first man Adam fell to the temptation of the Devil and handed down sin and death to all his descendants, but Jesus overcame the temptation of Satan and obeyed the will of God.

The person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit also experiences temptations and spiritual battles while living in the flesh. But the ground of salvation does not lie in a person never once being tempted or in completely removing the weakness of the flesh. The ground of salvation lies in the righteous work of Jesus, who removed all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection.

When the saved person faces temptation, he must not rely on his own resolve or his own righteousness, but believe the word of the gospel that Jesus has already taken on all his sins and been judged for them.

6. The words *"Repent, and believe in the gospel"* (verses 14–15).

After John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee and proclaimed, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15)*.

Repentance is not the act of offering prayers of repentance every day to wash away little by little the sins committed that

day. True repentance is realizing that one was born a sinner from the beginning, that one's own deeds and righteousness cannot solve the problem of sin, and that the way of not believing God's word was wrong, and returning to the gospel.

Repentance does not end with acknowledging one's sins. The person who has realized his sins and his doomed destiny must believe the fact that Jesus took on even his sins with the baptism He received from John, received the punishment of those sins on the Cross in his place, and rose from the dead.

The words *"believe in the gospel"* are not a command to do something more to complete salvation. They are the word telling us to accept into our hearts the fact of the salvation Jesus has already accomplished. There is no deed that man can add for his salvation. A sinner receives the remission of sins by believing in the righteous work of Jesus.

This does not mean that after being saved one may sin carelessly. Even a born-again person can commit sin because his flesh is weak. But each time that happens, he does not think that the salvation of Jesus was insufficient and try to manufacture the remission of sins all over again; rather, he believes the fact that Jesus took on even that sin with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross, acknowledges his wrong, and returns to the word.

7. The disciples called to be fishers of men (verses 16–20)

Jesus called Simon and Andrew, James and John, saying that He would make them fishers of men. The person saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not stay in enjoying his own salvation alone, but is called to a life of preaching the gospel to other souls.

John the Baptist made people realize their sins and led them to Jesus. The disciples, too, afterward had to deliver to people

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the salvation Jesus accomplished. Those who preach the gospel today do not take over the office of John the Baptist itself, but they follow the example of his witnessing ministry in that they make people realize their sins and lead them to the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

To become a fisher of men does not mean drawing people to one's own side or enrolling them in some organization. It is to tell the person under sin the fact that Jesus removed all sins with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, so that the person returns to God.

That the disciples left their nets and followed Jesus shows that the saved person must set the center of his life on the Lord. It does not mean that everyone must leave his occupation and family in the same way, but the gospel and the will of the Lord must come before one's own greed and plans.

8. Jesus casts out an unclean spirit with the authority of the word (verses 21–28)

Jesus taught the word with authority in the synagogue of Capernaum and cast out an unclean spirit. The demon knew the fact that Jesus was the Holy One of God, but that knowledge did not save the demon.

Salvation is not attained merely by knowing information about Jesus and saying with one's mouth that He is the Son of God. We must believe with the heart the fact that Jesus took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged on the Cross.

Satan keeps people from knowing how Jesus took charge of the sin of the world even while they speak of the Cross of Jesus. Or he makes them believe that they must wash away their sins through their own deeds, prayers of repentance, and religious efforts. But the word of Jesus has the authority to set people

free from such falsehood.

When Jesus told the demon to be quiet and come out of the man, the demon obeyed. This shows that Jesus is God, greater than Satan, and the One who has the power to save those who are under the power of sin, death, and the Devil.

9. Jesus heals the sick and cleanses the leper (verses 29–34, 40–45)

Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law of the fever and restored many sick and demon-possessed people. Finally, He had compassion on a leper and touched him and made him clean.

These events show that Jesus does not turn away from human suffering and that He has the authority to restore a person completely. They must not be interpreted to mean that every sick person fell ill because of some particular personal sin. Yet just as the leper could not make himself clean by his own strength, so we can draw the spiritual lesson that a sinner cannot remove the sins of his heart by his own deeds and efforts.

The leper implored Him, *"If You are willing, You can make me clean."* Jesus said, *"I am willing; be cleansed."* What makes a sinner clean is not the sinner's merit or good deeds but the will and the power of Jesus.

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the washing of sin is not something that happens gradually. Because Jesus took on all sins with the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, the person who believes this fact receives the complete remission of sins once and for all.

The healed leper put his own feelings and zeal ahead of the command of Jesus and spread the news widely. This gives the

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lesson that even a person who believes the gospel and has received grace must put the word of the Lord before his own thoughts.

10. Jesus prays and preaches the gospel in other towns as well (verses 35–39)

Even while many people were seeking Him, Jesus went to a solitary place at dawn and prayed. The people sought Jesus expecting miracles and healing, but Jesus said that He must preach the word in other towns as well.

In the ministry of Jesus, miracles did not take the place of preaching the gospel. Healing the sick and casting out demons were important too, but the central purpose for which Jesus came was to preach the gospel of God to people and to save them from sin.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a gospel for any particular region or people only. Just as Jesus went about the many towns of Galilee preaching the word, so those who are saved must preach the gospel to the whole world.

The person who preaches the gospel must not rely only on his own ability and zeal. As Jesus prayed in a solitary place, he must rely on God, and think not of his own popularity or gain but of the souls that have not yet heard the gospel.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 1 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

First, the gospel of Jesus Christ began together with the ministry of John the Baptist. God sent John the Baptist to bring people to repentance and lead them to Jesus.

Second, the baptism of repentance that John the Baptist gave the people was not a baptism that actually removed all their sins, but a baptism that prepared them to acknowledge

their sins and return to Jesus Christ.

Third, Jesus, who has no sin, took on the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and carrying those sins He was judged on the Cross and rose from the dead.

Fourth, the blood of the Cross cannot be understood apart from the baptism Jesus received from John. Because Jesus had taken on the sins of mankind, He received the punishment of those sins on the Cross in our place.

Fifth, the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person who has been washed of all his sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and testifies of the fact that God has made him His child.

Sixth, true repentance is not trying to wash away sins with repeated prayers of repentance, but turning from one's own righteousness and wrong faith and believing with the heart in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

Seventh, the saved person is called to be a fisher of men, to preach the gospel of the remission of sins to other souls and lead them to Jesus Christ.

Eighth, the word of Jesus has the authority to set people free from the power of sin and Satan and to cleanse the sinner who is spiritually unclean.

Ninth, preaching the gospel is not a work for human popularity or religious success, but the work of delivering the salvation Jesus accomplished to those who do not yet know the gospel.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 1 is the chapter that shows the beginning of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord, Jesus took on the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and then completed

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salvation with the Cross and the resurrection, and God gives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit to everyone who believes this gospel. ✉

Mark Chapter 1

The beginning of the gospel: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to seek out sinners

Introduction

Mark chapter 1 shows Jesus Christ, the Son of God, beginning His ministry on this earth to save sinners. John the Baptist made people realize their sins and prepared the way of the Lord so that they would return to Jesus. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and then rose again, and so accomplished perfect salvation. God the Father and the Holy Spirit testified that Jesus is the beloved Son of God and the true Savior.

Jesus then overcame the temptation of Satan, proclaimed repentance and faith, and called His disciples. He also cast out a demon with His authoritative word, healed many sick people, and stretched out His hand even to the outcast leper and made him clean. But the purpose of Jesus did not lie only in solving people's physical problems. It was to deliver people from the power of sin, Satan, and death with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, and to give the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life to those who believe.

This writing goes through Mark chapter 1 passage by passage, unfolding in order who Jesus is, how He took on the

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sins of sinners and accomplished salvation, and with what faith and life those who have received that grace ought to follow the Lord.

The beginning of the gospel appeared as John the Baptist prepared the way to lead sinners to Jesus Christ

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'' John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'" (Mark 1:1–8).

In his first sentence, Mark declares that what he intends to record is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The name *"Jesus"* means the One who saves His people from their sins, and the title *"Christ"* means 'the Anointed One.' In the time of the Old Testament, kings, priests, and prophets were anointed with oil when they were appointed, and Jesus came to this earth as the King of kings, as the High Priest of heaven, and as the true Prophet who teaches the truth of salvation. Jesus fulfilled

all three offices of King, High Priest, and Prophet, and offered His own body as the sacrifice of atonement to save sinners. The name *"Jesus Christ"* therefore carries the meaning that the Savior whom God promised has fulfilled all three offices and saved His people from their sins. The gospel is not a religious method man has made to climb up to God, but the good news of the salvation that the Son of God accomplished in person for sinners. Therefore, to understand the Gospel of Mark rightly, we must know and believe who Jesus is and what salvation He accomplished through the offices of King, High Priest, and Prophet.

Verses 2 and 3 show that God promised to send a messenger first, before sending the Christ into the world. The words, *"I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You,"* have as their background Malachi 3:1, and the words, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness,"* have as their background Isaiah 40:3. According to this prophecy, John the Baptist was born before Jesus and prepared His way. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not an idea that appeared suddenly; it is the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation, promised long beforehand through the prophets of the Old Testament.

The *"way of the LORD"* that John the Baptist prepared was not a physical road, but the way by which the hearts of people are made ready to receive Jesus Christ. In the heart of man there sit self-righteousness and pride, wrong religious teachings, and the lusts of the flesh. With such a heart, one can neither acknowledge his own sins nor accept Jesus as his Savior. John the Baptist pointed out people's sins and turned them back to God, preparing the way so that they would lay down their own thoughts and look to Christ.

The *"baptism of repentance for the remission of sins"* in

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verse 4 means that John the Baptist preached to the people to acknowledge their sins and return to God. Here we must distinguish the role of the baptism John gave the people from the role of the baptism he would soon give Jesus Christ. The baptism the people received was a mark of repentance, acknowledging that they were sinners before God and beings who must be judged. It was a baptism that prepared them to believe in Jesus Christ who was to come, and the rite of baptism itself did not wash away all of a person's sins completely.

That the people of all the land of Judea and of Jerusalem came out to John and confessed their sins shows that the religious state of that time was different from how it looked. They knew the Law and the sacrificial system, but before the word of God they were still sinners. To confess one's sins is not merely to list a few wrongs in words; it is to acknowledge that because of all the sins that come out of one's heart and conduct, one cannot escape the judgment of God by oneself. Only with this realization does a person stop relying on his own deeds and merits and seek Jesus Christ, the true Savior.

Verse 6 tells us that John the Baptist was clothed with camel's hair, wore a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. His appearance calls to mind Elijah of the Old Testament, and shows the life of a prophet who put the mission entrusted by God before the riches and honor of the world. John the Baptist did not seek people's popularity or material success, but preached the word of God in the wilderness. The purpose of his ministry was not to gather people to himself but to lead them to Jesus Christ, who was coming after him.

John the Baptist testified that One mightier than he was coming after him, and said that he was not worthy even to

stoop down and loose His sandal strap. In those days, loosing sandal straps was a lowly task that a servant performed for his master. Yet John the Baptist confessed that he could not take on even that task. He was a prophet sent by God, but he did not exalt himself as if he were the savior. He made it plain that he was the messenger who prepares the way, and that the One who actually saves sinners is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The words of verse 8, *"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit,"* show how the ministry of John the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus are connected. John gave the baptism of repentance with water, making people realize that they were sinners and wait for the Christ. But Jesus actually took charge of the sins of sinners and removed them, and He gives the Holy Spirit to everyone who believes that salvation and receives the remission of sins. The baptism of the Holy Spirit does not mean simply an emotional experience or a special power; it is the work of salvation in which the Holy Spirit comes upon the person who has received the remission of sins and seals him as a child of God.

The most important mission of John the Baptist did not end with preaching repentance to people. He had to baptize Jesus, who came to the Jordan River after him. Jesus is the Son of God who has no sin, but to save sinners He took the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. John the Baptist baptized Jesus as the prophet sent by God and as the representative of mankind, and Jesus carried those sins to the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving the punishment of sin in our place.

After Jesus died on the Cross, He was buried, and He rose again on the third day. Therefore the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are one saving work that cannot be separated. With the baptism He

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received from John He took on our sins; on the Cross He paid the wages of those sins; and by rising again He overcame sin and death and completed salvation. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, regardless of his own deeds, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again.

Therefore verses 1–8 are not a passage teaching that the act of confessing sins or repeating prayers of repentance itself washes away sin. The cry of repentance from John the Baptist was the word that prepared people to realize their sin and their helplessness and to believe in Jesus Christ who was coming after him. The person who has realized his sins must not try to solve them with his own resolve or good deeds, but must believe the fact that Jesus took on even all his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection.

This passage teaches that the right starting point for receiving the gospel is to acknowledge one's own sins and to look to Jesus Christ. John the Baptist did not bind people to himself, but led them to Jesus, who was mightier than he. Those who preach the gospel today must also clearly deliver the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection, rather than presenting their own experience or merits. By believing this gospel, a sinner is washed of all his sins and receives the Holy Spirit and lives as a child of God.

Jesus took on all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John and fulfilled the righteousness of God

"It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mark 1:9–11).

The phrase *"in those days"* points to the time when John the Baptist was preaching the baptism of repentance in the wilderness and leading people to Jesus Christ. According to the promise of God, John the Baptist appeared first and prepared the way of the Lord, and now Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee to the Jordan River. This is the scene in which Jesus begins in earnest His public life of saving sinners.

Jesus is the Son of God who has no sin, and so He had no need to repent of or wash away any sin of His own. The purpose of the baptism of repentance that John the Baptist gave the people and the purpose of the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist are therefore clearly distinguished. The people received baptism as a mark of repentance, acknowledging that they were sinners before God, but Jesus received baptism in order to take the sins of sinners onto His own body.

The Gospel of Mark records concisely the fact that Jesus was baptized by John. The meaning of this event appears more plainly in Matthew 3:15. To John, who hesitated to baptize Him, Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* The baptism Jesus received from John was therefore the saving work by which He fulfilled all the righteousness of God.

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The righteousness of God is God's right and just way of saving sinners and making them righteous, without sin. God did not declare sin nonexistent without any ground, nor did He pass over it without judgment. He passed all the sins of sinners onto Jesus Christ, who has no sin, and had Jesus receive the punishment of those sins in their place, and so fulfilled love and justice together. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was God's righteous method by which all the sins of the world were transferred onto Jesus.

This is connected with the sacrifices of the Old Testament. In the time of the Old Testament, a sinner or the high priest laid his hands on the head of a flawless sacrificial offering and passed the sins onto it, and the offering that received those sins shed its blood and died in their place. In the same way, John the Baptist baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind whom God had established, and Jesus took on all the sins of mankind once and for all onto His own body through the baptism He received from John. If the laying on of hands and the sacrifices of the Old Testament showed beforehand the saving work of the Christ who was to come, that prophecy actually began to be fulfilled in the Jordan River.

The sins transferred onto Jesus include not only the sins of the people of that time but all the sins committed by all mankind, from Adam to the last person of this world. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took on all the sins of the past, the present, and the future. That is why, after His baptism, Jesus could go to the Cross as *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* Because He had taken on the sins, He shed His blood on the Cross and received the punishment of sin, and He died and rose again on the third day, and so completed the salvation that delivers us from sin and death.

Verse 10 records that Jesus came up from the water immediately. His going into the water shows that He would take on the sin of the world and die, and His coming up out of the water is a sign showing that He would rise from the dead. The baptism Jesus received from John is not a rite that ends in itself, but the beginning of the saving work that leads to the death of the Cross and the resurrection. The water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit are not separate gospels; they testify of the one gospel of God that saves sinners perfectly.

When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens were parted and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. The descent of the Holy Spirit does not mean that Jesus had been without the Spirit until then. Jesus is the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Spirit was the visible testimony that Jesus is the Christ sent by God and the Savior who has taken on the sin of the world.

The dove calls to mind gentleness and peace. Jesus did not come to oppress or destroy sinners, but to take on their sins and save them. The descent of the Holy Spirit also reveals that Jesus, as the anointed Christ, carries out the offices of the King of kings, the High Priest of heaven, and the true Prophet. As King, Jesus overcame the power of sin and death; as High Priest, He offered His own body as the sacrifice of atonement; and as Prophet, He taught us the truth of God's salvation.

From heaven came the voice of God the Father, *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* These words testify that Jesus is not merely a man or one prophet among many, but the beloved Son of God. God the Father was pleased that Jesus had taken on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John and obeyed His will of salvation. The obedience of the Son, who gave up His own body to save sinners, was in perfect accord with the righteous will of God.

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In this scene the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit appear together. The Son Jesus took on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River; the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and testified of that work; and God the Father acknowledged His Son from heaven and was pleased with Him. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a doctrine made up by man, but the truth of salvation that the Triune God planned, accomplished, and testified to together.

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the water points to the fact that Jesus took on all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John. The blood shows that Jesus carried those sins and was judged and died on the Cross. And the Holy Spirit testifies that all this was accomplished according to the will of God, and He comes into the heart of the person who believes this fact and has received the remission of sins. Therefore not one of the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection can be left out of the gospel of salvation.

The work by which Jesus took on the sins of sinners and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are closely connected. The Holy Spirit of God cannot dwell in a heart where sin remains as it is. But whoever believes with the heart the fact that Jesus removed all his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the person who has received the remission of sins and seals him as His child.

This passage teaches that salvation is not attained by man's prayers of repentance or by good deeds and religious zeal. A person must acknowledge his sins, but the act of acknowledging sin does not itself wash sin away. The person who has realized his sins must believe the fact that Jesus took on even all his sins with the baptism He received from John,

received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. Believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the way of the remission of sins that God has established.

Just as God the Father testified of Jesus as His beloved Son and was pleased with Him, so the believer must accept as it is the saving work of the Son to which God testified. We must not judge the remission of our sins by our own thoughts and feelings, but believe the word that Jesus completely removed all our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection. Whoever receives this gospel into his heart is saved from sin, receives the Holy Spirit, and lives a new life as a child of God.

After taking on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, Jesus overcame the temptation of Satan following the leading of the Holy Spirit

"Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him" (Mark 1:12–13).

Mark connects what happened after Jesus came up out of the Jordan River with the word *"Immediately."* Jesus had taken the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and God the Father had testified that He was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. Right after that, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. The event of the Jordan River and the temptation of the wilderness are therefore not disconnected events, but one course of ministry that Jesus walked as the

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Savior of sinners.

The expression, *"Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness,"* means that the Holy Spirit led Jesus strongly. It does not mean that the Holy Spirit enticed Jesus to sin. God does not tempt anyone with evil. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to reveal that He is the Savior who defeats the temptation of Satan head-on and obeys the will of God to the end.

Jesus took on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, but Jesus Himself did not become a sinner. The Son of God, who has no sin, became the representative of sinners and received the burden of sin upon Himself. For Jesus to take on sin and for Him to commit sin are entirely different things. He was the flawless Lamb of God, who carried the sin of the world and yet repelled every temptation of Satan.

The Gospel of Mark records only concisely that Jesus was tempted for forty days, but the Gospels of Matthew and Luke convey the content of that temptation in detail. Satan demanded that Jesus turn stones into bread if He was the Son of God, told Him to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to test God's protection, and tempted Him with all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if He would worship him. All these temptations were attempts to make Jesus put His own power and needs before the will of God.

The temptation to turn stones into bread was a temptation that used the needs of a starving body. It was not that Jesus lacked the power to turn stones into bread; He would not use His power in a way that departed from the will of God at the word of Satan. The temptation to jump from the temple was a temptation to appear to trust God while actually testing God to fit one's own will. The temptation offering the kingdoms of the world was a temptation to obtain glory and power without

obedience to the Father and without passing through the suffering of the Cross.

Satan knew that after Jesus took on the sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He had to obey all the way to the Cross, and he tried to block that path. If Jesus had accepted Satan's proposals, the saving work of fulfilling the righteousness of God in the place of sinners could not have been completed. But Jesus did not choose to display His power or to take a comfortable path; He repelled every temptation with the written word of God.

The forty days in the wilderness call to mind the forty years the people of Israel spent in the wilderness. The people of Israel complained against God and served idols in the wilderness over food and drink, but Jesus obeyed God the Father perfectly even in extreme hunger and loneliness. The first man Adam fell to the temptation of Satan in the abundant garden of Eden, but Jesus overcame the temptation in the barren wilderness. Jesus is the true Representative who fulfilled perfect obedience in the place of fallen mankind.

Mark's record that Jesus was with the wild beasts shows that the wilderness was a lonely and dangerous place where it was hard for anyone to live. Jesus, as true man who came in the flesh, actually went through hunger, loneliness, and danger. And yet He did not sin. The word that the angels ministered to Jesus reveals that God the Father did not abandon His Son in the midst of temptation but protected Him.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the temptation in the wilderness reveals that Jesus is the flawless Savior, qualified to accomplish the work of salvation. Jesus received onto His own body all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John, and He overcame the temptation of Satan and carried those sins all the way to the

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Cross. If Jesus had yielded to the temptation, He could not have been judged in the place of other sinners; but He was the sinless Son of God who overcame every temptation.

Even after His victory in the wilderness, Jesus did not cast off the sins He had taken on with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, but carried them to the end. And by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He received in our place the punishment of all those sins, and He was buried and rose again on the third day, and so overcame the power of sin, death, and Satan. Therefore the water, the blood, and the Spirit of Jesus are not separate salvations; they fulfill the righteousness of God that saves sinners completely.

The temptation of Satan also comes to the person who has received the remission of sins by believing this gospel. Satan uses the weakness and circumstances of the saved person to make him doubt the fact that he is a child of God, and makes him trust his own feelings and situation more than the written word. Sometimes he even misquotes the word to make the lusts of the flesh be accepted as the will of God. Therefore the believer must not try to fight Satan with his own will or ability alone, but must stand on the word that Jesus has overcome all sin and the power of Satan with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection.

This passage teaches that being led by the Holy Spirit does not mean there will be no temptation or hardship at all. The Holy Spirit does not always lead the believer only along a comfortable path; He also leads him to the place where he must believe and obey the word of God. But the ground on which the saved person overcomes temptation is not his own strong resolve; it is the complete victory of Jesus Christ, who took on our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and defeated Satan with the Cross and the resurrection. The

believer must rely on that victory, holding on to the word of God and living by faith even in the midst of temptation.

The words to repent and believe in the gospel mean to turn from our own thoughts and believe in the salvation of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ would accomplish

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14–15).

The arrest of John the Baptist shows that the history of the gospel had entered a new stage. He had preached the baptism of repentance to the people and prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, and at the Jordan River he had baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind. After that mission was finished, when John was shut up in prison, Jesus began in earnest to preach the gospel of God in Galilee.

That John was arrested shows that the work of preaching the word of God is not always welcomed by the world. John the Baptist pointed out the sin of Herod and was put in prison. It looked as though the servant of God had been seized and the way of the gospel blocked, but the saving plan of God did not stop. When the preparatory ministry of the one messenger ended, Jesus Christ, of whom he had testified, appeared in person and preached the gospel.

What Jesus preached was not a human idea or religious moral teaching but *"the gospel of the kingdom of God."* The gospel is the good news that God planned and accomplishes Himself in order to save sinners. Demanding that people live

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good lives and keep the Law so as to become righteous by themselves is not the center of the gospel. The gospel is the news that, for the person who cannot remove his sins by his own efforts, the Son of God takes charge of his sins and receives the judgment in his place, and so saves him.

The words *"The time is fulfilled"* mean that the time of salvation that God promised through the prophets of the Old Testament had come. God promised the Savior who would come as the Seed of the woman, the descendant of Abraham, and the descendant of David. The sacrifices and offerings of the Law also showed beforehand the saving work of Jesus Christ who was to come. At last the Son of God came into the world in the flesh, and He took the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John, and so the promised salvation began to be fulfilled within history.

The words, *"the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel,"* do not stop at meaning that a visible earthly kingdom would soon be established. The kingdom of God is the kingdom where God reigns as King. Because Jesus Christ, the King of that kingdom, had come among people, the kingdom of God had drawn near. When a person who had been far from God because of sin believes in Jesus Christ, receives the remission of sins, and receives the Holy Spirit, the reign of God is established in his heart.

A person who has sin cannot enter the holy kingdom of God. Neither can man's good deeds or religious zeal completely remove all the sins that come out of his heart and conduct. The kingdom of God, therefore, is not a kingdom one climbs up to by one's own righteousness, but a kingdom one enters by believing in the righteousness that God has prepared. To bring sinners into that kingdom, Jesus began the saving

work of taking on their sins and receiving the judgment in their place.

The *"repentance"* Jesus spoke of does not mean simply regretting one's wrongs or begging every day for one's sins to be remitted while listing them one by one. True repentance is turning from the heart that counted its own thoughts more right than God. It is abandoning the thought that one can wash away sins with one's good deeds, one's keeping of the Law, one's prayers of repentance and religious merits, and returning to the word of salvation that God accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the Cross.

People easily think that if they shed tears and beg for the remission of their sins each time they sin, their sins are washed away each time. But this thought makes a person rely on his own act of repentance more than on the work of Jesus Christ who took on his sins. Prayers of repentance are needed for acknowledging one's wrongs and setting one's relationship with God straight, but they are not a means of salvation that pays the price of sin or removes sin completely. The power that actually removes sin is in the gospel that Jesus Christ accomplished.

The words *"believe in the gospel"* do not mean merely acknowledging that a Savior exists. They mean receiving with the heart the fact that Jesus took on all our sins with the baptism He received from John, carried those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the punishment of sin in our place, and was buried and rose again on the third day. Faith is accepting the salvation God accomplished as one's own salvation.

When Jesus proclaimed these words, the Cross and the resurrection had not yet taken place in history. But Jesus had already taken on the sins of sinners with the baptism He

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received from John the Baptist, and He was now walking the way of salvation, carrying those sins toward the Cross. Therefore the words *"believe in the gospel"* were an invitation to believe in Jesus Himself and in all the saving work He would complete.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a gospel that speaks of the water only or of the blood of the Cross only. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, paid the wages of those sins on the Cross, and overcame sin and death by rising again. The Holy Spirit testifies that this word of salvation is the truth, and He comes into the heart of the person who believes it and has received the remission of sins, and seals him as a child of God.

Therefore repentance and faith are not separated from each other. One cannot believe the gospel while still holding on to one's own thoughts and righteousness, and repeating regret without the gospel is not the repentance that leads to salvation either. True repentance is acknowledging that one is a sinner before God who cannot solve his sins by himself, and going as far as believing in Jesus Christ, who completed salvation with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection.

This passage teaches that we must not put off our decision before the gospel. The words, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel,"* are the declaration that the Savior whom God promised has already come and the way of salvation has been opened. The sinner must turn from the thought of becoming righteous by his own deeds and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished. Whoever believes this gospel with the heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and lives as a child

belonging to the kingdom of God.

Jesus called ordinary fishermen and made them disciples who save people's souls with the gospel

"And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him" (Mark 1:16–20).

As Jesus passed by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea. The Sea of Galilee was an important base of livelihood for the people of that time, and the two men were not people of special religious standing but ordinary fishermen who made their living by catching fish. Jesus did not look only for the exalted and learned people of the world; He first called as His disciples people who were living in the place of everyday life.

The text does not record that Simon and Andrew first went to Jesus and asked to be accepted as His disciples. Jesus saw them and first called them, saying, "*Follow Me.*" The life of a disciple is not a position obtained by proving one's qualifications, but begins with the Lord calling in grace. Salvation, likewise, is not the sinner first producing some qualification to come to God; it is the grace of God, who sent Jesus Christ and calls sinners through the gospel.

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The words *"Follow Me"* do not mean simply to walk along physically behind Jesus. They are the call to lay down one's own thoughts and the lordship of one's life, to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to learn and obey His word. A disciple is not a person who merely has knowledge about Jesus, but a person who believes who Jesus is and what salvation He accomplished, and receives His leading.

Before Jesus called His disciples, He had already taken all the sins of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. Therefore the Jesus whom the disciples were to follow was not merely a teacher giving excellent lessons, but the Savior carrying the sins of sinners and going toward the Cross. The disciples did not at first understand all the meaning of that salvation, but Jesus would be with them and teach them the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In the words, *"I will make you become fishers of men,"* the important subject is *"I."* It is not that Simon and Andrew would become fishers of men by their own ability; it is the promise that Jesus would make them so. A disciple is not raised by natural eloquence or human ability alone. When he hears the word of Jesus, believes the salvation He accomplished, and receives the leading of the Holy Spirit, he grows into a worker who preaches the gospel.

The expression of catching men does not mean deceiving people and drawing them into one's own camp. Catching fish is pulling them out of the sea with a net, but catching men with the gospel is delivering the way of life to souls fallen into sin, judgment, and death, so that they are saved. The aim of a disciple is not to make people his own followers but to lead them to Jesus Christ.

The power to save people from sin does not come from the wisdom or persuasiveness of the disciples. Because Jesus took

on the sins of all people with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, carried those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead, the gospel has the power to bring people to life. The disciples are not the ones who remove sin; they are witnesses who deliver the salvation Jesus completed.

Hearing the word of Jesus, Simon and Andrew left their nets and followed Him "*immediately.*" The nets symbolized their means of living and their familiar life. That they left their nets means that they received the call of Jesus as more important than their occupation and plans. They did not follow after understanding everything that lay ahead or completing sufficient preparation; they trusted and obeyed Jesus who called them.

But we must not interpret this word only as a command that everyone must instantly abandon his occupation and property. God calls some people to devote themselves wholly to preaching the gospel, and has others serve the gospel within their families and occupations. What matters is not the outward form of one's occupation but what one takes as the master of one's life. A disciple must not cling to his livelihood like an idol, but place all his life under the will of Jesus.

Going a little farther, Jesus also called James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were mending their nets in the boat, and their father Zebedee and the hired servants were with them. This shows that they were engaged in a fishing business organized to some degree around the family. When Jesus called, the two men left their father and the hired servants in the boat and followed Jesus.

That James and John left their father behind does not mean that responsibility toward parents may be ignored. The text makes clear that there were hired servants beside Zebedee,

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showing that his livelihood was not abandoned without any provision. The action of the two men was not a lack of devotion to family, but means that when they received the special call of Jesus, they followed that call above all. The call of God does not make us despise family ties and occupation, but it does not allow any relationship to be placed higher than Jesus.

These four men did not become people of perfect faith the moment they were called. They sometimes failed to understand the words of Jesus, argued with one another over the higher place, and fled in fear when Jesus was arrested. Nevertheless Jesus did not cast them away, but taught them with the word and built them up as workers of faith. Becoming a disciple is not proving one's own perfection; it is the process by which an imperfect person is changed by the grace and the word of the Lord.

The devotion of a disciple is not a condition for the remission of sins. We are not saved because we abandon our nets, serve, and make many sacrifices; we receive the remission of sins by believing the gospel that Jesus took on all our sins with the baptism He received from John and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. In the person who believes that salvation and has received the Holy Spirit, a life of gratitude, obedience, and preaching the gospel follows. Salvation is not a reward for devotion; devotion is the response to the grace of having been saved.

Becoming a fisher of men today also begins with preaching in full the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. If we speak only of the Cross while leaving out the work by which Jesus took on the sins, or hold up man's repentance and good deeds as if they were conditions of salvation, it does not become clear what the

sinner must believe. The person who preaches the gospel must clearly testify of the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with the water, the blood, and the Spirit, rather than exalting his own experience or the tradition of his denomination.

This passage teaches the fact that Jesus calls ordinary and insufficient people and makes them workers of the gospel. The believer has no need to refuse the call of the Lord because of his own insufficiency, nor should he try to change people by relying on his own ability. He must first believe clearly in the gospel of the water and the Spirit himself and live following the word, while delivering the salvation of Jesus Christ to those who are under sin and judgment. It is Jesus who saves people, and a disciple is a witness called to cast the net of that salvation.

The word of Jesus is the gospel of authority that subdues unclean spirits and delivers sinners from the power of Satan

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

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For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.' And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee" (Mark 1:21–28).

After calling Simon and Andrew, James and John, Jesus went with them into Capernaum. Capernaum was an important town in the region of Galilee, with much coming and going of people. When the Sabbath came, Jesus entered the synagogue and taught the word. The synagogue was the place where the Jews gathered to read and learn the Law and the writings of the prophets. Where people were gathered, Jesus plainly taught the kingdom of God and the gospel.

The people in the synagogue were astonished at the teaching of Jesus. The scribes taught mainly by citing the Law and the interpretations of earlier scholars, but Jesus spoke as the One who knows the will of God directly. The authority of Jesus did not come from raising His voice or from an attitude that overpowers people. Because He is the Son of God, the Word who became flesh, and the One who fulfills every word, there was authority in the teaching itself.

Jesus had taken all the sins of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John, and had begun the public life of saving sinners. The authority Jesus holds as the Son of God did not newly arise through that baptism. He is God from the beginning, and at the Jordan River He fulfilled in obedience the righteousness of God for saving sinners. Therefore in the teaching of Jesus there appeared together the authority of the Savior who had taken on the sins and the authority of God who actually fulfills the word.

In that synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit. He was in a religious place, yet he had not been freed from the rule of the unclean spirit. This shows that the outward religious life of attending the synagogue or learning Bible knowledge

does not by itself solve a person's sin and spiritual bondage. The One who delivers a person from the power of sin and Satan is not the religious system or ritual itself, but Jesus Christ.

The demon-possession that appears in this text is an event in which an unclean spirit actually oppressed and ruled a man. That does not mean, however, that every physical disease or mental suffering may be judged to be demon-possession. The Bible also records diseases and the oppression of demons separately. To conclude that any suffering is unconditionally the work of demons goes beyond the purpose of the text and can inflict yet another wound on the person who suffers.

Seeing Jesus, the unclean spirit cried out, *"What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth?"* The people did not yet know clearly who Jesus was, but the demon recognized that He was *"the Holy One of God."* It also knew that Jesus had the authority to destroy them, and it was afraid. When Jesus, the light, appeared, the identity of the darkness that had been hiding was exposed.

But the demon's stating the identity of Jesus accurately does not mean it had saving faith. Saving faith does not stop at knowing information about Jesus and fearing Him; it is receiving into the heart the righteousness He accomplished. Even the demons know that Jesus is the Son of God, but they neither love Him nor obey His word. Therefore saying with the mouth who Jesus is and believing with the heart the gospel He accomplished must be distinguished.

Jesus did not praise the demon's words or make use of its testimony. He rebuked it, saying, *"Be quiet, and come out of him!"* Jesus did not argue with the evil spirit or use any special incantation or ritual. He commanded with the word alone, and the demon could not but obey the command. This shows that the authority of Jesus is greater than all the power of Satan.

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The unclean spirit convulsed the man, cried out with a loud voice, and came out. It tried to torment the man to the last, but it could not defy the word of Jesus or remain in him any longer. More important than the demon's loud cry and violent behavior was the one command of Jesus. However strong the forces of darkness may look, before the Son of God they must surrender.

This event is a sign that the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed did not exist in words only but came with real authority. But the ultimate purpose for which Jesus came into the world does not stop at driving demons out of a few people. All people lie under the judgment of death because of sin, and Satan accuses them on the ground of their sins. To solve this fundamental problem of sin, Jesus took on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist.

Jesus carried the sins He had taken on through that baptism, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and so paid all the wages of sin, and He rose from the dead on the third day. The power of Satan rests on man's sin and on the death that sin brings, but since Jesus paid the price of sin completely, Satan can no longer condemn the person who believes the gospel. The gospel of the water and the Spirit sets the sinner free not only from the punishment of sin but also from the accusation of Satan and the fear of death.

The way for a sinner to escape the power of darkness does not lie in special religious rituals or in his own strong will. He must believe that Jesus took on all his sins with the baptism He received from John and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. Whoever believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the saved person and testifies that he is a child of God and God's own possession.

Seeing this event, the people said it was a *"new doctrine"* given *"with authority."* That the teaching of Jesus was new does not mean it was some entirely different idea severed from the word of God given before. It sounded new because the salvation that the Law and the prophets had foretold was actually being fulfilled through Jesus. If the scribes interpreted and delivered the word, Jesus taught as the Owner and Fulfiller of the word and showed that authority in action.

The fame of Jesus immediately spread throughout the whole region around Galilee. But being astonished at the news about Jesus and being saved by believing the gospel are not the same. Curiosity about miracles or admiration for the power that cast out a demon cannot bring the remission of sins. One must know and believe why Jesus came into the world and how He removed sin.

Those who preach the gospel today must not try to establish authority by frightening people or exaggerating mysterious phenomena. True spiritual authority comes from the written word of God and from the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. And rather than pursuing only visible miracles, they must preach the fundamental salvation by which the sinner believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receives the remission of sins, and becomes a child of God.

This passage teaches that the word of Jesus is the word of God that overcomes the power of sin and Satan. The person who believes in Jesus Christ, who completed salvation with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, no longer needs to live as a slave of sin and condemnation. The believer must rely on the word of the gospel rather than on his own feelings and fears, and live in the victory of Jesus Christ, following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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Jesus raised up the woman who lay sick with a fever, and the healed woman served at once

"Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them" (Mark 1:29–31).

After teaching the word in the synagogue and casting out the unclean spirit, Jesus went at once into the house of Simon and Andrew. James and John were with Him. The authority of Jesus shown in the synagogue did not remain only in a public place with many people; it reached the small, personal hardship of one household. Jesus cared not only about preaching the word to many people but also about the plight of one person suffering from illness.

Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. In those days it was hard to receive an accurate diagnosis and treatment as we do today, so a severe fever could threaten one's life. She could not rise by herself and go to Jesus, nor could she care for others. The text shows how physically weak man is and how easily he becomes helpless before disease.

The people told Jesus about the woman's situation "*at once.*" They could not cure the disease by their own power, but they laid the sick woman's situation before Jesus with faith that He could help. This shows the appearance of intercession and love, which does not turn away from another person's suffering but brings it to Jesus. The believer must not judge a person in hardship, but must lay his situation before the Lord and actually help him.

Hearing their words, Jesus went directly to the sick woman.

He could have merely given a command from a distance, but He took her by the hand and lifted her up. In this action appears the compassion of Jesus, who comes near to the one lying sick and holds her up. The touch of Jesus was not an exaggerated gesture to show people, but real love toward one suffering person.

Jesus had already taken onto His own body the sins of all mankind, including Simon's mother-in-law, with the baptism He received from John. He is not One who only looks from a distance at the weakness of sinners, but the Savior who came in person to those in sin and suffering. The sight of Jesus taking the sick woman by the hand shows the love of God, who came near to save sinners rather than turning away from them.

When Jesus took the woman's hand and lifted her up, the fever left at once. No separate medicine or long process of recovery was needed. This reveals that Jesus holds the Creator's authority to rule over the diseases of the body. In the synagogue the unclean spirit obeyed the word of Jesus, and in Simon's house the fever departed before His touch. It showed that both spiritual powers and bodily diseases are under the authority of Jesus.

What happened to Simon's mother-in-law must not be interpreted to mean that the cause of every disease is the individual's sin. The Bible teaches that man came to suffer disease and death in a world fallen through sin, but it does not conclude that a particular disease necessarily arose because of that person's particular sin. Jesus, too, did not condemn the sick but had compassion on them and healed them. The believer likewise must not drive the sick into a corner as sinners, but care for them with love.

The miracle of healing bodily disease is a sign showing that Jesus is the One who will save people bound by sin and death.

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But the most fundamental purpose for which Jesus came was not only to remove every disease from this world at once. He came to solve the problem of sin, the root of disease and death, by taking on all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross.

After the fever left, the woman served Jesus and His disciples at once. A person who has suffered a severe fever usually remains without strength for some time even after the fever breaks, but she was restored so completely that she could rise immediately and care for people. Her serving was not a condition for receiving healing but a response to the grace already received. First Jesus raised her up, and then the woman served with gratitude.

This order applies as it is to salvation and the life of faith. A person does not obtain the remission of sins by service and devotion. We receive the remission of sins by believing the gospel that Jesus took on all our sins with the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again on the third day. The person who by that grace has received the Holy Spirit serves God and his neighbors out of gratitude. Serving is not a price paid to obtain salvation but a fruit of faith borne by the person who has been saved.

This miracle does not promise that every believer will always experience immediate bodily healing in this world. God sometimes heals disease, but in other cases He has people go through treatment and recovery, and He also has them live by faith in the weakness of the flesh. Therefore we must not condemn a person whose illness is not healed as lacking faith. The most certain promises given to the Christian are the remission of sins and eternal life, and the resurrection of the body on the last day—not that every disease will vanish at once.

The salvation that the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives does not stop at mere comfort of heart or the temporary solving of problems. Jesus took on our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the price of sin with the blood of the Cross, and opened the way of eternal life by rising from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel is washed of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit, and will put on the resurrection body that does not decay or fall sick.

This passage teaches that Jesus cares not only about the place of public worship but also about one person's home, illness, and daily life. The believer must bring his own situation and the hardships of others to Jesus and rely on His will. And after receiving grace, he must not live for himself alone, but, like Simon's mother-in-law, serve others with gratitude. Because the Lord first came to the sinner and raised him up, the saved person can serve gladly in that grace.

Jesus did not turn away from the sick and the demon-possessed gathered at the door, but healed them with authority and compassion

"At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him" (Mark 1:32–34).

"At evening, when the sun had set" points to the time when the Sabbath was ending. The Jews regarded sunset as the time when one day ended and a new day began. It seems that because of the regulations about movement and activity on the

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Sabbath, the people waited for the sun to set and then brought the sick and the demon-possessed to Jesus. When the news that Simon's mother-in-law had been healed and what had happened in the synagogue spread, many people came seeking Jesus.

The text does not say only that the sick came by themselves; it records that people "brought" them to Jesus. Among those severely ill and those oppressed by demons, there would have been some who could not come to Jesus by their own strength. Their families and neighbors did not turn away from their suffering but brought them to Jesus. This shows that what the believer can do for a suffering person is not to condemn or watch him, but to help him and lead him to the Lord.

The words, *"the whole city was gathered together at the door,"* show how great the interest of the people of Capernaum was. That door would have been the door of the house of Simon and Andrew where Jesus was staying. Jesus, who a little while before had healed Simon's mother-in-law inside one home, now received the crowds gathered outside the house. The compassion of Jesus goes out to one person and also to many people.

That day Jesus had taught in the synagogue, cast out a demon, and healed Simon's mother-in-law, yet He did not treat the people who flocked to Him in the evening as a nuisance or send them away. He healed the many people who suffered from all kinds of diseases and cast out many demons. Each person's disease and situation were different, but there was no case that the authority of Jesus could not reach.

The expression *"sick with various diseases"* means that the people's illnesses were not of one kind. Jesus did not deal only with certain diseases or choose only those easy to cure. Because He is God who created the human body, He had the

authority to rule over diseases of every kind. Such healing was a sign showing that the kingdom of God had drawn near through Jesus and that He is the promised Savior.

The text records the sick and the demon-possessed separately. Therefore we must not judge every disease to be the work of demons. Many diseases have physical causes and need treatment, and mental suffering also must receive proper care and treatment. To blame every problem unconditionally on demons, or to condemn the faith of a person receiving treatment, is not a biblical attitude.

That Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons was an event in which the Savior's authority was shown against the suffering and the power of death that entered through sin. Jesus was the Savior who had taken the sins of all mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. Therefore the healing and the casting out of demons that He performed showed in advance the saving work by which He would fundamentally solve the power of sin, Satan, and death.

But being cured of a bodily disease and being born again by receiving the remission of all sins must be distinguished. Even a person whose disease is cured will one day face the death of the body, but the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit obtains eternal life. The healing of Jesus was amazing grace, but the most fundamental gift He wants to give is salvation from sin.

Jesus carried the sin of the world that He had taken on with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and at last He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment of those sins. And He rose again on the third day and overcame sin and death. This is the salvation more fundamental and eternal than the temporary restoration of a sick body. Whoever believes this gospel receives the remission

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of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Jesus did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. The demons knew that Jesus was the holy Son of God, but their knowledge was not faith flowing from obedience and love. Jesus did not intend to make His identity known through the testimony of unclean spirits. The truth must be revealed through the word of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, not through the spirit of falsehood.

In Jesus' silencing of the demons there was also the intent to prevent His ministry from being made known wrongly to people. In those days people expected the Christ to be a political king who would free them from the rule of Rome. But Jesus did not come to become a popular king working miracles; He came to carry the sins He had taken on with the baptism He received from John and to die on the Cross. Who Jesus is had to be fully revealed through the Cross and the resurrection.

A person's speaking accurately about Jesus does not necessarily mean he has saving faith. The demons also knew who Jesus was, but they did not believe and obey Him. True faith does not stop at acknowledging as knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God; it receives into one's heart, as one's own, the salvation He accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection.

This passage shows that Jesus has compassion on both the physical suffering and the spiritual bondage of man. Therefore the church and believers also must not turn away from the sick and the weak, but care for them with practical love. At the same time, we must not regard visible healing and miracles as the whole of the gospel, but preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which solved sin, the root of all suffering.

The believer may ask God for the healing of disease and

should also faithfully receive medical help. But we must not judge the love of God by the outcome of treatment alone. Even if every disease does not disappear in this world, the remission of sins and the eternal life received in Jesus Christ do not change. For when we rise again, we will put on a body without disease, pain, or death.

This word does not end with the fact that many people came to Jesus; it makes us look back at what we seek when we come to Him. Solving today's problems and the healing of the body matter too, but the sinner must first believe the gospel that saves him from eternal judgment. When we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, we receive the remission of all sins, escape the condemnation of Satan, and enjoy eternal life with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus sought the will of the Father in prayer and preached the gospel of God in many towns

"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for You.' But He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.' And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons" (Mark 1:35–39).

The day before, Jesus had taught the word in the synagogue, cast out a demon, and healed Simon's mother-in-law. After the sun set, He cared for the many sick and demon-possessed people gathered at the door. It was the day after He had done so

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much work, yet Jesus rose while it was still dark, long before daylight, and went out to a solitary place. Before meeting the demands of the people again, He first prayed in fellowship with God the Father.

That Jesus sought a solitary place was not a religious act to draw people's attention. He prayed to God the Father where no one was watching. True prayer is not an act of displaying one's piety to people, but fellowship in which one opens his heart before God and seeks His will. Even when many people were looking for Him, Jesus sought the will of the Father before the estimation of people.

Jesus is the Son of God, and so He is not like a creature that cannot obtain power unless it prays. But at the same time, as true man who came in the flesh, He lived relying on God the Father and obeying His will. In the prayer of Jesus appear the loving fellowship of the Father and the Son, and the obedience by which He carried out the work of saving sinners not according to His own will but according to the will the Father had appointed.

Jesus had taken all the sins of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John, and He was going forward toward the Cross carrying those sins. Therefore the prayer of Jesus was not a prayer seeking a comfortable life or worldly success, but a prayer for carrying out to the end the saving work entrusted to Him. Jesus chose not the path of receiving people's cheers, but the path of obeying the will of the Father and receiving the judgment of sinners in their place.

Simon and those who were with him followed after Jesus and found Him. In the words, *"Everyone is looking for You,"* lies the fact that the people of Capernaum wanted to meet Jesus again. His fame had spread rapidly through the healing of the sick and the casting out of demons. The disciples may have

regarded the gathering of so many people as a great success of the ministry and expected Jesus to return to them.

But the fact that everyone sought Jesus does not mean that they all realized the gospel and believed in Him as the Savior. Some would have sought Him to hear the word, but many would have come expecting the healing of diseases and miracles. People may want the help and blessings Jesus gives while having no interest in acknowledging their sins and believing His gospel. Jesus did not regard the mere fact that people were seeking Him as saving faith.

Jesus did not go back to stay in Capernaum, but said, *"Let us go into the next towns."* He was not bound by the popularity and success gained in one place, but went out to those who had not yet heard the word. For the gospel must be delivered to every sinner, not to a particular region or a few people only. By taking His disciples with Him, Jesus also had them see and learn the field of gospel preaching.

The words, *"that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth,"* show how important the preaching of the word is in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons, but He did not come to be known only as a worker of miracles. He came to proclaim to sinners that the kingdom of God had drawn near, and to have them repent and believe in the gospel.

The gospel Jesus preached is not a teaching that man can become righteous by himself through good deeds and the keeping of the Law. It is the promise of God that the sinless Son of God takes on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and receives the judgment of those sins in their place, and so saves them. Jesus had already taken on the sins, and now, carrying them, He walked the path of obedience, preaching the gospel all the way to the Cross.

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The words of Jesus, *"for this purpose I have come forth,"* show that the proclamation of the gospel and the fulfillment of the gospel are not separated. Jesus did not teach salvation in words only, but Himself fulfilled the word He preached. He took on the sins with the baptism He received from John, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and was buried and rose again on the third day, and so completed the salvation He had proclaimed.

The text records that Jesus went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues. Jesus did not only wait for people to come to Him; He went in person to many towns. The person who preaches the gospel must also not stay only in familiar places and among people who welcome him, but must care about those who have not yet heard the true gospel. The mission of preaching the gospel is not gathering people into one's own church or organization, but leading them to the salvation of Jesus Christ.

While preaching the word, Jesus also cast out demons. Casting out demons showed that the word of Jesus is the word of God with real authority, and that the kingdom of God was coming, breaking down the power of Satan. But miracles are signs that testify of the gospel; they do not take the place of the gospel itself. Even if a person has experienced amazing phenomena, if he does not believe the gospel of the remission of sins, he has not obtained eternal salvation.

What fundamentally sets the sinner free from the accusation of Satan and the power of death is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus received all sins passed onto Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and overcame sin and death by rising again. Whoever believes this gospel with the heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy

Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

This passage teaches that prayer and the preaching of the gospel must go together. We must not only pray without preaching the gospel, nor work by human zeal alone without seeking the will of God. Jesus prayed in a solitary place and then went out to people and preached the word. The believer also must seek the will of God through prayer, and with the word he has received, preach the gospel in the field of his life.

It also shows that the popularity and responses of people cannot be the absolute standard for judging the will of God. That many people seek a place does not necessarily make staying there the will of God, and the absence of immediate visible results does not mean the preaching of the gospel has failed. What matters is not what people want but what God has entrusted.

The believer must pray not only for his own wishes to be fulfilled, but for the mission of the gospel that Jesus has entrusted. And rather than worldly popularity or miraculous experiences, he must clearly preach the righteousness of God accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Just as Jesus went to many towns and preached the gospel, so the saved person must look after the souls that have not yet heard the gospel and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus touched the leper who had been quarantined as unclean and made him clean

"Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make

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me clean.' Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction" (Mark 1:40–45).

The "*leprosy*" of this text may refer to the disease generally called leprosy today, and also to several serious skin diseases that the Law of that time judged to be unclean. It is therefore difficult to determine from the text alone the exact modern medical name of this man's disease. What matters is the fact that he had to bear not only the disease but also the uncleanness under the Law and quarantine from the community.

According to Leviticus chapters 13 and 14, a person with such a skin disease was set apart as unclean by the judgment of the priest and had to dwell alone outside the camp. When anyone came near, he had to announce his own uncleanness, so it was hard for him to lead a normal family and social life. This man was going through not only the pain of the body but also the loneliness and shame of being cut off from people.

Yet this leper came to Jesus and knelt down before Him. Acknowledging his uncleanness and helplessness, he asked Jesus for help. People avoided him, but he believed that Jesus had the power to heal him. The Law could judge that his condition was unclean, but the power to make him clean was with Jesus.

He did not say, 'If You can heal me'; he confessed, *"If You are willing, You can make me clean."* He did not doubt the power of Jesus; he asked whether Jesus would receive even a person like himself. Having long been rejected by people, he may have found it hard to be sure of the Lord's will toward him rather than of the Lord's power.

The text records that Jesus, *"moved with compassion, stretched out His hand"* and touched the leper. Being moved with compassion here does not mean He felt awkward; it means He pitied his suffering deeply. Jesus did not step back from the unclean man or condemn him. He stretched out His hand, touched his body directly, and said, *"I am willing; be cleansed."*

People of that time thought that if they touched an unclean person, they too became unclean. But when Jesus touched him, the man's uncleanness did not defile Jesus; rather, the cleansing authority of Jesus came upon him. The touch of Jesus shows the compassion that receives a man who had long been welcomed by no one, and the power of God that overcomes all uncleanness.

This scene makes us think of the ministry of Jesus, who came to save sinners. The holy Son of God did not stop at condemning sinners from afar; He came in the flesh among sinners. And He took the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. Jesus, who has no sin, took charge of the uncleanness of sinners, but He Himself did not become a sinner who commits sin.

When Jesus said, *"be cleansed,"* the leprosy immediately left the man. No long ritual or special incantation was needed. By the word of Jesus alone the disease vanished and he was made clean. This shows that the word of Jesus holds the

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Creator's authority that governs even the human body and uncleanness under the Law.

But we must not regard this man's bodily cleansing and the sinner's eternal remission of sins as exactly the same event. What the text directly records is the fact that his skin disease was healed and his ceremonial cleanness restored. This miracle is a sign showing that Jesus is the Savior who will solve even the fundamental uncleanness of sinners. The complete washing of sin is received by believing the gospel Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection.

Jesus sent the healed man away at once, strictly warning him to tell no one. Jesus did not give this command because He was so lacking that He had to hide His power. It was because, if only rumors about the miracle spread, people might misunderstand Jesus not as the Christ who saves from sin but as a miracle worker who only solves diseases and practical problems.

Jesus told him first to go to the priest, show himself, and offer the gift Moses commanded. According to the Law, a person whose disease was healed had to receive the priest's judgment that he was clean before returning to the community. Jesus did not ignore the legal procedure of that time; He made it possible for the man to be officially acknowledged as clean and to return to his family and community. His restoration also became a testimony showing the authority of Jesus to the priests.

The Law could declare that a leper was unclean and judge whether he had become clean, but it could not heal the disease itself. In the same way, the Law exposes man's sin and tells him that the sinner must be judged, but it cannot remove sin itself. What actually makes the sinner clean is the righteousness

of God, which Jesus fulfilled by taking on sin with the baptism He received from John and paying the price of sin on the Cross.

Despite the strict command of Jesus, the man went out and proclaimed his story widely. He would have wanted to make known what had happened to him out of joy and gratitude. But good intentions and warm emotion do not justify disobedience to the word of Jesus. Even zeal for the Lord, if it does not follow the way and the time He has spoken, can rather bring difficulty to the work of the gospel.

As the news spread widely, Jesus could no longer openly enter the city and stayed outside in deserted places. The healed man could now return into the community, but Jesus came to stay outside because of the people. The sight of the cleansed man going in while Jesus who cleansed him remains outside calls to mind the sacrifice of the Savior, who took the sinner's place upon Himself.

Jesus carried all the sins of sinners that He had taken on with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and at last, on the Cross outside the gate, He shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the judgment of abandonment and the curse that the sinner deserved. And He rose again on the third day and overcame sin and death. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit is washed of all the sins of his heart and enters in among the people of God.

Leprosy was a visible disease, but sin is the spiritual uncleanness that ceaselessly comes out of man's heart and conduct. Man cannot completely wash away his sins with his own resolve, good deeds, or religious rituals. He must acknowledge that he is a sinner and come to Jesus. Yet there is no need to remain in the uncertainty of "If You are willing, You can save even me." For Jesus has already fulfilled the will of God to save sinners, taking on all sins with the baptism He

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received from John the Baptist and paying their price on the Cross.

This passage also teaches that the church and believers must not turn away from those who are marginalized in society and shunned by people. Jesus pitied the suffering of the leper and stretched out His hand and took hold of him in person. Believers likewise must not condemn the sick as people punished for some particular sin, but care for them with respect and love, and help them receive the treatment and help they need.

True salvation does not end with the healing of bodily disease or the solving of practical problems. To receive the remission of all sins once and for all by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection—this is the true cleanness obtained before God. The person who has believed this gospel receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God, and rather than spreading the grace he has received according to his own thoughts, he must obey the word of the Lord and testify of it wisely and clearly. ✉

Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 1

[Question] 1. Summarize and explain what Mark chapter 1 contains.

Mark chapter 1 shows how the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, began, and how Jesus began His ministry as the Son of God and the Savior.

First, according to the prophecy of the Old Testament, God sent John the Baptist ahead to prepare the way of the Lord. John the Baptist preached in the wilderness the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and testified that Jesus, who was coming after him, was mightier than he and would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus took on all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. When Jesus came up from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon Him like a dove, and a voice from heaven declared that Jesus was the beloved Son of God. Afterward Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness for forty days, but He overcame.

After John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus preached in Galilee, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."* And He called Simon and Andrew, James and John, saying that He would make them fishers of men, and the disciples immediately left their nets and their boat and followed Jesus.

Jesus taught with the authoritative word in the synagogue of Capernaum and cast out an unclean spirit. He healed Simon's

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mother-in-law and many other sick people and cast out many demons, and at dawn, long before daylight, He went to a solitary place and prayed. He also went about the many synagogues of Galilee preaching the word, and He had compassion on a leper and healed him and made him clean.

The center of Mark chapter 1, therefore, lies in showing that Jesus is not merely a prophet or a man of power, but the Son of God, the Creator, and the Savior. Jesus took on all the sins of the world with His baptism, carried those sins and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment of sin in our place, and rose from the dead, and so completed salvation. Mark chapter 1 clearly shows the beginning of this gospel of the water and the Spirit and the authoritative saving ministry of Jesus.

[Question] 2. Mark 1:1—what is the meaning of Mark's opening declaration, "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*"?

This declaration means that the Gospel of Mark is not simply a biography recording the life of Jesus, but a book testifying of the good news that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has saved mankind from sin.

The words *"the Son of God"* reveal that Jesus is not an ordinary man or one prophet among many, but God who came to this earth in the flesh of man. *"Jesus"* means the Savior who will save His people from their sins, and *"Christ"* means the One anointed to fulfill the offices of King, High Priest, and Prophet. So from the very first verse, Mark makes clear who Jesus is.

"The beginning of the gospel" does not stop at meaning the first part of the book called the Gospel of Mark. It means that

the plan of salvation promised in the Old Testament actually began to be fulfilled in history. God first sent John the Baptist as His messenger to preach repentance to the people and prepare the way of the Lord. God also established John the Baptist as the representative of mankind and had him baptize Jesus.

Jesus took on all the sins of the world once and for all with the baptism He received from John. Then, carrying those sins, He was nailed to the Cross, received the judgment of sin and died, and rose from the dead, and so completed salvation. For the person who believes this fact, all his sins are removed once and for all, and he receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God.

Therefore the gospel Mark speaks of is not a moral lesson telling us simply to imitate Jesus and live good lives. It is the news of salvation, that God sent John the Baptist and Jesus, and that Jesus removed all sins with the water and the Spirit. Mark declared that this saving work did not begin by chance, but was accomplished according to the prophecy of the Old Testament and the plan of God.

[Question] 3. Are the Old Testament words quoted in Mark 1:2–3 all from the book of Isaiah?

No. Mark 1:2–3 quotes two Old Testament prophecies together.

The main source of the words in verse 2, *"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You,"* is Malachi 3:1.

"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me" (Malachi 3:1).

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The words of verse 3, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight,'"* come from Isaiah 40:3.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:3).

Therefore we should not regard all the words of Mark 1:2–3 as quoted from the book of Isaiah. Mark presented the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah joined as one, recording representatively the name of Isaiah, who is the central prophet.

Both prophecies point to God sending John the Baptist first to prepare the way of Jesus Christ. Malachi emphasizes the *"messenger"* God would send, and Isaiah emphasizes that this messenger would prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness.

[Question] 4. Mark 1:2–3—what work was the *"messenger,"* whom God said He would send ahead, appointed to do?

The *"messenger"* God sent ahead of Jesus is John the Baptist. As the servant of God promised in the Old Testament, he was appointed to prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight.

To prepare the way of the Lord does not mean paving a physical road for Jesus to pass over. It means awakening with the word of God the hearts of people caught in sin, idols, and self-righteousness, so that they turn from wrong faith and wrong thoughts and come to Jesus Christ. John the Baptist cried out repentance in the wilderness and had people confess their sins, and he testified that Jesus, coming after him, was the Savior mightier than he.

There was another important role in the ministry of John the Baptist. As the representative of mankind established by God, he baptized Jesus and so did the work of passing all the sins of the world on to Him. Jesus took on the sins of all people once and for all with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and carrying those sins He was judged on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead, and so completed salvation.

Therefore the words that John the Baptist made the way of the Lord straight carry two meanings. First, he rebuked people's sins and preached repentance, turning their hearts to Jesus; and second, he baptized Jesus so that the sins of mankind passed over to Him, and so prepared the way of salvation.

John the Baptist himself was not the savior. He was the witness who made people know and believe rightly in Jesus, the Savior. Through the ministry of this messenger, God prepared the way of salvation so that people would realize the gospel of the water and the Spirit and come to Jesus and receive the remission of sins.

[Question] 5. Mark 1:4—when John cried out for repentance, what does that *"sin"* refer to?

The sin John the Baptist pointed out does not refer only to a few outwardly visible wrongs. It refers to the fundamental sin of not believing in God and not obeying His word, and of relying on one's own thoughts, one's greed, and the things of the world more than on God. All the evil thoughts, words, and deeds that come out of a heart departed from God are also included here.

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The Jews of that time could easily think that they were righteous before God because they were descendants of Abraham and kept the Law and their religious traditions. But John the Baptist rebuked them, saying that lineage and religious deeds cannot make a person righteous. Even if they seemed outwardly to serve God, if in their hearts they served idols, held on to their own righteousness, and did not believe the word of God, they were in a state departed from God.

Moreover, all people are born as descendants of Adam, inheriting sin, and by themselves they cannot live fully according to the will of God. The many sins actually committed are fruits that come out of the fundamental heart departed from God. Therefore repentance does not mean only reflecting on a few wrongs and resolving never to sin again. It is acknowledging that one is under sin and judgment before God and that one cannot solve sin by one's own deeds, and turning to the Savior.

The baptism of repentance that John the Baptist gave the people did not itself completely remove all the sins of the world. His ministry was the work of preparing people's hearts to acknowledge their sins and to believe in Jesus Christ who was to come.

Jesus took on once and for all, with the baptism He received from John, both the sin inherited from Adam and all the sins a person commits throughout his whole life. And carrying those sins He was judged on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead. Therefore true repentance is turning from the way of being away from God and relying on one's own thoughts and deeds, and believing with the heart in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed.

[Question] 6. Mark 1:4–5—what was the appearance of the crowds who came out to John's baptismal ministry?

When John the Baptist preached in the wilderness the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, many people from all the land of Judea and from Jerusalem came out to the Jordan River to hear his words.

"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:4–5).

They did not put forward the lineage of being descendants of Abraham or their religious deeds, but before the word of God they acknowledged and confessed their sins. They did not hide their sins or pretend to be righteous, but publicly acknowledged that they were people who had to turn from the wrong way.

Moreover, they did not stop at hearing the cry of John the Baptist, but went out into the wilderness and were baptized in the Jordan River. This was expressing in action their intent of repentance to turn back to God, and it was the appearance of hearts prepared to receive the coming Savior, Jesus Christ.

But the outward act of being baptized in the Jordan River did not itself completely remove all their sins. The ministry of John the Baptist was a preparatory ministry, leading people to realize and acknowledge their sins so that they would believe in Jesus, who would actually take on all their sins.

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[Question] 7. Mark 1:6—what clothing did John the Baptist wear, and what did he eat as he lived?

John the Baptist wore clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and he lived on locusts and wild honey.

"Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey" (Mark 1:6).

Wild honey refers to honey obtained in the fields. This appearance shows that John the Baptist did not pursue splendid clothing or an abundant life, but lived simply in the wilderness, devoting himself to the ministry of repentance and of preparing the way of the gospel that God had entrusted to him.

[Question] 8. What character of John is revealed in his proclamation in Mark 1:7?

In the proclamation of John the Baptist is revealed his humble character, lowering himself and exalting Jesus.

"And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose'" (Mark 1:7).

In those days, loosing someone's sandal strap was a very lowly task done by a servant for his master. Although many people came out to John the Baptist and respected him as a servant of God, he did not exalt himself or try to make people his own disciples. Rather, he confessed that he could not take on even the task of loosing the sandal strap of Jesus, and turned everyone's eyes to Jesus.

Here also appears the character of knowing exactly his own

office and limits. John the Baptist knew clearly that he was the messenger preparing the way of the Lord, and that the Savior was Jesus, coming after him. He also made plain the difference that he baptized with water, but that Jesus is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist was bold when rebuking people's sins, but before Jesus he was thoroughly lowly. This shows that a true servant of God must not display his own fame and ability, but must faithfully carry out the office entrusted to him while exalting only Jesus Christ and His saving work.

[Question] 9. Mark 1:8—what is the difference between John's baptism and the baptism Jesus gives?

John the Baptist said, *"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

The baptism John gave the people was the baptism of repentance given with water. People acknowledged that they were sinners before God, confessed their sins, and received the baptism of water. This was a ministry that humbled the hearts of the people and prepared them to believe in Jesus Christ who was to come. But this baptism of water did not itself completely remove all a person's sins or cause him to receive the Holy Spirit.

The baptism Jesus gives is the baptism given with the Holy Spirit. Jesus took on all the sins of the world once and for all with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead. When a person believes this gospel with the heart, all his sins are removed once and for all and he receives the Holy

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Spirit as a gift. This is receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that person is born again and becomes a child of God.

The difference between the two baptisms, therefore, is as follows. John's baptism of water was the baptism of repentance that prepared people to acknowledge their sins and receive the Christ, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus gives is the baptism of salvation, by which the Holy Spirit comes in and dwells in the heart of the person who believes the completed gospel and has received the remission of sins.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a rite of sprinkling water on the body or immersing the body in water, nor is it something that produces heated emotion or special experiences. When a person believes, just as it is in the word, the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood, God gives him the Holy Spirit as a gift together with the remission of sins.

[Question] 10. Mark 1:10–11—what happened when Jesus was baptized and came up from the water?

When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens were parted, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove. And from heaven came the voice of God, saying, *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

This is the event in which God the Father and the Holy Spirit testified that Jesus is the beloved Son of God and the promised Christ.

[Question] 11. What spiritual meaning is contained in the event of Jesus' baptism recorded in Mark 1:9–11?

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee to the Jordan River and was baptized by John the Baptist. When He came up from the water, the heavens were parted and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove, and God the Father testified, *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Jesus did not receive the baptism of repentance because He had sin. In Matthew 3:15 Jesus said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* This means that the sinless Son of God was baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and so took on all the sins of the world once and for all onto His own body, fulfilling the righteousness of God that saves people from sin.

In the atoning sacrifices of the Old Testament, the sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sins onto it, and then the offering died in the place of those sins. In the same way, Jesus took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John. Therefore this event is not only the time when the public life of Jesus began; it is the event in which He began His saving work as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In the image of Jesus going into the water and coming up out of it, the course of salvation is also shown symbolically: He would carry the sin of the world, be judged and die on the Cross, and rise from the dead. Taking on sins through His baptism and His death on the Cross are not separate events. Because of the sins He took on with His baptism, Jesus shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment of sin, and He completed salvation by rising from the dead.

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The descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove testifies that Jesus is the anointed Christ of God and the Savior who gives people the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that Jesus first became the Son of God at that moment; it means that God revealed that He, who is the Son of God from the beginning, is the promised Messiah.

The words heard from heaven, *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,"* are the Father's testimony that Jesus is the Son of God. They also carry the meaning that God was pleased with and acknowledged the work of the Son, who took on the sins of mankind and fulfilled the Father's plan of salvation.

In this scene the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit appear together. The Father speaks from heaven, the Son is baptized and takes on the sins of mankind, and the Holy Spirit descends upon Him and testifies of the saving work. That is, here appears the work of salvation that the Father planned, the Son accomplished, and the Holy Spirit testifies to.

Therefore the event of verses 9–11 is not a mere rite of water baptism. It is the beginning of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus took on all the sins of mankind, and the first step of the saving work that leads to the judgment of the Cross, His death, and His resurrection. When a person believes this gospel just as it is in the word, all his sins are removed once and for all and he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God.

[Question] 12. According to Mark 1:12, by what was Jesus led into the wilderness?

Jesus went into the wilderness led by the Holy Spirit. The

text records, *"Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness."*

This shows that the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness did not happen by chance, but took place in the will and leading of the Holy Spirit in the course of His beginning the work of salvation.

[Question] 13. Mark 1:12–13—what does the record that Jesus was with the wild beasts in the wilderness teach us?

Mark records that Jesus, led by the Spirit, went into the wilderness and was tempted by Satan for forty days, and that He was there with the wild beasts.

The text does not directly explain what kinds of wild beasts they were, or what each wild beast symbolizes. Therefore this expression first shows the fact that Jesus was tempted alone, not in a quiet place without people, but in a rough and dangerous environment where there was even a threat to life.

Jesus is the Son of God, yet He came in the body of a true man and actually went through hunger, loneliness, and physical danger. Even in such difficult circumstances He did not yield to the temptation of Satan but fully obeyed the will of God. This shows that, unlike the first man Adam who fell in temptation, Jesus is the righteous Savior who overcame temptation.

Moreover, the words, *"the angels ministered to Him,"* reveal that even in the dangerous wilderness with wild beasts, God kept Jesus and gave Him the help He needed. So this record also delivers the lesson that there may be temptations and dangers on the path of following the will of God, but God

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does not abandon the servant who fulfills His will; He protects him and gives him the strength he needs.

[Question] 14. Mark 1:14—when did Jesus begin to preach the gospel?

Jesus came to Galilee and began to preach the gospel of God after John the Baptist was put in prison.

This shows that the ministry of John the Baptist of preparing the way had been completed, and that the public life in which Jesus preaches the gospel of the kingdom of God in earnest had begun.

[Question] 15. Mark 1:14–15—what is the content of the gospel contained in the words, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand"*?

Jesus proclaimed, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

That the time is fulfilled means that the time of salvation promised by God through the prophets of the Old Testament had come. God promised that He would send the Messiah and save people from sin and judgment. Now John the Baptist had prepared the way and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had come to this earth, so that promise had actually begun to be fulfilled.

That the kingdom of God is at hand does not mean simply that some country had drawn geographically near. It means that Jesus, the King of the kingdom of God, had come, and that the way of salvation had been opened for sinners to receive the remission of sins and enter under the reign of God. It is also the

proclamation that the eternal kingdom of God, which will one day appear in fullness, had drawn near.

The gospel Jesus spoke of is the good news that God accomplishes to save people from sin. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind once and for all onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Carrying those sins He went to the Cross, received the judgment of sin, shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so completed salvation. When Jesus proclaimed verse 15, the Cross and the resurrection had not yet taken place, but these words are the proclamation announcing that the saving work God promised had begun through Jesus.

Here, the word to repent does not mean to wash away one's sins by oneself through daily prayers of repentance. It means to acknowledge that one is under sin before God and that one's good deeds or works of the Law cannot remove sin, and to turn from one's own thoughts and wrong faith and accept the salvation God accomplished.

To *"believe in the gospel"* is not to vaguely respect Jesus or to be diligent in religious life. It is the word telling us to believe with the heart the salvation Jesus completed with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. For the person who believes this gospel, all his sins are removed once and for all, and he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God, one of the people of the kingdom of God who receives His reign.

The core of these words, therefore, is this: since the time of salvation promised by God has come, turn from relying on your own deeds and wrong faith, believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished, and enter the kingdom of God.

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[Question] 16. What kind of people were the disciples Jesus called in Mark 1:16–20?

Those Jesus called were Simon and his brother Andrew, and James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were all fishermen working on the Sea of Galilee.

Simon and Andrew were casting a net into the sea, and James and John were in the boat mending their nets. In the boat of James and John there were also their father Zebedee and the hired servants, so they were people engaged in fishing together with their family and workers.

They are not introduced as famous religious leaders or scholars of the time; they appear as ordinary people working faithfully at their workplace. But when they received the call of Jesus, Simon and Andrew immediately left their nets, and James and John also left their father and the hired servants in the boat and followed Jesus.

Therefore they were fishermen with ordinary livelihoods, but they were people who heard the word of Jesus, obeyed at once, and put the call of the Lord before their occupation and their living.

[Question] 17. Mark 1:16–20—how did the disciples act before the call of Jesus?

When Jesus called, "*Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men,*" Simon and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed Jesus.

James and John also, when Jesus called them, left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and went after Jesus.

After receiving the call, they did not put it off until their circumstances improved, nor did they set forward their own conditions. It was not that they took lightly their responsibility for their livelihood and family; they put the authority and mission of Jesus who called them first of all, and obeyed at once.

[Question] 18. Mark 1:21–22—what did Jesus do when He entered the synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath?

On the Sabbath, Jesus entered the synagogue of Capernaum and taught the word of God.

The people were astonished at the teaching of Jesus. For Jesus did not depend on the authority or tradition of others as the scribes did, but taught as One having authority, proclaiming the will of God directly.

[Question] 19. According to Mark 1:23, where was the man possessed by the unclean spirit?

The man with the unclean spirit was inside the synagogue of Capernaum. That is, he was present in the very place where Jesus was teaching the word on the Sabbath.

[Question] 20. What are the words of the demon-possessed man recorded in Mark 1:24?

The demon-possessed man spoke as follows.

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"What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

[Question] 21. Mark 1:25–28—when Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and told it to come out, what did it do?

When Jesus commanded, *"Be quiet, and come out of him!"* the unclean spirit convulsed the man, cried out with a loud voice, and came out.

All the people who saw this were amazed and said of the word of Jesus that it was a *"new doctrine"* given *"with authority."* For they had witnessed even the unclean spirit obeying the command of Jesus. As a result, the fame of Jesus immediately spread throughout the whole region around Galilee.

[Question] 22. Mark 1:29–31—what meaning is contained in Jesus' healing of Simon's mother-in-law?

When Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, the people told Jesus about her situation at once. Jesus went near to her, took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left. She was completely restored and at once served Jesus and His disciples.

In this event, first of all, the compassion of Jesus appears. Jesus did not perform His power only before many people; He also went near to a sick woman in one home and stretched out

His hand to her. This shows that the Lord is the One who does not turn away from a person's private pain and hardship.

It also reveals that Jesus is God, holding the authority to rule over life and disease. Without medicine or a long process of recovery, when He took her hand and lifted her up, the fever left at once, and the woman was restored fully enough to serve others. This is a sign showing that in the word and the touch of Jesus there is the Creator's authority that drives out disease.

The healing of the body also shows that Jesus is the Savior who came to save people from sin and death. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead. The power that healed the diseases of the body testifies that Jesus is the One who holds the authority to remove sin, the root problem of man, and to give new life.

In the healed woman's serving at once also appears the fitting response of a person who has received grace. She was not healed because she served; she was first healed by the grace of the Lord, and in gratitude for that grace she served the Lord and the people with her restored body. In this way, serving is not a condition for obtaining salvation, but the fruit of gratitude and faith borne by the believer who has received salvation and grace.

However, the believer must not interpret this event as a promise that every disease will surely be healed immediately. The center of the text lies in showing that Jesus has compassion on the sick and that He is the Son of God and the Savior who holds the authority to rule over life and disease.

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[Question] 23. Mark 1:32–34—what can we learn from the sight of Jesus healing the sick late into the night?

The text records that *"At evening, when the sun had set,"* people brought to Jesus all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed, and the whole city was gathered together at the door. Jesus did not turn them away, but healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons.

From this sight we first learn the deep compassion and love of Jesus. Jesus had already taught the word in the synagogue and cast out a demon, and had even healed Simon's mother-in-law. Yet He did not regard the many people who came in the evening as a nuisance or send them back; He looked after their suffering. The Lord is the One who does not turn away from people's circumstances and pain, but Himself takes up their burdens.

We also learn the attitude of serving people without discrimination. The people came with all kinds of diseases and problems, but Jesus did not pick out only the famous or important people to help. When those in need came, He looked into the situation of each one and gave the grace that was needed. The believer also must not think only of his own convenience, but must pity those who meet hardship and serve them in love within what he can do.

This event also shows that Jesus is the Savior with the authority of God, ruling over diseases and demons. Man cannot heal every disease by his own strength or drive out demons at will, but Jesus solved those problems with His word and authority. Therefore we must not exalt ourselves as if we were workers of miracles, but believe that power and salvation belong to Jesus and rely on Him.

The fact that Jesus did not allow the demons to speak is also important. The demons knew Jesus, but Jesus did not need their testimony. True faith does not arise from the words of demons or from strange phenomena, but from hearing and believing the word of God.

Therefore this text teaches us to follow the compassion of the Lord and serve suffering people, while acknowledging that the authority to solve every problem lies not in ourselves but in Jesus. It also teaches that we must not stay in seeking only the solving of physical problems, but must believe that Jesus is the Son of God who came to save people from sin and death.

[Question] 24. Mark 1:35—what did Jesus do before dawn broke?

Jesus rose *"a long while before daylight"* in the morning and went out. And He went to a solitary place and prayed to God there.

Even after teaching many people and healing the sick, Jesus sought a quiet time and place and had fellowship with God the Father.

[Question] 25. Mark 1:36–37—what can be seen in the disciples who went out to find Jesus as He was praying?

When Jesus was not to be seen, Simon and those who were with him followed after Him and found Him. And they said to Jesus, *"Everyone is looking for You."*

Here appears, first, the disciples who needed Jesus and

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sought Him. Since they could not handle by themselves the demands of the crowds that had gathered, they went out to find Jesus, who could solve the problem.

But looking at the context, the disciples did not yet fully understand the purpose of Jesus' ministry. Their attention was fixed on the fact that many people were looking for Jesus and on the great response that had arisen in Capernaum. Jesus did not remain in the people's popularity; in the next verse He said that they must preach the gospel in the other nearby towns as well.

In the appearance of the disciples, therefore, are revealed both the zeal that relies on Jesus and seeks Him, and the immaturity that is swayed by the popularity before their eyes and the demands of the people. The believer must not merely follow what many people want, but must discern through prayer and the word what gospel mission the Lord has entrusted to him.

[Question] 26. In Mark 1:38–39, for what purpose did Jesus say He had come to this earth?

Jesus said that He had come to preach the gospel of God in the other nearby towns as well.

Jesus said, *"that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth,"* and He went throughout all Galilee, preaching the word in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Therefore the central mission of Jesus was not to stay in one place healing diseases or gaining popularity, but to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God in many regions so that people would believe in the salvation of God. Healing the sick

and casting out demons were signs revealing that He is the Son of God and the Savior with authority.

[Question] 27. Mark 1:40—with what appearance and posture did the leper who came to Jesus make his plea?

The leper came to Jesus, knelt down, and implored Him, saying, *"If You are willing, You can make me clean."*

He did not hide his disease and helplessness, but came before Jesus. And while believing that Jesus had the power to make him clean, he did not force his own will but entrusted himself to the will of the Lord. Here appear reverence and humility that exalt Jesus, and faith that trusts the power of the Lord.

[Question] 28. Mark 1:40–45—what can we realize from this event in which the leper was healed?

A leper came to Jesus, knelt down, and implored Him, *"If You are willing, You can make me clean."* Jesus was moved with compassion for him, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said, *"I am willing; be cleansed."* Then the leprosy left him at once and he was made clean.

First, true faith appears in the attitude of the leper. He did not hide his disease or claim that he could heal himself. He acknowledged his miserable state and helplessness and fell down before Jesus, and he believed that Jesus had the authority to make him clean. He also did not force his own will, but said, *"If You are willing,"* and entrusted the decision to the Lord.

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True faith does not put forward one's own merits or ability, but relies on the power and the will of the Lord.

In the sight of Jesus touching him appears the compassion of the Lord. In those days a leper was regarded as unclean and had to be quarantined from the community, but Jesus did not avoid or despise him. He went near to him, touched him, and made him clean. The uncleanness did not pass over to Jesus; rather, by the holy power of Jesus the man's uncleanness disappeared. This shows that Jesus is the Savior who has compassion even on the rejected and suffering.

This event is an actual healing of a disease of the body, and at the same time a spiritual picture showing the problem of sin. Just as the leper could not make himself clean by his own strength, so man cannot remove the sins of his heart with his own good deeds or religious efforts. He must acknowledge his sin and come to Jesus, who can make sin completely clean.

Jesus took on all the sins of mankind once and for all onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead. The Lord who said to the leper, *"I am willing; be cleansed,"* also accomplished in person the saving work to actually remove all the sins of man. When a person believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit, all his sins are removed once and for all and he becomes a clean, righteous person. The remission of sins is not man becoming clean little by little through long effort; it is grace received by believing in the salvation the Lord completed.

There is also meaning in Jesus' telling the man to show himself to the priest and offer what Moses commanded. This was so that the fact that he had become clean would be confirmed according to the procedure set by the Law, and so that his healing would testify of the power of Jesus to the

priests. Jesus did not ignore the Law; He respected the demand of the Law while revealing that He is the promised Savior.

But the healed man did not follow the command of Jesus to tell no one, and proclaimed the matter widely. Even if he had the heart to make a good thing known, putting his own judgment before the word of the Lord was not obedience. As a result, Jesus could not openly enter the city and had to stay outside in deserted places. Here we gain the lesson that zeal and good intentions cannot take the place of obedience to the word, and that testimony and service also must be carried out following the will and the way of the Lord.

Therefore this event shows that Jesus is the Son of God with the authority and compassion to make man's body and soul clean. At the same time it teaches that man must acknowledge his uncleanness and helplessness and come to the Lord and believe in the salvation He accomplished, and that after receiving grace he must obey not his own thoughts but the word of the Lord.

[Question] 29. Mark 1:41–42—what were the heart and the action Jesus showed before the leper's request?

Jesus was moved with compassion for the leper. This means He deeply pitied his suffering and miserable situation.

Jesus did not avoid him; He stretched out His hand and touched his body, and said, *"I am willing; be cleansed."* Then the leprosy left the man at once and he was made clean.

Here appear the compassion and love of Jesus, who does not turn away from a suffering person, His heart that desires to make him clean, and the authority of God that drives out

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disease immediately with the word alone.

[Question] 30. What did Jesus say after cleansing the leper, as recorded in Mark 1:43–44?

Jesus strictly warned the cleansed man and sent him away at once, saying as follows.

"See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

That is, He commanded him not to spread to people first what had happened to him, but to go to the priest, show his cleansed body, and offer the gift commanded by the Law of Moses, testifying officially.

[Question] 31. Mark 1:45—what did the leper do after he was healed?

Although Jesus had commanded him to say nothing to anyone, the healed man went out and proclaimed widely what had happened to him, spreading the matter.

As a result, Jesus could no longer openly enter the city and stayed outside in deserted places. But the people kept coming to Jesus from every direction. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The gospel of Jesus Christ

< Mark 1:1-8 >

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

Today we have read together Mark chapter 1, verses 1 through 8. The Gospel of Mark opens with the words, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* How the gospel of Jesus Christ, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, begins—this Mark makes plain across verses 2 through 5. He first quotes the words of the prophet Isaiah and of Malachi 3:1, and delivers, *"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make*

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His paths straight.'"

John the Baptist, who prepared the way of the Lord

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, opens together with the ministry of John the Baptist. Before Jesus Christ, God sent His messenger to this earth, and that messenger is John the Baptist. John the Baptist came out first into the wilderness and cried out to the people to repent. To a people who had departed from God he cried out to return, to confess their sins. So he preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and all the land of Judea and the people of Jerusalem came out, confessed their sins, and were baptized by him in the Jordan River. But the final destination to which John the Baptist led people was not himself; it was Jesus Christ. He carried out the work of bringing people to repentance and leading them to Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist wore camel's hair clothing with a leather belt around his waist and lived in the wilderness eating locusts and wild honey. He preached, saying, *"There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* The baptism John the Baptist gave with water went as far as urging people to repent: you are sinners, you must be washed of your sins, you must turn from the wrong way. But John lifted his hand and pointed to Jesus Christ, testifying that He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ came to this earth, was baptized by John the Baptist and so took on our sins, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and saved us;

and whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and at the same time receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. This is the beginning of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that began from the baptism Jesus received from John

The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, began together with the ministry of John the Baptist and is completed with the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection. John the Baptist brought people to repentance and led them to Jesus Christ, and as the representative of mankind he baptized Jesus Christ and passed the sins of all mankind on to Him. And he testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)* Jesus took on the sins of mankind once and for all with the baptism He received from John, and carrying those sins He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead on the third day. And so He has washed away and removed all the sins of those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, baptizes them with the Holy Spirit, and gives them the Holy Spirit as a gift. Thus He makes them children of God, and this is the will of God the Father being fulfilled. This is the beginning and the completion of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

That Jesus Christ took on our sins with the baptism He received from John and was judged on the Cross, shedding His blood and dying, was in order to wash away all our sins without remainder. Therefore the person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit is washed of his sins and at the same time becomes a child of God. The evidence of that childship is the

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Holy Spirit who dwells in his heart. The Holy Spirit testifies within us to the fact that our Lord has removed all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, the same as the Father and the Son, and He testifies of the work by which God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus Christ, upholding the will of God the Father, came to this earth, took on the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us. And God the Father planned all this beforehand. That is why we call Him God the Father.

Jesus is God, who baptizes us with the Holy Spirit

In the world there are people who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses and do not believe that Jesus is God. They insist that since the Old Testament said Jehovah, and said God is one, only Jehovah God is God. But they are not testifying of the true truth; rather, they go about blocking those who want to believe from believing. The Bible calls such a company the synagogue of Satan. But Jesus is plainly God, who baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. Our Lord removes all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and He seals those who believe that gospel with the Holy Spirit as the final seal.

Then why does our Lord baptize us with the Holy Spirit? Because with our thoughts we may know and believe the gospel and yet soon be shaken, and we may go through changes of feeling. A person may believe well at one time, and at another time run into his own weakness and be discouraged. Therefore God has sent His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit, into our hearts. Once we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Holy

Spirit acknowledges that faith as right and dwells in our hearts. So whenever we hear or read the word concerning the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit testifies, “Yes, this is how the Lord has saved you.” Therefore you and I have become children of God without sin, praising God and calling Him Abba, Father. As the word of Romans chapter 8 says, the Holy Spirit prays to God for us in our weakness, with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that must go on being testified

How does the gospel of the water and the Spirit begin? It began together with John the Baptist. Someone may ask why we deliver again what is already known. But it is not so at all. The gospel of the water and the Spirit must be testified without ceasing. To people this gospel is utterly unfamiliar, and though they seem to know it, in reality they do not. This gospel is a mystery that was hidden for a long time. John the Baptist fulfilled his mission as far as pointing out people’s sins so that they would return, and preaching that they must be washed of their sins. Receiving baptism from John the Baptist did not in itself mean being washed of sin right away. He preached the baptism of repentance, crying out this far: you are sinners, and you must be washed of your sins. And as the representative of mankind, he baptized Jesus Christ and passed the sins of all mankind on to Him. Jesus received the sins of mankind passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so saved us.

When the true gospel of the water and the Spirit is testified

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clearly in this way, people come to discern for themselves what is the true gospel and what is a false gospel. The more a person agonizes over his sins, the more earnestly he seeks the solution of his sins, and so he finds in this gospel the way of the remission of sins and reaches true salvation. Therefore we must preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit without resting.

The work John the Baptist carried out and the work Jesus accomplished

John the Baptist fulfilled his mission as far as preaching the baptism of repentance to sinners. To those who had left God and were serving idols, he cried out to return and to be washed of their sins, and he baptized them. Baptism always means washing. If water symbolizes washing, fire symbolizes judgment and burning. John the Baptist preached this far, and testified of who Jesus is. As the representative of mankind he baptized Jesus Christ, passing the sins of mankind on to Him, and he went as far as testifying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* And the rest—taking on the sins of mankind with His baptism, being nailed to the Cross and shedding His blood and dying, rising from the dead and saving us, and giving the Holy Spirit to those who believe—only Jesus Himself accomplished.

Joshua, who led the people across the Jordan into Canaan

When we look through the Old Testament, from Genesis past the five books of Moses, we come in the book of Joshua to the

scene where the people of Israel cross the Jordan River. In Deuteronomy, Moses only looked out over the land of Canaan; he led the people to the edge of the flowing Jordan, finished his mission, and died. The one who then led the people of Israel across the Jordan into the land of Canaan was Joshua. The name Joshua and the name Jesus both mean Savior. Just as Moses led the people only to the front of the Jordan, and just as the Lord said in Matthew 11:12, *"from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence,"* so John the Baptist also carried out his mission only as far as testifying of who Jesus is and passing the sins on to Him. And Jesus took on our sins with the baptism He received from John, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so saved us. Therefore, by believing in Jesus Christ we are washed of our sins, and we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift and become children of God. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The salvation that comes to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Today I have shared with you what the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is. Not only the Gospel of Mark but all four Gospels alike testify of this gospel. John the Baptist said, *"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* Baptism carries the meaning of passing on. The baptism John gives with water goes as far as urging that sins must be washed away. But Jesus received our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and washed them all away, and after washing away our sins He gave us the Holy Spirit as a gift. This truth looks simple, but a person who is not born again may read the words of this

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passage all his life and still not realize its meaning.

Everyone, who receives the Holy Spirit? How is He received? The person who has been washed of his sins receives Him. The person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is a child of God, and the person who is still a sinner is not a child of God. A child of God is a person who has received the Holy Spirit, and the person who has received the Holy Spirit is a person whose heart has been washed of sin and has no sin. How amazing a truth, then, is this one saying of John the Baptist?

The age we live in is a time when disasters and hardships do not cease. But in such a time as this, we are truly thankful for the fact that we have been saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord keeps us, and even in this confusion He helps us to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit all the more, and for this we can only give thanks. Whatever hardship may come, we want to hold firmly to this gospel of the water and the Spirit and live on well. We pray that God will keep us and bless us. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who has us carry out the role of John the Baptist

< Mark 1:1-8 >

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

We are truly thankful that we can gather like this today and serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Amid many difficulties the Lord has kept us and has us labor together in preaching this gospel, and that grace is great. Today, through the words of Mark chapter 1, verses 1 through 8, I want to share the

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role the Lord entrusted to John the Baptist, and His intent in having us, too, carry out that role today.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God

The Gospel of Mark opens with the words, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* How the gospel of Jesus Christ, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, begins, Mark makes plain by quoting the words of the prophets Isaiah and Malachi. He said, *"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You" (Mark 1:2)*, and, *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight'" (Mark 1:3)*. As these words say, John the Baptist came out into the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and all the land of Judea and the people of Jerusalem came out, confessed their sins, and were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

This passage introduces the ministry of John the Baptist. Before He came to this earth, the Lord first sent John the Baptist to bring people to repentance and to preach the baptism of repentance. Because John the Baptist carried out this work, Jesus, who came after him, could begin the work of fulfilling the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is how important the role of John the Baptist is.

The role of John the Baptist, who prepared the way of the Lord

If there had been no role of John the Baptist, the Lord could not have come to this earth and accomplished all that work alone. For God had already promised in the time of the Old Testament that He would send Elijah. This was His intent to send first the servant of God who would lead all mankind to God, and so prepare the way for the gospel of the water and the Spirit to be preached. The prophet Malachi said, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5)*, and that he *"will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6)*. John the Baptist was sent, exactly according to that promise, as the mediator joining the heart of the Father and the hearts of the children.

For about four hundred years before the Lord came, Israel had no servant to deliver the will of God. The people longed for the voice of God and waited earnestly. At that time God sent John, the son of Zacharias, to this earth, had him come six months ahead of the Lord, and had him preach the baptism of repentance. John the Baptist cried out repentance to a people who had departed from God and become corrupt. Do not put forward being descendants of Abraham, he said; bear fruits worthy of repentance. He warned, *"even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10)*. And he cried out to repent and come to the One he was pointing to and be saved. In this way John the Baptist fully carried out his role of bringing people to repentance and leading them to Jesus Christ.

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We who have taken over the role of John the Baptist

Amazingly, after God saved insufficient you and me through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, He has entrusted to us today this very role of John the Baptist. Now we are carrying out the work of bringing people to repentance and leading them to the way of the Lord through the literature ministry and the e-book ministry. What we deliver is that people are believing wrongly and must turn; and to where must they turn? They must turn to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we deliver this truth, that the Lord has saved us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, people read those writings, realize, believe, and are saved.

In fact, there was a case where a person in despair, who was about to take his own life, was connected with a worker preaching this gospel, heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit, had his heart turned, and came back to life. Whenever we hear such testimonies, we are truly thankful. Through this role that we carry out, God is working even now, exactly as He worked by sending John the Baptist. Therefore you and I are the little John the Baptists of today.

Of course, today we cannot cry out repentance with a loud voice in the streets as John the Baptist did. The world has changed so much that doing so would rather bring rejection; such is the age we live in. So we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world through literature and e-books. Now is the time of sowing seed. When the seed is sown, some receive it and some keep it engraved in their hearts. As the world grows harder and the last time draws near, from that sown seed sprouts will come up and flowers will bloom and fruit will be borne. In that last time, the people who will be saved through the

gospel of the water and the Spirit are countless beyond measure. As the word of the Book of Revelation says, out of every nation, tribe, people, and tongue, a great multitude which no one can number will stand before the Lamb clothed in white robes. Therefore this work of sowing seed that we do now is the very role of John the Baptist.

The Lord who made me realize the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Let me share for a moment how I came to realize this gospel of the water and the Spirit. In my youth I spent a long time in a sickbed. In that hard time, rather, a fire was kindled in my heart to love the Lord and to preach this gospel. One day, as I was reading the Bible and praying on my sickbed, the voice of the Lord came clearly into my heart: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." When a person goes through hardship, he holds on to God all the more closely. At that time I experienced deeply that there is no truth as true as the Bible and no word as sweet as the Bible.

But the more I read the Bible, the more one question remained unsolved. I could not know what it meant spiritually that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Later, studying theology, I asked many professors and pastors, but there was not a single one who knew its meaning. That when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist the sins of mankind passed over to Jesus—no theologian, no professor, no pastor testified of this fact clearly. I searched through many writings, but I never found anyone who declared that this is precisely it.

But at last the Lord made me realize that truth. The words Jesus spoke when He was baptized by John the Baptist make it

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plain. Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. That is, it is fitting that by the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist—by that very method—He would receive the sins of mankind passed on to Him and make mankind sinless. This is the reason Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. This truth is confirmed also by the shadow of the Old Testament. In the time of the Old Testament, the high priest laid his hands on the head of the animal on the Day of Atonement and passed the people's sins onto it. Since the Old Testament is the shadow of the New Testament, in the time of the New Testament also there must be the passing of the sins of mankind on to Jesus. That very thing is the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist. As John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, laid his hands on the head of Jesus and baptized Him, all the sins of mankind passed over to Jesus. Fearing I might have realized wrongly, I checked even the Greek original text, and the meaning was all too clear. In this way Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and took on the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross and judged, shedding His blood and dying, and rose from the dead on the third day, and so completed our salvation—this is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that the early Church preached

This gospel of the water and the Spirit is by no means something new. The early Church plainly preached this gospel. The Apostle John testified, *"This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood" (1 John 5:6)*, and, *"there are three that bear witness on earth:*

the Spirit, the water, and the blood" (1 John 5:8). The water of the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood He shed on the Cross, and the Holy Spirit who testifies of this—together they accomplish our salvation. The Apostle Peter also said, *"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)*. In this way the saints of the early Church held on to the gospel of the water and the Spirit and overcame the world, and so John also said, *"And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4)*.

But after the church fathers of the early Church passed away, those who clearly preached this gospel of the water and the Spirit gradually disappeared. As the leaders of religion fought for power, they branded as heretics those who did not follow their words, persecuted them, and burned their writings. And so even writings or pictures declaring the truth that Jesus was baptized by the hands of John the Baptist are hard to find today. Many churches today keep the form of baptism, but they do not know what that baptism means, its true meaning. Therefore this work of ours, preaching again to the whole world the gospel of the water and the Spirit that had been hidden, is precious beyond measure.

If there had been no role of John the Baptist

I think again of how important the path John the Baptist walked is. If there had been no role of John the Baptist, how hard would it have been for Jesus alone to make known to people that He is the Savior? John the Baptist, following the will of God, came six months before the Lord, cried out repentance to the

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people, and led them to Jesus. And he testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)* Just as the word said to make His paths straight, John the Baptist made straight in advance the way the Lord would go.

And on that prepared way, Jesus accomplished our salvation. Jesus took on the sins of mankind once and for all with the baptism He received from John, and carrying those sins He was nailed to the Cross and judged, shedding His blood and dying, and He rose from the dead and saved us. Therefore, when we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we are washed of our sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift and become children of God. Because there was that work of John the Baptist—passing the sins on to Jesus as the representative of mankind and testifying of Him—the fruit of the literature ministry, by which we preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit today, is also being borne.

Those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit even in the last days

The age we live in is a time when disasters and hardships do not cease. The climate grows ever more violent, the hearts of people grow ever more evil, and those who oppose us as we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit are increasing. The world will become still harder, and at last one who opposes God and the saints will arise, and the time of martyrdom will come. Yet that is not something that comes upon us right now, and no one knows when that day will be. But hardships keep coming toward us. Therefore, in this time when we can preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must carry out this work wisely and in faith.

However hard the world becomes and however it changes, what we must do now is clear. It is the role of John the Baptist. To preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit we make paper books, e-books, and audiobooks, gathering strength a little here and a little there to carry out this work. All the labor we offer is, in the end, to deliver this gospel of the water and the Spirit to even one more person. We are those who carry out the role of John the Baptist, preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. There is nothing else besides this.

Meeting like this and serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit together, we are truly thankful. I deeply thank you who have endured many hardships and labored for this gospel. Joining our strength together, may we carry out well, for the rest of our lives, this work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has entrusted to us. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The ministry of John the Baptist

< Mark 1:1-11 >

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

We have read the word of the Gospel of Mark together today.

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First, let us look at chapter 1, verse 1. It says, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* The Bible—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, all four Gospels alike—speaks of John the Baptist when telling how the gospel of Jesus Christ began. The work of the Son of God coming to this earth and saving us mankind from sin, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, was opened in this way.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ

At the beginning of this gospel, the Bible speaks of John the Baptist. For the one who baptized Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him is none other than John the Baptist. Let us look at Mark chapter 1, verses 2 and 3. It says, *"As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"*

The words here, *"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You,"* are words found in Malachi 3:1 of the Old Testament. The book of Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, placed before the Gospel of Matthew. Let us read Malachi 3:1 together. It says, *"'Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' Says the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:1).*

The One who spoke this word of promise is the LORD God. God said, I send My messenger—this means sending a messenger from the kingdom of heaven to this earth. Just as our country sends ambassadors to other nations, God sent a

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messenger to this earth, and that messenger is John the Baptist. John the Baptist came to this earth ahead of Jesus and, following the mission of the words, *"Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight,"* he prepared the way of Jesus.

"A baptism of repentance for the remission of sins"

So John the Baptist appears in verse 4 like this: *"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4)*. God the Father planned to send His Son to this earth, to have Him take on all the sins and all the curses of mankind, and to save those who believe from sin. As He began that work, He first sent the one who would pave the way and prepare in advance, and that man is John the Baptist.

God sent John the Baptist six months before He sent His Son to this earth. John the Baptist preached to the people the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. That is, he cried out for them to repent. Here repentance means to turn back. John the Baptist, as a prophet of God on whose heart the Holy Spirit had come, cried out boldly in the broad wilderness without regard for the eyes of men. He preached to repent and be washed of their sins.

This work John the Baptist did is the very beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As God began the work of saving believers from sin and bringing them to heaven, He sent John the Baptist and had him do this work.

Mankind placed under the Law and under the curse

To understand this part well, we must know the Old Testament. God made all things, and on the last day He made Adam and Eve, had them rule the garden of Eden, and had them give names. But Adam and Eve fell into the temptation of the Devil, broke the word of God that told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and became sinners. So the curse came, and they were driven out of the garden of Eden.

As time passed, God called Noah, Abraham, and their descendants, and taught them the truth of obtaining salvation by faith. Abraham, following the call of God, went out toward the land of Canaan without knowing where he was going, and the descendants of his grandson Jacob came to Egypt and served as slaves for four hundred and thirty years. After that they escaped from Egypt and received the command of God, that is, the Law.

The summary of that Law is the Ten Commandments we know. God commanded ten commandments: you shall have no other gods before Me; you shall not make any carved image and bow down to it; you shall not take the name of God in vain; keep the Sabbath day holy; honor your father and your mother; you shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not covet your neighbor's house or his wife or anything that is his. Besides these He gave 613 commandments. The criminal law, the civil law, and the national laws of the world today all came from this law. Just as one who breaks the law the nation has established receives punishment, so one who breaks the Law of God becomes a sinner.

But there is not a single person who can keep this Law

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perfectly. Therefore all people became sinners, and all people came to be placed under the curse of God. At that very time, God sent Jesus Christ to this earth.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist

Just as the opening of the Gospel of Mark says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," when Jesus was to come to this earth, God sent John the Baptist six months ahead of Him. A man like John the Baptist was also promised in the Old Testament, and Jesus too is the One God promised to send as the Savior. Before Jesus and John the Baptist came to this earth, God gave the Law and shut all people up under sin, and when the time of Malachi had passed and the time of the New Testament came, He sent His own Son to this earth.

When Jesus was thirty years old, He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Through that baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, all the sins of mankind were transferred onto Him once and for all. And carrying the sin of the world, He went to the Cross, was nailed to it, received the curse, shed His blood and died. He died and rose again on the third day, and so completely finished the work of saving us mankind. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection from the dead—these three are the core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that has saved us perfectly from sin.

Who is the one who leads us to this salvation? It is John the

Baptist. What John the Baptist did was to cry out repentance and lead people to Jesus, and also to baptize Jesus and pass the sin of the world on to Him. Therefore the ministry of John the Baptist is the beginning of the gospel and the beginning of salvation.

This gospel of the water and the Spirit that we now believe is the very core of the Bible. The most essential content in the Bible is this. Therefore, if we know the gospel of the water and the Spirit rightly, we know the whole Bible, and we believe in Jesus properly. We could not keep the Law and so became sinners and were placed under the curse, but God the Father sent His Son to this earth and completed the work of saving us. Therefore in this age we do not obtain salvation by keeping the Law, but obtain salvation by believing with the heart in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The law that examines not only deeds but even the heart

Then may we ignore the Law? The Law regulates only the deeds that appear outwardly. For example, it says, you shall not murder; and if a person has not murdered in action, the Law can say nothing about his outward appearance. So there are people who think they have not committed a single sin. When have I ever killed anyone, they say; why do you keep calling me a sinner? They can misunderstand in this way.

But after Jesus came to this earth, the law of the Spirit governs us. Under the old law it said not to murder, and if one did not murder, that was enough; but Jesus spoke like this: *"I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew*

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5:28). In this way Jesus speaks not only of our actions but of everything we have wrongly thought and wrongly harbored in the heart.

Therefore the person who says he has committed no sin because he has done nothing evil in action is rather a hypocrite and an evil person. Jesus also rebuked the Pharisees, calling them whitewashed tombs and hypocrites. To appear outwardly to believe well while in the heart not uniting with the church, not giving one's heart to the will of God who said to preach the gospel to the whole world, doing everything only as an outer shell—this is not truly believing and following the word of God.

Therefore we must realize our sins through the Law, and believe with the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus Christ came to this earth, received our wrongs transferred onto Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John, carried the sin of the world in our place, was nailed to the Cross and received the curse, shed His blood and died, and rose again, and so saved us completely.

Salvation that comes by believing with the heart unto righteousness

The Bible speaks like this: *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. It is believing with my heart what the Lord has done, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The person who has received the remission of sins remembers, whenever his shortcomings are exposed, that the Lord has saved him in this way. So he can start a new life afresh at any time, and he can do what is right at any time. Since Jesus has solved all that I did wrong, if I only acknowledge that I did

wrong, I can live a new life at any time. In this way the Lord has made us new creations. We must remember and commemorate this.

True repentance is returning to the gospel of the water and the Spirit

John the Baptist cried out repentance to the people of Israel. The word repentance means to turn back; it does not mean to offer prayers of repentance. To turn from the wrong way one was walking and return to the right way is true repentance. Even today there are those who wrongly believe that if they sin and then pray asking for the remission of sin, they all receive the remission of sins; but that is not so. Believing wrongly like that is because they do not know and do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore they must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and believe not the blood of the Cross alone, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which believes together the baptism Jesus received from John, His blood, and His resurrection.

John the Baptist cried out like this to the people of Israel, who called themselves descendants of Abraham while keeping the Law only as an outer shell: *"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7)* And again, *"even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10)*. It means: turn back now. This word John the Baptist preached means that with legalistic faith one can never be saved.

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The Christ who came as King, Prophet, and High Priest

The Bible says, *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."* The word Jesus means Savior, and the word Christ means the three offices of the anointed one: King, High Priest, and Prophet. Jesus came to this earth in human flesh as the Savior.

Jesus, as the High Priest, received onto His own body all the sins of us mankind through the baptism He received from John, and so made us whole. And Jesus is the King, and He is God. The angel said, *"she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. That is, He is the One who came to this earth to save His people from their sins.

Jesus is also the Prophet. Through the work by which He came to this earth and saved us with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection from the dead, He taught us what true salvation is and the way to heaven, that is, the way to receive the remission of sins. This is called the ministry of the Christ, and the work by which Jesus saved us.

Faith in the Creator God who made heaven and earth

The core of the Old Testament is this: God made this universe and man; when Adam and Eve sinned, He set up the plan of salvation to save them; and to make them know sin, He gave the Law, that is, the Ten Commandments. Yet people who know nothing rush in trying to keep this Law. All the people of the Old Testament also challenged themselves to keep the Law

of God.

But we are born inheriting sin from birth, and so we are those who cannot keep the Law. There may be someone who does not murder in action, but there is no one who can go without sinning in his heart even once. Therefore we must believe in God, who created heaven and earth and made all things.

We were born as descendants through Adam and Eve, whom God made. When God made all things, He said, let the earth bring forth the herb that yields seed and the tree that bears fruit, and it was so; there is power in His word, and even now, when spring comes, all kinds of plants and trees sprout again. God gave us the four seasons, and though this earth passes away, the word God has spoken never passes away forever. That power remains just the same even now.

We must believe in the God of life, the Creator God who made the universe, the God who made us mankind, and the God who loved us and sent His own Son to remove our sins. The God who saved us through the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection—believing in this God is true faith.

The bread of life we must eat every day

Just as we eat the food of the body every day, we must also eat the food of the spirit every day. Having eaten lunch does not mean we need not eat supper, does it? So, as the words say, *"Give us this day our daily bread,"* we must also eat the word of God daily, portion by portion.

It is thinking together on what this word means—ah, the Lord worked in this way to save us—and engraving it on the heart. There was the role of John the Baptist; Jesus took on the

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sins of us mankind by being baptized by John the Baptist; He received the curse on the Cross and died and rose again and became our Savior; and we have obtained salvation by faith—eating this food of the heart. In this hour of worship today, we too are eating this bread.

Therefore we must worship often and hear the word often. If we eat the bread of the kingdom of heaven, the bread of life, several times a week, we are doing well in our life of faith. If we hear the word only once a week, the spirit goes hungry, and even though we are saved, God feels far from us. Besides hearing the word in formal worship, serving the work of God and the work of the Lord together with our fellow workers and having fellowship is also eating the food of the spirit. The fellowship the righteous share with one another becomes precious food by which they are led.

The absolute role of John the Baptist

Now let me speak of one more thing and close. John the Baptist did the very important work of passing the sin of the world on to Jesus. John the Baptist knew that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. Yet some people say that John the Baptist, at the end, failed to believe in Jesus and doubted Him.

Even after John the Baptist baptized Jesus and passed the sins on to Him, he kept on testifying of Jesus. He cried out, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)* and led people to Jesus. Then John the Baptist pointed out the sin of King Herod, and because of that he was shut up in prison.

Before he was beheaded, while he was shut up in prison, John the Baptist told his disciples who came to visit him to go to

Jesus. John the Baptist told them to go to Jesus and ask, 'Are You the Savior who was to come?' John the Baptist knew that the time of his death had drawn near, and he joined his own disciples to Jesus. You must believe in Him to be saved—in this way he sent even his own disciples to Jesus.

Yet the majority of those who believe in Jesus, even people belonging to many denominations, say that John the Baptist was a failure who doubted at the end and died. But it is not so. The one who made Jesus known as the Savior and passed the sins on to Jesus is John the Baptist. If there had been no role of John the Baptist—if he had not done the work of baptizing Jesus and passing on to Him the sins and all the curses of us mankind—you and I would have no way to believe in Jesus.

The one who first and in earnest testified before people that Jesus is the Savior is John the Baptist. That is why the four Gospels record John the Baptist in the very front part of their books. Therefore John the Baptist is not one who did not believe in Jesus; he is the messenger of God and the servant of God who believed in Jesus and had even his own disciples go to Jesus and obtain salvation. There is no one to respect as much as Jesus, but we must never disregard John the Baptist.

The baptism given with the water and the Spirit, and the gift of the Holy Spirit

John the Baptist testified like this: *"There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* The role of John the Baptist was exactly two things.

One was to turn back those who were going the wrong way,

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so that they would return to Jesus and believe in Him as the Savior and receive the remission of sins. The other was to baptize Jesus and pass on to Him your sins and mine, the sins of mankind. Jesus received the sins of mankind passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism John the Baptist gave, shed His blood on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead, and so saved us.

After He saved us in this way, when we come to know that this Jesus is our Savior and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart, He gives the Holy Spirit into our hearts. At the very moment we rightly know and believe in Jesus as the Savior, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. This is not received by praying; it comes as a gift.

When we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, He makes our hearts uncomfortable when we live in a way that is not right, and He makes our hearts uncomfortable when we slander the servants of God or refuse to serve the gospel. He also gives us realization when we look into the word, and when a brother or sister exhorts us, "That is wrong; you must turn back," if that word is the word of God, He softens our hearts so that we accept the exhortation. In this way the Holy Spirit makes us unite our hearts to what is right. All this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the person who does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Holy Spirit is not present; but in the heart of the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Holy Spirit dwells, so that he can live a life pleasing to God following the Spirit and carry out the work of the Lord. All this is the work of God.

Today let us share the word up to this point, and pray and praise together. I will pray that God will richly give us what we need, give health to those among us whose health is poor, and keep safe all the men and women servants of God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The ministry of John the Baptist in salvation

< Mark 1:1-15 >

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

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

Today I want to share the word together under the theme, 'Let us establish our own salvation.' Establishing one's own salvation is a matter of great importance. I pray that in this last age God will confirm your salvation and mine, save us from sin, and give us the assurance of our salvation.

Let us establish our own salvation

We have read Mark chapter 1, verses 1 through 15, together. What must we know in order to establish our own salvation? First, let us look at verse 1. It says, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* Telling from verse 1 through verse 15 how this beginning of the gospel came about, the Bible makes plain how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth, saved us, and confirmed our salvation.

If we learn and know the word contained in these fifteen verses, your salvation and mine is accomplished of itself. For God came to save you and me, and He accomplished salvation exactly as God the Father desired when He sent His Son to this earth. Therefore, when we learn this gospel of the water and the Spirit, our salvation is accomplished of itself.

Your salvation and mine is not accomplished by our striving hard, fasting and praying, climbing a mountain, weeping and wailing, as if sin would disappear that way. It can never be so. Your salvation and mine is accomplished only by believing with the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has

already accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection.

The love of salvation that God prepared in advance

Let us look at verses 2 and 3. It says, *"As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"* Before God the Father sent His Son to this earth, He first sent the messenger who would prepare the way of the Son. That is, in order to fulfill the gospel of the water and the Spirit—by which Jesus Christ would come to this earth, take on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, be nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and die, and rise from the dead to save us—He first sent John the Baptist, who would prepare that work.

It has been two thousand years since these words were spoken. The people of that time heard these words directly, and you and I hear these words today, two thousand years later. God knew that you and I would be born into this world and would sin, and He prepared our salvation in advance, long beforehand, like this. This is the love of God toward you and me.

You and I are born into this world, eat when we are hungry, and as we live on we turn twenty, turn thirty, grow old, fall sick, and die. Such is the life of man, repeating birth and death. God, to save our fleeting life from sin, prepared your salvation and mine from long, long ago. This is the love of God toward you and me.

The religions of the world teach that a person must do many

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good deeds and offer much devotion to receive blessing and have his sins disappear. That is, one must do something well. But God is not like that. It is not that we receive blessing because we do something well; rather, because we became sinners at the root and were headed for destruction, God wills first to save you and me from sin, and after that to bless us. This is the love of God.

God says that all have sinned. Because Adam and Eve sinned, all people, their descendants, became sinners alike, and became those who could not but receive judgment before God. So there is a work God prepared to remove your sins and mine. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. To save us human beings from sin, He clothed His own Son in the body of a man and sent Him to this earth.

"A baptism of repentance for the remission of sins"

Then who is the one who came six months ahead of Jesus to prepare? It is John the Baptist. Let us look at verses 4 and 5. It says, *"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:4–5)*. The beginning of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus saves us, started from here.

Though He came clothed in human flesh, He is God who made this universe. God made man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and made him a living being, but man did not believe the word of God; he went against it and doubted it, sinned, and came to ruin. But because God loves the people He

made, He desired to save them from sin, make them His own children, and live with them forever. So He came to this earth to fulfill this work, and the one who prepared that way is John the Baptist.

What John the Baptist cried out in the wilderness was repentance. At that time the Jews were a people who believed in God, yet they lived serving idols. When John the Baptist was growing up, for four hundred years there had not been a single person in Israel who could be called a servant of God. There had been servants of God like Moses, Abraham, Isaiah, and Malachi, and then at some point they were cut off. A servant of God is one who comes to this earth, points out people's sins, makes them know the judgment upon that sin, and delivers the will of God: that if they return to God and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they receive the remission of sins and are saved. John the Baptist is the very one who did such work.

The two meanings of the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist

In the baptism John the Baptist gave, there are two meanings. The first is the baptism that rebuked people's sins and turned them back to God from the way they were going, serving idols. That is, the baptism of repentance: come back from the wrong way and be washed of your sins.

The second is the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River; this is the baptism that passes the sins of mankind on to Jesus. For God established John the Baptist as the representative of mankind. Just as in the Old Testament, when hands were laid on the sacrificial offering the sins passed onto that offering, so in the New Testament, John the

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Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus, the Son of God, and passed all the sins of mankind on to Jesus. For you and me to be saved from sin, there must be someone who passes our sins on to Jesus. By ourselves, however much we beg and weep, we cannot pass our sins on to Jesus. Therefore God established one representative of mankind, and through him He willed to pass all the sins of mankind on to His own Son.

So we must know well the role of John the Baptist and the work Jesus did. John the Baptist carried out the role of passing the sins of mankind on to Jesus Christ, and Jesus received all the sins of us mankind passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and shouldered those sins. Because of those sins He shouldered, Jesus was nailed to the Cross through both hands and both feet, poured out all the blood of His heart, died, and rose from the dead, and so saved you and me from all sins. We must know this gospel of the water and the Spirit rightly.

When Jesus came before John the Baptist, John tried to prevent Him, saying, I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me? But Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and He was baptized. So John the Baptist did the work of baptizing Jesus and passing the sins of mankind on to Him.

The Savior who came as King, Priest, and Prophet

There is One prepared in the work by which God the Father saves us. First is Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father. The word Jesus means Savior, and the word Christ means the three offices: the office of High Priest, the office of King, and the office of Prophet. Jesus came to save His people from their sins

by fulfilling all three of these offices.

How did Jesus save us? Upholding the will of God the Father, He came to this earth in the body of a man, took on our sins onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of our sins by being nailed to the Cross and shedding His blood, died in our place, and rose again, and so became our Savior. Let us read verses 7 and 8 together. It says, *"And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'"*

John the Baptist said of himself that he was not worthy even to loose the sandal strap of Jesus. Jesus means Savior, and Christ means the King of kings, the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, and the Prophet who knows all things. Therefore Jesus is not only the Son of God the Father who came in the body of a man; He is the Creator who made this universe and all things. When the people He made went wrong, the Creator—to set them right and make them whole, to save us justly—lived on this earth for thirty-three years in the body of a man, was baptized, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again, and so saved you and me. This is the work of God.

The baptism given with the Holy Spirit and the sins that have been washed away

As it says, *"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit,"* Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. Then how do we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? In the word baptism there are the meanings of being covered over, of passing over, of being transferred.

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Our receiving the remission of sins is like this. When we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that the Lord came to this earth, was baptized by John the Baptist and received our sins passed on to Him, carried the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose from the dead and saved us—our sins are washed away. We come to know: a moment ago I had sin, and now I have no sin. And we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit; that is, the Holy Spirit comes upon our hearts. This is not some burning experience; it is coming to know and believe: my sins have all passed over to Jesus; Jesus, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, took on all my sins and received the judgment; and so Jesus is my Savior.

Because our sins have all passed over to Jesus, whatever sin was in the heart has been washed away. Even the sins we will commit in the future have passed over to Jesus. For the word says that Jesus took on the sin of the world entirely. It has already been two thousand years since Jesus accomplished our salvation. The removing of all our sins is a thing of long ago, and you and I now hear this news, realize it, and believe it. Because Jesus is God and lives forever, He took on not only your sins and mine but even the sins of our descendants—eternal sin—entirely.

You and I are precious beings made in the image of God. That is why man longs for the eternal world and pursues holiness. Though he has no ability to live holy, he still desires to live so. God loves us who are like this, and He has made salvation come upon us when we exactly know and believe the remission of sins, that is, what the Lord has done. Our salvation is something God accomplishes; it is not obtained by anything we do.

The baptism that fulfilled all righteousness

Let us read verses 9 through 11. It says, *"It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mark 1:9–11).*

This event is recorded in more detail in Matthew chapter 3. It says, *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:13–15).*

All people are sinners born with sin, so it is man who must be washed of sin before God; how could God receive the washing of sin from man? That is why John the Baptist tried to prevent Him. But Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* Jesus received baptism in order to fulfill all righteousness, that is, our salvation. For Him to receive all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, die on the Cross in our place, and rise again to become our Savior, He had to first be baptized and receive our sins before being nailed to the Cross.

By that work of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist, all righteousness was fulfilled. The Gospel of Matthew goes on to record: *"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*

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heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16–17). By Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist, your sins and mine all passed over to Jesus, and every righteous work was fulfilled.

John the Baptist, the greatest among those born of women

Jesus spoke about John the Baptist like this: *"'Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11)*. It means that God established John the Baptist on this earth as the representative of mankind. Why did He establish him so? It was to have him do the work of baptizing Jesus and passing all the sins of mankind on to the Son of God the Father.

Just as when a nation appoints and sends an ambassador, that ambassador works representing the nation, so God established John the Baptist as the representative of mankind and, through him, had all the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus. Jesus also said this: *"But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You'" (Matthew 11:9–10)*. The word messenger means one sent by God. The one established as the representative of mankind, who would baptize Jesus the Son of God and pass on the sins of mankind once and for all, is John the Baptist.

"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence"

Jesus also said this: *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. The kingdom of God does not belong to those who stay still; it belongs to those who press into it. God has fully accomplished your salvation and mine through His Son and John the Baptist; yet one person hears it and stays still, while another says, "So it is—thank You," and seizes it eagerly with the heart. The one who presses in means the one who willingly takes hold of and believes that gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The person who merely knows it does not receive the remission of sins; the person who believes receives the remission of sins. For faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. Therefore the one who hears this gospel of the water and the Spirit and takes hold of it with the heart and believes is the one who presses into the kingdom of heaven, the one who receives the remission of sins and becomes a child of God.

As the word says that to those who received Him, to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, so the person who believes that God took on all your sins and mine and received baptism through John the Baptist and saved us—that person receives the remission of sins, becomes a child of God, and will enter the kingdom of heaven in the days to come. Such is the blessing He gives.

God loves you and me one-sidedly: He removes all our sins, makes us His children and the righteous, gives us the Holy Spirit, and brings us to heaven. But if we try to go to heaven by adding a little of our own effort, we are always lacking. If it were said that everyone who brings great wealth is saved, would only the wealthy of this world obtain salvation? Would God love only the

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wealthy? God is rather the One who pities the pitiable more and loves them more.

God has removed the sins of every person without exception through His Son, and has justly arranged that whoever believes may enter the kingdom of God. Therefore, do not try to obtain salvation by adding your own merit with fasting prayers or prayers of repentance; if you only know, receive, and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has accomplished freely, you receive the remission of sins. God desires, loves, and saves the one who so believes.

The prophecy of the Law and the prophets is until John

Jesus also said this: *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:13–14)*. The age of the Law is until John. John the Baptist is the representative of mankind, the one who serves the role of high priest, and the last prophet. The prophet higher than Isaiah or Moses is John the Baptist, and the greatest among those born of women is John the Baptist. For the one who could baptize Jesus and pass on the whole sin of the world is John the Baptist.

If we look at what the Law prophesied: in the tabernacle of the Old Testament, to be washed of sin one had to bring a sacrificial offering, lay his hands on its head to pass his sins onto it, and then slaughter it and offer it. This is the law of sacrifice that God appointed. Also, once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest offered the sacrifice on behalf of the people, laying hands to pass on a year's sins of the people of Israel and offering the atoning sacrifice so that they would receive the

remission of sins. But they received the remission of sins only briefly, once a year on the Day of Atonement, and the remaining days they were daily in sin: they offered a sacrifice in the morning and sinned again at midday and became sinners again. The next day they offered a sacrifice again, and when time passed they became sinners again, so there was no day when they received the remission of sins completely. Therefore Jesus, the Son of God, came as our Savior and offered the eternal atoning sacrifice, taking on the sins of mankind once and for all and receiving the judgment once and for all. He came to this earth for you and me.

That the people of Israel came out of Egypt and all died in the wilderness shows that our old man has died. Our sins all passed over to Jesus at the Jordan River; when Jesus died, we also died; and when Jesus rose again, we also rose again. The Elijah who was to come is John the Baptist, and John the Baptist is the one who leads you and me to return to God. If there had not been that work of John the Baptist baptizing the Son of God and passing our sins on to Him, we could not return to God. Therefore we must believe the fact that Jesus Christ was baptized by John the Baptist and took on our sins, and we must also believe the fact that John the Baptist passed all our sins on to Jesus.

Repent, and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Let us read Mark chapter 1, verses 14 and 15, and share them. It says, *"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and*

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believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14–15). When Jesus came to this earth, was baptized by John the Baptist, and preached the gospel, John the Baptist testified of Jesus to the people, crying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)* John the Baptist testified: that One is the Son of God, the Lamb of God who has shouldered the whole sin of the world through the baptism I gave Him, our Savior.

Then Herod seized John the Baptist, who rebuked his sin, and Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying that the time was fulfilled. God planned and accomplished the work of saving all mankind from sin, so now those who believe obtain salvation. The words, repent and believe in the gospel, mean: repent and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In John chapter 3 Jesus said that unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Here the water means that Jesus received our sins passed on to Him and took charge of them with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so saved us. The Spirit is God; the Holy Spirit comes upon the person who believes that Jesus came to this earth, was baptized to take on our sins, died on the Cross, and rose again to save us, and who has been washed of his sins. Therefore, if anyone says he believes in Jesus as the Savior and yet does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he must return to right repentance and right realization and believe this gospel.

The good conscience that the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives

Let us look at 1 Peter 3:21. It says, *"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, your sins and mine passed over to Jesus, and therefore Jesus could go to the Cross, be nailed to it, pour out all the blood of His heart, say, It is finished, and die. That is why it says the water is the sign that saves us, that is, baptism.

Now, after these words it says: not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God—and this is the point. Even when we know the fact that our sins all passed over through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and that we have no sin, even after receiving the remission of sins the filthy heart of the flesh still rises up and we commit sins. But even those sins Jesus already received passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist.

Therefore, even when we are lacking and commit sin, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to remit our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Lord, I have committed this sin again; but I thank You, for You already took charge of even this sin with the baptism You received from John the Baptist—so with a good conscience we go forward toward God. That is why the Apostle Paul also lamented, *"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24)* and then went on to confess: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law*

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of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1–2).

Until now, in believing in Jesus, we have in many cases believed only in the blood of the Cross. But if Jesus had gone straight to the Cross alone, without passing through this process of taking on your sins and mine with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, our sins would not have passed over to Jesus—then how could our sins disappear? Therefore believing only in the blood of the Cross is a half faith. Because Jesus took on your sins and mine with the baptism He received from John the Baptist before He was nailed to the Cross, He could die on the Cross, rise from the dead, and become your perfect Savior and mine.

Believing in the blood of the Cross is not in itself wrong. For there Jesus received for us the judgment of our sins. But only when we also know and believe that Jesus took charge of your sins and mine with the baptism He received from John the Baptist does that Jesus truly become the Savior who has to do with you and me. It is not to believe in the water alone; it is to believe also in the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, to believe also in the fact that through it your sins passed over to Jesus, to believe also that He received all the judgment of our sins on the Cross, and to believe that the death of Jesus is our death and the resurrection of Jesus is our resurrection. As He said, *"you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*, we must fully know and believe this truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

We passed our sins on to Christ through John the Baptist; when Jesus Christ was nailed to the Cross and died, we also died together; and when Jesus Christ rose again, we also rose again by faith. So the Apostle Paul confessed: *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and*

the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). This faith, this truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is what establishes your own salvation and mine.

Jesus came to this earth, shouldered our sins with His baptism, was nailed to the Cross and died for us, and rose from the dead; and so our conscience has now become a good conscience through believing in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God has removed all our sins, so we go forward before God with thanksgiving, as the righteous without sin. I hope you will use your conscience rightly before God. Believing that God has removed all your sins, confessing your faith with a good conscience—saying thank You, I am grateful—may you all live such lives of faith. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The Son of God is revealed before the word of authority

< Mark 1:22-31 >

"And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, 'Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.' And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them."

On one Sabbath in Capernaum, the people met an entirely unfamiliar authority in a familiar place. The place was the synagogue, and the people had gathered to hear teaching.

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Reading and explaining the word would not itself have been strange to them. But when Jesus taught, the response was different. The people were astonished at His teaching. For His teaching was as One having authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark does not record in detail in this scene with what tone Jesus spoke. Nor does he transcribe at length here what He taught. Instead he records the decisive difference the hearers felt: there was authority in the word of Jesus. A moment later that authority does not remain an abstract impression. An unclean spirit obeys His command, a fever departs, and real change comes to many sick and demon-possessed people.

The scenes of this one day lead us to a single question: "Who is this One who speaks like this?" If we look only at the wonder of the signs, we can easily miss this question. But the Gospel of Mark already declared in its first verse that Jesus is the Son of God. At the Jordan River, the voice from heaven testified that He is the beloved Son. Now in Capernaum, through the authority of the word that rules the unclean spirits and diseases, it is revealed that Jesus is the Son of God. Today we must look not only at what happened, but at Jesus who did it.

The teaching that astonished them

Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and taught. His first act was not to create a spectacle; it was to teach the word. The casting out and the healing that follow are not detached from this teaching either. Seeing the unclean spirit go out, the people said it was a *"new doctrine"* given *"with authority" (Mark 1:27)*. The word of Jesus was not a word that only explains and ends; it was the word that accomplishes what it commands.

We need not exaggerate the contrast with the scribes and

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conclude that every word of every scribe was always false. What the text stresses is the unique authority of Jesus. A scribe is a man who studies and delivers the word given to him, but Jesus speaks as the Son of God. He does not borrow another's authority to establish His own words; He teaches as the One who possesses authority. Before His word, even the unclean spirit that had been hiding is exposed and driven back.

The words of man, even when they contain right content, cannot immediately change every reality that hears them. We can explain to a sick person the importance of health, but we cannot make a fever leave with a single word. We can comfort a person pressed down by anguish, but we cannot subdue an evil spirit by our own authority. Man is a creature and a being with limits. But the word of Jesus was different. That difference was not a difference of eloquence but a difference of being and authority.

Therefore we must not confuse authority with the loudness of a voice or an attitude that overwhelms people. Speaking loudly and allowing no questions does not produce the authority of God. The authority of Jesus came not from an atmosphere created by exaggerated gestures but from the fact that He is the Son of God. His word was true, and what He commanded actually came to pass. To preach the word with authority in the church, likewise, is not for the preacher to exalt himself, but to deliver the word of Jesus without distortion so that people stand before the Lord.

So faith cannot begin by placing the word of Jesus as merely one good counsel among many. If we respect Jesus only as a great teacher, we cannot adequately explain the event the people of the synagogue witnessed. He is beyond one who recommends wisdom for living; He is the Lord who commands and accomplishes. To hear the word is not to examine an interesting

idea but to stand before the authority of the Lord who made me and saves me.

We too can hear the Bible only as familiar religious language. Because we have heard the word so much, we may no longer be astonished, and may pick out and accept only the parts that fit our judgment. But the people of the synagogue faced an authority they had not expected. The word today is higher than our habits. Knowing that Jesus is the Son of God, we do not leave His word as mere material for discussion, but receive it as the word of God to be believed and obeyed.

The unclean spirit that knew who He was and yet could only obey

Just then there was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. Seeing Jesus, the unclean spirit cried out. It shouted, *"What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us?" (Mark 1:24)* And it said, *"I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" (Mark 1:24)* The people were still astonished and asking, but the unclean spirit recognized the identity of Jesus and the authority standing before it.

Here we must distinguish knowing from believing. That the unclean spirit called Jesus the Holy One of God does not mean it had saving faith. It did not love Jesus or willingly obey His word. It cried out in fear of His authority. Saying with the mouth an accurate statement about Jesus and believing Jesus in the heart as one's own Savior are not the same.

Today also a person can know much information about Jesus. He can say that Jesus is the Son of God and can even explain the order of the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. But in his heart he can still trust his own thoughts more and live with no

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regard for the word of Jesus. Knowledge is necessary for faith, but knowledge itself cannot take the place of faith. True faith is knowing who Jesus is, accepting that the salvation He accomplished is a fact for me, and entrusting oneself to His word.

Jesus did not listen long to the words of the unclean spirit; He rebuked it, saying, *"Be quiet, and come out of him!" (Mark 1:25)* In that command there was no negotiation and no incantation. He did not ask the unclean spirit's permission. The Lord who holds authority commanded, and the unclean spirit convulsed the man, cried out with a loud voice, and came out. There was a commotion that looked like a last resistance, but it could not change the outcome. The word of Jesus was accomplished.

In this scene it is also important to distinguish the unclean spirit from the man. Jesus said, *"come out of him!" (Mark 1:25)* His command was not a word to destroy the man but a word casting out the unclean spirit that had seized him. The unclean spirit asked Jesus, *"Did You come to destroy us?" (Mark 1:24)*, but what happened to the man was deliverance from oppression. The authority of the Son of God is the authority that rescues the person pressed down under sin and evil spirits.

We must not stretch this event into the claim that every mental and physical illness is caused by demon-possession. The text itself records separately the man with the unclean spirit, the woman sick with a fever, and the many sick people. If man mashes together what the Bible has distinguished, he can groundlessly condemn suffering people and make wrong judgments. The core Mark shows lies not in guessing the causes of diseases, but in the fact that no oppression is greater than the authority of Jesus.

When the demon went out of the man, the people were all amazed and asked one another, *"What is this?" (Mark 1:27)*

They connected the event before their eyes with the teaching of Jesus, saying, *"What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him" (Mark 1:27)* The authority of the word was confirmed by the event. Jesus is not a teacher great in words yet helpless before reality. When He commanded, the hidden evil power was placed under His command.

The text leaves the short command of Jesus stronger than the commotion of the unclean spirit. The loud cry and the convulsion draw people's eyes, but what held the deciding power was not the commotion but the word of the Lord. In our lives too there are times when the noise of a problem is so loud that it is all we hear. Fear shouts as if everything were over, and old failure says nothing can change. At such times the saint must not judge the power of the Lord by the volume of the commotion. When the Son of God speaks, even the last cry of the evil power cannot cancel His command.

This news immediately spread through the whole region around Galilee. Word of an amazing event spreads quickly from person to person. But hearing the news and believing in Jesus are still different. Some may come out of curiosity at a strange story, and some may expect only the solving of their immediate problems. The Gospel of Mark does not equate the size of the fame with the depth of faith. We also must not look only at how many people have gathered, but must watch whether they come to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior.

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The word that took her by the hand and raised her up

Coming out of the synagogue, Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and the people told Jesus about her at once. The One who had done in the synagogue a work whose fame would spread through all Galilee now draws near to one person inside one house. He did not show His authority only before great crowds. He did not turn away from the suffering of a person lying in a home.

The text records that the people told Jesus of her situation. This makes us think of the form of prayer. We do not need to act as though the authority to solve the problem were our own. It is enough to acknowledge our limits and tell the Lord the situation. Faith is not making our own ability look great; it is bringing the problem to the Lord who has the power. It is not forcing an answer, but believing who He is and entrusting the matter to Him.

Jesus went to the woman, took her by the hand, and lifted her up. Then the fever left. In the synagogue the unclean spirit went out at the command, *"come out" (Mark 1:25)*; in the house the fever departed at His taking her by the hand and raising her up. The manner differed, but the One who acted was the same Jesus, and the result was plain. The authority of the Lord lacked nothing in any place—in the public synagogue or the private home, over spiritual oppression or bodily disease.

Mark records that after the woman rose she served them. This shows that the healing was not a momentary change of mood. The one who had been lying down recovered enough to rise and serve. At the same time this shows the response of a person who has received grace. The person raised up by the hand of the Lord can go beyond keeping the grace to himself, out to

the place of serving others.

But the order of this serving must not be reversed. It is not that the woman first served well and therefore Jesus made the fever leave. The Lord first drew near and took her by the hand and raised her up, and after that the woman served. Grace comes first, and serving is the fruit that follows. It is the same in salvation. We do not buy the remission of sins with service and obedience; we receive the remission of sins by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished, and then serve with gratitude.

This order must be kept in the church. If we teach that God receives us only when we serve people more, we turn the gospel into heavy wages. If on the contrary we say that having received grace we need serve no one, we ignore the fruit of life that grace raises up. As the one who was raised up moved, so the saint who has received the remission of sins serves his family, the church, and his neighbors with the help of the Holy Spirit. That serving is not a condition of salvation but the expression of living gratitude.

We also must not turn the healing event into a guarantee that every believer will always be made well in this world immediately and in the same way. The text testifies of the event in which Jesus actually healed this woman. The center that event reveals is that Jesus has the authority to rule over disease. It is not a promise that every present suffering will vanish at the time and in the way we want. Even in sickness and weakness we believe the power and goodness of the Lord, tell Him our situation, and entrust the outcome to Him.

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The whole city gathered at the door

When the sun set, people brought to Jesus all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. The whole city was gathered at the door. The astonishment that began in one synagogue filled the front of the door of one house. There were people there with all different situations. There were those sick with various diseases and those who were demon-possessed. Without making the kinds of suffering into one, Mark shows the fact that they all came to Jesus.

The expression *"at the door" (Mark 1:33)* is vivid. The people came with their troubles right up to where Jesus was, but the great number of those gathered did not make each person's pain disappear into a number. The Lord did not see the crowd as a vague mass. He healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. It was revealed that the authority shown to one man in the synagogue was not a chance, one-time event.

Here also we must look carefully at the expressions the text chose. People brought all the sick and the demon-possessed, and Jesus healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. We have no need to inflate the numbers beyond what the Bible said in order to stress His power. The recorded facts alone reveal His authority fully. Accurate faith does not lean on exaggeration. Rather than trying to dress the word up more amazingly, it trusts the Jesus whom the word itself testifies of.

This scene shows human weakness without concealment. The whole city gathered at the door—so many were the problems people could not solve. Even as civilization and knowledge advance, man cannot master sin and death and every weakness by his own strength alone. When one problem is

solved, we meet our limits again before another. Man needs God who created him, and needs the Savior who will deliver him from sin and death.

At the same time, the scene at the door shows the abundant authority of Jesus. He is not One whose power decreases after helping one person. Nor is He One who could not manage because many people came. He is not confined under the limits of a creature; He is the Son of God who came in the body of a man. Even the demons recognized Him, and He did not allow the demons to speak. His command stood firm not only in casting out but also in silencing.

The scene of Jesus not allowing the demons to speak makes us think of the order of signs and testimony. The identity of Jesus is not established by the advertisement of unclean spirits. The word of the Gospel of Mark, the testimony of God, and the ministry Jesus performed in person make Him known. The church, too, must not try to exalt the name of Jesus by putting forward sensational stories and mysterious experiences. It must deliver the word of God rightly and testify clearly of who Jesus is and what salvation He accomplished.

We must see ourselves as standing among the people gathered at the door. Even if we look healthy and problem-free on the outside, every person has the more fundamental problem of sin. We cannot judge who is the greater sinner by the presence or absence of disease. All have sinned, and no one can remove that sin by his own strength. So the One we need is not an advisor who soothes the heart for a moment, but the Savior who is God, who actually takes charge of sin and delivers us from judgment.

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The One to whom the signs point

The events of Capernaum do not end in admiration that Jesus is a powerful miracle worker. The unclean spirit called Him *"the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24)* and submitted before His word. The fever departed before His touch, and many diseases and demon-possessions were placed under His authority. All these scenes point to the fact that Jesus is not one among the creatures but the Son of God who holds authority.

If Jesus were not God, we could not entrust our eternal salvation to Him. A weak man may give help to another man, but he cannot take on the sins of all mankind, overcome the judgment of sin, and rise from the dead. But Jesus is the Son of God who came among us in the body of a man. Because He loved sinners and accomplished the work of salvation in person, we can believe His word and entrust ourselves to Him.

We must remember, briefly but wholly, the salvation this Son of God accomplished. Jesus took on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. The Lord of authority who subdued the unclean spirit and the diseases in Capernaum accomplished this salvation to deliver us from sin and death. Therefore our faith does not stay at the signs themselves, but goes toward the Savior to whom the signs point and toward the gospel He completed.

Whoever believes this gospel with the heart receives the remission of sins, by which all his sins are removed once and for all, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The Holy Spirit is not a reward for loud sounds or special feelings, but the gift of God given to the person who believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished. The Holy Spirit testifies that this person is a child of God, and helps him to believe the word of the Lord of

authority and live following it.

Faith that lives under His authority

For us to believe the authority of Jesus does not mean making Him a problem-solver we call on only when needed. Nor is it a faith that is astonished in the synagogue and forgets at home. It is acknowledging that He is the Son of God and placing our thoughts and choices under His word. When my desires and experience collide with the word, it is not the word I correct but my direction I turn. If we praise the authority of the Lord while treating His commands lightly, the confession of the lips and the life split apart.

Of course, obedience does not pay the price of salvation. We do not receive the remission of sins as wages for obeying the word perfectly. Jesus accomplished salvation completely, and we receive it by faith. But the person who truly believes that authority does not consider his life free to be unrelated to that word. As Simon's mother-in-law who was raised up served, so the person who has received grace obeys with gratitude and bears the fruits of faith.

When you obey the word and discover your own lack, do not despair and try again to buy salvation with deeds. Return to the remission of sins Jesus accomplished, and ask the help of the Holy Spirit. Do not hide the fact that you have fallen; acknowledge it before the Lord, but look again to the Savior who has already taken charge of all sins. In that faith, correct the wrong path, serve your neighbors, and preach the gospel. Fruit grows not as a price paid under the whip of anxiety but from a life rooted in grace.

The people of Capernaum asked, *"What is this?" (Mark 1:27)*

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Today we can answer that question with the testimony of the Gospel of Mark. The One who speaks like this is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. At His word the unclean spirit submitted, at His touch the fever departed, and many suffering people received help. That authority did not end at astonishing people; it went as far as saving sinners.

Therefore do not stand at the door seeking only signs. Believe in Jesus, to whom the signs point. Do not stop at knowing with the lips who He is; receive Him in the heart as the Son of God and my Savior. Entrust yourself to the One greater than your problems, the One with authority over sin, evil spirits, and death. And receive His word as the highest authority of your life.

The Lord testifies of Himself through the word today also. Though the fashions and estimations of men change, the authority of the Son of God does not change. Believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished, receive the remission of sins, and live under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Do not end as one who was astonished in the synagogue; like the one who was raised up in the house and served, bear the fruits of grace. Before the word of authority, may you know who Jesus is, believe in Him, and follow His word. ✉

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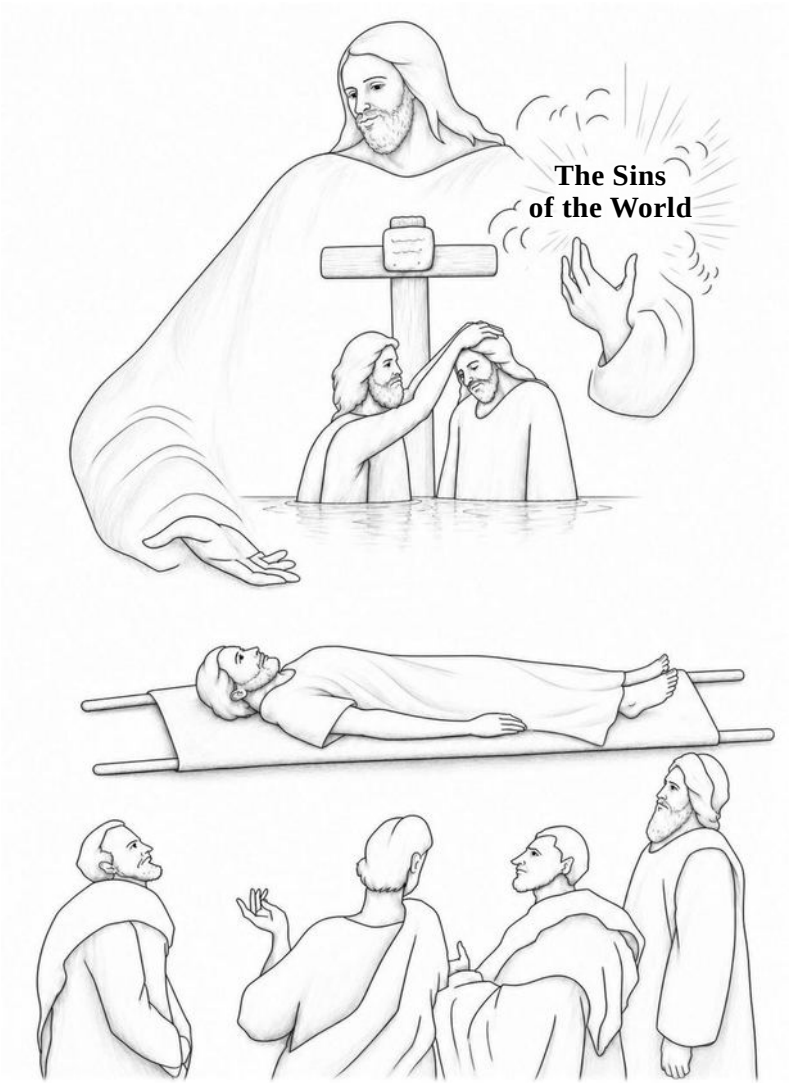

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Mark Chapter 2

< Mark 2:1-28 >

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

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tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.' The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.' Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, 'Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?' But He said to them, 'Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat

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except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?' And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'"

1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 2 shows that Jesus is God who remits sin, and that He is the One who calls and saves sinners and makes plain the true meaning of the Law. While Jesus is preaching the word in a house in Capernaum, four men come carrying a paralytic. When they cannot enter through the door because of the crowd, they uncover the roof and let down the bed on which the paralytic is lying before Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus first declares to the paralytic the remission of his sins. When the scribes judge this to be blasphemy, Jesus raises the paralytic and makes him walk, and so reveals that He has the authority to remit sins on earth.

Jesus then calls Levi, who is sitting at the tax office. Levi rises at once and follows Jesus, and Jesus eats together with tax collectors and sinners. When the scribes of the Pharisees criticize this, Jesus says that those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, and He declares that He did not come to call the righteous but sinners.

When people ask why the disciples of Jesus do not fast, Jesus compares Himself to a bridegroom. While the bridegroom is with them, the people of the wedding feast cannot fast, but the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away, and then they will fast. Then, through the parables of the piece of unshrunk cloth and the old garment, and of the new wine and the old wineskins, He teaches that the new age

and the gospel He has brought cannot simply be attached to the old religious framework.

Finally, a dispute arises with the Pharisees because His disciples pluck heads of grain as they pass through the grainfields on the Sabbath. Jesus speaks of the event in which David ate the showbread when he was hungry, and makes it plain that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. He also declares that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Mark chapter 2 shows that Jesus is God, who remits sins, calls sinners, and rules over religious customs and the Sabbath.

1. The four men who brought the paralytic to Jesus (verses 1–4)

When the news spread that Jesus had entered Capernaum again, many people gathered at the house where He was. There was no room even at the door, and Jesus preached the word to the people who had gathered.

Then four men came to Jesus carrying a paralytic on a bed. But because there were so many people, they could not come near Jesus. They did not give up or wait until the crowd thinned out; they uncovered the roof where Jesus was, made an opening, and let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

The four men knew the fact that they could not heal the paralytic by their own strength. But they believed that Jesus had the authority to heal him. Their faith did not remain only as a thought in their hearts; it appeared in the action of crossing over the obstacle and bringing the sick man before Jesus.

The paralytic could not come to Jesus by his own strength. The four men did not turn away from his helpless situation but carried the burden with him. Faith that truly loves another person does not end with looking at his hardship; it appears in

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action that helps him meet Jesus.

However, we must not generalize from this event that all faith necessarily brings physical healing. The center of the text lies not in the action of the four men itself, but in making plain who Jesus is, who saw their faith, and what authority Jesus holds.

2. Jesus declares the remission of sins to the paralytic (verse 5)

Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. The paralytic and those who brought him may have expected first that the disease would be healed, but Jesus spoke of the remission of sins before the disease of the body.

These words do not mean that the paralytic had contracted paralysis as punishment for some particular sin he had committed. The Bible does not conclude that every disease is the result of a particular sin committed by the individual. Jesus was not explaining the cause of the disease; He was revealing that He has the authority to remit sins.

The paralytic was a man who could not move his body freely. But man has a problem more fundamental than the helplessness of the body. No one can solve his sins by himself or make himself righteous before God.

Jesus did not begin with words of condemnation and fear; He called the paralytic *"Son."* This shows that Jesus pitied him and received him. And without demanding any religious procedure or human merit, He declared the remission of his sins.

3. Jesus reveals His authority to remit sins (verses 6–12)

The scribes sitting there heard the words of Jesus and

reasoned in their hearts. They judged that only God alone can remit sins, and that for Jesus to declare the remission of sins was to blaspheme God.

The premise of the scribes, that only God can remit sins, was itself correct. But they did not know the fact that Jesus, who stood before them, is the Son of God and the One who holds the authority to remit sins.

Jesus knew even the thoughts of their hearts, which the scribes had not spoken with their mouths. Jesus asked which is easier, to say, *"Your sins are forgiven you,"* or to say, *"Arise, take up your bed and walk."*

The remission of sins is hard to confirm immediately with the eyes, but the paralytic rising and walking was something everyone could confirm. To make known that He has the authority to remit sins on earth, Jesus commanded the paralytic to arise, take up his bed, and go to his house.

The paralytic immediately arose, took up the bed he had been lying on, and went out in the presence of them all. The people were amazed and glorified God, saying that they had never seen anything like this. The healing of the body became a sign showing the fact that Jesus has the unseen authority to remit sins.

Jesus is not simply a man of power who heals diseases. Jesus is the Savior who completely solves the problem of sin, which man cannot solve. And through the words, *"that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10),* He revealed that He had come to this earth holding the authority of God.

4. Jesus calls Levi sitting at the tax office (verses 13–14)

Jesus went out again by the sea and taught the multitude that gathered. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of

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Alphaeus sitting at the tax office and said, *"Follow Me."* Levi arose and followed Jesus.

In those days a tax collector was a man who collected taxes for the Roman government. Because there were cases of collecting more money than the appointed tax and taking the profit for themselves, tax collectors were treated as traitors and sinners in Jewish society. People regarded them as unclean and were reluctant to come near them.

But Jesus did not look only at Levi's occupation and past. He went directly to Levi, whom many people kept at a distance, and called him to follow Him. The call of Jesus was not directed only to those already righteous and without blemish.

Levi heard the call of Jesus and rose at once and followed Him. To follow Jesus is not simply to move from one place to another; it means to turn from the life in which one has been the center and to live with Jesus as the center.

Jesus not only declared the remission of sins to the paralytic, but also called Levi, who was treated as a sinner in society, to be His disciple. Jesus, who holds the authority of the remission of sins, does not cast the sinner away; He calls him and has him live a new life.

5. Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners (verses 15–17)

Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners in Levi's house. Among them were many who followed Jesus. Eating together meant something more than eating food in the same place. It was an act of receiving the other person and forming a relationship.

When the scribes of the Pharisees saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners, they asked His disciples why He ate with such people. They thought that keeping their distance from those they had defined as sinners was holiness.

Jesus said that those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. He made it plain that He did not come to call the righteous but sinners.

These words do not mean that there actually exist righteous people who have no sin at all. The person who counts himself righteous and refuses to stand in the place of a sinner does not realize his need of Jesus. On the other hand, the person who acknowledges that he is a sinner and cannot solve the problem of sin by himself needs Jesus.

A physician does not visit a sick person in order to leave the disease as it is. He visits in order to diagnose and cure the disease. In the same way, Jesus being with sinners was not His approval of their sins; it was in order to save them from sin and call them to a new life.

The church likewise must not become a place that rejects sinners and gathers only the righteous. At the same time it must not become a place that takes sin lightly or approves the sinner's life as it is. It must be a community that helps the person who acknowledges he is a sinner to receive the grace of Jesus and live a changed life.

6. They cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them (verses 18–20)

While the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees were fasting, people came to Jesus and asked why His disciples did not fast. In those days fasting was an important religious act expressing repentance, sorrow, and earnest seeking toward God.

Jesus said that those who take part in the wedding feast cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them. It means that Jesus Himself is the Bridegroom, and that the time spent with Him is like a wedding feast, enjoying the joy of salvation.

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Jesus said that the days would come when the bridegroom would be taken away, and that in those days the disciples would fast. This points ahead to Jesus suffering and being put to death. Jesus did not deny fasting itself; He took issue with formal fasting that departs from the will of God and from the situation.

Faith is not fasting because others fast, or copying a particular religious act because others do it. We must know who Jesus is and what God is doing now, and respond fittingly to His will.

Fasting, prayer, and service cannot make a person righteous by the acts themselves. If they are done without a heart that loves and relies on God, as religious duty or to display one's own righteousness, they lose their original purpose.

7. The parable of the unshrunk cloth and the new wine (verses 21–22)

Jesus said that no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If one does, the new cloth pulls at the old garment and the tear becomes worse. And if new wine is put into old wineskins, the skins burst in the process of fermentation, and both the wine and the wineskins are lost.

This parable means that the gospel Jesus brought must not be attached as a small part to one's existing religious life. Jesus did not come as One who slightly supplements man's old life and self-righteousness. He came to call sinners and to give them a new life.

Just as new wine must be put into new wineskins, the person who receives the gospel of Jesus needs a new faith and a new attitude of life. One must not hold on to his own thoughts and religious merits as they are, attaching the words of Jesus only where needed.

This does not mean that the Law of the Old Testament or the word God gave before is evil and useless. The problem lies in turning the word of God into a tool for building up human tradition and self-righteousness. Jesus is the One who completes and makes plain the will of God to which the Law points.

The gospel is not an ornament that decorates man's old religious life. The gospel is the power of God that makes new the center of a person's faith, values, and life.

8. The disciples pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath (verses 23–24)

On the Sabbath, as Jesus and His disciples were passing through the grainfields, the disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees raised the issue with Jesus, saying that the disciples were doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath.

The center of the dispute was not whether the disciples had stolen someone else's grain. The Law of that time permitted plucking heads of grain by hand while passing through a neighbor's field. The Pharisees interpreted the act of plucking and rubbing the heads of grain as labor on the Sabbath and condemned it.

The Sabbath commandment God gave was not meant to oppress and condemn man. It was a commandment given so that man might rest, remember God, and live in His grace. But the Pharisees made detailed regulations for keeping the Sabbath and used those regulations as a standard for judging and condemning people.

If we apply the Law only as literal rules while turning away from human life and need, we miss the will of God who gave the Law. The word of God was given to bring people to life and to bring them into a right relationship with God.

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9. Jesus speaks of David and the showbread (verses 25–26)

Jesus spoke of the event in which David and those with him, when they had nothing to eat and were hungry, went into the house of God and ate the showbread that only the priests could eat.

Jesus did not cite David's action to teach that one may disregard the Law of God at will. He was pointing out that the interpretation of the Pharisees was wrong—an interpretation that absolutized ceremonial regulations while turning away from human life and desperate need.

As in David's case, preserving human life in special circumstances was treated as more important than ceremonial regulations. The purpose for which God gave the Law is not to drive people into death and suffering but to protect life and bring about good.

The Pharisees were zealous in keeping the Sabbath regulations, yet through those regulations they condemned the hungry disciples. While thinking they kept the Law well, they were missing the compassion and love of God who gave the Law.

10. The true meaning of the Sabbath and Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath (verses 27–28)

Jesus said, "*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27–28)*. God established the Sabbath to give man true rest and benefit.

Man does not exist as a tool for maintaining Sabbath regulations. The Sabbath was given to give man rest and to have him serve God. Therefore, condemning a hungry person or refusing to do good in the name of the Sabbath goes against the original purpose of the Sabbath.

This word does not mean that the Sabbath or the commandments of God may be disregarded at will. Jesus was not giving a pretext for abolishing the Sabbath; He was rightly making plain the will of God who gave the Sabbath.

Jesus then declared, *"Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28)*. Jesus is not one teacher among many who interpret the Sabbath regulations; He is God who established the Sabbath and is its Lord.

Mark chapter 2 shows the authority of Jesus step by step, from the remission of sins to lordship over the Sabbath. Jesus remits sins, calls sinners, makes plain the meaning of religious customs, and reveals Himself as the true Lord of the Sabbath.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 2

First, Jesus holds the authority to solve not only man's physical problems but sin, the most fundamental problem of man.

Second, the faith of the four men who brought the paralytic did not give up before hardship, but appeared in the action of leading one soul to Jesus.

Third, the healing of the paralytic proved visibly that Jesus has the authority to remit sins on earth.

Fourth, Jesus did not turn away from a man treated as a sinner by people, like Levi the tax collector, but called him as His disciple.

Fifth, Jesus did not come to condemn sinners and keep them at a distance, but to call and save those who acknowledge that they are sinners.

Sixth, religious acts such as fasting cannot make a person righteous by the acts themselves, and they must be done with Jesus and the will of God at the center.

Seventh, the gospel Jesus brought does not attach a part to

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one's old self-righteousness and religious life, but makes a person's faith and life new.

Eighth, the Law was given not to oppress and condemn man, but to protect life and to have man enjoy true benefit and rest in God.

Ninth, Jesus not only holds the authority to remit sins but is the Lord of the Sabbath, who makes plain the true meaning of the Sabbath.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 2 is the chapter in which Jesus remits the sins of the paralytic and heals his body, calls sinners as His disciples, and corrects the old religious forms and legalism, revealing that He is God who saves sinners and the Lord of the Sabbath.

2) Mark chapter 2 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 2 shows that Jesus is God, who holds the authority to remit sins on earth. The paralytic could neither come to Jesus by his own strength nor solve his own sins, but Jesus first declared to him, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* Jesus remits sins because He is the Savior who had already taken on the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John, and who would carry those sins, be judged on the Cross, and rise from the dead.

The remission of sins accomplished with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection is not obtained by human merit or religious acts. Just as the paralytic heard the word of Jesus and rose, so the sinner receives the remission of sins by believing with the heart the gospel that Jesus has removed all his sins. And after receiving

the remission of sins, he must carry the heart of Jesus, who was with sinners and saved them, and live a life that leads other souls to the gospel.

The healing of the paralytic, the calling of Levi, the meal with sinners, the dispute over fasting, the parable of the new wine, and the Sabbath dispute in Mark chapter 2 all point to one center. Jesus is not One who came to improve a little the person who relies on his own righteousness and religious deeds; He is God, who came to save sinners completely and to give them new life and true rest.

1. The paralytic who could not come to Jesus by his own strength (verses 1–4)

Because the paralytic could not move his body, he could not come to Jesus by his own strength. Four men carried him on a bed, but they could not enter through the door because of the crowd. They did not give up; they uncovered the roof and let down the bed on which the paralytic lay before Jesus.

The helpless state of the paralytic makes us think of the sinner who cannot solve the problem of sin with his own strength and deeds. Man tries to live well by himself, to keep the Law, and not to sin, but because he was born with sin already in his heart, he cannot become a perfect righteous person by his own strength.

Just as the paralytic could not raise his own body, so the sinner cannot raise his soul by his own efforts. Even if he does many good deeds, fasts, prays, and repeats prayers of repentance, such acts cannot receive in his place the punishment of the sins he has already committed and the sins he will commit.

The paralytic needed people who would bring him to Jesus. In the same way, the person who does not yet know the gospel

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needs workers of the gospel who will deliver to him the salvation Jesus accomplished. We cannot conclude that the four men literally symbolize all preachers of the gospel, but we can find in them the appearance of faith that does not turn away from another's helpless situation but brings him to Jesus.

The four men did not make the paralytic depend on themselves. Nor did they try to heal him themselves. They brought the paralytic before Jesus. The person who preaches the gospel likewise must not bind souls to his own knowledge or character, but must lead them to Jesus, who holds the authority to remit sins.

2. *"Son, your sins are forgiven you"* (verse 5).

Seeing the faith of the four men and of the paralytic, Jesus said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)*. The first word people expected may have been, 'Your disease is healed,' but Jesus first declared the remission of sins.

These words do not mean that the paralytic fell ill as punishment for some special sin he had committed. We must not conclude that every disease is the result of a particular sin the individual committed. Jesus was not explaining the cause of the disease; He was revealing that He holds the authority to remit sin, the most fundamental problem of man.

The remission of sins that Jesus gives is not groundless comfort or a mere declaration. Jesus was the One who had taken on the sins of all mankind, including the sins of the paralytic, with the baptism He received from John, and who would receive the punishment of those sins on the Cross in the place of sinners. Jesus declared the remission of sins on the ground of the righteous saving work He Himself would complete.

The paralytic did not first prove his good deeds. Nor did he

receive the remission of sins by living righteously for a long time after his disease was healed. Jesus first declared the remission of sins, and the paralytic received that word.

The remission of sins does not come from human deeds; it is given by the word and grace of Jesus. To be saved, one must acknowledge his sins, but the act of acknowledging sin does not itself wash sin away. We receive the remission of sins when we believe the fact that Jesus took on all sins and was judged for them.

3. Jesus, God who remits sins (verses 6–10)

The scribes heard the words of Jesus and judged in their hearts that He was blaspheming. They knew the fact that only God alone can remit sins. But they did not know the fact that Jesus, who stood before them, is God and holds the authority to remit sins.

Jesus knew even the thoughts of their hearts, which they had not expressed in words. Jesus, who knows the hearts of men, is not a mere prophet or teacher of the Law; He is God.

Remitting sins is something only God can do. A man can forgive another person the harm he himself has suffered, but he cannot remove all the sins committed before God. No religious leader can wash away another person's sins, nor can a sinner remit his own sins and become righteous.

Jesus took the sins of all people onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. Therefore Jesus, as the Savior who took on the sins of all mankind and received their judgment, has the rightful authority to proclaim the remission of sins.

The scribes knew the doctrine that the remission of sins is God's prerogative, but they did not know how God saves

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sinners through Jesus. Today also, a person may know that Jesus is the Savior and that He shed His blood on the Cross, and yet not know how Jesus took on the sin of the world.

If we believe in the Cross detached by itself, it is hard to explain clearly what sins Jesus carried when He was judged on the Cross. Jesus did not die because of His own sins. Because He had taken on the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John, He carried those sins and shed His blood on the Cross.

4. Jesus raises the paralytic to show the authority of the remission of sins (verses 10–12)

Jesus asked which is easier, to say, *"Your sins are forgiven you,"* or to say, *"Arise, take up your bed and walk."* The remission of sins is hard to confirm immediately with the eyes, but everyone could see with their eyes the paralytic rising and walking.

To make known that He has the authority to remit sins on earth, Jesus told the paralytic to arise, take up his bed, and go to his house. The paralytic immediately arose, took up his bed, and went out in the presence of them all.

The paralytic was not healed first and then believed the word of Jesus. He believed and obeyed the word of Jesus and arose. His taking up the bed and walking was not a merit for obtaining the remission of sins but the result of believing the word and the authority of Jesus.

The good life of the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is likewise not a condition for obtaining the remission of sins. The person saved by believing the gospel that Jesus completely removed sin with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross lives a new life as the fruit of that faith.

The event of the paralytic rising showed that the declaration of the remission of sins by Jesus was no empty word. But the healing of the body and the remission of the sins of the soul must not be seen as identical. Not being healed does not mean one has not received the remission of sins, and being healed does not automatically mean one has received the remission of sins. The remission of sins is received when one believes with the heart the gospel Jesus accomplished.

5. Jesus calls Levi sitting at the tax office (verses 13–14)

Jesus saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office and said, "*Follow Me.*" In those days a tax collector was regarded as a man who collected taxes for Rome and took profit for himself, and so he was treated like a sinner in Jewish society.

Jesus did not call as disciples only the religious people whom others respected. He went to Levi, despised as a sinner, and called him in person. This shows that Jesus did not come to find people acknowledged as righteous, but to save sinners.

Levi did not follow Jesus after first cleaning up his past and becoming a perfect man. Hearing the call of Jesus, he rose at once and followed. The sinner does not first make himself clean and then come to Jesus; he comes to Jesus and is made clean by believing in the salvation He accomplished.

Jesus did not call Levi because He took Levi's sins lightly. Jesus was the Savior who would take on even all of Levi's sins with the baptism He received from John and be judged on the Cross.

To the person who has received the remission of sins a new direction of life is given. Just as Levi rose from the tax office and followed Jesus, so the saved person must turn from the life in which he was the center and live with Jesus and the gospel at

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the center.

6. The physician of souls who came to call sinners (verses 15–17)

Jesus ate with many tax collectors and sinners in Levi's house. The scribes of the Pharisees took issue with why Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners.

Jesus said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick,"* and made it plain that He did not come to call the righteous but sinners.

The person who thinks himself righteous does not need Jesus. For he thinks he can become righteous enough through religious acts, good deeds, and keeping the Law. But the person who knows that there is sin in his heart and that he cannot solve that sin by himself needs Jesus.

The purpose for which a physician visits the sick is not to acknowledge the diseased state and leave it alone. It is to diagnose and cure the disease. Jesus being with sinners was likewise not to approve of sin, but to save them from sin.

The gospel that cures the sinner was accomplished with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. Jesus took on all the sins of sinners and was judged in their place, and so fundamentally cured the disease of sin.

The saved person must not think he was saved because he was originally better and more righteous than others. All people must receive the grace of Jesus from the same sinner's place. Therefore he must not despise other sinners, but serve them so that they too may hear the gospel and receive the remission of sins.

7. Jesus the Bridegroom and the meaning of fasting (verses 18–20)

While the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees were fasting, people asked why the disciples of Jesus did not fast. Jesus compared Himself to a bridegroom and said that the people of the wedding feast cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them.

Jesus is the Bridegroom who came to save sinners. The Bridegroom came not to add sorrow, but to save sinners and bring them into the joy of the kingdom of God. Therefore the disciples who were with Jesus had the joy of salvation.

Jesus said that the days would come when the bridegroom would be taken away, and that then the disciples would fast. This points to Jesus being put to death on the Cross. But the death of Jesus was not defeat. Jesus was judged on the Cross for the sin of the world He had taken on with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and He rose from the dead and completed salvation.

Fasting and prayer have meaning in the life of faith, but they cannot wash away sin. However long a person fasts and however earnestly he prays, those acts cannot receive the punishment of sin in his place. The remission of sins is received by believing the gospel that Jesus the Bridegroom completed.

Fasting and prayer after being saved are not a transaction or merit for obtaining the remission of sins. They must be acts of faith for relying on God, serving the gospel, and restraining the desires of the flesh.

8. New wine cannot be put into old wineskins (verses 21–22)

Jesus said that if a piece of unshrunk cloth is sewn on an old garment, the garment tears worse, and if new wine is put

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into old wineskins, the skins burst. New wine must be put into new wineskins.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a teaching that slightly supplements man's self-righteousness and religious acts. Nor is it Jesus filling up a remission of sins left insufficient by man's efforts. It is the gospel that Jesus completely removed all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection.

Therefore one cannot mix with the gospel of the water and the Spirit a faith that limits the salvation of Jesus to the blood of the Cross alone and holds that the sins committed each day must be washed again by daily prayers of repentance. The salvation of Jesus is not a salvation of which only a part was completed, with the rest to be filled up by man's own deeds.

Believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean taking sin lightly or refusing to admit one's wrongs. Even the saved person, when he does wrong, must acknowledge it and turn from it. But he does not repeat a new atonement to wash that wrong away; he believes the perfect salvation of Jesus, who already took on even that sin with the baptism He received from John and the Cross, and returns to the word.

To put new wine into a new wineskin is to receive the perfect salvation of Jesus with a new faith. One must abandon the heart that held on to its own deeds and religious merits, and wholly receive the righteousness Jesus accomplished.

9. The disciples pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath (verses 23–26)

When the disciples of Jesus plucked heads of grain while passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, the Pharisees condemned them for breaking the Sabbath regulations. The

Pharisees tried to display their own righteousness by strictly keeping the Sabbath.

Jesus spoke of the event in which David and those with him, when hungry, went into the house of God and ate the showbread that only the priests could eat. Jesus did not teach that the Law may be disregarded at will; He said that the Law, given to bring people to life, must not be used as a tool to condemn and kill people.

Man cannot receive the remission of sins by keeping the Law perfectly. The Law makes a person realize that he is a sinner, but it does not wash his sins away. It is like a mirror that can show the dirt on one's face but cannot itself wash it off.

The Pharisees looked at their own deeds of keeping the Sabbath, but the disciples were with Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The remission of sins and salvation do not come from relying on how well one has kept the Law, but from believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Just as David and his men ate the showbread to preserve their lives, so the sinner must eat the bread of life that God gives. That bread of life is the word of salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished for sinners.

10. The true rest that the Lord of the Sabbath gives (verses 27–28)

Jesus said, "*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.*" The Sabbath is not a day for shutting man up under regulations and condemning him, but a day God prepared to give man rest.

In the soul of the sinner there is no true rest because of sin. However hard he tries not to sin, sin keeps being exposed; and however much he repeats prayers of repentance, if he thinks sin

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still remains in his heart, he cannot find rest before God.

Jesus took on the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John, and received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross. The person who believes this gospel stops the labor of trying to solve his sins by himself and finds true rest in the remission of sins that Jesus accomplished.

True rest does not mean doing nothing or living according to one's own desires. It is to stop the work of building one's own righteousness to obtain salvation and to believe the righteousness Jesus accomplished. It is to live in that faith, serving God and preaching the gospel to other souls.

Jesus declared, *"Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28)*. Jesus is not one teacher interpreting Sabbath regulations; He is the Creator who gave the Sabbath, and God who gives eternal rest to sinners.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 2 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

First, just as the paralytic could not come to Jesus by his own strength, so the sinner cannot solve the problem of sin by his own deeds and efforts.

Second, by first declaring the remission of sins to the paralytic, Jesus revealed that the most fundamental problem of man is sin, and that He holds the authority to remit that sin.

Third, Jesus can remit sins because He is God, who took on the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again.

Fourth, the paralytic rising and walking was not a merit for obtaining the remission of sins but the result of believing the word and the authority of Jesus. The good life of the saved person likewise is not a condition of salvation but the fruit of

faith.

Fifth, Jesus did not turn away from Levi and the tax collectors and sinners but went to them. This shows that Jesus came to call and save not the person with his own righteousness but the person who acknowledges he is a sinner.

Sixth, religious acts such as fasting, prayer, and keeping the Law cannot wash away sin. The remission of sins is received by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

Seventh, just as new wine cannot be put into old wineskins, the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not be mixed into a system of self-righteousness and repeated acts of atonement.

Eighth, true repentance is not washing sins little by little with daily prayers of repentance, but turning from one's own righteousness and wrong faith and believing the gospel that Jesus has removed all sins.

Ninth, Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, ends the sinner's labor of trying to become righteous by his own strength and has him enjoy true rest in the remission of sins He completed.

Tenth, the person who has received the remission of sins must not stay in enjoying his own salvation alone, but must lead other souls to Jesus, like the men who brought the paralytic.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 2 is the chapter in which Jesus, God who removed the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, declares the remission of sins to the paralytic and calls sinners, and gives complete remission of sins and true rest to those bound by self-righteousness and religious acts. ✉

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Mark Chapter 2

Jesus Christ, who calls sinners and gives true rest

Introduction

Mark chapter 2 shows that Jesus is God who remits sin, and that He came to save not the person who counts himself righteous but the person who acknowledges his sin and helplessness. Jesus proclaimed the remission of sins before healing the body of the paralytic, called the despised tax collector Levi as His disciple, and ate with many tax collectors and sinners. Through this He made plain that what man needs most is not outward health or religious recognition but receiving the remission of all his sins before God.

Jesus could remit sins not because He merely offered words of comfort, but because He was the Savior who had taken on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and would receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross. Jesus rose from the dead and overcame sin and death and completed salvation. Therefore the remission of sins is not obtained by fasting, keeping the Law, and religious merits; it is the grace of God received by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished.

The parable of the unshrunk cloth and the new wine teaches that the gospel cannot be attached to man’s old self-righteousness. And the words about the Sabbath show that man must not become a slave of religious regulations, but must find true rest in Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. When we believe in

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Jesus, who solved all sins with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, we escape the labor of piling up merits to wash away sin and the fear of condemnation, and enjoy spiritual rest.

The several events of Mark chapter 2 therefore flow as one stream: the remission of sins, grace, new faith, and true rest. This writing follows each passage and looks in order at whom Jesus calls and how He remits sins, and with what faith and life the person who believes the gospel, laying down his own righteousness, ought to follow Jesus.

Jesus proclaimed the remission of sins to the paralytic before the healing of his body

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

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and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'" (Mark 2:1–12).

When Jesus entered Capernaum again, the news spread that He was in the house. Because the healing of the leper had become widely known, many people gathered to see Jesus. The house was full, and there was no room even at the door. Jesus did not begin with miracles to satisfy the curiosity of the gathered people; He first preached the word of God to them.

Here *"the word"* does not mean only religious rules that man must keep. It is the word about the way a sinner returns to God and is saved. Jesus also had the power to heal diseases and cast out demons, but He showed that what people need most is to hear the word of God and know the way of the remission of sins. Miracles can solve the problems of the body, but the word of the gospel saves a person from eternal sin and judgment.

People brought a paralytic to Jesus, carried by four men. The paralytic could not walk by himself or push through the crowd to Jesus. But the men who carried him did not give up because the way was blocked by the crowd. Because they believed that Jesus had the authority to heal this sick man, they looked for another way.

The houses of that time generally had flat roofs, and one could go up to the roof by an outside stairway. They uncovered the roof where Jesus was, made an opening, and let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. This action shows that their faith in coming to Jesus did not stop at thought or words but appeared in actual deeds.

Jesus saw *"their faith."* This certainly includes the faith of

the men who brought the sick man, and the sick man himself also wanted to come to Jesus with their help. But these words do not mean that a person can be saved automatically by the faith of others alone, apart from his own will. Others can tell him the gospel and help him come to Jesus, but each person must believe the gospel of salvation with his own heart.

Jesus did not tell the paralytic to rise right away. He first said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* In the address *"Son"* is contained the compassion of Jesus, who warmly receives a sick and helpless man. He may have been regarded by people as a burden, but Jesus treated him with dignity and declared the remission of his sins.

That Jesus spoke of the remission of sins first does not mean that this man's paralysis necessarily arose from some particular sin. The Bible does not conclude that every disease is the result of a particular sin the individual committed. Jesus proclaimed the remission of sins first in order to show that the more fundamental problem of man than the disease of the body is the sin that lies before God. Even if the body becomes healthy, if sin remains as it is, one cannot escape eternal judgment.

Some scribes heard the words of Jesus and judged in their hearts that this was blasphemy. They knew that no one can remit sins except God alone. Their premise was right, for sin is ultimately against God, and so the authority to remit sins belongs to God alone. But they did not know that Jesus, who was speaking before them, is God who came in the flesh.

That Jesus remits sins does not mean that the justice of God overlooks sin without any price. Jesus had taken on the sins of all mankind, including the sins of the paralytic, onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. And because He would receive on the Cross, in his place, the punishment of the

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sins He had taken on, He could proclaim to him the remission of sins. The remission of sins that Jesus gives is not emotional comfort or a groundless declaration; it rests on the righteous salvation He would accomplish in person.

The scribes reasoned only inwardly, without speaking, yet Jesus knew their thoughts at once. Man cannot fully know another's heart, but Jesus knows the center of man. This shows that Jesus is not a mere prophet or teacher but the One who holds the authority and knowledge of God. A person may look pious outwardly, but before Jesus he cannot hide the unbelief and pride of his heart.

Jesus asked which is easier, to say, *"Your sins are forgiven you,"* or to say, *"Arise, take up your bed and walk."* Both sentences are easy to say with the mouth, but actually remitting sins or instantly raising a man who cannot walk is beyond human ability. Since the remission of sins is invisible, it was hard for people to confirm the truth of that declaration at once. So Jesus proved the unseen authority of the remission of sins through a healing that could be seen.

Jesus called Himself *"the Son of Man"* and declared that He has the authority to remit sins on earth. The title Son of Man reveals together the fact that Jesus came as true man and the fact that He is the promised Christ who received authority from God. Jesus took on the sins of mankind as their representative with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and He is the Savior who actually meets sinners on earth and gives them the remission of sins.

When Jesus commanded the paralytic to arise, take up his bed, and go home, he rose at once. He was not restored little by little; before the eyes of all he took up his bed and walked out. Before, the bed had carried him; now he carried the bed. This complete change testified that the word of Jesus is not mere

teaching but the word of authority that actually comes to pass.

But the healing of the body itself does not mean the completion of eternal salvation. The miracle of the paralytic rising was a sign showing that Jesus has the authority to remit sins. The ground on which a person becomes eternally righteous does not lie in seeing miracles or in diseases being healed. It lies in believing the gospel that Jesus took on all our sins with the baptism He received from John, paid the price of sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

The people who saw the paralytic walk out carrying his bed were amazed and glorified God. They had witnessed an amazing thing they had never seen. But being amazed at a miracle and speaking words of glory to God must be distinguished from believing the gospel with the heart and receiving the remission of sins. Even a person who saw the miracle cannot reach the full faith of salvation if he does not know how Jesus removed sin.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not teach that each time a person sins he must erase his sins with his own repentance and good deeds. It is the news that Jesus took on all sins once and for all with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again. Whoever believes this gospel with the heart receives the remission of all his sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes righteous before God.

The men who carried the paralytic also show how a believer ought to serve other souls. We cannot believe in another person’s place, but we can deliver the word to the person who does not know the gospel or who finds it hard to come by himself, and lead him to Jesus Christ. We must not easily give up because of obstacles, but help him with love and

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patience so that he can hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The believer also must not regard bodily health and the solving of practical problems as the whole of salvation. Jesus spoke of the remission of sins before healing the body of the paralytic. The grace man needs first is to be washed of all his sins and reconciled to God. The person who has received the remission of sins possesses eternal life with God even in circumstances where disease or hardship remains.

This passage teaches that Jesus is God, who knows the heart and situation of the sinner and holds the authority to remit sins. The sinner must not rely on his own merits or religious life, but believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. The person who has received the remission of sins by that faith no longer lies in guilt and condemnation, but rises on the word of God and lives a new life.

Jesus called not those who count themselves righteous but those who know they are sinners

"Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no

need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance'" (Mark 2:13–17).

Jesus went out again to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and many people came to Him. Jesus first taught the word of God to the people who gathered. Just as in the house in Capernaum He had preached the word before healing the paralytic, teaching the word always stood at the center of His ministry. For a person must first hear the word of God in order to realize his sins and obtain true salvation.

As Jesus passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. Tax collectors of that time collected taxes under the ruling system of Rome, and so the Jews regarded them as traitors to the nation. Since there were also cases of collecting more than the appointed amount and taking the gain, the perception of them as greedy and corrupt was strong. We cannot conclude that every tax collector committed the same wrongs, but it is clear that the occupation itself was greatly despised socially and religiously.

Levi was not in the synagogue or in a respected religious position; he was sitting at the tax office. Yet Jesus looked with attention at the man whom people shunned and condemned. Levi did not first ask to be accepted as a disciple; Jesus first called him, saying, *"Follow Me."* Salvation toward the sinner begins not with human merit or qualification but with the gracious call of Jesus.

When Levi heard the word of Jesus, he rose and followed Him. That he was sitting at the tax office shows that he was bound to his former living and gain, and that he rose and followed shows that the master of his life had changed. To follow Jesus is not simply to walk behind Him with the body; it is to lay down one's own thoughts and greed, to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to obey His word.

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The text then shows Jesus dining in Levi's house. In those days, eating together meant a deeper fellowship and acceptance than merely eating in the same place. Jesus entered the place of the tax collectors and sinners, whom people regarded as unclean and avoided, and sat with them. He did not stop at condemning sinners from a distance; He came near to them and gave them the chance to hear the word.

Many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and His disciples, and among them were many who followed Jesus. The joy of Levi, who had met Jesus, did not stay with himself alone. He called those who had been in the same situation as himself so that they could meet Jesus. When one person receives grace, leading the people around him to hear the gospel is a natural fruit of faith.

That Jesus ate with sinners does not mean He approved all their sins and ways of life. Jesus did not take sin lightly; He came near to sinners in order to bring them out of sin. He had taken onto His own body, with the baptism He received from John, the sins of all the sinners of the world, including Levi and those at that table. He was with them in the sinners' place, yet He did not share in their sins; He came to them as the Savior who removes those sins.

The scribes of the Pharisees saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners and questioned His disciples. The Pharisees thought that keeping the Law strictly and living separated from those they considered unclean was godly living. They did not understand the compassion of Jesus, who draws near to sinners, and criticized Him only for being with them.

The scribes did not ask Jesus directly but asked the disciples, *"How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"* In their words lay the thought that they themselves were righteous, different from tax collectors and

sinners. But before God it is not only those with many outward sins who are sinners. The pride and greed, hatred and self-righteousness of the heart are all sin, and every person is a sinner in need of the grace of God.

Hearing this, Jesus said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."* Just as it is natural for a physician to go to the sick, so it was natural for Jesus, who came to save sinners, to be with sinners. As a physician does not hate the patient and keep away from him but comes near to cure the disease, so Jesus came near to sinners not to condemn and abandon them but to save them from sin.

Jesus is the Physician of souls, who does not stop at comforting the disease of sin with words but actually removes it. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist He took on the sins of all people, and carrying those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, paying the price of sin. And He rose again on the third day and overcame sin and death. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that makes the sinner completely clean.

When Jesus said, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners,"* He did not mean that there exist complete righteous people who have no need of Him. Just as the person who thinks himself healthy does not seek a physician, so the person who considers himself righteous through his deeds and religious life does not seek the Savior. On the contrary, the person who acknowledges that he is a sinner before God and cannot solve his sins by himself can receive the salvation of Jesus.

True repentance is turning from the thought that counted oneself better and more righteous than others. One must abandon the belief that one's good deeds, prayers, service, and keeping of the Law can wash away sin, and believe in the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with the baptism

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He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Acknowledging that one is a sinner is not meant to leave one in despair; it is the starting point for coming to Jesus, who calls sinners.

As Levi received the call of Jesus and followed, change also comes to the life of the person who believes the gospel. But it is not that one is saved by changing his life and living well. First the sinner believes the perfect salvation of Jesus and receives the remission of sins, and as the result the Holy Spirit comes into his heart and leads him to turn from his former sinful life. Obedience and change are not conditions for obtaining salvation but fruits borne by the salvation already received.

The church must be not a place where people without any sin boast of their own righteousness, but a place where sinners hear the gospel and receive the remission of sins. Yet it must not become a place that acknowledges and leaves sin as it is. Just as Jesus received sinners and yet saved them out of sin, so the church must not condemn people and drive them out, but must clearly preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that they may be delivered from sin.

The person who preaches the gospel must not judge by outward reputation alone who is worthy of salvation and who is not. Levi the tax collector, despised by people, received the call of Jesus and became His disciple. Whatever kind of sinner a person may be, if he believes the fact that Jesus took on even his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid their price on the Cross, he receives the remission of all his sins.

This passage asks how we see our own spiritual state. If a person thinks of himself as healthy and righteous, he comes to feel no need of the salvation of Jesus. But the person who

acknowledges his sin and helplessness before the word of God meets Jesus, who came to call sinners. Whoever believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit, and follows Jesus with new life.

Since Jesus the Bridegroom has come, salvation is not a matter of patching the gospel onto man's old righteousness

"The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins'" (Mark 2:18–22).

While the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting, some people came to Jesus and asked why His disciples did not fast. They were judging by the outward act of fasting who was more godly. Since the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fasted while the disciples of Jesus did not, they thought something was lacking.

The Law of the Old Testament commanded the people to afflict their souls and humble themselves before God on the

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Day of Atonement. Later the Jews also fasted in times of national disaster or deep sorrow. Fasting could be a profitable act of restraining one's bodily desires and fixing one's heart on God. But as time passed, for some people fasting itself became a religious merit that displayed their godliness and piled up their righteousness.

Jesus did not say that fasting is unconditionally wrong. What mattered was not the act of fasting itself but its time and purpose. One may fast in times of sorrow and repentance, but for the guests who ought to rejoice with the bridegroom at a wedding feast to put on sorrowful faces and fast does not fit the occasion. Jesus explained why His disciples did not fast by the parable of the wedding feast.

In the parable, the bridegroom is Jesus and the guests of the wedding are the disciples who are with Him. The prophets of the Old Testament expressed the relationship between God and His people as that of a bridegroom and a bride. That Jesus compared Himself to the bridegroom reveals that He is God, who came to save His people. Since the promised Savior was with the disciples, that time suited joy more than sorrow.

That Jesus came means the way was opened for sinners to be reconciled to God and take part in the feast of salvation. The sinner cannot pay the price of sin with his own asceticism and sorrow, but Jesus the Bridegroom came in person to solve the problem of sin. Therefore the center of the gospel lies not in how much a person has fasted and afflicted himself, but in what Jesus has accomplished for sinners.

Jesus took the sins of all mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. This event ended the human way of salvation, in which the sinner must repeat fasting and asceticism to wash his own sins, and opened the righteous way of salvation that God accomplishes Himself.

Because Jesus took on the sins, the person who believes in Him enjoys the joy of salvation not by his own merit but by the grace of God.

But Jesus said that *"the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away."* This points to Jesus being seized and put to death on the Cross. The disciples would go through great sorrow when Jesus was arrested and killed, and in those days they would fast. Jesus already knew the suffering of the Cross that was coming upon Him.

The word that the bridegroom would be taken away shows that the death of Jesus was not an accident but was included in the course of saving sinners. Jesus had to go to the Cross carrying the sins of mankind. Jesus the Bridegroom bestowed the costly love of giving His own life to receive sinners as His people.

Jesus carried all the sins He had received with the baptism from John the Baptist and shed His blood and died on the Cross. By that death He paid all the wages of sin, and by rising on the third day He overcame sin and death. Therefore behind the Cross there is the joy of the resurrection, and the believer does not live on in sorrow like one who has lost the bridegroom forever, but enjoys the joy of salvation with the risen Lord.

In the age of the New Testament also, the believer may fast to concentrate on prayer or to seek the will of God. But fasting must not be made a condition for the remission of sins or a price for drawing blessing out of God. One does not become more righteous by fasting much, nor does one fail of salvation by not fasting. The remission of sins is received not by religious asceticism but by believing the gospel that Jesus Christ completed.

Jesus then spoke the parable of the unshrunk cloth and the old garment. If unshrunk new cloth is sewn on an old garment,

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the new cloth shrinks in washing, pulls the old part, and the garment tears worse. The new piece itself is not bad; the problem is joining the new and the old in that way.

This parable shows that the gospel of Jesus must not be attached in small part to man's old righteousness and religious merits. A person easily tries to supplement with the grace of Jesus only what is lacking in his own good deeds and law-keeping. But the gospel is not a patch that mends human righteousness. One must abandon the righteousness he has made and wholly believe the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection.

This does not mean that the Law itself is evil or useless. The Law shows the holy will of God, exposes man's sin, and makes the sinner realize that he needs the Savior. But the human act of keeping the Law cannot be the ground of the remission of sins. The One who actually removes the sin the Law has exposed is Jesus Christ.

The parable of the new wine and the old wineskins explains the same truth in another image. New wine ferments and produces gas and swells, so it had to be put into new skins with elasticity. If new wine is put into an old skin, already hardened and weak, the skin cannot bear the pressure and bursts, and both the wine and the skin are lost.

The new wine calls to mind the gospel of the new covenant that Jesus brought. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, accomplished with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, cannot be contained in the old framework of faith that relies on human deeds to wash away sin. If one tries to make both the merit of Jesus and his own merit the ground of salvation, he cannot fully receive the grace of the gospel.

The new wineskin points to the heart made new by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receiving the remission of sins. It does not mean that a person must first become a new wineskin by his own effort before he can receive the gospel. When he acknowledges his sin and helplessness and believes the gospel Jesus accomplished, he is washed of all his sins and receives the Holy Spirit and lives as a new creation. The gospel makes the heart new, and the Holy Spirit works within it.

That we are saved by the grace of the gospel does not mean the believer may live sinning at will. Works of the Law cannot be a condition of salvation, but in the person who has received the remission of sins and has the Holy Spirit, a new heart arises that loves the word of God and desires to obey it. Obedience is not a transaction for obtaining salvation but the fruit of gratitude for the grace first received.

This passage teaches that we must not judge a person's faith by outward religious acts alone. Fasting, prayer, and service are profitable, but if we make them our own righteousness, we rather move away from the gospel. The believer must boast not of what he has done but of what Jesus Christ has accomplished.

True faith is not leaving one's old self-righteousness as it is and adding a little of the help of Jesus. It is turning from the thought of washing away sins by one's own merits, and believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus the Bridegroom completed. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and serves God not in formal religious life but in the joy and gratitude of salvation.

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Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, gives true rest to those pressed down under the burden of sin

"Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, 'Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?' But He said to them, 'Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?' And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:23–28).

Jesus and His disciples were passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath. As they went along, the disciples plucked heads of grain and rubbed them in their hands and ate. The Law permitted plucking heads of grain by hand in a neighbor's field, but forbade harvesting with a sickle as if it were one's own. So what was at issue in the disciples' action was not stealing another's grain but plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath.

It was clear that God had commanded rest from work on the Sabbath. But to keep this command, the Pharisees defined in fine detail what counted as work. They regarded the disciples' plucking and rubbing heads of grain as labor corresponding to reaping and threshing. Regulations that began with the aim of protecting the commandment of God gradually became a heavy burden that pressed down even the basic needs of man.

The Pharisees did not speak to the disciples directly but challenged Jesus, saying, *"Look, why do they do what is not*

lawful on the Sabbath?" Their question was not simply to learn the meaning of the Law; it carried the character of condemning Jesus and His disciples. They counted keeping the Sabbath regulations they had established more important than the situation of the hungry disciples.

Jesus spoke of the event in which David and those with him ate the showbread when they were hungry. While fleeing from Saul, David had nothing to eat and went into the house of God. The priest gave David the showbread that ordinary people could not eat, and David shared it also with those who were with him. Saving the life of the starving came before the ceremonial regulation.

The First Book of Samuel records that the priest who gave David the bread at that time was Ahimelech. He was the father of Abiathar, and Abiathar afterward was with David and became the widely known high priest. Therefore the expression *"in the days of Abiathar the high priest"* need not be read as meaning that Abiathar himself gave the showbread; it can be understood as pointing to the event in the high-priestly era associated with Abiathar.

Jesus did not speak of David's deed to mean that one may disregard the Law of God whenever needed. In the will of God who gave the Law there is love that protects life and pities the hungry. If we apply ceremonial regulations while destroying the life and compassion those regulations were meant to serve, we have missed the heart of God who gave the Law.

Moreover, if it was permitted for David and his men to satisfy their hunger, then the disciples, who walked with the Christ who is greater than David, could not be condemned for eating heads of grain when hungry. Jesus is not a teacher merely offering an opinion on the interpretation of the Law; He is the One who knows and fulfills the true meaning of the Law.

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The Pharisees knew the Sabbath regulations in detail, but they did not recognize the Lord of the Sabbath standing before them.

Jesus said, *"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."* God did not give the Sabbath to oppress man; He gave it so that man might stop his labor, gain rest, and remember God. The Sabbath was a gift of grace that brings man to life, but under the wrong application of the Pharisees it became a tool that judged and bound people.

The rest the Sabbath gives shows beforehand the true spiritual rest that the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives. Jesus took the sins of all mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. The sinner labors endlessly to wash his sins by his own deeds, but by Jesus taking on all sins, the way was opened for man to stop piling up his own merits and to rest in the salvation of God.

The words, *"the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath,"* show plainly the identity and authority of Jesus. Since it is God who established the Sabbath, for Jesus to declare Himself Lord of the Sabbath means that He holds the same authority as God. Jesus did not come to abolish the Sabbath; He is the Lord who makes plain its original purpose and completes true rest.

For a sinner to enjoy true rest, the sin that blocks his relationship with God must first be solved. Jesus carried all the sins He had received with the baptism from John the Baptist, and shed His blood and died on the Cross. By that death He received all the judgment of sin, and by rising on the third day He overcame sin and death. Since Jesus completed the whole work of salvation, the believer escapes the labor of trying to accomplish the remission of sins by his own deeds.

The rest the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives is not idleness that does nothing, nor permission to sin at will. True

rest is to stop building one's own righteousness to obtain salvation and to believe the righteousness Jesus accomplished. The person who has received the remission of sins and has the Holy Spirit does not work grudgingly to be saved; out of gratitude for the grace already received, he obeys the word of God and loves his neighbors.

A person cannot receive the remission of sins by the act of keeping the Sabbath or a particular day of worship. If we make the day on which we worship the ground of salvation, we come to rely on our own religious deeds more than on the righteousness Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Before keeping days and seasons, one must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be washed of all the sins of his heart.

This does not mean that worship and rest are unnecessary. The believer needs time to stop his busy work, worship God, hear the word, and let his body and heart rest. But he is not made righteous by the merit of keeping that time; because he has already been made righteous by the gospel, he worships God with gratitude. The day of worship is God's gift for man; it must not become a master that condemns man.

The Pharisees teach us that we must distinguish between the word of God and rules made by man. If we make traditions and ways of living that the Bible does not command into absolute standards of salvation, we suppress the conscience of others. The believer must not boast of his own religious life or make it a standard for condemning others, but must examine whether the love and compassion of God appear in his conduct.

The words of Jesus, who looked upon the hunger of His disciples, also show that faith must not turn away from people's practical needs. If we concentrate on keeping rules while ignoring the hungry, the sick, and the weary, we have

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lost love, the center of the Law. True gospel faith does not press people down under heavy burdens; it brings them to life and gives them rest in the grace of Christ.

This passage teaches where the sinner obtains true rest. The Law and religious acts can expose man's sin, but they cannot remove it completely. When we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, we receive the remission of all sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. The person so saved takes off the fear of condemnation and enjoys true spiritual rest in Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath. ✉

Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 2

[Question] 1. Briefly summarize the contents of Mark chapter 2 as a whole.

Mark chapter 2 shows that Jesus is the Savior who holds the authority to remit sins, and records how His gospel and the legalistic faith of the religious leaders of that time began to collide. The whole content is divided into four events.

First, Jesus preached the word in a house in Capernaum. Four men came carrying a paralytic, but when they could not come near Jesus because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof and let him down before Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* When the scribes thought this was blasphemy, Jesus knew their hearts and raised the paralytic and made him walk. Through this He revealed that the Son of Man holds the authority to remit sins on earth (Mark 2:1–12).

Second, Jesus called Levi the son of Alphaeus, who was sitting at the tax office, and Levi rose and followed Jesus. When Jesus ate with tax collectors and those treated as sinners in those days, the scribes and Pharisees criticized Him. Jesus said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."* This shows the compassion of Jesus, who calls and saves the person who acknowledges his sin and his spiritual disease (Mark 2:13–17).

Third, when people asked why the disciples of Jesus did not

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fast, Jesus compared Himself to a bridegroom. He said that the friends of the wedding feast cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, but that they will fast in the days when the bridegroom is taken away from them. He then spoke the parable of not sewing a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment and not putting new wine into old wineskins. This means that the new life and the gospel Jesus gives cannot be forced into old legalism and man's religious forms (Mark 2:18–22).

Fourth, when the disciples plucked heads of grain while passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, the Pharisees condemned them for breaking the Sabbath regulations. Jesus spoke of what David did when he ate the showbread in his time of need, and taught, *"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."* And He declared that the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath. This shows that the Law was given not to oppress man but to give life and true rest, and that Jesus is the Lord who makes plain the true meaning of the Law (Mark 2:23–28).

At the center of Mark chapter 2 is the remission of sins. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. All that He did—declaring the remission of sins to the paralytic, calling tax collectors and sinners, and teaching the new gospel and the true rest that break out of the old religious framework—reveals that Jesus is the Son of God, who saves sinners, makes them righteous, and gives them true rest.

[Question] 2. Mark 2:1–12—what lessons does the event of Jesus healing the paralytic teach us?

While Jesus was preaching the word in a house in Capernaum, four men came carrying a paralytic. When they could not come near Jesus because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof, made an opening, and let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying before Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* and then raised him up and made him walk.

First, it teaches that the problem that must be solved first for man is sin. For the paralytic, the healing of his bodily disease seemed most urgent, but Jesus spoke of the remission of sins first. It is a great grace for the disease of the body to be healed, but even if the disease is healed, man dies in the end. When he receives the remission of sins, however, he is reconciled to God and obtains eternal life. Jesus first solved the problem of sin, which is more fundamental than the problems that appear on the outside.

Second, the appearance of the paralytic shows the helplessness of man, who cannot solve the problem of sin by himself. He could not rise by his own strength or walk to Jesus, and he had to receive the help of others. In the same way, man cannot remove his sins with his own good deeds and efforts, with the works of the Law, or with repeated prayers of repentance. He must acknowledge his helplessness and come to Jesus, who holds the authority to remit sins.

Third, we learn the faith and love of the men who brought the paralytic. They met the obstacle of the great crowd, but they did not give up. They meant to bring the sick man before Jesus even by uncovering the roof. The text records that Jesus spoke these words when He *"saw their faith."* This teaches

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that the believer must not turn away from the soul who finds it hard to come to the Lord by himself, but must lead him to Jesus with prayer, the word, and the preaching of the gospel. Yet their action itself was not a merit that earned the remission of sins; salvation was given only by the authority and grace of Jesus.

Fourth, true faith does not give up before obstacles but comes to Jesus. The crowd that filled the house was a great obstacle to the paralytic, but he and the men who carried him did not look only at people and circumstances. They believed that Jesus had the authority to heal the paralytic, and they found a way. We also must not let people's eyes, our own thoughts, or fixed religious ideas block us from believing the gospel.

Fifth, it shows that Jesus is God, who holds the authority to remit sins. The scribes thought, *"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"* The words themselves were right, but they did not know that Jesus, who stood before them, is the Son of God and God Himself. Jesus knew even the thoughts within their hearts and said, *"that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."*

When Jesus commanded the paralytic, *"arise, take up your bed, and go to your house,"* he immediately rose, took up his bed, and went out in the presence of them all. Jesus proved through the visible healing of the body that the unseen authority of the remission of sins belongs to Him. The people who saw it were amazed and glorified God, saying that they had never seen anything like this.

Sixth, the remission of sins rests on the salvation Jesus actually accomplished. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind once and for all onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And carrying those sins, He

was judged and died on the Cross and then rose from the dead. Therefore Jesus did not declare the remission of sins with mere words; He is the Savior who accomplished in person, with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, the saving work that completely removes all sins.

When a person believes this gospel with his heart, all his sins are removed once and for all, and he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes righteous. Just as the paralytic believed the word of Jesus and rose and took up his bed and went out, so the person who has received the remission of sins must no longer lie pressed down under sin, but must believe that the word of God has been fulfilled in him and live a new life.

This event therefore teaches that we must acknowledge our helplessness and our sins and come to Jesus, and that we must also lead others before the gospel. It also makes us believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who completely solves not only the disease of the body but sin, the fundamental problem of man, and gives new life.

[Question] 3. Mark 2:1—where did Jesus stay when He entered Capernaum again?

Jesus stayed in a house in Capernaum. The news that Jesus was in that house spread to the people.

Mark 2:1 does not specifically state who the owner of that house was.

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[Question] 4. Mark 2:2—what did Jesus do for the crowd that gathered so thickly that there was no room even near the door?

Jesus preached the word of God to the people who had gathered until there was no room to receive them, not even near the door.

Jesus did not first perform a miracle to draw people's attention; He preached to them the word of God that teaches the way of salvation.

[Question] 5. Mark 2:3–4—what did the four men who carried the paralytic do?

The four men came to Jesus carrying the paralytic lying on a bed. But when they could not come near Jesus because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was and made an opening. Then they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying before Jesus.

Even before the obstacle of the great crowd they did not give up, but sought a way to the end in order to bring the paralytic to Jesus. Here appear the heart that believed Jesus had the authority to heal him and the love that pitied the sick man.

[Question] 6. What were the words Jesus spoke to the paralytic, recorded in Mark 2:5?

Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic as follows.
"Son, your sins are forgiven you".

[Question] 7. Mark 2:6–7—how did the scribes react to the words of Jesus, who proclaimed the remission of sins?

Some scribes sitting there heard the words of Jesus and reasoned in their hearts as follows.

"Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

They knew the fact that the authority to remit sins belongs to God alone, but they did not know that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior who holds the authority to remit sins. So they judged the proclamation of the remission of sins by Jesus to be a word blaspheming God.

[Question] 8. What does the expression "*perceived in His spirit*" in Mark 2:8 mean?

The words *"perceived in His spirit"* mean that Jesus immediately perceived even what the scribes were reasoning within their hearts without speaking with their mouths.

Here *"His spirit"* does not point to one part of the body; it means the spiritual perception and heart of Jesus. Jesus does not see only a person's outward appearance and words; He knows even the thoughts and intentions within.

This shows that Jesus, unlike ordinary men, has the wisdom and authority of God, who knows the hearts of men. Therefore a person must not merely pretend to believe outwardly, but must stand with honest faith before the Lord, who knows even the thoughts of the heart.

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[Question] 9. Mark 2:10—to whom does *"the Son of Man"* spoken of in the Bible refer?

"The Son of Man" is the title Jesus used of Himself, and it basically means 'a son of man.' It reveals that Jesus, the Son of God, actually came to this earth in the flesh of man in order to save mankind.

But *"the Son of Man"* does not mean that Jesus is merely an ordinary man or one of the prophets. Jesus is true man and at the same time the Son of God and God Himself. In the Old Testament also, the Son of Man appears as the Messiah who receives authority and glory and a kingdom from God.

In Mark 2:10 Jesus said, *"that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."* Since remitting sins is something only God can do, these words made plain that Jesus, who came in the body of man, is God and the Savior who holds the authority to remit sins.

Jesus came as the Son of Man and personally went through the weakness and suffering of man, and He took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John. Then He was judged for those sins and died on the Cross and rose from the dead, and so saved man from sin and death. The One who will come again to judge the world and rule the eternal kingdom is also Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

Therefore *"the Son of Man"* refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came in the flesh of man, took on the sins of man, and saved him. This title carries not only the true humanity of Jesus but also the meaning that He is the Messiah, who holds the authority of the remission of sins, of judgment, and of eternal reign.

[Question] 10. Mark 2:9–10—knowing the thoughts of the scribes, what did Jesus say?

Jesus asked the scribes why they reasoned such things in their hearts, and said as follows.

"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?"

Then Jesus revealed the reason He would heal the paralytic as follows.

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins".

That is, by healing the visible disease of the body, He meant to prove that He also holds the authority to remit the sins that are not seen.

[Question] 11. Mark 2:11—what was the command Jesus gave the paralytic?

Jesus commanded the paralytic as follows.

"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house".

[Question] 12. Who was the person Jesus called in Mark 2:14?

The person Jesus called was Levi the son of Alphaeus, who was sitting at the tax office. He was a tax collector, who collected taxes.

When Jesus said, *"Follow Me,"* Levi rose and followed Jesus.

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[Question] 13. With what kind of people does Mark 2:15–16 say Jesus had a meal?

Jesus dined with His disciples in Levi's house, and at that place many tax collectors and those regarded as sinners in those days also sat together with them.

The scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners and criticized it. But Jesus came near to them in order to call and save those who were spiritually sick.

[Question] 14. Mark 2:16—when the scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus eating with sinners, what did they say?

The scribes of the Pharisees said to the disciples of Jesus as follows.

"How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"

Because they regarded tax collectors and sinners as unclean and kept them at a distance, they could not understand Jesus eating with them and criticized Him.

[Question] 15. Mark 2:17—how did Jesus answer the criticism of the Jewish leaders?

Jesus heard their words and answered as follows.

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance".

This means that Jesus came to call the person who

acknowledges his sins and his spiritual disease and needs salvation. On the contrary, the person who puts forward his own righteousness and considers himself whole finds it hard to accept the fact that he needs the salvation of Jesus.

[Question] 16. Mark 2:18—how did the Jews of the days of Jesus practice fasting?

At that time the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees were practicing the fast of not eating food. They practiced fasting as an expression of religious devotion and repentance.

But Mark 2:18 does not explain in detail how often or in what way they fasted. It only records that, unlike them, the disciples of Jesus did not fast, and so people asked Jesus the reason.

[Question] 17. Mark 2:20—what time is meant by the days when *"the bridegroom will be taken away"*?

The days when *"the bridegroom will be taken away"* mean the time when Jesus, compared to the bridegroom, would be seized by men and nailed to the Cross and die.

At that time the disciples would think they had lost Jesus, and would grieve and mourn deeply, and so they would fast. This was Jesus speaking beforehand of the suffering and the death on the Cross that He would undergo.

But Jesus did not remain in death; He rose again, and so the sorrow of the disciples was turned back into joy.

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[Question] 18. What lessons does the parable of the wedding feast in Mark 2:19–20 teach us?

Explaining why His disciples did not fast, Jesus compared Himself to the bridegroom of a wedding feast and His disciples to the friends of the wedding. Since a wedding feast is a place of rejoicing and sharing food with the bridegroom, for the guests to fast while the bridegroom is with them does not fit the occasion.

In this parable the bridegroom points to Jesus. That Jesus came to this earth is the good news that the time of salvation God promised has arrived. The disciples were with the promised Savior in person, hearing His word; so at that time the joy and gratitude of receiving the bridegroom were more fitting than the fasting that expresses sorrow.

This teaches that the center of true faith does not lie in deliberately afflicting oneself or piling up religious acts. The Pharisees made the act of fasting itself the standard of godliness and compared the disciples of Jesus with themselves. But Jesus taught that knowing Jesus the Bridegroom and being with Him is more important than how much of any act one has done.

The days when "*the bridegroom will be taken away*" point to the time when Jesus would be seized and nailed to the Cross and die. Then the disciples would think they had lost Jesus and would grieve and mourn, and so they would fast. These words were also Jesus telling beforehand of the suffering and death He would undergo.

But the death of Jesus was not a failure. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and carrying those sins He was judged and died on the Cross and then rose from the dead. So the sorrow of the

disciples was changed into the joy of the resurrection. The faith of the person who has received the remission of sins by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also be, at bottom, a faith of gratitude and joy over salvation.

This parable does not deny all fasting itself. The believer may fast voluntarily when he seeks the will of God before an important matter or devotes himself to prayer for the mission of the gospel. But fasting is not a means of obtaining the remission of sins or of piling up merit before God, nor must it become an act done to display godliness to others.

The parable of the wedding feast therefore teaches that the center of the life of faith lies not in religious asceticism or form but in the relationship with Jesus Christ the Bridegroom. Fasting fit for its time and purpose can be needed, but the saved believer must live with joy, believing and giving thanks for the perfect salvation Jesus accomplished.

[Question] 19. Mark 2:21–22—what is the lesson of the parable given with *"an old garment"* and *"old wineskins"*?

Jesus said that if a piece of unshrunk cloth is sewn on an old garment, the new piece pulls away the old and the tear becomes worse, and that if new wine is put into old wineskins, it swells as it ferments, so that the old skins burst and both the wine and the wineskins are lost. Therefore new wine must be put into new wineskins.

In this parable the piece of unshrunk cloth and the new wine point to the gospel of the new covenant and the new life that Jesus brought. The old garment and the old wineskins represent the old religious thinking and the hardened heart that

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rely on self-righteousness and the works of the Law.

The gospel of Jesus is not a teaching that slightly mends man's old religious life or supplements what is lacking in it. True faith cannot be achieved by attaching one piece of the gospel to a heart that tries to be saved by keeping the Law, doing good, and practicing much fasting and prayer. For the faith that relies on one's own deeds and the faith that relies on the salvation Jesus completed cannot be mixed together.

But this does not mean that the Old Testament or the Law of God itself is wrong. The Law reveals the holy will of God and makes man realize that he is under sin and cannot become righteous by himself. The problem is man's self-righteousness and legalism, which try to remove sin and obtain salvation by his own strength through keeping the Law. The Law makes us realize sin, but the work of completely removing sin is accomplished by Jesus Christ.

Jesus took on all the sins of mankind once and for all onto His own body with the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a salvation man completes with his own deeds, but the gospel by which he receives, through faith, the perfect salvation Jesus already accomplished.

The new wineskin points to the new heart that lays down its own thoughts and righteousness and receives the word of God as it is. When a person acknowledges that he cannot remove his sins by himself and believes the salvation Jesus accomplished, all his sins are removed once and for all, and he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a new person. The heart of the righteous who has received the remission of sins in this way becomes the new wineskin that holds the new wine of the gospel.

The life of faith after receiving the remission of sins also must not return to the old legalism. Good deeds, prayer, fasting, and service are not conditions for obtaining salvation but fruits of faith that the saved person bears following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

This parable therefore teaches that the gospel must not be attached in part to one's existing self-righteousness and religious forms, and that one must abandon old thoughts and wrong faith and wholly receive the salvation of the new covenant that Jesus accomplished.

[Question] 20. Mark 2:23–24—what did the disciples of Jesus do while passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and how did the Pharisees who saw it react?

The disciples of Jesus plucked the heads of grain as they made their way through the grainfields on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees who saw this spoke to Jesus as follows and condemned the disciples.

"Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

The Pharisees judged the disciples' act of plucking the heads of grain to be labor forbidden on the Sabbath.

[Question] 21. Mark 2:23–28—what should we learn from the words Jesus taught concerning the Sabbath?

When Jesus and His disciples were passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, the disciples plucked heads of grain.

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The Pharisees saw it and condemned the disciples for doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath. They put the regulations and forms they had established before the hunger of the disciples and the will of God, who gave the Sabbath.

Jesus spoke of the event in which David and those with him, when hungry, went into the house of God and ate the showbread that no one but the priests could eat. This did not mean that the commandment of God may be taken lightly; He taught that the compassion that saves human life and cares for human need is more important than religious form.

Jesus said, *"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."* The purpose for which God gave the Sabbath was not to bind man with rules and afflict him, but to have him stop his labor and rest, remember God, and enjoy His grace. But the Pharisees made numerous regulations and turned the Sabbath into a heavy burden.

These words teach that the life and soul of man must be counted more precious than the forms of faith. Worship, prayer, fasting, and ordinances exist to serve God and benefit man; they must not become tools for condemning or oppressing others. The believer must not put forward the self-righteousness of having kept rules, but must pity and save the person in hardship.

Jesus also declared, *"the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."* Since Jesus is the One who made the Sabbath and appointed its true meaning, we must understand the meaning of the Sabbath through the words of Jesus, not through the tradition of the Pharisees. These words reveal that Jesus is not a mere teacher of the Law but the Son of God, who holds authority above the Law.

The Sabbath spiritually points to the true rest of salvation that Jesus gives. To remove his sins man relies on good deeds,

the works of the Law, and repeated prayers of repentance, but with such efforts he cannot obtain true rest in his heart. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind once and for all with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged for those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

When a person believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit, all his sins are removed once and for all, and he escapes the fear of the judgment of sin and obtains true rest. Therefore to keep the Sabbath spiritually is not to try to be saved by keeping the rules of a particular day, but to believe the word that Jesus has completely removed all sins and to rest in that salvation.

This does not mean that the commandments of God or worship may be taken lightly. The saved believer receives with gratitude the time of rest and worship God has given, and must use it to hear the word, serve God, and save others. Such obedience is not a condition for obtaining salvation but the fruit of faith that the already saved person bears with gratitude.

The passage therefore teaches that we must not condemn people with the letter of the Law and religious forms, but must know the compassion and the life-giving will of God, who gave the Sabbath. It also shows that true rest is obtained when we believe in the salvation completed by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath.

[Question] 22. According to Mark 2:25–26, what did Jesus answer to the protest of the Pharisees?

Jesus answered by citing what David and those with him did when they were hungry and had nothing to eat.

"Have you never read what David did when he was in need

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and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?"

Through this event Jesus pointed out that the Pharisees, while putting forward only the form of the Sabbath, were missing the compassion of God, who cares for human life and need.

[Question] 23. Explain the relationship between the words "*in the days of Abiathar the high priest*" in Mark 2:26 and the record of 1 Samuel 21:1–6.

Mark 2:26 and 1 Samuel 21:1–6 both point to the same event, in which David, while fleeing from Saul, received and ate the showbread at the house of God. Only, since the names of two priests are mentioned in different ways, their relationship must be distinguished.

1 Samuel 21:1 states that the priest who received David at that time was Ahimelech.

"Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest".

When David asked for food, Ahimelech gave him the holy showbread, since there was no ordinary bread.

"So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away" (1 Samuel 21:6).

Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech. Afterward, when Saul killed the priests, Abiathar survived and fled to David.

"Now one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David" (1 Samuel

22:20).

Therefore the priest who gave the showbread directly to David was Ahimelech, and Abiathar was his son, who afterward was with David and became the widely known high priest. Mark 2:26 does not say that Abiathar himself gave the showbread; it expresses that the event took place *"in the days of Abiathar the high priest."*

Concerning this expression, there is the understanding that, since Abiathar later became high priest, the era was indicated by the title by which he was known in later days. There is also the view that it points to the event recorded in the part of Old Testament history associated with Abiathar. Whichever explanation one takes, Mark and 1 Samuel are not speaking of different showbread events.

To sum up, it is as follows.

The one who gave the showbread directly to David was Ahimelech.

Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech, and afterward became the high priest who was with David.

Mark refers to the event by the priestly era connected with Abiathar, or by that section of biblical history.

The point of Jesus citing this event lies in making plain the fact that, when David and his company were starving, the work of caring for life came before the ceremonial regulation.

Therefore, rather than reading this verse to mean that Abiathar gave the showbread in person, it is fitting to understand it as referring to the event in which Ahimelech gave the bread, in connection with Abiathar, the high priest widely known in later days.

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[Question] 24. Mark 2:27—what is the relationship between the Sabbath and man of which Jesus spoke?

Jesus said, *"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."*

This means that God did not give the Sabbath to make man a slave of Sabbath regulations. God gave the Sabbath so that man might stop his work and gain rest, remember God, and enjoy His grace.

Therefore, if we turn away from the needs of the hungry and the suffering or condemn people on the ground of keeping the Sabbath regulations, we have lost the original will of God, who gave the Sabbath. The Sabbath is God's gift for the life and rest of man, not a heavy burden that oppresses him.

[Question] 25. Who does Mark 2:28 say is the Lord of the Sabbath?

Verse 28 says that Jesus, the Son of Man, is the Lord of the Sabbath.

"Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath".

This means that Jesus is God, who established the Sabbath, and the One who holds the authority to make plain and govern the true meaning of the Sabbath. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Only Jesus remits our sins

< Mark 2:1-12 >

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

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Today we have read together the words of Mark chapter 2. Through this word I want to share with you the fact that only Jesus is the One who remits my sins and yours. To know this truth, let us first look at the word of the Old Testament.

God, who delivers His people out of the hand of false prophets

When we look at the Old Testament, when the people of Israel were carried away captive to Babylon and suffered there for seventy years, God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel. At that time there were also true servants of God, but there were many false prophets, who lied to the people and deceived them. Yet after rebuking His people, God never failed to promise this: that He would deliver His people out of the hand of the false ones and bring them back again to His own land.

Let us look at Ezekiel 13:17–23. *"'Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Woe to the women who sew magic charms on their sleeves and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive? And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?' 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I am against your magic charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds. I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall no longer be as prey in*

your hand. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. 'Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life. Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.''''" It was the promise of God that He would deliver the deceived people out of the hand of the false ones and make them live.

That the false prophets sewed magic charms on their sleeves and made veils and so hunted the souls of men means this: without the gospel of the water and the Spirit they give people church offices and put them to work, bind people tightly with the Law, and do so for a few handfuls of barley and a few pieces of bread—that is, for their own gain. The method of the Devil is the same now as it was then. Today also there are false ones who do not testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit but bind people with the Law and with offerings. But God promised that He would deliver those deceived by such false ones out of their hand.

The false ones, as soon as people come to church and believe in Jesus, give them all kinds of offices and put them to work, stress special offerings at every festival, and bind people with the Law. The gospel of the water and the Spirit itself they do not testify; they can neither remove people's sins nor lead them rightly in spirit. If one preaches the word of God and yet cannot remove people's sins, how could that be a true sacred office? It is out of the hand of such men that God promised to deliver His deceived people.

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Israel, which had no hope for four thousand years

The Bible is a book written with the purpose of saving mankind from sin. Therefore the age of the universe that the scientists of the world speak of and the chronology that the history of Israel speaks of may differ, but we have no need to quarrel over it. What is certain is the fact that God created this universe. Moses, who recorded Genesis, did not see the scene of creation with his eyes; he recorded it moved by the Holy Spirit. The word *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)* was all given by the inspiration of God.

The people of Israel carried on four thousand years of history in the Old Testament, and after passing the days of King David and King Solomon, from the time of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, the nation was divided into south and north and went completely downhill. On one side Jeroboam became king and on the other Rehoboam, but the one side served idols, and the other side also set up golden calves and served idols. So they were rebuked by God as if beaten day after day, carried away captive, killed, and went on toward ruin.

As a rule, the people of Israel moved together according to what faith their king had. If the king served idols, the people all served idols too. In the church also, if a minister serves idols and goes out toward the world, the members naturally become like him. For people do not learn only by hearing the word; watching the life of the one who goes before them, they learn and imitate without knowing it. So the history of the Old Testament was that even when they met a true servant of God, they failed to live by faith as that servant led them.

So if you and I had been born in the days of the Old Testament, not one of us could have come out of this curse. Who had to appear here? Only Jesus had to appear. There was Elijah,

that great prophet, who turned the people of Israel back to God, and the one who came in the spirit of that Elijah is John the Baptist. John the Baptist is the guide who would lead all mankind to Jesus and to God the Father. Therefore to despise John the Baptist is a greatly mistaken thing.

The Savior who appeared at last

Israel lived that way for four thousand years, and in the end even lost its nation, becoming a colony of Rome, trampled and miserable. It was at just such a time that Jesus came to this earth. We read the New Testament easily, but when we know the history of the Old Testament, we can see what a relief and how great a blessing it is that Jesus came.

It is written, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: the Savior had appeared at last. Whether the people of Israel or all the nations of the Gentiles, only when the Savior appeared could they be delivered out of the hand of the plunderer. Jesus appeared and delivered to us the word of God, and through John the Baptist He took on my sins and yours and saved us. This gospel of the water and the Spirit—by which Jesus received the sin of the world passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and accomplished our salvation—has come to us.

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Jesus, who has the authority to remit sins

In today's passage, Mark chapter 2, it appears who this Savior is. When Jesus entered Capernaum the news spread and people crowded in, and some people tried to bring a paralytic to Jesus; but there were too many people, so they uncovered the roof where He was, made an opening, and let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."*

Then (Jeremiah 17:1 reasoned and spoke against Him in their hearts: how can this man speak like this—who can remit sins but God alone? Jesus knew their hearts and spoke to them thus: *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'" (Mark 2:10–12).*

Jesus asked this: which would be easier, to declare to the paralytic that his sins were remitted, or to tell him to arise, take up his bed, and walk? Which is harder—to declare the remission of sins that is not seen with the eyes, or to heal a visible disease and raise the man up? Jesus actually raised the paralytic and made him walk, and so made them know that He is the Son of God, who has the authority to remit sins on earth.

To make it known that the Son of God came to this earth in the flesh of man holding the authority to remit sins, He declared the remission of sins to the paralytic and raised him up. And that word came to pass exactly as He spoke it.

We were paralytics who could do nothing

What we must know, therefore, is the fact that the Son of God came in the body of man as the Savior, who holds the authority to remit our sins. No one but Jesus can remit the sins of man. Our Lord came to this earth, took on my sins and yours with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose from the dead, and so saved us. That is why He could say, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."*

Just as the people of the Old Testament could do nothing before Jesus came and could only receive the curse, so you and I could do nothing until Jesus appeared to us and told us that He had remitted our sins. We were spiritual paralytics. Even while our heads said it was right to live good lives, because of the sinful nature we inherited there was sin in our hearts, and we could only live under the rule of Satan the Devil. For our own salvation there was nothing we could do by ourselves. But the Lord appeared and saved you and me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only Jesus is the Savior, who holds the authority to remit my sins and yours.

Jesus raised even the dead, healed paralytics, cast out demons, and also remitted our sins. He came to save us, who could only perish, be cursed, and live miserably because of our weakness and our sins, and He saved you and me. We ought to know how to give thanks that the Lord came to this earth in the body of man.

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God, who came as the son of man

The Lord was certainly born on this earth as the son of man. Borrowing the body of Mary, before she and Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, had come together, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit through the word of God delivered by the angel, and after ten months He was born on this earth. That the Son of God, the Creator who made this universe, came in the body of man was so that God might be with you and me.

The Lord became man in order to save you and me from all sins in person. For me, for you, for each and every one, God became man. It is as if the maker of toys became a toy himself in order to be with the children. The Creator became man for us. How then could we fail to give thanks that Jesus saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit?

That Jesus put on the flesh of man, that He was baptized by John the Baptist, that He died on the Cross, that He rose again from the dead, that He now sits at the right hand of the throne of God and will come again to take us, giving us the new heaven and the new earth so that we enjoy riches and glory forever as children of God—all of this is for you and for me.

The person who knows his own lack meets the Savior

But what was the real state of you and me? Were we not paralytics? Did we come into this world because we wanted to? We simply came out of our mother's womb and were born on this earth—people who could hardly manage even the tasks given to us, and who had no way even to repent of the sins we committed. We suffered and were pointed at because of our

weakness and our sins; we bore children just like ourselves and had them go through the same course of hardship; and far from blessing others, we handed down curses instead—lives that could only look at themselves and die in sorrow.

Therefore, to know one's own sins and one's own lack, and to believe that the Lord is one's Savior and be saved, is a tremendous blessing. There is nothing greater than this. Only when a person knows his own lack does he meet the Lord and meet the Savior. The Savior certainly came to this earth two thousand years ago and accomplished the salvation of you and me, but if you and I do not know our own lack, we cannot receive that Savior.

How great a blessing it is to know that one is lacking! To be able to come before God and testify of the salvation one has received is also a great blessing. A person must know his own lack to meet the Lord, and must know his own lack to believe in the righteousness of God and receive salvation.

As we live on, we live developing the sins we inherited from our parents. At some moment we discover in ourselves a fierce heart and a furious heart we did not know in ordinary days. Therefore we must always examine and know ourselves. We must look back and ask whether we, who are not upright before God ourselves, are not condemning the faults of others. When we know ourselves in this way, we can respond with gratitude to the good news that Jesus came to this earth in the body of man and saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive salvation by faith, and give glory to God.

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The baptism He received from John the Baptist for me

The Lord pitied me—who could only go to hell because of my sins, and who wished to do good but could not do it—and came to me. And in order to take charge of my sins, He had to be baptized by John the Baptist.

If Jesus had not been baptized by John the Baptist, He could not have taken charge of my sins and yours, and then He could not have saved you and me. Therefore the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist to save me was absolutely necessary. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took on my sins and yours, was judged on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so became my Savior. We must know, believe, and give thanks that all this was for me.

Those who can do nothing without the Lord

Could we leave the church of God and serve this gospel of the water and the Spirit alone, living the life of faith well by ourselves? We could not. Alone, I cannot serve this gospel of righteousness until the day the Lord comes. There must be the word that fits the heart of God, there must be faith and a loving heart, and the Holy Spirit must work with me. Just as the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, so the Holy Spirit must lead me; it does not come about by my striving alone, saying that since I have received the remission of sins I will live as a servant.

There are those who, having received the remission of sins without maturity, think they can just go out and start a church, but the church is not something anyone can do. It is a work that only the person whom God can acknowledge, saying, you are

My servant, can do. Therefore we must rely on the Lord and serve this gospel of the water and the Spirit together with fellow workers of the same faith.

Without the Lord we were useless; we could only pass on curses rather than blessings to others, and could only do evil rather than what is right. But the Lord came to us, who could do nothing and could only be cursed, met us as the Savior, and saved us completely with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Now we are preaching the gospel to the whole world, and through the printed books and electronic books people are receiving the remission of sins. Who did this work? The Lord did it. We have only testified, through the Holy Spirit, of what appears in the word and of the Lord who came into our hearts, and recorded it and shared it. Because we know our own weakness, even as we give thanks, saying hallelujah, we always pray that the Lord will hold us fast.

Like the people of Israel in the Old Testament, we would have had no hope if the Savior had not appeared; we give thanks that the Lord came to us and saved us. Those who receive blessing before God and those who become workers of God are all people who knew their own weakness and lack and believed in the righteousness of God. I want God to give us great faith to believe in Him. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus Christ, who saved the paralytic

< Mark 2:1-12 >

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

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How are you? I too am weary, but it is good to be weary like this doing the Lord's work. I want God to spread this gospel of the water and the Spirit quickly to the whole world.

Today I have read Mark 2:1–12. This passage is the word of God that records the spiritual truth contained in the event in which people brought a paralytic to Jesus and he received healing. It records together the fact that the disease of his body was healed and the fact that the Lord remitted the sins of this man sick with paralysis.

The faith of the people who brought the paralytic

While Jesus was on this earth, when He saw those possessed by demons He commanded and cast the demons out; He took the sick by the hand and raised them up, and the diseases left them; and He healed all kinds of sick people who came to Him and many lepers. As this news spread far throughout the whole land of Israel, the Lord could not stay in one town only, and many people flocked to Him from every direction. Going here and there in this way, He entered Capernaum, and there too the people gathered in great crowds.

At that time there were four men carrying a paralytic. They tried to bring the paralytic to Jesus to have him healed, but so many people surrounded Jesus that they could not enter. So they went up on the roof of the house where Jesus was staying, uncovered the roof, and let down the paralytic lying on his bed, bed and all. These men believed that if they only met the Lord, this paralysis too would surely be healed. For they had heard the news that all who met Jesus were healed—even the demon-possessed, even the lepers with the dreaded disease. With the faith that if they only brought this man sick with paralysis before

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Jesus he would be healed, they uncovered the roof and let the sick man down.

Who is Jesus?

Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* The Lord saw not only the faith of the paralytic but also the faith of those who brought him, and spoke these words.

The scribes and the people nearby reasoned in their hearts and murmured: who is this man Jesus—who can remit sins but God alone? Jesus knew the center of their hearts and spoke. Why do you reason in your hearts over My declaring to this man that his sins are remitted? If I had said to this paralytic, your disease is healed, take up your bed and walk, you would have called Me a man of great power; but because I declared that his sins are remitted, your hearts are full of questions. And saying, *"that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,"* He said to the paralytic, *"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Mark 2:11)*, and he arose, immediately took up his bed, and went out in the presence of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying that they had never seen anything like this.

It was to make known that Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father who came as the son of man, holds the authority to remit the sins of men that He said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* In this world we see many people who are possessed by demons and perform powers, and people who work signs and wonders in the borrowed name of Jesus Christ. But what we must know clearly is the fact that Jesus Christ is not merely a possessor of supernatural power but the One who holds the authority to remit

the sins of men. To say, take up your bed and rise and walk, is also an authority no one can imitate; but greater still is this, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth as the son of man in the flesh of man, holding the authority to wash away and remove the sins of men.

We must know and believe that Jesus Christ is God, who has such power. Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God the Father, and the Creator who made the universe. The world was made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. Jesus Christ is the only Son to God the Father, but He came to this earth and remitted my sins and yours, and He is the Creator God, who made you and me. Therefore, when the people made in the image of God fell into sin, the authority to remit that sin belonged to Jesus Christ. The word Lord means master. He is the Master of all things and the Master of you and me; He is our God, our Savior, and our Master. That is why He would have them know that the One who came to this earth as the Son of Man holds the authority to remit the sins of men.

Though Jesus Christ came to this earth as the son of man, borrowing the body of the virgin Mary, in His essence He was the Creator, who would save His people from their sins. He is the Master God, who created the universe and created you and me. Because Jesus Christ is the Creator, He made not only all things in the universe but also us—you and me. Therefore Jesus has full authority to remit the sins of the creatures He made. Jesus Christ is the Savior God with such power.

People today believe in Jesus to have their diseases healed and to gain various things of the flesh, but they must know that Jesus is the One who holds the authority to remit the sins of men. There is no one but Jesus Christ who can save you and me from sin. He was baptized by John the Baptist and took on my sins and yours and yours once and for all, was nailed to the Cross and

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shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so became our eternal Savior—our Savior God.

Some people speak of Jesus Christ as a mere man without power, as one of the four great sages. They name Him together with Socrates, Buddha, and Confucius as the four great sages, but apart from Jesus Christ those three are creatures. Can a man remit the sins of a man? A man cannot remit the sins of a man. Only Jesus, who made us, holds the authority to remit the sins of men. It is possible because He is God. Since we are creatures made by Him, we must believe in that Jesus Christ to receive the remission of sins.

Has the Lord remitted your sins?

When the Lord says, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* the sins are remitted. But why did the Lord speak so to this paralytic, let down bed and all? In the flesh, a paralytic can do nothing as he wills. His thoughts are clear, but his body does not move; even speaking one word or lifting one spoonful of rice does not go as he wishes. The body not obeying one's own will—this is paralysis.

That the Lord said to the paralytic, *"your sins are forgiven you,"* was to teach the spiritual remission of sins for all people, you and me. He was pointing out our spiritual helplessness and speaking of His mercy and of His authority to remit sins. A man may manage many other things as he pleases, but in the matter of his own sins he can do nothing. Though he weeps, begs, fasts, prays through the night, does good deeds—though he does everything—he cannot remove his own sins.

Since the remission of sins would not come that way, the Lord said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you"*—that is, I remit

your sins. It was not that we did something about our sins; the Lord washed our sins away with the authority of His own word. The Lord is our Master, who has such power and such authority.

Mankind is the creature He made. He formed mankind from the dust. When the universe and all things were created, the only begotten Son Jesus Christ was there together with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, and when He spoke, the whole universe came to be. When He said, let there be light, in the darkness, chaos, and emptiness, there was light; when He said, let the dry land appear, it appeared; when He said, let the earth bring forth the herb that yields seed and the tree that bears fruit, everything came up. God formed man and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being, made in the image of God. Jesus, who is God, is the One with such authority, who created us and the universe.

It is because God saved us from sin that His name is called Jesus Christ; in His essence He is God and the Son of God the Father. Who is the God of creation? It is Jesus Christ. That God declares that when the men He made fell into sin, the authority to remit that sin belongs to Him. The sin of man is sin committed against God. Since the absolute standard belongs to God, He remitted all the sins we committed in our lack and weakness, saying, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."*

The Lord who remitted our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Then how did He truly remit our sins? When we look at Matthew 3:13 and onward, when Jesus came to John the Baptist and was baptized, He said, *"it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* The Lord fulfilled all righteousness and truly

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remitted our sins. How did He remit them? To remit our sins the Lord came to this earth in the flesh of man, was baptized by John the Baptist and took on my sins and yours once and for all, carried the sin of the world to the Cross and was nailed to it, shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so saved us.

So Jesus Christ is our Creator, our Master, and our Savior, who remitted our sins. The Lord removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He came to this earth holding together the three offices of High Priest, King, and Prophet, fulfilled them all, and delivered us from sin and became our Savior. That is why Peter also confessed, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our Lord is the true Prophet, the High Priest, and the King of believers, who saved us from our sins once and for all with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and made known to us that He has remitted them all.

Jesus Christ is truly the God and Master of you and me. He is the God of us all; Jesus Christ is truly God. God became man to save man from sin, became a creature for us, was baptized by John the Baptist, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so removed our sins once and for all. And He ascended, sits now at the right hand of the throne of God the Father, and is the God who will come again to this earth.

Jesus Christ, God who saved us out of countless sins, is the beginning and the end of all things. He alone is truly our Savior, our God, and the King of kings. We must rightly know and rightly believe this Jesus Christ and His work through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus Christ is not a savior who merely heals diseases; He is God, who has remitted the sins of all people. God has already remitted all our sins with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

We must rightly know and rightly believe the essence of

Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ there is power that overcomes all darkness. When we command before that name, Satan, depart, the forces of evil spirits retreat, because Jesus is Almighty God. The Jesus Christ you and I believe in is truly the One with almighty power, the powerful God, who solves our diseases, the demons, leprosy, and our sins as well. At times, you see, we must actually put to use the faith we know and believe.

When we believe in Jesus, we must know who He is and believe. Do you believe that if you just believe in Jesus He makes you rich and only heals the diseases of your body, or do you suppose that Jesus removes original sin but cannot remove your actual sins? It is not so. When Jesus declared, Son, your sins are remitted, and people murmured at this word, He said, child, take up your bed and walk, and the paralytic took up his bed and walked out. This is the command of Jesus Christ, and our Lord is the One with such great power.

When we meet many problems living in this world, we must know who Jesus Christ is and what power He has, and live by faith in Him. Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Father, the Creator who made the universe, and the Savior who completely removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we know and believe this fact, there is no remaining problem that is not solved through the Lord.

When we think how we came to meet such a Lord, there are parts we cannot fully understand; but it was not that we received this salvation because we wanted to meet the Lord—He pitied us, came to us, and met us. Pitying us, He said: Son, your sins are remitted; with the truth of the water and the Spirit I have removed all your sins, so you have no sin; where these have been remitted, there is no more offering for sin. The Lord gave us the gospel of the water and the Spirit and saved us. All on this earth—the demon-possessed, the sick, those struck with leprosy,

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all who live amid countless problems—are solved when they meet the Lord. When they come to know who the Lord is and how He removed our sins, they all receive healing. We are so very thankful.

I too was once a spiritual leper

I too was once a spiritual paralytic and a leper. There was sin in my heart, and I could do nothing about it. I tried fasting prayer and all-night prayer, tried living devoutly, did good deeds, and worked diligently at the Lord's work, but the sin of my heart did not disappear. When one sin seemed gone I committed another, and when I had barely gotten rid of that one I committed yet another. Just as a paralytic cannot solve his own problem, neither I nor you could solve the sins we committed. But the Lord came to us and spoke the word of blessing: *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* Do you believe this fact?

You and I were like this paralytic. If the Lord had not met me, I would have died. Man cannot live on bread alone. Gaining honor or pleasure on this earth is not everything. Before I met the Lord I had no true hope. But the Lord came to you and me, who could do nothing, met us with the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, saved us, made us children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ, and entrusted the work of God to us. I am most thankful of all that I was born into this world and met the Lord, and I am most greatly thankful that, having received the remission of sins, I can be used in this work of preaching the righteousness of the Lord.

Think of it. If you were struck with paralysis and could do nothing, would life taste sweet? You would want to die. But the Lord came to us and solved what we could not solve ourselves,

with the power of His own word: Son, your sins are remitted; arise, take up your bed and walk. How thankful a thing is this! Shall we not leap for joy, praise God, give Him glory, and proclaim this fact?

All the people of this world are paralytics, lepers, and demon-possessed, and the Lord came to all of them and healed them. Truly the Lord was God of great power and our Savior. Because we know and believe that, we come to praise the Lord. With one voice and one faith we praise Him, that He is so powerful and so merciful. We give thanks that He has given us such praise, such gratitude, such amazing faith, and the blessing of living the life of righteousness. We give thanks by faith before our beloved Lord. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, who holds the authority to remit sins

< Mark 2:1-12 >

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

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There was nothing I could do for the remission of my sins

We must consider what we can do to receive the remission of sins before God. I have now received the remission of sins and my God has become my Savior, and I think back on what I could actually do until I truly received salvation. I was not a person who studied theology and believed in Jesus from the start; my family was Buddhist, and I believed in Buddhism until, falling ill in body with a certain disease, I came to believe in God, wanting at least to receive the remission of sins before I died. I came to believe in Jesus in order to receive the remission of sins and die; and now, after believing in Jesus, I think over what I could do until I received the remission of sins completely. What indeed could I have done? I ponder it carefully.

In the old days I did much prayer of repentance—did it really help me receive the remission of sins? In fact it did not help at all. Then did my living faithfully and kindly help? I would take elderly women back to their homes, take lost children back to their homes, and return money I picked up on the street to its owner—did the good deeds I did around the neighborhood help me receive the remission of sins? Thinking of it now, none of it helped. Then did studying the Bible and studying theology help me receive salvation? Far from helping, by studying theology I came to know the Bible wrongly and learn it wrongly, and so I suffered all the more. I suffered truly to the point of death. Only one step before death did I receive the remission of sins. Learning doctrine before God did not help either. Rather, because of doctrine I nearly came to great harm. Being told that original sin was remitted but actual sins were not, I clung to prayers of repentance, strained myself with fasting prayers at every turn, and wept and fasted over even a small fault. I also

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interpreted the word wrongly: taking the word, love your neighbor as yourself, as a command of God to be carried out just so, I tried it, but it simply did not work. If I was full, the other person had to be full too; if I was warmly dressed, the other person had to be warm too. At first it seemed to work, but as I kept on, a person like me could not love his neighbor as himself.

Neither my living kindly nor my learning theology—none of it helped me receive salvation. I was simply a person who, like the paralytic, could do nothing, and later God came to me and met me, and so I received salvation. That is all. My efforts, my goodness, and my studies did not help my salvation in the least. If there was one thing that did help, it was this: I realized that however I longed and strove to seek and meet God, I could never meet the Lord by my own strength; that I could only become a liar; that I was one who could do nothing. To such a me the Lord came. He met me, who could do nothing, and He met you, who could do nothing. None of the efforts you made to receive the remission of sins helped at all, yet God pitied you, came to you, met you, and saved you.

Our receiving salvation is nothing other than God pitying us and loving us and saving us. Did we receive the remission of sins because we were different from the people of the world? No. We too were the blind wandering the road, the mute, the deaf, the lame, the withered, people who could do nothing. But our Lord—God who so loved the world—came to us and saved us. Today's Scripture passage tells exactly that story.

Only the paralytic receives the remission of sins

When Jesus entered Capernaum again, the news that He was in the house spread, and so many people gathered that there was no room even near the door. There was not even room to set one's foot. It seemed that more people had gathered than at a great market. There were gathered many clever people, scribes, Pharisees, distinguished people, and the lowly also had gathered to hear the word of God. Then four men brought a paralytic to Jesus, and among that great crowd Jesus looked at that paralytic and said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* Our Lord fixes the focus on this, that among all those people it was that paralytic who received the remission of sins.

Our Lord came to remove the sins of men. He came to this earth to remove my sins and yours. Then who is the person who receives the remission of sins before the Lord? How many people crowded in to receive the remission of sins before the Lord! So many gathered that there was no room to set one's foot, yet among them the one who received the remission of sins was that one paralytic alone.

Many people live on this earth, and many people try to believe in God and receive the remission of sins; but what kind of person receives the remission of sins and salvation before God and lives on this earth without sin? Among the many people, it is the person like the paralytic who receives the remission of sins. What kind of person is a paralytic? A person who can do nothing. His thoughts are clear, but his body is paralyzed and he cannot stir. If something goes wrong in the right side of the brain the left limbs are paralyzed, and if something goes wrong in the left side the right side of the body is paralyzed; the nerves all harden and total paralysis comes—that is the disease called palsy. All those people came before Jesus and heard the way to the

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kingdom of heaven, but the one who received the remission of sins there was the paralytic alone. The Bible fixes its focus exactly on this point.

That among the scribes and Pharisees, the religionists, the many clever and distinguished people gathered there, only the one paralytic received the remission of sins is spoken to you and me. Only the person who realizes that his own efforts are of no use at all for his salvation and the remission of his sins, that by his own efforts he cannot receive the remission of sins, and that his efforts are of no profit for receiving salvation before God—only such a person receives the remission of sins.

Prayers of repentance do not remove sin

You and I are people who have received the remission of sins, and people who are to receive it; can we then receive the remission of sins by praying in repentance over our sins? Does sin disappear when we pray in repentance? The person who thinks he can receive the remission of sins by prayers of repentance is not a paralytic but a scribe and a Pharisee. The person who prays well in repentance is not a paralytic. The religious leaders of the New Testament era say that if you repent of sin, sin disappears. If we repent of sin and repent again, does the Lord remit all that sin? Then let us try it that way. If we confess the sins of our hearts or the sins shown in our deeds and pray in repentance, does God remit those sins? If the Lord remitted sin just because our mouths said we were wrong, then even without being paralytics, anyone who could simply confess sin would receive the remission of sins—and then the Bible and reality would contradict each other.

For in the Bible only the paralytic received the remission of

sins, and the sound people who were there did not receive it. If the remission of sins came by prayers of repentance, Jesus need not have come to this earth and been nailed to the Cross to die. The wages of sin is death. The price of sin is death and hell. Where there is sin, its price must surely be paid with death. One must die. If some god remitted sin when a man had stabbed another to death and merely begged, I did wrong, I did it unknowingly—such a god would end up a god higher than God, more loving, and more arrogant.

God did not accomplish the remission of our sins for nothing, without a price. God removed our sins not because we begged and said we were wrong. To save us He came to this earth: Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and took on the sin of the world in the Jordan River; as the price of those sins He was judged on the Cross, shed His blood and died, paying the price of death; and He rose again from the dead and so saved us completely from sin. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The remission of sins is the authority of the Son of Man alone

The remission of sins is never something we humans can accomplish. Only the Son of Man can do it. The Lord said, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."* Only the Son of God, only the Son of God—only Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh of man—had the power to save mankind from all sins. Those who have failed to become paralytics say, my strength is the Lord God, and think they can wash their own sins; but the remission of sins never lies with us men. However well one prays in repentance, however kindly one lives, however devotedly one serves God—no human effort, no

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ability, no faithfulness can save a man from his sins.

Only Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, removes our sins. Many theologians say that people who are not paralytics, people like the Pharisees, receive the remission of sins if they pray in repentance. But it is never so. Does sin disappear because one prays in repentance? If sin disappeared through prayers of repentance, the many people living on this earth would all have received the remission of sins and become children of God. How many people have attended church, repented and repented until it would not work, and given up! Those who have never once attended church are a very small few; everyone has attended church and tried all there was to try. If sin could be removed by prayers of repentance, those people would all have received the remission of sins. It is because they have not yet become paralytics that they have not received the remission of sins.

Only the paralytic receives the remission of sins. Only the person who knows he can do nothing, only the person who has given up his own efforts, receives the remission of sins and salvation. Only if He saves me am I saved; if He does not save me, I go to hell. It is when we set our hope on Him alone and entrust our salvation to Him alone that we receive the remission of sins. If Jesus Christ had not removed our sins, then whether we did this or that—prayed in repentance, strove, served faithfully—there would be no way for us to receive the remission of sins. Do this or do that, without Jesus Christ there is no receiving the remission of sins. Salvation is in Him alone. In heaven above and on earth beneath, our salvation hangs on Jesus Christ alone. If He has removed your sins, you receive the remission of sins; and if He has not removed your sins, there is not one among mankind who can receive the remission of sins. Do you understand? However we strive, if God has not removed our sins there is no way to receive the remission of sins. Is it not

so?

I too once thought that the remission of sins was my own effort—seeking and seeking, praying in repentance, living kindly—with the salvation of Jesus Christ added to it. But I came to know that however I strove, if Jesus Christ had not removed all sin, I could not receive salvation. I received salvation because He had accomplished salvation completely. Therefore we must not set our eyes only on what we do, but fix our view on what He has done for us. God did for me what I could not do—what has He done for me? What has He done for me, who am helpless? When we fix our view there, we know that truth and are set free by the truth, and only so can we receive salvation. It says, *"you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*, and the truth is Jesus Christ. We must know Jesus Christ to be saved from sin. If we do not know the truth, if we do not know what is real, if we do not know that God has truly saved us, then however we strive we cannot receive the remission of sins. If we do not become paralytics, can we receive the remission of sins? If we do not become paralytics, we cannot. Only the person who has given himself up, admitting that he can do nothing, receives the remission of sins and salvation.

He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world

What ability do you have to remove your sins? None at all. Are you good at confessing sins? Can you pray in repentance one hundred percent? People who say that a man receives the remission of sins by praying in repentance argue from the words of 1 John 1:9, but that does not hold. How much of the sins committed all day long can one remember and repent of in the

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evening? A man remembers what profits him and forgets all the bad, repenting only of the few sins that greatly prick his conscience. Even if we pray in repentance over sin, what would we repent of? As we live we say that most things are all right, and repent, we say, only of the sins we committed greatly. What we did wrong in the morning we forget by evening, and what we did wrong in the evening we forget the next day. After only a day or two everything is forgotten—how then could we remove with prayers of repentance all the sins committed over a whole lifetime? It is when we cling to Him, saying, I am a lump of sin; I can do nothing; I am bound for hell; save me, deliver me—that we receive salvation. Our Lord said that if there is even a little sin, one can by no means come out from that place. Even small things are all sin. If only great sins were remitted and small sins were not, how could we go to the kingdom of heaven? It is written, repent and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away; our Lord must remove every sin, small or great, for us to receive the remission of sins. Only when He has cleanly removed all the sins committed in a whole lifetime can we receive the remission of sins.

Yet there are people who, having failed to become paralytics, think they can do it themselves. There are people who sing and teach, my strength is the Lord God, saying it can be done. Our Lord said we can do the other things, and He gave us the ability to do them. But He did not enable us to wash our own sins. If we could commit sin and then wash it away ourselves, we would ourselves become gods; then there would be no need of God or of a Savior, no need to serve God or to believe in Jesus. But God desires to be united with us and live together with us, to clothe us with His boundless love and blessing and have us live in His bosom. God never gave us the authority to remove our own sins.

To say that one can do it oneself is the voice of the Devil.

The Devil tempted Adam and Eve to take and eat the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, saying that if they ate it their eyes would be opened and they would be like God, and that God had kept them from eating it lest they become like God. Eve is the mother of all mankind and the figure of our race, and Adam is the figure of Him who was to come. Eve was beguiled by that word, that she would become like God, and took and ate. Satan the Devil still says to us today, you can do it, nothing is impossible—asserting works and setting us against God. In former days too there were many books teaching that if a man tries, everything can be done. Raising the sales of the world and becoming rich may perhaps be done, but receiving the remission of sins cannot be done. It is not a thing that can be done; it is a thing that cannot. If we humans had the ability to wash our own sins, what need would there be of God, what need for Jesus to come to this earth, what need for Him to die on the Cross? What need would there be for Him to suffer on this earth? We are paralytics who can do nothing. If we had been able to do even a little, we would all have gone to hell and would not be in this place now. Those are in this place who tried and tried until it would not work, gave up early, and clung to the Lord, saying, I cannot; help me. God saved the paralytic, who could do nothing. Nothing comes of our efforts. All the other things God permitted us we could do, but the ability to remove sin we did not have. So He came Himself and removed our sins. Even now there are many who do not know they are paralytics and, deceived by the Devil, say they can do it. Can a paralytic whose fingers are stiffened wash rice with those hands, boil soup, do the laundry? He can do nothing; and yet the person who thinks he has even the least strength to move and sets his hope on himself comes to destruction.

Beloved saints, we were paralytics. God saved us, who could

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do nothing, who could not remove our own sins. I too wept wearily over sin and struggled to remove it. To remove sin I would go into a closet for days without even eating, repeating the words, God, remit my sins, praying until I heard a voice say, it is enough now, I have remitted your sins. My stomach was empty, but unless I heard before God the word that my sins were remitted, food would not go down. And Satan the Devil does a strange thing. If you pray three days, sometimes a sound rises in your chest, saying, I have removed all your sins; and if no such sound comes, you comfort yourself, thinking, surely God will let it pass this time, and come out and wash and eat. But do we not sin again? Every time I sinned I had to starve three or four days, and sin became so sickening and so fearful that the more I strove to avoid it, the more I was bound by it. I lived the life of faith that way for ten years, and all that remained in my heart was sin. I fasted and prayed well, never once missed the Lord's Day, and went from village to village, young or old or children alike, leading great numbers of people to church; but though I prayed in repentance again and again, for certain sins no word came that they were remitted. Ten years after I believed in Jesus, I had become truly a sinner.

Jeremiah 17:1 says, "'*The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars" (Jeremiah 17:1).* The sins of a man are written on the tablet of his heart and written in the book of judgment. That is why, whenever we try to pray before God, our sins rise up before us. It is truly a torment. Since that sin would not disappear, the life of faith lost its pulse, I lost the strength to do anything, and no effort availed. At that time I had one way of escape and one hope, and it was that God had chosen me. I had been believing in Buddhism, and God called me and made me believe in Jesus; so I believed that though there

was sin in my heart, God had chosen me and loved me.

This is the doctrine of Calvinist predestination: that those God has chosen receive salvation and those He has not chosen go to hell—something said by a master of conservative theology. So I believed that though I had sin and was lacking, God had chosen me and I would go to heaven. There was sin in my heart, but one thing was certain: I plainly believed in Him. On my side I gripped God tight, but having no strength I kept slipping; I sinned and prayed in repentance and gripped Him again, and prayed in repentance again and gripped Him again. But we must know this doctrine of predestination rightly.

Let us look at Ephesians chapter 1. The Apostle Paul, writing to the church of Ephesus, praises God, saying, Blessed be God: God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. It says, *"just as 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)* and *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).*

Here we must understand well the words in Christ. In the old days, when I did not know how my sins were removed in Jesus Christ, I read the words, He chose us before the foundation of the world, leaving out the word Christ. But we must look carefully at how this word stands. If we drop the words in Christ and read only that God chose us before the foundation of the world, then when twenty people are gathered, it means that God chose this one and did not choose that one. It means that among the people living on this earth God chose some and did not choose others. Then God becomes an unfair and partial God, who makes some His children and sends others to hell. If a man were bound for hell anyway, without being chosen, would he not

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shake his fist at God? Would he stop at shaking his fist? Would he not pour out every curse he had learned on this earth and then go to hell? But God is holy, and He never so acts as to be cursed by His creatures. Do you believe it? Therefore our Lord chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Knowing that all men would sin, He sent Jesus Christ, passed sin onto Him and removed it, and had us receive the remission of sins through Him. He made it so that whoever believes that Jesus removed all the sins of this earth and saved us from sin may go to heaven—so that any person at all may believe in Jesus with the heart and receive every spiritual blessing of heaven. Therefore the person who goes to hell goes to hell because he does not believe what Jesus Christ has done.

The theologians and those who hang their lives on prayers of repentance say that God chose only them before the foundation of the world, and that they go to heaven while all others go to hell. This is what a man named John Calvin said in the sixteenth century. Is the word of John Calvin the word of God, or is the Bible the word of God? The Bible is the word of God. The Bible says that He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. As through one man's offense all men were made sinners, so through one Man's act of righteousness all men are made righteous—so says the Bible.

All men are paralytics. They are people who can do nothing. To the paralytic who could do nothing Jesus said: Son, your sins are remitted; arise, take up your bed and walk. Our Lord removed all the sins of the paralytic, who could not remove his own sins. Then do you know how our Lord removed our sins? The One who delivers that to us is God, and the place that delivers it is this very church. When you meet those who have received the remission of sins, you can surely hear that story.

We are paralytics born with sin

What kind of people are we before God? We are paralytics before God. We were sinners before God from the beginning. Being descendants of Adam, we were born with sin from our mother's womb. Born with murder in the heart, evil thoughts, adultery, envy, strife, theft, hatred, and foolishness—shall we practice them, or shall we not? How shall we not practice what we were born with? That is why we are always careful lest sin come out, careful even in the way we speak. But since we were born with sin, however careful we are, that sin cannot help coming out.

God said, do not murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not bear false witness, do not covet, in order to make us know that we are lumps of sin. If we were people who do not commit adultery, He would not have needed to say, do not commit adultery. Because we are people who commit adultery, He said, do not commit adultery, to make us know our own state. He said, do not murder; and though we know it is right not to murder, hating someone and wishing that he were dead is itself murder. He said, do not steal; and though we do not steal great things, we are the ones who pilfer small things all the time. In the old days when there was little to eat, when ladling the soup, did we not press the solid pieces down for the others and try to scoop them up when our own turn came? Measured against the word, this too is stealing. Whether we enter a company, keep a household, or live in society, what we practice day in and day out is stealing and murder and adultery. Because we are people who murder, who covet, who bear false witness, who disobey parents, who serve idols before God, God gave the Law in this way to teach us that we are sinners who do what He told us not to do.

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Sinners we are, yet because we have no ability to remove our own sins, God calls us paralytics. We have dribbled sin along little by little as we went—how could we remove it all with prayers of repentance? Because we commit sin until the day we die, we need the Savior. We need Jesus, who will remove all our sins. That is why we believe in Jesus. He predestined and chose us in Jesus Christ.

The theologians of today take the words in Jesus Christ and the word election apart, dividing and analyzing with their own heads—election on one side, predestination on the other. But these are not to be believed separately; they are to be believed together as one. God chose us in Christ Jesus, predestined the remission of our sins, and determined to make us His children. It is not this apart and that apart; the will of God is one, and it is His will toward us. Are you confident that you will not sin? If anyone is confident, let him speak. The person who is confident he will not sin is a god. How those who practice asceticism suffer, saying that if they attain enlightenment they become divine! Eating one spoonful of rice a day, living on a few beans, striking the wooden block and fighting themselves—but for all that, sin does not disappear. When a lustful thought rises in the heart they beat it back and beat it back again, but for all that, sin does not disappear. When the lustful thought passes, a hating heart rises; greed rises; evil thoughts rise without ceasing—that is sin. As a persimmon tree, however it may hate it, bears persimmons every year, so if a man is a tree of sin he can only bear the fruits of sin. Our committing sin is like a man with loose bowels who cannot hold back however he tries: however he strains his whole body not to sin, in the end he commits sin. Born with sin, how shall he not sin?

However one strives alone, it is useless. One must give up flat, saying, I cannot; I am a lump of sin—and seek a savior: is

there no god who will save me? God, You save me. When a person seeks the Savior who will save him from sin and comes before Jesus Christ, he receives the remission of sins freely through what Jesus Christ has done, becomes a child of God, and goes to heaven. No effort at all is needed. There is no need to suffer in the mountains practicing asceticism, and no need to strain oneself going hungry. It does not come by effort. In no religion does salvation come by effort.

We must realize that we are paralytics and lumps of sin, that we cannot remove our own sins, and that only when the true God saves us from sin do we receive salvation. Do you know why people try to speak in tongues? Because a person can tell what is being said just by watching the shape of the mouth, they speak in tongues so that others cannot understand. Satan the Devil, to send us to hell, makes the whole body feel warm and makes people take that for the work of the Holy Spirit. Though there is sin in the heart, if only that warmth is there they think all is well, and living that way all their lives they serve as slaves of demons and go to hell. Among Christians too there are many foolish people. Even now they turn off the lights in the chapel and weep and pray in repentance, and since the person next to them would understand if they pronounced the words properly, they slur their prayers lest anyone hear. Though there is sin in the heart, if the body burns warm they take it for the work of the Holy Spirit, and living so all their lives they go to hell. I too, in the old days, for ten years, felt my body flush and seem filled whenever I went to the chapel, and I saw visions and prayed well in tongues. Yet there was sin in my heart. The Lord said that *"many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name?'" (Matthew 7:22),* but that He will declare, *"depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:23)*. Those who mocked God, claiming to believe in Him while keeping sin, He

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drives out in this way.

Beloved saints, it is not the person sound in body, or the person who does something well before God, who receives the remission of sins; it is the person who knows himself—that before God he can only commit sin and can do nothing—who receives the remission of sins. The remission of sins is simple. When you say, I can do nothing; I cannot even pray well in repentance; I know how to do nothing; save me—the Lord asks, can you truly do nothing? And when you say, I cannot; save me—He says, very well; I came to save such as you; I did not come to call the righteous but sinners; and this is how I have removed your sins. Then you say, "Thank You. Now my sins are gone," and praising hallelujah, you receive the remission of sins. Though one sings well, though one is good-looking, we are all paralytics. Because we cannot remove our own sins, we are paralytics. Do you believe that only the paralytic received the remission of sins?

Uncover the roof and confirm what the Lord has done

Let us look at our passage, sum it up, and close. Four men carried a paralytic to Jesus, but they could not bring him near because of the crowd; so they uncovered the roof where He was, made an opening, and let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. Jesus saw their faith and said, Son, your sins are remitted. Here lies the secret of receiving the remission of sins. Though we would receive salvation, many people surrounded Jesus and we could not enter. So they tore the roof open. If the paralytic had turned back because the people were many, he could neither have been healed nor have received the remission of sins.

The paralytic's bed was about the size of the stretchers the medics carry in the army, and they tore open another man's roof, made a hole, and let it down. If we would receive the true remission of sins, we must know what God has done for us. We must give up our own efforts and dig through, one by one, the words of the Old and New Testaments: how the Lord saved us, and how He removed our sins. We must confirm how God removed sin in the Old Testament and how He fulfilled that word in the New. Then we receive the remission of sins. When we come to know the fact of how Jesus Christ came to this earth in the flesh of man and removed our sins, we receive the remission of sins. As He said, Son, your sins are remitted, so to receive the remission of sins we must take the words of the Old and New Testaments apart one by one and confirm: is the word so, or is it not? How did the people of the Old Testament receive the remission of sins, and how do the people of the New receive it? We must tear it open and see. He said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free; we must know this word. However excellent an elder, a pastor, a deacon, or a senior deaconess one may be, whatever office one holds, one must not remain ignorant of this word. We must give up our own effort and confirm how the Lord saved us. And so all the sins are remitted, and the paralytic took up the bed he had lain on and rose and walked out.

At that time the scribes and Pharisees, sitting before Jesus, thought in their hearts: this man blasphemes; who but God could dare have the authority to remit sins? But Jesus Christ is God. Being God, He came to this earth in the body of man to save us. He is the Creator who made us and our Savior. It was that they might know that the Son of Man has the authority to remit sins on earth. Only our Lord can remove the sins of men. God did not remove the sins of some and leave the sins of others. He removed

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the sins of all. On this earth there is not one person whose sins have not been removed.

If someone has gone to hell, it is not because his sins were not removed, but because he took no interest in what God had done for him and did not confirm it, and so went to hell. Our Lord came to this earth so that all people might know the fact that Jesus is the Savior, the Lord who has removed sin. That is why we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Beloved saints, the Lord said, *"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?" (Mark 2:9)* The paralytic had come down through the torn roof and the people stood around him in a circle, and Jesus speaks two words. Between the words, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* and the words, child, take up your bed and walk, which is easier? To men it looks easier to heal a disease than to remit sins. So when Jesus said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* the scribes and the Pharisees thought it blasphemous. But the Lord came to this earth not to heal diseases but to heal the sins of our souls, and He healed them. The Lord came to this earth to remove our sins. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life,"* and the authority to proclaim on this earth, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* belongs to Jesus Christ alone. Only Jesus can remove our sins.

All who met Him received the remission of sins, but the person who has not yet met Him has not received the remission of sins. Is it not so? Our Lord gave the remission of sins first, and then solved the person's problems. How the paralytic must have longed to become healthy! It is unhappy for our body to go wrong, but for the soul to go wrong is worse still. Do you know how much the soul shut up in our flesh longs to receive the remission of sins? Do not care only for your flesh; care for your soul. Before God, let your soul first receive the remission of sins,

and then, as you live on this earth, think of the work this body does and receive blessing.

In the blessing received from God the order is the soul first, and then the life we live. Countless people on this earth say they believe in Jesus and yet speak only of the flesh receiving blessing. That is not Christianity; it is superstition and pseudo-Christianity. To believe in Jesus with sin as it is in the heart is to believe wrongly. To say that any spirit will do, demon or true God, so long as it heals the body, is not true faith but the belief of petty spirits. We must know the truth, know the true God, and know the true remission of sins. We must receive the remission of sins. God caused the paralytic, who could do nothing, to receive the remission of sins. You and I and all mankind are paralytics. We have no ability to do anything of ourselves. We have only to confirm and examine what God has done for us and receive the remission of sins. We must acknowledge before God that we can do nothing, confirm how He has dealt with us, and receive the remission of sins. Only so can we receive salvation. Do you believe?

Lastly, let us hear the words of David, confirm our faith, and close. Those who would receive the remission of sins, I ask you to have fellowship with the brothers and with the servants of God. David committed adultery and committed murder. There was not one of the Ten Commandments he had not broken. To break one point of the Law is to break it all. The person who has not received the remission of sins, when he sins, weeps and begs: God, remit only this sin; from now on I will not sin. But David was a man who had received the remission of sins, a man after God's own heart. After he committed such sins, how did he pray? David prayed thus: *"For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just*

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when You speak, And blameless when You judge" (Psalm 51:3–4).

He meant that God's word and God's judgment are blameless. If You say I go to hell, I go to hell; if You say I am saved, I am saved; it comes to pass according to Your judgment, and it is not something I can determine. Because David acknowledged God in this way, he was called a man after God's own heart. Our judgment must not become the standard or the truth. God's judgment is the truth, and God Himself is the truth. If the Lord had not removed all of David's sins, David too would have gone to hell. But the Lord sent Jesus Christ and washed David's sins wholly away. So David confessed that he was brought forth in iniquity, that in sin his mother conceived him, and that, being born a seed of iniquity, he was a man who could only do such things. David did not say, remit only this sin and from now on I will not sin; he acknowledged himself: from the time I was formed in my mother's womb I was shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin; I am by nature a seed of iniquity, and I am a man who can only do such things.

We too must so acknowledge ourselves and become those who seek salvation before God. When we acknowledge that we are paralytics, come before God, weigh the word of God, know the truth, and believe with the heart, we receive salvation and the remission of sins before God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Solve the sins of your heart by faith

< Mark 2:1-12 >

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

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The blessing given through the church of God

God has bestowed many blessings on us through the church of God. In Ephesians chapter 5 there is the word that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church, and that wives should submit to their own husbands and respect them. This evening, since there are some who have come for the first time, I intend to speak of the gospel of the water and the Spirit through the words of Mark chapter 2 and Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians 5 says that Christ washed the church with clean water, without spot or wrinkle, made her born again and clean, saved her wholly, loved her, protected her, and kept her. Before delivering this word, I first give thanks for the fact that God has blessed us, who are members of the church of God.

God has loved and blessed mankind through the church of God. This is like a husband caring for and supporting his wife so that she has no spot or wrinkle. God has blessed us so that we can preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to all the world, and He has given us everything needed for spirit and body while we live in this world. The Lord has made us the church of God, washed our souls with the clean water of salvation and saved us from all sins once and for all, made us born again, and clothed us with the blessing of heaven. If the Lord had not given us the gospel of the water and the Spirit, how could we have become members of the church of God? Today's passage is not a story about husbands and wives in the flesh but the word about the church, so we must look at it with hearts that believe and give thanks that God has so blessed us.

The Bible records that when the Apostle Peter preached in the days of the early Church, three thousand people repented and were baptized in one day. Such blessing is a work that happens in this age also; and this is the last age, the age when the latter

rain falls, so when we think of the work of the Holy Spirit, what must always be thought of together with it is the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. People pass around the evangelistic books we publish, and many come to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are washed of their sins and become righteous, so there is gratitude in our hearts before God. If someone had the members give offerings and built an enormous chapel, the world would call him the most successful minister; but if he does not preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, though he draws tens of thousands, that is not success but failure. In this age, for us who are born into this world, the greatest success is to meet the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believe it with the heart; and however much doctrine one knows and however faithfully one attends a chapel, if one claims to believe without knowing the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that faith is a vain faith, hollow like an empty shell.

Christians who say they are saved while theirs is a phantom pregnancy

Today there are many who say they attend church and yet do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, attending merely religiously. The religions of the world are things man has made: man makes a religion himself, believes it, discards it, and does with it as he pleases; and this religiosity exists inside Christianity too. As you well know, among Christians also there are those who believe in their salvation by imagination. They say even animals have phantom pregnancies: the longing to have young is so intense that the belly actually swells, the sickness comes, and all the symptoms of a real pregnancy are felt; but when she goes to the doctor and is examined, there is no baby in the womb.

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That is a phantom pregnancy. In the same way, among those who believe in Jesus today there are many in a phantom pregnancy, who count themselves saved while they have sin.

The sins of the heart that ten years of believing could not wash away

I myself was such a one. My family believed in Buddhism, and I came to believe in Jesus when I fell ill in body; and for more than ten years after I believed, I was one in a phantom pregnancy. I believed in Jesus as my Savior; I believed that He had chosen me from before the foundation of the world, met me when the time came, and answered whenever I prayed, and so I passed many years. Whatever anyone said, even with a knife at my throat, I could not deny the faith that I believed in Jesus as the Savior. Yet though I believed in Jesus long, there was sin in my heart. When I first believed, the blood of the Cross, by which He was judged for me, was so precious that tears came whenever I thought of that blood, and Jesus was so dear that marriage in the flesh seemed meaningless to me. But after I believed I still sinned, and so there was sin in my heart; and though I tried to wash my sins by prayers of repentance, relying on the precious blood, in reality there was sin in my heart, and so I was still a sinner.

I had studied Calvinist theology, knew Christian doctrine well, and knew well the logic of sanctification, but in my heart there was always sin. At first joy overflowed like a river, but as five years, six, seven, ten years passed after I believed, my heart grew spiritually dry; the sin stayed as it was; worship became a form; I grew more and more distressed because of sin, and I came to see that I was becoming spiritually a Pharisee. Yet I

could by no means deny that Jesus had saved me with the blood of the Cross, so I judged that I was the one who was unfaithful, not that the Lord had failed to save me, and I stirred up still more zeal: I fasted and prayed more, prayed more in repentance, and strove harder in evangelism and service. Did the sin of my heart then disappear? It did not disappear. I was carrying the phantom pregnancy that Christians today are carrying.

I was studying at a theological seminary, and once I graduated and received ordination I would have to become one who teaches the Bible, not one who asks about it; but with sin in my heart, what was I to do? I knelt down alone and prayed: Lord, I must now go out into the world to minister, but within my heart there is sin. That You saved me from sin and chose me—all this I believe. But did You truly establish me as a servant of God, or am I going out to work calling myself a servant on my own? As I prayed, asking and answering myself in this way, the word of the Psalms came up in my heart, that unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; and a voice came to me, saying, if God has not established you, are you not, in the end, ministering to earn your bread?—and I was in real anguish.

What was most tormenting was that there was sin in my heart. I had prayed in repentance for more than five years, and yet certain sins were not washed away. Other sins seemed to be gone, but these seemed not to disappear; because of them I prayed, evangelized, and did the Lord's work, but the sin of my heart did not disappear, and I was in deep torment. When I first believed, my sins were washed white as snow—why then were certain sins committed afterward not washed? A longing arose in me: even if I gave up the ministry and everything else, I wished to have my sins washed white as snow, so that whatever office I served in within the church, I might serve the Lord with a heart made white as snow. And I prayed for it earnestly.

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When I first read the Bible, most of it seemed to be understood; but after ten years of believing, when I read the Bible I understood it less and less. Before I went to seminary I understood and believed the words of John chapter 1 just as they are: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).* But after I learned doctrine, my eyes read the sin of the world while my heart interpreted at its own will, reading it as the Lamb who takes away original sin. Because there was sin in my heart and it would not disappear however I prayed in repentance, the Bible began to look that way to me. I wanted to know not doctrine but only what God says, and I cried out before God to open my eyes to see the Bible. In Leviticus in the Old Testament it says that when hands were laid on the sacrificial offering the sins passed onto it, and that when the animal was slain and its blood was put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and poured out on the ground, the sin was atoned for; so I searched, thinking that in the New Testament too there must be the fulfillment of this. But having learned by theology, the word kept looking to me like doctrine only, and I could not find it.

My eyes opened to the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Then the Lord made me know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit through the words of the New and Old Testaments, and caused me to receive the remission of sins. I read in Matthew chapter 3 the passage where Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist. The moment I read the words, *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and, *"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from*

the water" (Matthew 3:16), I struck my knee: ah, all sin is ended; the prophecy of the Old Testament has been fulfilled! And for a while I sat there blank, without a single thought. It opened up brightly before me: Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and so took on our sins; therefore He could carry the sin of the world to the Cross and die; and having died, He rose again and became our Savior once and for all.

I realized that the work of the Old Testament—laying hands on the sacrificial offering to pass the sins onto it, slaying that offering, and putting its blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, on the altar of incense, and on the Ark of the Covenant—Jesus, the High Priest of the New Testament, fulfilled together with John the Baptist. The heart that had been tangled and the questions were solved at a stroke; from the Old Testament through the New it began to be understood, and into my dark and gloomy heart came the light of salvation. Not a great light like a nuclear blast, but a very faint light shone into my heart: the Lord saved me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit; and in that way He saved all people from sin. After I met the Lord in this way, I came to worry over how many people there are who, like my old self, are in a phantom pregnancy without knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When one believes in Jesus, sin truly disappears, white as snow; to say, I have sin but I am saved; I have sin but I go to heaven; I have sin but I am God's people—all that is phantom pregnancy.

To confirm this matter I searched the commentaries, the books of sermons, and the theses, to see how people knew and preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The more I looked at those books, the more I saw that people were believing what was neither accurate nor coherent, and I went back up as far as the era of the Reformation, searching even the books of the world's famous men. But my judgment was right. The Bible

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preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but the books of theology, the sermon collections, and the commentaries did not speak of the gospel of the water and the Spirit; they spoke only of the blood of the Cross. The Apostle Peter said that a person is born again not by silver or gold, but through the eternal word of God; so people today also must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their hearts and be born again by the word of God. One is born again by believing the living word—not by receiving tongues while praying; and however much one believes in Jesus and in the blood of the Cross, if there is sin in the heart, one is not born again.

Even if one says there is no sin in his heart, if, when asked how he believes in Jesus as his Savior, he cannot say that he was born again by the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Old and New Testaments declare, he is not one truly born again but one leading a religious life, a sinner who claims to be saved. Such a person is fine while he is gathered together with others, but when he is alone and looks into his heart, he knows that he is not united with Christ but merely holding on to Christ. That is why we once gave an evangelistic meeting the title, Let us obtain the certificate of blessing. Since the person who does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has sin in his heart can never enter heaven, to obtain the certificate means to take the test of faith—to know rightly and believe and receive the remission of sins. If one fails on this earth to be saved from sin and obtain that certificate, still less will he be acknowledged when he goes before God; what is not done on this earth is not done in heaven either.

Therefore you must listen well to the word of truth concerning the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If you listen well you receive salvation simply; but if you find it tiresome and do not listen, then though you make offerings amounting to

billions to the church, it is all vain service. The false ones in the end speak only of money: to receive blessing, they say, give much offering; and if one does not give, they do not treat him well. Some preach Solomon's thousand burnt offerings and weigh the amount of the offering, putting to shame the one who gave little—how could it be right to be so intent on taking money before God? That Christians today, in a phantom pregnancy of their own thoughts, confess that they are saved and will go to heaven, and yet are lonely when they are alone, is because Christ is not in their hearts and sin is there. Such people must hear and believe the true gospel of the water and the Spirit; then true rest comes into the heart.

"Son, your sins are forgiven you"

It seems my introduction today has been too long. Now I will preach the passage itself. In the passage we read together, four men carried a paralytic to Jesus. The house where Jesus was staying was so crowded that there was no room even to set a foot, and they could go no farther; so they tore open the roof and let down the sick man's bed and set it before Jesus. Jesus saw their faith and said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you."* Around Him there were always encamped the scribes and the Pharisees; they believed well in the LORD God, but they did not in the least acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God.

They said in their hearts, this is blasphemy; who but God can remit sins?—counting Jesus insolent. Not knowing that Jesus is God, they sneered and murmured among themselves that this man was saying what only God can say. Jesus knew their hearts and said, why do you reason about these things in your hearts? And He asked: between the word declaring to the paralytic that

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his sins are remitted and the word telling him to rise, take up his bed, and walk, which would be easier? The paralytic could neither rise nor walk, so he could do neither of the two; yet if one must weigh them, the word, take up your bed and walk, is the easier side.

The Lord knew that both of these are one hundred percent impossible for man. Therefore He said, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."* It was to make known that He Himself, living on this earth in the body of man, holds the authority to remit the sins of men. And when He said to the paralytic, arise, take up your bed and go to your house, he rose, took up his bed, and went out in the presence of them all. The people were all amazed and glorified God, saying that they had never seen anything like this.

Do you know who Jesus is?

Here I want to say one thing. We now say that we know Jesus and believe in Him—but how much do we really know Him in our hearts? Do you know and believe that Jesus is God, who created this universe? Do you know in your heart that the God who said, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)* and spoke, saying, let there be, let there be—that this God is Jesus Christ, who came to this earth as our Savior? Jesus is the only Son to God the Father, but He is the Creator, who made the universe and all things. We say we believe in Jesus as the Savior and yet believe in Him only as the Son of God, in many ways thinking of His power apart from the Father's power; but if we do not rightly know the identity of Jesus, it is hard to hold a sound faith.

Jesus is certainly the Son to God the Father, but to us He is

God the Absolute. He is our Savior and our Shepherd; the Savior who saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Judge, and the Absolute One. When we meet the Lord through the word of God, we come to know that the Lord came to this earth, lived the thirty-three years of His life, removed our sins with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, rose from the dead, and became our eternal Savior. The Lord is the One who will now come again, the One who will take us to Himself, and the Judge who will judge those who do not believe. Then how did Jesus remit the sins of men? Did He remit your sins only by hanging on the Cross?

In John chapter 3 the Lord said that unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he can neither see the kingdom of God nor enter it. Only by being born again of water and the Spirit can one enter the kingdom of God and see God; and for that we must know how the Lord came to this earth and saved us and made us born again—we must rightly know who Jesus is. People today believe in Jesus as the complete Savior and yet set a rank between Him and the Father in the work and the power of God; but He is the very same God. The Pharisees sneered that this man was saying what only God can say, but Jesus is the One who can say on this earth to you and me, Son, your sins are remitted. For He came to this earth, took on my sins and yours on His own body exactly as was spoken in the Old Testament, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again, and so saved us.

The two places where our sins are written

Have you ever passed your sins over to Jesus Christ by your faith? I do not doubt that you believe in the blood of the Cross. But have you, in the state of knowing yourself a sinner, ever

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passed your sins over to Jesus Christ through the word? People plainly believe that Jesus carried the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, rose again, and ascended; and yet they miss the fact that this sin of the world is, at bottom, in my heart and in yours. There was the event in which Jesus, through the thirty-three years of His life, moved the sins that were in my heart and yours onto His own body and took on them—this we must know clearly. It says, *"you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*; if you do not know by the word the fact that your sins passed over to Jesus Christ, your faith becomes an imagined faith, like a phantom pregnancy.

Though you plainly believe that He carried all the sin of the world and died on the Cross and rose again and saved us, and that Jesus is God, who created us—if you do not know the fact that the sins of your own heart passed over to Jesus, that is exactly a phantom pregnancy. You believe with the head and believe with the breast, and yet when you look into the center of the heart, sin is written there as it was. God has written the sins of man in two places. First, He wrote them on the tablet of the heart: the one who actually has sin in his heart and says he has sin is the true sinner, and the one who acknowledges as sin what God calls sin is the genuine sinner. Second, to judge those who do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God records all the sins they have committed in the book of judgment.

Since sin is written in two places, if the Lord would remove our sins, He had to wash away the sins of both places. First, not painting over the filthy sins of our hearts, He received them onto His own body through His baptism and washed them clean; and carrying those sins He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, rose again and ascended; and He must come again and erase even the name recorded in the book of judgment, that we

may be wholly saved from sin. The Lord has washed our sins in this way; if then there is still sin in your heart and mine, though we say we believe in Jesus as our Savior, we are not yet those who have met Christ, but are carrying a phantom pregnancy. If, like the scribes and the Pharisees, we fail to recognize Jesus rightly, and believe without knowing the fact that He washed all our sins white as snow with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is a faith like a phantom pregnancy.

The paralytic who can do nothing

To know and believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit truly, you must know the fact that you yourself are a paralytic. A paralytic is one who can do nothing; you must know that there is nothing you can do by yourself to wash your sins. The mark of paralysis is that the thought is clear but cannot be carried into action: everyone knows well enough that he need only not sin, and yet he keeps committing the sins he does not want to commit, and sin piles up in his heart. People today pray in repentance; they weep, they laugh, they do everything, but the sin is not washed. To be saved from sin, one must know that he is one who must surely receive the Lord's salvation and has not yet received it; the person who thinks he is not a paralytic cannot receive salvation. Only that paralytic whom the four men carried received the remission of sins from Jesus, who saw his faith.

The person who thinks, I can do something; I can wash my sins with prayers of repentance; if I just fast forty days, will not God be moved and remit my sins?—such a person is not a paralytic but a Pharisee. The most fearful word within Christianity is the word that one can do anything: with sin in the heart, not yet even the people of God, what can one do, and how

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could one wash away sin? The person who has believed in Jesus a long time knows in himself that sin does not disappear by prayers of repentance. Though at a revival meeting he weeps and receives grace and seems to have had all his sins settled, when he tries to pray again that sin rises up and tells him, you have sin. The person who has not received the remission of sins has sin, and the person who has received the remission of sins has none.

There is no need to weigh it in some complicated, philosophical way; it is to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and acknowledge the fact as it is. One must acknowledge that, being a paralytic, he cannot remove his own sins—that if the Lord has removed them they are gone, and if He has not removed them they remain, and that it is not affected in the least by anything of one's own. Yet people attending chapels today say they are not paralytics, gathering to wash their own sins with prayers of repentance or with the doctrine of sanctification. When Jesus was on this earth He healed many sick people, fed the crowds with five loaves and two fish, and cast out demons, and great numbers followed Him; but only this paralytic received the acknowledgment of his faith. Many believe in Jesus today, but many, with sin in their own hearts, tell the church members to receive the remission of sins and to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Does it make sense to arrive at sanctification by the doctrine of Christianity? The word of the Bible says that He washed our sins once and for all, white as snow, and the New Testament also says, *"Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)*. Our Lord came to this earth and, through the thirty-three years of His life, took on our sins perfectly and received the judgment of sin and removed it; this truth we must know. Because Christian believers do not know this fact, we are preaching it to all the people of the whole

world, and there are very many who confess that, after twenty or thirty years of ministry, only now have they come to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become wholly without sin. It says, *"You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14),* and the Lord is the light; only when we meet that light and deliver it do we become the light of the world—however much good we do at orphanages and nursing homes, we do not become the light by that.

Suppose there is sin in your heart, unsolved, and you die in an accident. If you have no sin you go to heaven, but if you have sin you go to hell. To suppose that if you pray in repentance at the moment of death the sin will disappear is only your own thought; we must prepare our own salvation—preparing not the lamp only but the oil as well. The person who attends church without preparing his own salvation is like the foolish virgins: when the Lord comes, he can neither go out to meet Him nor enter His kingdom. Lacking as I am, I can go to the Lord's kingdom at any time, and I give thanks before God. When I sought to meet the Lord, the Lord came after me and found me and met me through this word, and He met you in the same way. Because we met through the word, we cannot be parted; heaven and earth may pass away, but this word does not pass away, and so I can say at any time that there is no sin in my heart. Take up a booklet or listen to a sermon, and in the end it says, give much money and live kindly by ethics and morals; but measured by ethics and morals, those who believe other religions often live better. And yet do not Christians, committing worse sins, still think they go to heaven because they believe in Jesus? That is exactly a phantom pregnancy. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who calls sinners, and the new wine

< Mark 2:13-22 >

"Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.' The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts

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the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.'"

Jesus went out again by the sea. When the multitude came to Him, Jesus taught them. And passing by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. Jesus did not see only the multitude that had gathered to hear the word; He saw one man at whom people pointed as a sinner. Levi was sitting not in a high seat of the synagogue but in the seat where taxes were collected. In that very seat he heard the call of Jesus.

Levi heard the call and rose and followed Jesus. The scene that follows does not end as a quiet private resolution. When Jesus dined in his house, many tax collectors and sinners sat together with Jesus and His disciples. The call that came to one man opened one table, and to that table came those whom the religious were reluctant to come near. The latter part of Mark chapter 2 shows, through the scenes of the meal, the fasting, the garment, and the wine, whom Jesus calls and what the new life of faith with Him is.

Jesus, who in the preceding passage declared the remission of sins to the paralytic, now walks to the place of sinners. The authority to remit sins is not a cold authority that only pronounces verdicts from afar. It is the authority of the Savior, who seeks out and calls the sinner, sits together with him, and leads him into new life. The scribes of the Pharisees, on the other hand, without sitting at that table, asked His disciples why Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. Within the same scene, the Lord who calls sinners and the religion that sorts sinners and pushes them away stand in sharp contrast.

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He saw Levi sitting at the tax office and called him

That Levi was sitting at the tax office shows the concrete place of life where he worked. The tax collector of those days collected taxes under the rule of Rome and was treated as a sinner by his own people. The text does not explain what feelings Levi carried that day or what he was thinking before he was called. Therefore we must not imagine his inner heart and speak of it as if it were fact. What the Bible states plainly is the fact that Jesus saw him and called him, and that Levi rose and followed.

The gaze of Jesus was not shut up within people's reputations. Others would have seen first the signs of the tax office and the tax collector, but Jesus saw one man to be called. This does not mean that He approved the sins and wrongs that could arise in Levi's occupation. To say that He calls sinners is not to change sin into what is not sin. It means that He does not leave the man in his sin as he is, but calls him out to the place of following the Lord.

Levi was not called after he had first perfectly settled his affairs at the tax office and proved his own qualification. The call of Jesus came first, and he rose in answer to that word. Salvation is not a prize a man receives after making his own past clean. It is grace that the Savior comes and gives to the sinner who cannot erase his own past. What a man must do is not to hide his sins and pretend to be righteous, but to acknowledge that the One he needs as a sinner is Jesus, and to receive His word.

But the call did not leave Levi bound to the seat of the tax office either. He rose and followed Jesus. Grace comes to the sinner, but it does not sanction the place of sin as his everlasting home. To follow Jesus is for the master of one's life to change.

If before, money and circumstances and people's opinions led his decisions, now the word of Jesus sets the direction. This change does not create the price of salvation, but it shows the direction in which the faith that has been called moves.

We too easily fix a person to one scene of his past. We put names on people: this one is a greedy man, that one a failure, another a man not to be trusted. To make responsibility for a wrong clear is one thing; to exclude a person forever is another. Jesus did not take sin lightly, and yet He called sinners. The church must not call evil good, but neither must it shut even the way for a person to repent and hear the gospel. The door must be opened so that the call of the Lord may reach even the one sitting at the tax office.

The word that called Levi also makes us look back at our own seat. Even if we are not sitting in a tax office outwardly, the heart may be sitting in the seat that calculates its own gain. One may make his godly appearance his asset, count up the amount of his service, and build up his own righteousness by comparing it with the lack of others. Before the call of the Lord we must rise not only from worldly greed but also from religious self-righteousness. If we say we follow Jesus and still hold on to our own merits, the body has moved, but the heart remains sitting in the old seat.

The Physician who sat at one table with sinners

In Levi's house many tax collectors and sinners sat together with Jesus and His disciples. Mark records that there were many, and that they followed Jesus. The table was not merely a place where food was eaten. It was the place where it became plain who was with whom. By Jesus sitting at that table, a near place

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was opened where sinners could hear the word of God.

The scribes of the Pharisees saw this and questioned His disciples. They saw the past and the standing of those who sat at the table, but they did not see why Jesus was among them. They were practiced in distinguishing themselves from sinners, but they did not realize that their own hearts also needed the Physician. Knowledge that points out another's sin precisely does not make one's own sin disappear. Rather, the heart that counts itself healthy through comparison can end up refusing the Physician.

Jesus heard that question and said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mark 2:17)*. It is nothing strange for a physician to be near the sick. To cure the disease he must meet the patient. Jesus being with sinners was likewise not to take part in sin but to bring sinners up out of sin.

Here the well and the righteous do not mean people who by their own strength actually have not one sin. To the person who does not acknowledge his sin before the Bible and counts himself healthy, the physician looks useless. It is not that there is no medicine; the patient is denying the disease. The scribes of the Pharisees diagnosed the people inside the table, but excluded themselves from the diagnosis. So the grace of Jesus, who calls sinners, looked to them only uncomfortable.

To acknowledge that one is a sinner is not a religious performance of self-abasement. One can say with the mouth that he is the worst of sinners while thinking in his heart that he is better than others. True acknowledgment is to accept the judgment of the word of God: to confess that my good deeds and religious life cannot remove the sins of my heart, and that apart from Jesus there is no way to receive the remission of sins. Then the call of Jesus the Physician becomes good news.

The church is not a showroom of people who have no need of the Physician's treatment. It is the place where those who have received the remission of sins testify how they met the Savior, and where those who do not yet know the gospel are served so that they may hear the word. This does not mean covering over falsehood and violence and exploitation within the community. To leave harm untended in the name of welcoming sinners is not the work of a physician. To expose the disease accurately, stop the evil, protect the injured, and lead everyone before the gospel of the remission of sins—this is the manner of serving the Lord's table.

The person who has received the remission of sins must take care not to move over into the Pharisee's seat. If one saved by grace despises another's past, he has forgotten what call he received. We were not saved because our sins were light. We received the remission of sins because the salvation of Jesus is perfect. Therefore we must speak the truth plainly and yet not lose compassion toward sinners. We must not, by our prejudice, leave standing outside the table the person Jesus wants to meet.

Why fast while the Bridegroom is with them?

The question about the table led on to a question about fasting. While the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting, someone came to Jesus and asked why their disciples fasted while His disciples did not. They compared godliness by acts visible to the eye. They judged faith by who fasted more often and who disciplined himself more strictly.

Jesus did not unconditionally deny fasting itself. He said that the day would come when the bridegroom would be taken away, and that in that day they would fast. The problem was the time

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and the meaning. For the friends of the wedding feast to put forward the marks of sorrow while the bridegroom is with them does not fit the reality of the feast. If, though the Savior has come among them, they fail to recognize the Savior and only continue their own asceticism, their zeal may show, but their faith becomes a faith that misses the time of God.

In the word bridegroom there is joy, and there is also the shadow of the event that was to come. Jesus spoke of the day when the bridegroom would be taken away. The disciples would come to grieve before the suffering and death of Jesus. So the passage does not speak only of cheap gladness. True joy does not come from pretending not to know sin and judgment; it comes when we know that Jesus the Bridegroom would give Himself up for sinners.

Today also, fasting and prayer and self-restraint can be profitable in the life of faith. We may humble our hearts and pray before an important matter, and restrain the desires of the flesh and fix our attention on God. But the moment we make such acts a condition of the remission of sins, the purpose changes. If we think that God removes our sins because we fasted some days, or that the more we suffer the nearer we come to salvation, the guest is trying to do in place of the Bridegroom what the Bridegroom must do.

Prayer is the same. We do not pay the price of salvation by praying much. Prayer is the person who has received the remission of sins calling God Father, giving thanks, and asking for help. Service also is not a transaction that offsets sin. It is the fruit of the person called by grace loving his neighbor. However godly the form of the act, if the order is reversed, the gospel is veiled and self-righteousness shows itself.

In the faith that is with the Bridegroom there is gratitude. If we do not look at what Jesus has already done and only peer at

our own lack, faith becomes like an endless funeral. On the other hand, to insist only on gladness without looking back at one's own faults is not right either. Grieve over sin and turn from it, but keep the eyes on the Savior, who removed sin. After confessing a wrong, do not stay shut up in your own feelings; believe what the righteousness of the Lord has accomplished.

The new gospel is not a patch sewn on old self-righteousness

Jesus spoke of the piece of unshrunk cloth and the old garment. If the new piece is sewn on an old garment, the new pulls away the old and the tear is made worse. Then He said that if new wine is put into old wineskins, the old skins cannot bear the force the new wine carries, and they burst, and both the wine and the skins are lost. Therefore new wine must be put into new wineskins.

We must not turn this word simply into a slogan that the new idea is always better than the old. Nor does it mean that following fashion or innovating an organization brings success. The dispute that lay before it was the attitude toward sinners and the religious acts represented by fasting. It is the word that the salvation Jesus accomplishes, calling sinners, cannot be attached to the old frame that would establish righteousness by one's own works.

The man in an old garment tries to cover only the torn part with a new piece. In the same way, the man who holds his own righteousness tries to supplement only the lacking part of his life with Jesus. He thinks: basically I am a decent person, and Jesus need only handle the sins in which I fall short. But the gospel is not a supplement that acknowledges most of a man's merit and

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fills in the missing points. It begins from the diagnosis that all men are under sin and cannot remove sin by their own deeds.

The old wineskin, too, is outwardly a wineskin. Though religious habit is long, though one holds office, though one's Bible knowledge is great, if the heart relies on its own merit it cannot hold the new wine. Self-righteousness does not coexist peaceably with grace. When one does well he exalts himself; when he fails he condemns himself; and comparing himself with others, he keeps on calculating merit. Grace says: stop that calculation and believe wholly what the Savior has accomplished.

The news of the gospel, like new wine, is that Jesus has Himself completed the salvation of sinners. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body. And carrying those sins He went up on the Cross, received the judgment, and died. The price of sin was paid, and Jesus rose from the dead and showed that He is the Son of God and the Lord of life. The baptism received from John, the judgment and death of the Cross, and the resurrection from death are not a divided salvation but one gospel that Jesus completed for sinners.

All the sins of the person who believes this gospel with the heart are removed once and for all. God no longer leaves him a sinner but makes him a righteous person without sin, and gives him the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him a child of God. This is not obtained by the number of days fasted, the hours of service, or the amount of the offering. It is received by faith in what Jesus has already accomplished. The thought of adding works to complete salvation is to fasten the conditions of the old wineskin onto the new wine.

Therefore, to become a new wineskin is not merely to change the outward form into something modern. It does not mean only

making new the manner of the hymns or the form of the meetings. It is for the support of the heart to change from one's own works to the righteousness of Jesus. It is the faith that abandons the thought that I save myself, and receives as fact what Jesus has completed. The heart that has laid down its own righteousness does not shrink the gospel; it receives the remission of sins as grace, and holds the grace it has received with thanksgiving.

Even after one receives the remission of sins, the thoughts of the old wineskin can raise their head again. On a day of much service it can seem that God loves us more, and on a day we stumble we can feel as though we had lost the standing of a child. But the ground of our having become children of God is not our daily record but the completed salvation of Jesus. Acknowledge the weakness of the flesh and turn from it, but do not try to buy the standing again with works. The Holy Spirit brings us back to the gospel and leads us to bear fruit worthy of grace.

Set the condition of salvation and the fruit of following in right order

Levi rose and followed Jesus. His following is an important change. But that act was not the condition that made Jesus call him. Jesus saw and called first, and Levi's following was the answer to that call. When we keep this order, we neither despise works nor fall into salvation by works.

We cannot say that a change of life does not matter at all to the one who believes in Jesus. Living faith does not insist on keeping hold of the greed and falsehood of the tax office even after hearing the word. The person who has received the remission of sins, following the leading of the Holy Spirit,

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abandons unjust gain, sets right responsibly any loss he has caused by his wrong, and learns honesty and love. But such fruits are not the price that purchases or maintains the salvation of Jesus. They are the result of the saved life showing itself outwardly.

Fasting and prayer and service are precious in their own place. To give time for the kingdom of God, help neighbors in hardship, preach the gospel, and serve the church are beautiful fruits. The problem arises when one boasts of these to lower others, or demands recompense from God. The person who serves in order to receive the remission of sins is always counting his own record, but the person who serves with thanksgiving after receiving the remission of sins remembers the grace the Lord first bestowed.

When we help a believer whose fruit is lacking, we must also keep the order. Pouring in more condemnation does not produce true change. First see whether that person stands on the completed salvation of Jesus, and have him confirm in the gospel the standing God has given him. Then help him turn concretely from the wrong and obey in faith. Command given without grace makes an old wineskin, and grace spoken without obedience blurs the purpose of the call.

The table opened in Levi's house is the fruit of following. He did not know Jesus alone and stay hidden. A place came to be where many tax collectors and sinners could sit near Jesus. If we have received the Lord's call, we too must open the places of our life so that other souls can hear the gospel. Even if we cannot do great things, we can listen to the words of family and neighbors, treat them without prejudice, and tell them plainly what Jesus accomplished for sinners.

Here the church must not use the words, separate from the world, in the sense of despising people. From sin and falsehood

we must be separate, but from the love of Jesus, who went to find sinners, we must not drift away. We must not become the scribe outside the table on the plea of guarding the truth, nor approve sin as it is on the plea of speaking love. Like Jesus, we must declare sin to be sin, deliver the way of salvation to the sinner, and walk together with the person who has believed the gospel so that he lives the new life.

Do not only question from outside the table; come inside the calling

At the end of the passage two kinds of places appear. Levi and many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus, heard the word, and followed. The scribes of the Pharisees asked from outside why He ate with them. The one who compared the fasting of the disciples of John and of the Pharisees did not see the fact that the Bridegroom was right before him. The old garment and the old wineskin tried to keep their own way of believing and could not receive the new.

In which place are you? Do you weigh the sins of others and count yourself healthy? Do you seek to be acknowledged by Jesus on the ground of a long religious life? Or, like Levi, hearing the call of the Lord, are you rising from your seat? Jesus did not come to congratulate the man who has completed his own righteousness; He came to call sinners and make them righteous.

Do not put off acknowledging that you are a sinner. That is not the door of despair but the door to meeting the Physician. At the same time, to remain forever in the confession of being a sinner is not the purpose of the gospel either. Believe that Jesus removed all sins with the baptism He received from John, the

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judgment and death of the Cross, and the resurrection from death. The one who believes receives the remission of sins, becomes righteous, and becomes a child of God in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

Now lay down the calculations of the old wineskin. Come out of the faith that buys salvation with deeds done well and doubts the completed salvation because of deeds that have failed. Receive by faith what Jesus has done, and enjoy the joy of being with the Bridegroom. When you realize a wrong, confess it honestly and turn from it, but do not try to remove the sin with your own punishment; look to the Lord, who has already borne the judgment of sin.

And rise and follow. Do not turn the grace you have received back into a condition of salvation; show it as the fruit of thanksgiving. Pray, serve, and preach the gospel, but do not exalt yourself by these. Like Levi's table, prepare a place where other sinners can hear the word of Jesus. Carry not the heart of the religionist who pushes sinners away, but the heart of the Lord, who calls sinners.

New wine must be put into new wineskins. The completed salvation of Jesus is not a small patch for preserving one's own righteousness. It is the gospel that ends our old calculations and changes the master of our life. Believe in Jesus, who comes to find sinners, sits together with them, makes them righteous, and has them walk the new way. Within that calling, enjoy the joy of the remission of sins, and live following the Lord with thanksgiving, according to the Spirit. ✉

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CHAPTER

3

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Mark Chapter 3

< Mark 3:1-35 >

“And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward.’ Then He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, ‘You are the Son of God.’ But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known. And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him

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

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who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.’”

1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 3 begins with the event in which Jesus healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, and records the appointing of the twelve disciples, the warning about the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, and the teaching that the person who does the will of God is the true family of Jesus. In the synagogue Jesus healed a man whose hand was withered, and made plain that on the Sabbath it is right to do the good that saves life. But the Pharisees plotted with the Herodians how they might destroy Jesus. Many people flocked to Jesus, and He healed the sick and subdued the unclean spirits. Then He went up on the mountain and appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, preach the gospel, and cast out demons. Meanwhile the scribes who came down from Jerusalem accused Jesus of casting out demons by the ruler of the demons. Jesus answered that if Satan casts out Satan, his kingdom cannot stand, and He solemnly warned against the sin of deliberately blaspheming the work of the Holy Spirit as the work of Satan. At the end He said that the person who does the will of God is His brother and sister and mother, teaching of a new spiritual family that goes beyond blood relations.

1. Jesus heals the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath (verses 1–5)

When Jesus entered the synagogue again, there was a man whose hand was withered on one side. The people watched to

see whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath, in order to find grounds to accuse Him. Their interest lay not in the sick man being restored, but in gaining a pretext to condemn Jesus.

Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, *"Step forward."* And He asked the people which is right on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill. But they gave no answer at all. Though they knew that it is right to do good and to save life, they kept silent because of their intent to accuse Jesus.

Jesus was grieved by their hardened hearts, and He was angry. His anger was not directed at the sick or the weak; it was directed at the stubbornness that holds up the commandment of God while turning away from the suffering. When Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand, his hand was completely restored.

2. The Pharisees and the Herodians plot to destroy Jesus (verse 6)

The amazing thing happened that the withered hand was restored, but the Pharisees, seeing it, did not glorify God. They went out of the synagogue and at once plotted with the Herodians how they might destroy Jesus.

The Pharisees and the Herodians originally differed from each other in political and religious position. The Pharisees counted the Law and religious tradition important, and the Herodians were a group that supported the house of Herod and the political order of the time. But before the aim of getting rid of Jesus, they joined hands with each other.

They acted as though they kept the Sabbath, yet in their hearts they laid a plan to kill a man. This shows the fact that outward religious acts do not automatically make a person's heart good. That they claimed to keep the commandment of

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God and yet sought to kill Jesus, who had saved life, exposes how contradictory their faith was.

3. Great crowds flock to Jesus (verses 7–12)

Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the seaside. Not only from Galilee but also from Judea and Jerusalem, from Idumea and beyond the Jordan, and from around Tyre and Sidon, many people heard what Jesus was doing and came to Him. The ministry of Jesus had become widely known beyond the region of Galilee to many provinces.

Because those who suffered from diseases pressed in to touch Jesus, He had a small boat kept ready so that He would not be crushed by the multitude. The people had the purpose of hearing His teaching, but in many cases they came to have their own diseases and problems solved.

The unclean spirits, whenever they saw Jesus, fell down before Him and cried out, *"You are the Son of God."* The demons recognized the identity of Jesus, but that did not mean saving faith. Jesus sternly commanded them not to make His identity known at will. Who Jesus is had to be made known rightly not through the testimony of demons but through His word and ministry, His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

4. Jesus appoints the twelve disciples (verses 13–19)

Jesus went up on the mountain and called those He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. It was not the disciples who first chose Jesus; Jesus first called them. The life of a disciple does not begin with putting forward one's own ability or qualification, but with answering the call of Jesus.

The purpose for which Jesus appointed the twelve was first that they might be with Him. The mission of a disciple starts not from doing many works but from staying with Jesus and

learning His word and His life. After that, Jesus sent them out to preach the gospel and gave them power to cast out demons.

The twelve disciples were Simon Peter, James and John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot. To James and John, Jesus gave the name *"Sons of Thunder."* The backgrounds and characters of the disciples differed from one another, and Judas Iscariot later betrayed Jesus. The outward standing of having been called as one of the twelve does not by itself make a person faithful to the end; what matters is believing in Jesus and remaining in His word.

5. The people close to Jesus misunderstand Him (verses 20–21)

When Jesus entered a house, so many people gathered again that Jesus and His disciples could not even eat. Jesus taught, healed, and served the people without leisure to rest or to take a meal.

The people close to Jesus heard this news and went out to lay hold of Him. For people were saying that Jesus was out of His mind. Being in a close relationship with Jesus did not itself mean understanding His ministry rightly.

A person can fail to see the true form of the very one he thinks he knows familiarly. If one judges Jesus only by human standards and family relations, it is hard to realize the fact that He is the Son of God, who came as the Savior.

6. The scribes slander the power of Jesus as the power of a demon (verses 22–27)

The scribes who came down from Jerusalem asserted that Jesus had Beelzebub, and that He cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. They had seen in person, or heard reported, the

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work of Jesus casting out demons and setting people free, yet they did not acknowledge the fact that this power came from God.

Jesus called them and spoke in parables. He asked how Satan can cast out Satan, and explained that if a kingdom is divided against itself that kingdom cannot stand, and if a house is divided against itself that house cannot be maintained. If Satan attacked his own forces his kingdom would collapse; so the claim that Jesus casts out demons by the power of Satan did not hold together even logically.

Jesus said that no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man. This means that Jesus came as the One stronger than Satan, to subdue the authority of Satan and set free the people who were under his rule. Casting out demons was not evidence that Jesus was on Satan's side; it was evidence that He was breaking Satan's power.

7. The warning about the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (verses 28–30)

Jesus warned that all the sins of men and the words that blaspheme God can be remitted, but that the person who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never receives remission and is subject to eternal condemnation. These words do not mean that there is no way of the remission of sins for the person who spoke wrongly by mistake in weakness, or who fears because of his sins and seeks the remission of sins.

In the passage, the scribes watched the clear saving work that Jesus did by the power of the Holy Spirit and yet pronounced it the work of an unclean spirit. They did not simply fail to understand; in order to oppose Jesus, they deliberately distorted the work of God. Mark explains that the

reason Jesus gave this warning was that they said, *"He has an unclean spirit."*

The person who refuses the work of the Holy Spirit to the end and ascribes it to evil ends up rejecting for himself the testimony of God, who saves him from sin. He remains in sin not because the salvation of Jesus is insufficient, but because he stubbornly refuses the Lord, who remits sins, and His perfect saving work.

8. The person who does the will of God is the true family of Jesus (verses 31–35)

The mother and brothers of Jesus came, and standing outside they sent someone and called Him. Many people were sitting around Jesus, and they told Him that His mother and His brothers and sisters were outside seeking Him.

Jesus asked, *"Who is My mother, or My brothers?"* and then, looking at those who sat around Him, He said that whoever does the will of God is His brother and sister and mother. This was not a word despising His fleshly family or denying responsibility for family. Jesus was teaching the fact that there is a spiritual relationship more fundamental than blood relations.

The true family of Jesus is not simply those who are outwardly near Him or who know much about Him. The person who hears the word of Jesus and responds to the will of God in faith becomes His spiritual family. To do the will of God does not mean earning the qualification of family by one's own deeds; it means receiving the word of God and living worthy of that faith.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 3

First, Jesus plainly revealed the will of God, which is to

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save life and do good, above the form of the Sabbath.

Second, the Pharisees, while claiming to keep religious ordinances, sought to kill Jesus, and this shows that outward religious acts and a hardened heart can exist together.

Third, Jesus is the Son of God, who subdues disease and the power of unclean spirits, and as the One stronger than Satan He sets free those who are bound by him.

Fourth, Jesus first had the twelve disciples be with Him and then sent them out to preach the gospel. The mission of a disciple begins with walking with Jesus and learning His word.

Fifth, even those humanly close to Jesus can misunderstand Him, and outward acquaintance or knowledge alone cannot grasp the true identity and ministry of Jesus.

Sixth, the scribes slandered the saving work shown by the power of the Holy Spirit as the work of a demon, and Jesus solemnly warned against the sin of deliberately blaspheming the work of the Holy Spirit and refusing it to the end.

Seventh, not blood relations or social background, but the person who believes the word of God and responds to His will is the true spiritual family of Jesus.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 3 is the chapter in which Jesus, saving life on the Sabbath, subduing the power of Satan, and appointing the twelve disciples, warns against the opposition of the hardened religious leaders and the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and receives as His true family those who do the will of God.

2) Mark chapter 3 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 3 shows Jesus healing the man with the

withered hand, subduing the unclean spirits, and appointing the twelve disciples, while the Pharisees and the scribes oppose His saving work. Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the man whose hand was withered and who could not restore it by his own strength makes us think of the spiritual state of man, who cannot save himself under sin. Jesus pitied sinners and came to this earth, took on all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. The person who believes this salvation receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and obtains true rest. But the Pharisees and the scribes, putting forward their own religious standards, opposed Jesus, who saves life, and finally blasphemed the work done by the power of the Holy Spirit as the work of Satan. On the other hand, the person who believes the word of Jesus and responds to the will of God receives the remission of sins and becomes the family of God, and comes to live the life of a disciple who delivers this salvation to other souls as well.

1. The spiritual helplessness of man shown in the man with the withered hand (verses 1–3)

When Jesus entered the synagogue, there was a man whose hand was withered on one side. He could not restore his hand by his own strength, nor could the fundamental problem be solved by the help of others. He was a man who could become whole only if Jesus healed him.

The text does not directly explain the man with the withered hand as a symbol of the sinner. But when we apply it in the light of the gospel, his helplessness makes us think of the state of man, who is born with sin and cannot escape from sin by his own strength. All people have inherited sin from Adam,

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and following the evil thoughts and greed that come out of the heart, they actually commit many sins as they live. A man can resolve to live a good life, but he cannot completely remove with his own deeds the sins already written and the sins he will yet commit.

The sinner must first acknowledge the fact that he is fundamentally a sinner before God and cannot be saved by his own righteousness and efforts. Just as the person who counts himself healthy does not seek a physician, so the person who thinks himself righteous does not truly seek Jesus, who removes sin. To acknowledge one's spiritual helplessness is not meant to keep one in despair; it is the starting point for coming to Jesus the Savior.

Jesus told the man with the withered hand to stand up in the midst. He did not tell him to stay hidden for fear of people's eyes and condemnation. Before Jesus we must not hide our lack and our sins, but acknowledge them as they are in the light of the word. Jesus is not One who calls the sinner only to condemn him; He calls him to save him from sin and make him whole.

2. Saving life is the true meaning of the Sabbath (verses 4–5)

Jesus asked the people which is right on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill. This question shows that the true purpose of the Sabbath lies not in oppressing life but in saving people.

The Pharisees clung to the date called the Sabbath and to outward regulations, but they had no interest in the suffering man being restored. They thought that doing nothing was keeping the Sabbath, and yet in their hearts they sought to accuse and kill Jesus. Outwardly they kept the regulations, but in reality they planned the evil that kills life.

The true rest of which the gospel of the water and the Spirit speaks is not obtained by a man doing nothing on a particular day. Rest comes into the heart when one believes the fact that Jesus received all sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, carried those sins to the Cross and was judged, and completed salvation by rising again. One escapes the fear of having to solve the wages and judgment of sin by one's own efforts, and comes to rest in the fact that Jesus has accomplished salvation perfectly.

This rest does not mean that one may live carelessly. One rests from the labor of relying on his own deeds to receive the remission of sins, but after being saved he follows the will of God with gratitude and takes part in the good work of saving other souls. Like Jesus, who saved life even on the Sabbath, the person who has obtained true rest preaches the gospel so that others also may receive the remission of sins and rest.

3. The hardened heart that refused the word, and the restored hand (verse 5)

The people who received the question of Jesus kept silent. It was not because they did not know that it is right to do good and to save life, but because acknowledging that fact meant accepting that their own thinking was wrong. Rather than follow the truth, they sought to guard their religious authority and judgment.

Jesus was grieved by their hardened hearts and was angry. The wrath of Jesus was not directed at the lack of the man with the withered hand. It was directed at the stubbornness that shows no compassion with a suffering man before its eyes, and that clings to its own thoughts even while watching the saving work of God.

When Jesus said, *"Stretch out your hand,"* the man

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stretched it out, and his hand was restored. He did not heal his hand by his own ability; he heard the word of Jesus and stretched it out as He said. Salvation likewise is not something man completes by mending his sins little by little; it is received by knowing through the word what Jesus has accomplished and believing it with the heart.

The sinner must first agree, before the word of the Law, with the fact that he is a sinner. And he must also agree with the word that Jesus took charge of all his sins with the baptism He received from John, received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again to become the eternal Savior. To acknowledge one's sinnerhood by the word, and to believe the word that Jesus has made him completely righteous from all sins—this is the faith that receives the remission of sins.

4. The Pharisees and the Herodians plot to destroy Jesus (verse 6)

The good thing happened that the withered hand was restored, but the Pharisees did not give glory to God. They went outside and plotted with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. People whose positions and interests differed from each other became one in the work of opposing Jesus.

They thought they knew the word of God well, yet they failed to recognize the Son whom God had sent. Because they made the regulations and traditions they had established into absolute standards, when Jesus did not fit their standards they sought to remove Him. This shows the fact that having Bible knowledge or religious zeal does not necessarily mean one has been saved.

When a person holds on to his own righteousness, it is hard for him to receive the perfect salvation of Jesus. To the person who thinks he must wash his sins through prayers of

repentance, good deeds, and a devout life, the gospel that Jesus has already taken charge of all sins and been judged for them can sound strange. But if even a part of salvation is left to human deeds, sin keeps remaining in the heart and true rest cannot be obtained.

True repentance is not defending one's religious standards and one's own righteousness to the end; it is acknowledging that these cannot solve sin, and returning to the salvation Jesus completed. We must not try to fit the word to our own thoughts like the Pharisees; we must fit our thoughts to the word of God.

5. The remission of sins, more fundamental than the healing of disease (verses 7–12)

From Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and many other regions, great numbers of people came to Jesus. Many sick people pressed in to touch Jesus, and He healed them. This event shows that Jesus does not turn away from people's suffering but shows compassion.

But receiving healing of the body's disease is not the whole of salvation. Even if the disease is healed, a man grows old again and dies in the end. The most fundamental problem of man is the sin that lies before God and the judgment that comes because of that sin. Jesus did not come merely to make the body healthy or to improve one's circumstances in the world; He came to save man from sin and eternal punishment.

Jesus took on the sins of all mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the representative of all mankind. And carrying those sins He went to the Cross, shed His blood and died, receiving the punishment of sin, and He rose from the dead and gives new life to those who believe. When a person believes this fact, regardless of his bodily circumstances, all the sins of his heart are washed away and he

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obtains eternal life.

The unclean spirits fell down before Jesus and cried out that He was the Son of God. But one is not saved merely by knowing the identity of Jesus with the mouth. The demons also knew who Jesus was, but they did not love Him or believe in Him as the Savior and obey Him. Saving faith is not merely acknowledging the existence of Jesus; it is believing, according to the word, how He took charge of one's sins and removed them.

6. The disciples appointed to be with Jesus and to preach the gospel (verses 13–19)

Jesus called those He Himself wanted and appointed the twelve disciples. The first purpose in appointing them was that they might be with Him; the second was to send them out to preach the gospel; and the third was to have them hold the power to cast out demons.

A disciple must first be a person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished and is spiritually with Him. One cannot preach the gospel with mere religious knowledge or zeal while not having received the remission of sins. First he must believe the fact that Jesus completely removed his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, and become a righteous person with no sin in his heart. The Holy Spirit comes into the heart of the person who believes this gospel and receives the remission of sins, and confirms the fact that he is a child of God.

After that, the disciple preaches the gospel to others. Preaching the gospel is not a work of binding people to a particular organization or person; it is the work of helping sinners come to Jesus and receive the remission of sins. Just as the twelve disciples each had different backgrounds and

characters, so saved people too can differ in character and ability. But they must be of one heart in believing the same salvation, serving the same Jesus, and saving souls.

The authority of a disciple does not lie in displaying his own power. To the person caught in the lie of Satan, believing that he is still a sinner and that his sins have not yet been washed away, delivering the truth that Jesus has removed all sins so that he believes it—this is the ministry of spiritual liberation.

7. Those who misunderstood Jesus by human standards (verses 20–21)

The people close to Jesus heard the news that He was serving the crowds with no leisure even to eat, and they came out to lay hold of Him. For there were those among the people who said that Jesus was out of His mind. This shows that even those in a close fleshly relationship with Jesus could fail to understand His will and His saving work rightly.

Today also, one may know Jesus only as a historical figure or a fine teacher, and not know how He removed sin. The fact that one has led a life of faith for a long time, or has read the Bible much, does not itself bring the remission of sins. One must know accurately, according to the word, who Jesus is and what He has accomplished, and believe.

Jesus is the Son of God and the Creator, the Savior who came in the body of man to save sinners. He took charge of the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again. To think oneself outwardly close to Jesus while not believing this salvation is not a true spiritual relationship.

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8. Jesus, who binds the strong man and sets people free (verses 22–27)

The scribes who came down from Jerusalem slandered Jesus, saying that He had Beelzebub and cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. Jesus said that if Satan casts out Satan, his kingdom is divided against itself and cannot stand.

Jesus said that to enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, one must first bind the strong man. This means that Jesus came as the One stronger than Satan, to subdue his authority and save the people from sin and death, under which they were bound.

Satan not only makes people commit sin; he also keeps them from believing God's way of solving sin. Some he deceives into thinking they can become righteous enough by their own deeds, and others he deceives into thinking their sins are too great ever to be remitted. Others again he lets believe only vaguely the fact that Jesus died on the Cross, while keeping them from knowing when and how He took charge of the sins of mankind.

Jesus actually took charge of all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of all those sins on the Cross, and overcame the power of death by the resurrection. Therefore, for the person who believes this gospel, there remains no sin to be condemned. Satan can no longer condemn that person before God on the ground of his sins. Jesus has broken the power of sin and death and saved the believer out of Satan's rule.

9. The sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit and the stubbornness that refuses the gospel (verses 28–30)

Jesus warned that all the sins and blasphemies of men can be remitted, but that the person who blasphemes against the

Holy Spirit will never receive the remission of sins and is subject to eternal condemnation. Mark states plainly that the reason was that the scribes had said Jesus had an unclean spirit.

This warning does not mean that there is no longer a way of salvation for the person who sinned in weakness, or who spoke wrongly by mistake and, in fear, wants to return to God. The scribes who blasphemed the Holy Spirit deliberately distorted as the work of Satan the ministry of Jesus, who by the power of the Holy Spirit was saving people and casting out demons, even as they watched it.

On the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the important ministry of the Holy Spirit is to testify of the salvation Jesus accomplished and to help people believe this gospel. The Holy Spirit comes into the heart of the person who believes the fact that Jesus took charge of all sins with the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again. The Holy Spirit confirms that this faith is the truth, and leads the person who has received the remission of sins as a child of God.

Therefore it is a very fearful thing to know the testimony of the Holy Spirit and yet deliberately call it false, to slander the salvation Jesus completed as something evil, and to keep hindering others from believing. This differs from simply asking doctrinal questions or from a state of not yet understanding. It is possible to confirm by the Bible and ask about what one does not understand; but the stubbornness that knows the truth plainly and yet opposes it to the end in order to guard one's own interests and authority must be avoided.

True repentance is abandoning the obstinacy that opposed the truth and returning to the salvation Jesus accomplished. If there is yet a will to turn in the heart and a desire to believe the gospel, one should not conclude in fear that he cannot receive

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the remission of sins, but should believe the word that Jesus has removed all sins.

10. The person who does the will of God is the true family of Jesus (verses 31–35)

When the mother and brothers of Jesus sought Him from outside, Jesus said that whoever does the will of God is His brother and sister and mother. This was not a word denying His fleshly family; it means that there exists a spiritual family more fundamental than blood relations.

The will of God is not that the sinner strive to become righteous by his own deeds, but that he believe in Jesus Christ, the Son whom God sent, and receive the remission of sins. The person who believes the fact that Jesus removed all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God. This person belongs to the spiritual family of Jesus.

The words about doing the will of God must not be understood as human merit for obtaining salvation. First one believes the completed gospel and becomes a child of God, and afterward, as the fruit of that faith, lives following the will of God. Even the saved person can do wrong in the weakness of the flesh, but he does not justify his wrong; he acknowledges it before the word and turns back to the way of faith.

The spiritual family of Jesus does not judge one another by outward conditions or social position. Knowing that all alike have received the remission of sins by the same grace, they serve one another, and they deliver the news of salvation also to those still under sin. This is the good work that the family belonging to Jesus must do together.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 3 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

First, just as the man with the withered hand could not restore his hand by his own strength, so man is born with sin and cannot escape from sin by his own righteousness and deeds.

Second, the sinner must acknowledge his spiritual helplessness and his sinnerhood, and agree with his heart to the word of the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Third, true rest comes not from keeping the outward regulations of a particular day, but from believing the fact that Jesus completely removed all sins and so escaping condemnation.

Fourth, Jesus took charge of the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and by rising again overcame sin and death and the power of Satan.

Fifth, it is not enough to have knowledge about Jesus or to acknowledge with the mouth that He is the Son of God; one must believe how He removed one's own sins.

Sixth, a disciple must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, and then take part with Jesus in the mission of preaching the gospel that saves other souls.

Seventh, the sin of blaspheming the work of the Holy Spirit is not a simple mistake or a passing doubt; it is knowing the saving work of Jesus and yet distorting it as evil and stubbornly opposing it so that others too cannot believe.

Eighth, the true family of Jesus is not decided by blood relations or religious career, but consists of those who believe the salvation completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, receive the remission of sins, and respond to the will of God.

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To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 3 is the chapter in which Jesus pities the man who cannot save himself under sin and gives true rest and new life through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, establishes those who believe this salvation and receive the Holy Spirit as the family of God and workers of the gospel, and at the same time solemnly warns against the sin of stubbornly opposing the saving work of the Holy Spirit. ✉

Mark Chapter 3

Jesus Christ, who makes plain the will of God and saves life

Introduction

Mark chapter 3 shows that Jesus is the Son of God, who restores life and overcomes the power of Satan. Jesus healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, but the religious leaders, instead of rejoicing at His compassion, plotted how to kill Him. Great numbers of people from many regions flocked to Jesus, and even the unclean spirits confessed that He was the Son of God; but knowledge about Jesus or interest in miracles alone did not bring salvation.

Jesus called the twelve disciples, had them be with Him, and entrusted them with the mission of preaching the gospel and casting out demons. The center of the gospel the disciples were to deliver was not human ability or religious merit, but the salvation Jesus completed by taking charge of all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rising again. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, escapes the condemnation of Satan, receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes a child of God.

But the scribes, though they saw the plain work of Jesus casting out demons, slandered it as the power of Satan. The sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is not a momentary doubt or a word spoken by mistake; it is the attitude that knows

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the Holy Spirit's work of testifying of Jesus and His salvation and yet stubbornly refuses it and opposes it as evil. If one rejects to the end the only way of the remission of sins, accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, he blocks the way of salvation for himself.

Mark chapter 3 closes by making plain that not blood relations or religious position, but the person who believes and follows the will of God, is the true family of Jesus. This writing follows each passage and looks at the compassion and authority of Jesus, who saves life, the purpose for which He calls disciples, the danger of hardened unbelief, and the way in which those who have believed the gospel and become the family of God ought to love and serve one another.

Jesus restored life, but the hardened people sought to kill Him

"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Step forward.' Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:1–6).

This event connects with the Sabbath dispute that went

before. Jesus had said that the Sabbath was made for man and that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. Now, by healing the man with the withered hand in the synagogue, He showed in actual deed the will of God concerning the Sabbath. The Sabbath was not a day to bind people under regulations and make them suffer, but a day to enjoy life and restoration by the grace of God.

In the synagogue there was a man whose hand was withered on one side and could not be used properly. The text does not say when or from what cause his disease arose. But since he could not use his hand freely, he must have suffered great hardship in daily life and in making a living. He was inside the synagogue where many people had gathered, yet he was in a helpless state, unable to restore his hand by his own strength.

Some of the people there paid more attention to watching whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath than to the suffering of the man with the withered hand. While in some measure acknowledging that Jesus had the power to heal disease, they did not believe that power and seek His help. Rather, they watched closely to find evidence to accuse Jesus. The suffering man was to them not an object of compassion but an object to be used for accusing Jesus.

Jesus knew their intent, yet He did not avoid the man with the withered hand or heal him secretly. He said to him, *"Step forward."* By setting in the middle of the synagogue the man who had been pushed out of people's sight, He had everyone look upon his suffering. Jesus did not treat the dispute over Sabbath regulations as an abstract battle of words; He set at the center a man who was actually suffering.

Jesus asked, *"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"* This was not simply a question

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about whether acts of healing are permitted on the Sabbath. He was asking whether it is really right to turn away from a suffering man, holding up religious regulations, when one is able to do good. The will of God lies in saving life and restoring people.

The people who received the question of Jesus kept silent. It was not so much that they did not know the answer, as that whichever way they answered, their own wrong attitude could not but be exposed. If they said that it is right to do good and save life on the Sabbath, they could not criticize Jesus for healing the sick. If instead they said it was right to leave the suffering man as he was, they would deny the love and compassion of God contained in the Law.

Jesus was grieved at the hardness of their hearts and looked at them with anger. The anger of Jesus was not an emotion arising from wounded pride. It was holy anger toward the heart that knows the word of God and yet does not pity the suffering and refuses the truth. At the same time Jesus grieved over their hardness. He sorrowed as He watched people who, refusing the truth, were heading toward judgment of their own accord.

A hardened heart does not mean only the state of never having heard the word of God. A heart that knows much of the word and is diligent in religious life, and yet does not lay down its own thoughts, can be hardened. Jesus was the Savior who had taken charge even of their sins with the baptism He received from John, but they held on to their legal righteousness and sought to condemn Him. If one clings to his own righteousness before the gospel, he cannot receive even the grace of God that appears before his eyes.

Jesus commanded the man with the withered hand, *"Stretch out your hand."* It was a hand he could not stretch out whole by himself, but when he believed the word of Jesus and

stretched it out, his hand was restored. In the command of Jesus there was also the power that fulfills that command. What was impossible by human strength was accomplished by the word of Jesus.

This healing shows the fact that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and holds the authority of God, who restores life. Jesus restored the hand by the word alone, without performing any labor or complicated rite of healing. The problem, therefore, was not whether actual labor was done, but that the Pharisees counted their traditional interpretation more important than the compassion of Jesus.

The restoration of the body of the man with the withered hand and the sinner receiving the eternal remission of sins must be distinguished. This miracle is a sign showing who Jesus is and what authority He holds. To restore the soul of the sinner fundamentally, Jesus had to take charge of the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and carry those sins all the way to the Cross.

The Pharisees went out of the synagogue and at once plotted with the Herodians how to destroy Jesus. The Pharisees counted the religious keeping of the Law important, and the Herodians were a political group supporting the regime of Herod, so ordinarily their positions differed. But in the aim of removing Jesus they joined hands. It shows that when their authority and interests are threatened, people who differ from one another can unite to oppose the truth.

In this scene a plain contradiction is exposed. They made an issue of Jesus restoring one man's hand on the Sabbath, while they themselves, on that very day, laid a plan to kill Him. Jesus did good and saved life, but they, holding up religious pretexts, planned evil. Though one seems outwardly to keep the regulations, if there is hatred and murder in the heart, he is far

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from the righteousness God desires.

Their plot of murder leads on to the death of Jesus on the Cross, but the death of Jesus was not a defeat suffered helplessly through men's scheming. Jesus gave up His life of His own will, to receive in our place the punishment of all the sins He had taken charge of with the baptism He received from John. Men killed Jesus with evil intent, but God, through that very thing, fulfilled His righteous plan of saving sinners.

Jesus, carrying the sins He had taken on through His baptism, shed His blood and died on the Cross, paying all the wages of sin, and by rising on the third day He overcame sin and death. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The Law exposes man's sin and helplessness, but the gospel of Jesus Christ actually removes sin and makes one live a new life.

The salvation the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives is the grace that makes the man disabled by sin clean from all sins, so that he lives following the will of God. This does not mean that a man first does good works well and so earns salvation. It means that he believes that Jesus completed salvation with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of sins, and then serves God and his neighbor by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This passage teaches that we must not turn away from a suffering person on the ground of keeping religious rules. The believer must not use doctrines and regulations as tools for attacking and condemning people. From the person who rightly believes the word of God there must appear the love that saves life and restores the weak.

The appearance of Jesus also shows how the believer ought to handle anger. To be angry because one's pride and interests

are hurt is of the flesh; but the heart that grieves and seeks to set right the suffering of people under evil and injustice is needed. Yet even that anger must appear not in the direction of hating and destroying people, but in the direction of making the truth plain and saving life.

This word warns us not to harden our hearts when we hear the gospel. If one clings to his own religious experience and tradition, he can see the salvation Jesus accomplished and still refuse it. The sinner must lay down his own righteousness and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit completed by Jesus Christ. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and obtains true rest, and following the leading of the Holy Spirit he lives as a person who does good and saves life.

The great crowds came seeking the power of Jesus, but knowing the Son of God is not itself salvation

"But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.' But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known" (Mark 3:7–12).

After the Pharisees and the Herodians plotted how to

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destroy Jesus, He withdrew with His disciples toward the Sea of Galilee. This was not abandoning His mission out of fear of men. Since the time for Him to bear the Cross had not yet come, He avoided needless collision while continuing to deliver the word to others and to carry on the work of salvation.

Doing the work of God does not mean one must always meet danger head-on. Jesus knew the danger and yet moved according to the time and the way the Father had appointed. The believer also must not give up preaching the gospel out of fear, but neither should he count reckless action as faith; he must judge circumstances wisely.

Those who came to Jesus were not only in Galilee. From Judea and Jerusalem in the south, from Idumea farther south, from beyond the Jordan, and from around Tyre and Sidon in the northwest, a great multitude came. This shows that the news of Jesus had spread over a very wide area beyond Galilee. People of different regions and backgrounds gathered to Jesus.

But the text does not say that they all came because they had realized the gospel and believed in Jesus as the Savior. They came mainly on hearing the report of the great things Jesus had done. The expectation of His power to heal diseases and cast out demons moved them. To come seeking the grace of Jesus is a precious thing, but interest in miracles is not in itself the faith that receives the remission of sins.

A man may want Jesus to solve his diseases, his economic problems, and the hardships of his home, and yet pay no attention to the problem of sin. But even if the problems of this life are solved, if the sin of the heart remains as it is, the relationship with God and the matter of eternal judgment remain unsolved. The miracles of Jesus were signs pointing to the fact that He is the Son of God and the Christ, who saves sinners.

Jesus told His disciples to keep a small boat ready so that He might not be crushed by the multitude pressing upon Him. If the people crowded too close, someone might be hurt, or a situation might arise in which Jesus could not deliver the word. The small boat was a practical preparation so that He could keep some distance from the crowd and preach the word when needed.

That Jesus loved the people does not mean He allowed disorderly behavior as it was. To care for many people safely and continue the ministry, He set a fitting distance and order. The believer also, rather than being dragged unconditionally by every demand in the name of love, needs to set wise boundaries and order so that he can continue the work entrusted to him.

Those suffering from diseases pressed close, wanting to touch Jesus. Their desperation is understandable, but there was no magical power in the act itself of touching the body of Jesus. The power that heals people came not from a particular manner of contact or from an object, but from Jesus Himself. Jesus is the Son of God, who took charge of all sins with the baptism He received from John, and the Creator, who rules life and the body.

That Jesus healed the diseases of many people shows His compassion toward the suffering and the authority of the kingdom of God. But this event is not a promise that the diseases of all who believe the gospel will certainly be healed at once in this world. The healing of the body is a sign revealing the authority of Jesus, but the promise of salvation given surely to every believer is the remission of sins, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life.

To solve sin, which is like the most fundamental disease of man, Jesus received the sins of mankind passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Carrying those

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sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, paying all the wages of sin, and by rising on the third day He overcame sin and death. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, whatever his bodily circumstances.

The unclean spirits, whenever they saw Jesus, fell down before Him and cried out, *"You are the Son of God."* Many people did not know the true identity of Jesus, but the demons recognized that He is the Son of God. Their falling down before Him was not the worship of faith offered in love and gratitude; it was cowering submission before His authority in fear.

That the demons stated the identity of Jesus accurately does not mean they had saving faith. Confessing right knowledge about Jesus with the mouth and believing with the heart the gospel He accomplished are different things. True faith receives not only the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, but also the fact that He removed all one's sins with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection.

Jesus repeatedly warned the demons not to make Him known. He did not intend to make His identity known through the testimony of unclean spirits. For the truth must be proclaimed not by the spirit of falsehood but by the word of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Even if a demon spoke what was factually correct, the source and the purpose of that speech were not holy.

Moreover, the fact that Jesus is the Son of God could not be fully understood apart from His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. People could misunderstand the Son of God merely as a powerful king who would heal diseases and deliver them from the rule of Rome. Jesus came not as a king gaining popularity by working miracles, but as the Savior, who takes

charge of the sins of sinners and receives the judgment in their place.

Therefore Jesus prevented His identity from spreading hastily amid wrong expectations. What kind of Son of God He is had to be revealed plainly through the saving work of taking charge of the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, dying on the Cross, and rising again. The identity of Jesus and the gospel of the water and the Spirit He accomplished cannot be separated from each other.

That great crowds flocked to Jesus does not mean they all became disciples. The number of people and fervent responses are not always evidence of true faith. The person who preaches the gospel must aim not at gathering many people or producing amazing phenomena, but at having people realize their sins and believe accurately the salvation Jesus accomplished.

This passage teaches that while pitying people's suffering, we must not make practical help alone the whole of the gospel. The church must actually care for the sick and the weary, but together with that it must plainly preach the gospel that saves eternally from sin and death. One must not stop at seeking Jesus to have the problems of the body solved, but must receive the remission of sins for his soul.

The gospel of Jesus is not news belonging to one particular people or region. Just as people from many regions came to Jesus, so the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be delivered to all nations and to every kind of sinner. Whoever acknowledges his sins and believes with the heart the gospel Jesus completed receives the remission of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

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Jesus appointed the twelve disciples first to be with Him, and then to be sent out to preach the gospel

"And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house" (Mark 3:13–19).

Jesus left the great crowds and went up on the mountain. In the Bible the mountain often appears as the place where God calls people, gives His word, and entrusts important missions. That Jesus appointed the twelve on the mountain was not a simple recruiting of attendants to help Him; it was the important event of establishing the witnesses of the gospel.

Jesus called *"those He Himself wanted."* The twelve were not chosen because they were better than others or outstanding in learning and ability. Among them were ordinary or even despised men, such as fishermen and a tax collector. The calling of a disciple begins not from a man's qualification and merit but from the will and grace of the Lord.

Jesus called sovereignly, but the response of the disciples was also needed. When Jesus called, they came to Him. The calling of God does not drag a person by force; it has him hear the word and respond in faith. The person who has heard the gospel must also lay down his own thoughts and his own righteousness and come to Jesus.

That Jesus appointed twelve men calls to mind the twelve tribes of Israel. Through the twelve disciples God intended to establish the community of the gospel with Jesus Christ at the center, and to use them as witnesses of salvation. This was not organizing a human power group but establishing people who would serve the kingdom of God and the gospel.

The first purpose in appointing the twelve was *"that they might be with Him."* Before preaching or performing special works, they first needed to stay with Jesus and learn His word and His life. A disciple is, before being a person who does many works for Jesus, a person who learns and believes who Jesus is and what He has accomplished.

To be with Jesus does not mean only staying in the same place. The disciples had to hear the word of Jesus, watch His compassion and His authority, and go through the process of having their wrong thoughts exposed and corrected. Even after being called, they failed to understand His words or quarreled over who would take the higher place. Yet Jesus bore with them long and kept teaching them.

The second purpose was to send them out to preach. Jesus did not keep the disciples only at His side; He sent them out to deliver to others the word they had heard from Him. A preacher is not a person who delivers his own thought or experience, but a person who delivers the gospel entrusted by Jesus Christ.

The center of the salvation the disciples were to deliver is the fact that Jesus takes charge of the sins of all mankind on His own body with the baptism He received from John, and completes salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. The twelve did not fully understand this meaning from the beginning, but staying with Jesus they came to see and learn the whole course of His walking as the Savior of sinners.

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The third purpose was to have them hold the power to cast out demons. This power was not an ability that came out of the disciples themselves but authority entrusted by Jesus. Therefore the disciples were not to use that power to exalt their own names or to appear to people as mysterious beings. Casting out demons was a sign showing that the kingdom of God had come and the power of Satan was falling.

Today also, the center of spiritual ministry does not lie in producing strange phenomena or magnifying the fear of demons. The power that fundamentally frees a person from the accusation and condemnation of Satan is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus received all sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid their price on the Cross, and by rising again He overcame sin and death and Satan.

Jesus added to Simon the name Peter. Peter is a name meaning a rock, but that does not mean Simon was an unshakable man from the beginning. He spoke confidently and yet denied Jesus out of fear. Nevertheless Jesus restored him and established him as a witness of the gospel. The Lord does not call only finished people; He calls lacking people and changes them by the word and by grace.

To James and John He added the name *"Boanerges, that is, 'Sons of Thunder.'"* This name can be seen as expressing their strong and hasty temperament. They even showed such vehemence as to wish judgment to fall on those who did not receive them. Jesus did not cast away men of such character; He taught them and changed them into men who serve the gospel.

The list also includes Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus. Of some of them many deeds are recorded in the

Bible, and of others almost nothing is known but the name. But a smaller written record does not mean the mission the Lord entrusted was less important. The work of God must be judged not by how famous one is among men but by whether one was faithful to the Lord.

Matthew is understood to be the same person as Levi, who was called while sitting at the tax office. Since a tax collector collected taxes under the ruling system of Rome, he was regarded by the Jews as something like a traitor. On the other hand, the title *"Simon the Cananite"* can be understood as an expression carrying the meaning of a zealous one rather than his native region, indicating a background connected with national zeal. Men who would have found it hard to come near one another became one community of disciples within the calling of Jesus.

The gospel makes people one beyond origin and occupation, political leaning and past reputation. The ground of their becoming one was not that their thoughts were the same from the beginning, but that Jesus was the Savior, who would wash their sins with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Those who have received the remission of sins must not boast of their backgrounds or exclude others, but serve the gospel together as the family of God.

Lastly, Judas Iscariot is also in the list of the twelve. He heard the words of Jesus in person, saw the miracles, and worked together with the other disciples, but in the end he betrayed Jesus. The office called the twelve and the outward experience of having been at Jesus's side did not guarantee that there was saving faith in his heart.

The figure of Judas Iscariot warns that being in the church, holding office, and experiencing powerful works can differ from believing the gospel with the heart. Ministry recognized

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by people and religious activity are not evidence of the remission of sins. One must believe with the heart the fact that Jesus took charge of all his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid their price on the Cross.

The twelve received the office of preaching the gospel, but they too were sinners who first had to be saved. Becoming a disciple and a preacher does not remove their sins. What washes their sins is only the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. A minister must not neglect examining his own faith on the ground that he teaches others.

This passage teaches the order in which a worker of the gospel is established. First he is with Jesus and learns the word, then he plainly believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and then he is sent to preach that gospel. Activity not rooted in the word and the gospel runs the danger of leading people to one's own thoughts or religious zeal.

Moreover, the power of preaching the gospel does not come from a man's natural character, schooling, or eloquence. When Jesus calls, teaches by the word, and the Holy Spirit works, even an ordinary and lacking person can become a witness of the gospel. The believer must neither avoid the mission because of his lack nor boast of his ability.

The purpose for which Jesus called the twelve was not to exalt them to receive special honor. They were to stay with Jesus and learn, and then be sent to those who had not yet heard the gospel. Today also, the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has received the remission of sins must not stay enjoying the joy of salvation alone, but must deliver to other souls the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished.

To stubbornly refuse the work of the Holy Spirit as the work of a demon is to block for oneself the only way of the remission of sins

"Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.' So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. 'Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation'— because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:20–30).

When Jesus entered a house, many people gathered again. Those who wanted healing, those who sought release from the oppression of demons, and those who wanted to hear the word came without ceasing, so that Jesus and His disciples had no leisure even to eat. This shows the devotion of Jesus, who gave His whole strength to saving and caring for people.

But this word does not mean that the person who serves the gospel must always neglect his body and his meals. Jesus too rested in solitary places and prayed. Here it shows the situation: so many people flocked to Jesus that normal meals were

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difficult while caring for their needs. The believer must faithfully carry out his mission and at the same time wisely care for the body and the life God has entrusted to him.

The people close to Jesus heard the report and came out to lay hold of Him, for those around were saying that He was out of His mind. Hearing that Jesus had left the ordinary life of the family, was teaching great crowds, clashing with the religious leaders, and could not even eat properly, His relatives did not understand His ministry. Being close kin did not mean automatically knowing who Jesus is and what He does.

The person who lives following the will of God can be misunderstood when he looks different from the world's ordinary standards. But not every act that looks strange to people is the will of God either. One must not justify his own extreme behavior as faith, but must examine whether it accords with the written word of God and the gospel. The conduct of Jesus was right not simply because it was zealous, but because He was carrying out the ministry of saving sinners according to the will of the Father.

The reaction of the scribes who came down from Jerusalem was far more serious than the misunderstanding of His relatives. They were religious leaders who studied and taught the Law, and they could not deny the fact itself that Jesus cast out demons. Yet they did not acknowledge that this power came from God, and asserted that Jesus had Beelzebub and cast out demons by the ruler of the demons.

Beelzebub is used here as a name pointing to Satan, the ruler of the demons. The scribes turned the good work Jesus did upside down into the work of an evil spirit. Even seeing the plain work of a man oppressed by an unclean spirit being set free, they portrayed Jesus as a demon-possessed man in order to guard their own judgment and authority.

Jesus called them and answered with a logical parable. If Satan casts out Satan, who is on his own side, it becomes a work of tearing down his own kingdom. A kingdom divided within cannot stand, and a house divided against itself cannot be maintained. Therefore the scribes' claim that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan contradicted itself.

The power by which Jesus cast out demons came not from Satan but was the authority belonging to the Son of God. Jesus took charge of all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, and came to save those under the power of sin and death and Satan. That the demons obeyed His command was not evidence of civil war within Satan, but evidence that the Savior stronger than Satan had come.

Jesus said that to enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, one must first bind the strong man. In this parable the strong man points to Satan, who held people with sin and fear, and the One stronger, who binds him, points to Jesus. That those oppressed by demons were set free showed that Jesus was subduing the power of Satan.

This parable does not mean that Satan no longer exists or can do nothing at all. Until the last judgment Satan deceives people and opposes the gospel. But by the coming of Jesus his power was decisively defeated, and he lost the right to keep the person who believes the gospel under the condemnation of sin. The believer must look not at Satan himself but at the complete victory of Jesus Christ.

The ground on which Satan accuses the sinner is the sin that is in him. Jesus received all sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He paid the whole price of sin. And by rising on the third day He overcame sin and death and the power of Satan. Therefore the person who believes the

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gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sins is set free from the condemnation of Satan.

Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation."* These words first show how great and wide is the remission of sins God bestows. Even if a man committed very evil sins in the past or spoke insulting words while not knowing God, if he turns before the gospel and believes the salvation of Jesus Christ, he receives the remission of sins.

The remission of sins is not given because the sins a man committed are light. The wages of sin is death, but the remission of sins is given because Jesus took charge of all sins with the baptism He received from John and received their judgment in our place. No sin, however great, can be greater than the salvation Jesus accomplished. The sinner must not despair on the ground that his sin is too great, but must believe the completed gospel.

Yet Jesus warned that the person who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never receives remission forever and is subject to eternal condemnation. This does not mean that the way of the remission of sins is closed to everyone who once said something wrong by accident, doubted for a moment, or had an irreverent thought rise in his heart. The scribes of the passage, even while watching the manifest work of God in which Jesus cast out unclean spirits, deliberately defined it as the work of Satan.

The heart of the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit lies in stubbornly refusing the truth the Holy Spirit testifies concerning Jesus Christ and opposing it as evil. The Holy Spirit testifies of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the

Christ, who has saved sinners. If one keeps refusing that testimony and brands the gospel of salvation as a lie or the work of a demon, he rejects for himself the only way of receiving the remission of sins.

That this sin is not remitted is not because the salvation of Jesus fails to wash some sin. It is because the person, refusing to the end the testimony of the Holy Spirit, who gives the remission of sins, does not believe the gospel and so remains in sin. Outside the gospel there is no separate way of the remission of sins. This warning, therefore, is not a word that the grace of God is narrow, but a word not to refuse stubbornly the only salvation.

The Holy Spirit testifies of the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus took charge of all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again. If one keeps opposing this truth on the ground that it does not fit his thoughts and religious tradition, he is refusing the testimony of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the person who believes this gospel with the heart receives the remission of all his sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

The person who fears that he may have committed the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit and desires to return to God need not despair. The heart that acknowledges its wrong and wants to believe the gospel differs from the attitude of the scribes of the passage, who stubbornly defined the truth as evil. Jesus does not refuse the sinner who comes to Him, and He gives complete remission of sins to the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This passage shows that having much religious knowledge does not mean discerning the work of the Holy Spirit rightly. The scribes of Jerusalem had knowledge of the Scriptures, but

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clinging to their authority and judgment, they slandered the Son of God as a servant of Satan. The believer must put the written word before his doctrinal pride and preconceptions, and examine whether a teaching accords with the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished.

At the same time, the words blasphemy against the Holy Spirit must not be used as a tool for rashly condemning a person whose views differ from one's own. Only God fully knows the heart of a man and his final state. The role of the believer is not to declare that another has committed an eternal sin, but to preach plainly the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Holy Spirit testifies, and to help him receive the remission of sins by faith.

Jesus is the Savior stronger than the power of Satan. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, He removed the ground on which the sinner could be accused by Satan. The sinner must not rely on his own merits or religious knowledge, but receive with the heart this gospel the Holy Spirit testifies. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, comes out of the power of darkness, and becomes a child belonging to the kingdom of God.

The true family of Jesus is not blood relations or religious position, but those who believe and follow the will of God

"Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.' But He answered

them, saying, 'Who is My mother, or My brothers?' And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother'" (Mark 3:31–35).

This scene connects with the earlier word that the relatives of Jesus came out to lay hold of Him. Having heard various reports about His ministry, and with people saying that He was out of His mind, His relatives meant to take Him away. After that the Beelzebub dispute was recorded, and now the scene of His mother and brothers coming follows again.

The mother and brothers of Jesus stood outside the house where the people were gathered and sent someone to call Him. Inside the house the crowd that had come to hear the word sat around Jesus. The family seeking Jesus from outside and the hearers of the word sitting near Him inside stand in contrast. It shows that being near by blood and understanding and following Jesus by faith are not necessarily the same.

The crowd told Jesus that His mother and brothers and sisters were outside seeking Him. People naturally thought that Jesus would stop teaching and go out to His family. For in the society of that time the ties of blood and family were counted very important. But Jesus, through this situation, taught the meaning of the new family belonging to the kingdom of God.

Jesus asked, *"Who is My mother, or My brothers?"* This question does not mean that He denied or did not love His fleshly mother and brothers. Jesus honored His parents according to the commandment of God, and even when He hung on the Cross He entrusted the care of His mother. Jesus did not abolish blood relations; He made plain that there is a spiritual relationship deeper and more eternal than blood.

Looking at those who sat around Him hearing the word,

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Jesus said, *"Here are My mother and My brothers!"* They did not become the family of Jesus automatically because they happened to be sitting in the house. It means that the person who hears the word of Jesus and receives the will of God enters into the spiritual family relationship with Him.

The word *"whoever"* shows that the family of Jesus is not limited to a particular people or class. Jew or Gentile, man or woman, rich or poor—whoever believes and follows the will of God can become the family of Jesus. Even a person cast out by his family and community in the world can be received as the family of God in Jesus Christ.

The way a sinner can become the family of God does not lie in lineage or religious merit. Jesus took on the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. It was the work of making clean from sin those who had become enemies of God because of sin and stood outside His family, so as to make them children of God.

"Whoever does the will of God," of whom Jesus spoke, must not be interpreted as a person who has become perfect by his own deeds. If one could enter the family of Jesus only by keeping every word perfectly without ever breaking it, no one could enter that family. The starting point of doing the will of God is acknowledging one's sin and helplessness and believing in Jesus Christ, whom God sent.

What God desires of the sinner is not that he try to wash his sins with his good deeds and religious life, but that he believe the salvation accomplished with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. When he receives this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart, he receives the remission of all his sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God. Believing the will of God and obeying the gospel are not separated from each

other.

But to say that one believes the gospel does not mean that one may keep refusing the word of God while claiming faith with the mouth only. The person who has truly received the remission of sins and has the Holy Spirit loves the will of God and desires to live following His word. Obedience is not an act that pays the price for becoming the family of God; it is the fruit of faith that appears in the person who has already become His child.

One is not saved merely by having been in the same place as Jesus or having seen miracles. Even being a fleshly relative of Jesus did not guarantee the remission of sins. Likewise today, long attendance at church, holding office, or being born into a minister's family is not in itself the ground of salvation. Each person must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit with his own heart.

Church registration, a certificate of baptism, and the faith tradition of one's family cannot take the place of the individual's faith in the gospel. When one believes the fact that Jesus took charge of all his sins with the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and rose again, his relationship with God becomes new. The person who receives the Holy Spirit by this faith becomes the spiritual family belonging to the body of Christ.

That Jesus called believers His brother and sister and mother shows how close a relationship He forms with the saved. Jesus does not treat the believer only as a distant servant; He receives him as His own family. People of different origins and characters also become brothers and sisters in Christ when they believe the same gospel.

Therefore the church must not become a group where only people of the same region, schooling, economic level, or

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political leaning gather. It must become a community where those who have received the remission of sins through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection receive one another as the family of God and care for one another. It must not condemn or isolate the weak, but build them up with the word and love.

Neither must one abandon or despise his fleshly family on the ground of emphasizing the spiritual family. Heretical groups sometimes demand, in the name of faith, that people cut off their family relations and obey only the leader. But the words of Jesus do not justify such conduct. The believer must honor his parents, love his spouse and children, and faithfully carry the responsibilities of his family.

Even when the family does not understand the gospel or opposes one's faith, one must not confront them with hatred. As Jesus dealt with His relatives who did not understand Him, so we must deal with them in patience and love and deliver the gospel. We cannot exalt blood relations above Jesus like an idol, but because of the gospel we must become those who love and serve their families all the more.

This passage teaches who is truly near Jesus. Not outward distance, blood relations, or religious position, but the person who hears the word of God, believes the salvation He accomplished, and obeys is the family of Jesus. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has received the remission of all his sins once and for all is a child of God born again of the Spirit, and lives together with other believers as the eternal family of the gospel. ✉

Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 3

[Question] 1. Briefly explain what Mark chapter 3 contains.

Mark chapter 3 records Jesus revealing His authority to rule over disease and demons and appointing the twelve disciples, together with the religious leaders who opposed Him and the teaching about the true family of God.

First, Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath. When the Pharisees watched Him in order to accuse Him, Jesus taught that it is right on the Sabbath to do good and to save life. But the Pharisees hardened their hearts and plotted with the Herodians how to kill Jesus (Mark 3:1–6).

Second, a great multitude that heard what Jesus had done flocked to Him, not only from Galilee but also from Judea and Jerusalem, from Idumea and beyond the Jordan, and from around Tyre and Sidon. Jesus healed many sick people, and even the unclean spirits fell down before Him and called Him the Son of God. But Jesus sternly commanded the demons not to make Him known (Mark 3:7–12).

Third, Jesus went up on the mountain, called those He Himself wanted, and appointed twelve. He appointed the twelve so that they might first be with Him, be sent out to preach the gospel, and receive the power to cast out demons. This shows that a disciple must have fellowship with the Lord and learn the word, and afterward carry out the mission of

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preaching the gospel (Mark 3:13–19).

Fourth, the relatives of Jesus, hearing it said that He was out of His mind, came to lay hold of Him. The scribes who came down from Jerusalem slandered Jesus, saying that He had Beelzebub and cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. Jesus said that if Satan casts out Satan his kingdom cannot stand, and revealed that He is the stronger Savior, who binds the strong man and rescues those held by him (Mark 3:20–27).

Jesus then solemnly warned against the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. The scribes saw the saving work of Jesus done by the power of the Holy Spirit and yet deliberately blasphemed it as the work of a demon. This was not simple doubt or a momentary mistake, but the hardened attitude that turns the plain work of God into evil and refuses it to the end (Mark 3:28–30).

Lastly, when the mother and brothers of Jesus came, Jesus looked at those who sat around Him and said, *"whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."* This means that not fleshly blood relations only, but those who believe the word of God and follow His will become the true spiritual family in Jesus (Mark 3:31–35).

Mark chapter 3 shows that Jesus is the Son of God, who would take charge of all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John and save man with the death of the Cross and the resurrection from the dead. At the same time, the person who believes and follows His word and the person who, clinging to his own thoughts and religious authority, opposes the work of the Holy Spirit stand in plain contrast.

[Question] 2. What does the 'withered hand' of Mark 3:1 teach us?

In the passage the 'withered hand' means first the actual disease of the body, a hand withered and unable to move. The man could not stretch out or use his hand normally by his own strength, and he needed the healing of Jesus.

Applied spiritually, the withered hand becomes a picture of man's inability, under sin, to do fully by his own strength the good that pleases God. The hand is the member used for working and helping others, and if the hand is withered, whatever one desires in the heart, he cannot carry it out properly. In the same way, however a man strives to live well, by his own strength and will alone he can neither remove his sins nor achieve the righteousness of God.

When Jesus said, "*Stretch out your hand,*" the man obeyed the word and stretched out his hand, and the hand was restored. This shows that it was not the man's ability or merit but the word and the authority of Jesus that made him whole.

Therefore a man must first acknowledge his spiritual inability and receive the remission of sins and the new life that Jesus gives. Good deeds and service are not means for obtaining salvation, but fruits that the righteous person restored by the grace of the Lord bears following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Yet we must not, on the ground of this figurative application, judge people with physical disabilities or diseases to be greater sinners. The passage does not say that the man's disease was the result of any particular sin. Rather, it rebukes the hardness of those who tried to use a suffering man to accuse Jesus, and shows the compassion of Jesus, who pitied him and restored him wholly.

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[Question] 3. Mark 3:1–6—what meaning is contained in the healing of the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath?

When Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, a man with a withered hand was there. Rather than pitying him, the people watched whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath, seeking grounds to accuse Him. Jesus set the man with the withered hand in the midst and asked, *"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"*

First, this event shows that the original purpose of the Sabbath lies in saving people and giving true rest. God did not give the Sabbath to bind people with regulations and afflict them. To do good to a suffering person and to save life is fitting even on the Sabbath. If we turn away from a person in need on the ground of keeping religious form, we go against the will of God, who gave the Sabbath.

Second, the question of Jesus teaches that doing nothing when there is opportunity to do good is not a neutral attitude. To leave the man with the withered hand as he was, citing Sabbath regulations when he could be healed, was to stand not on the side that saves life but on the side that kills. The believer must not only hold up rules, but must help the suffering with the love of God and do the work that saves souls.

Third, we must consider why Jesus was grieved and angered by the hardness of their hearts. They were not silent because they did not know what was right. Knowing that saving a person is right, they did not answer, because their aim was to accuse Jesus. The anger of Jesus came not from personal feeling or pride; it was holy anger toward the hardness that turns away from human suffering and refuses plain truth.

Fourth, the figure of the man with the withered hand is a

picture of the state of man, who has no spiritual ability to do good. Just as the withered hand could not move at his will, so man under sin cannot achieve the righteousness of God or remove his own sins by his own strength alone. However one leads a religious life and tries to appear good outwardly, if the problem of sin is not solved he cannot do the true righteousness that pleases God.

Fifth, the man's obedience to the word of Jesus shows what faith is. When Jesus said, *"Stretch out your hand,"* he did not refuse, saying that he could not stretch it out because it would not move. He believed the word of the Lord and stretched out his hand, and at that moment the hand was restored. It was not his will or ability that healed the disease; the word of Jesus carried healing power, and he believed that word and obeyed.

This applies to the remission of sins as well. The sinner cannot remove his sins by his own effort; he receives the remission of sins when he believes with the heart the word of the salvation Jesus accomplished. Jesus took charge of all the sins of mankind once and for all with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. When a person believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit as it is, all his sins are removed once and for all, and he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes righteous.

The man whose hand was restored could now use that hand to work and to serve others. In the same way, good deeds are not a condition for receiving the remission of sins. First Jesus makes one clean from sin and gives new life, and then the saved person serves God and his neighbor following the leading of the Holy Spirit—this is the true fruit of faith.

Sixth, this event shows that the aims of Jesus and of the Pharisees were exact opposites. Jesus saved and restored a man

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on the Sabbath, but the Pharisees went out of the synagogue and plotted with the Herodians how to kill Jesus. While claiming to keep the Sabbath regulations, they actually sought to kill life. This shows how contradictory and dangerous legalism without love and life is.

This event therefore teaches that the Sabbath and all the commandments of God must not be used as tools for condemning people, and that we must know the will of life and compassion contained in them. It also shows that the One who restores man from sin and inability is Jesus, and that we must believe not in our own ability but in the word of the Lord's salvation, obtain true rest, and live the new life that does good.

[Question] 4. According to Mark 3:2, what were the people watching Jesus for?

The people watched whether Jesus would heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, seeking a pretext to accuse Him.

Their interest was not in the sick man being healed. Their aim was to obtain grounds to charge Jesus with breaking the Sabbath regulations.

[Question] 5. Mark 3:4—what did Jesus ask the Pharisees and the scribes, and how did they answer?

Jesus asked them as follows.

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"

But they gave no answer and kept silent. If they

acknowledged that saving a person is right, they could not accuse Jesus; so without abandoning their wrong thoughts, they kept silent.

[Question] 6. In Mark 3:5, what did Jesus require of the man with the withered hand?

Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, *"Stretch out your hand."*

When the man stretched out his hand according to the word of Jesus, the withered hand was restored. This shows that in the word of Jesus there is authority to heal disease and make a person whole.

[Question] 7. How does Mark 3:5 state the reason Jesus was angry and grieved?

Jesus was grieved and angry because their hearts were hardened.

They cared more about finding a pretext to accuse Jesus than about the suffering man being restored. And though they knew that saving life and doing good is right, they did not abandon their thoughts and kept silent.

The anger of Jesus did not come from personal feeling or pride. It was holy anger toward the hardened heart that refuses the truth and turns away from human suffering, and at the same time it was grief, sorrowing that they would not turn from their wrong way.

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[Question] 8. What kind of group were the Herodians in Mark 3:6?

The Herodians were a group of a political character, who supported Herod Antipas, then ruling Galilee, and the rule of the house of Herod. They also showed a comparatively cooperative attitude toward the Roman rule carried on through the regime of Herod.

Since the Bible does not explain in detail the organization or doctrine of the Herodians, we cannot conclude that they were of exactly the same form as a formal political party of today. It is fitting to understand them as a group of people who supported the political power and interests of the house of Herod.

The Pharisees counted the religious Law and tradition important, and so differed in disposition from the Herodians, who were cooperative toward political power and Rome. Nevertheless the two groups joined hands because of the common aim of removing Jesus.

Jesus saved and restored the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, but the Pharisees and the Herodians, on that same Sabbath, discussed how to kill Him. This shows that people of different positions and interests can unite in opposing the truth, and that the heart set on guarding religious form and political interest can go against the will of God, who saves life.

[Question] 9. Mark 3:6—what did the Pharisees, who ordinarily did not mix with the Herodians, meet them to plot?

After going out of the synagogue, the Pharisees at once

plotted with the Herodians how they might destroy Jesus.

The religiously inclined Pharisees and the politically inclined Herodians ordinarily differed in position, but in the aim of removing Jesus they united with each other.

[Question] 10. Mark 3:7–8—why did people flock to Jesus from every quarter?

The people came to Jesus on hearing the report of the great things He had done. For they had heard of Jesus healing the sick and restoring the demon-possessed.

They flocked not only from Galilee but also from Judea and Jerusalem, from Idumea and beyond the Jordan, and from around Tyre and Sidon. This shows that the report about Jesus had spread over a wide region, and that great numbers of people needed His help.

[Question] 11. According to Mark 3:9–10, why did Jesus have a boat kept ready?

Jesus told His disciples to keep a small boat ready in order to avoid being crushed by the many people pressing around Him.

Because Jesus had healed many, those suffering from diseases pressed close to touch Him. So Jesus had the boat kept ready to prevent being pushed by the crowd, and to preach the word and care for the people in safety.

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[Question] 12. Mark 3:11—what did the unclean spirits cry out, falling down before Jesus?

The unclean spirits, whenever they saw Jesus, fell down before Him and cried out as follows.

"You are the Son of God".

[Question] 13. Mark 3:12—what did Jesus sternly forbid the demons to do?

Jesus sternly commanded the demons not to make known to people who He was.

Jesus did not intend to make His identity known through the testimony of demons. That He is the Son of God had to be revealed not by the words of demons but through the word of God and the saving work Jesus accomplishes.

[Question] 14. According to Mark 3:13, what kind of people were those Jesus appointed as disciples?

Those Jesus appointed as disciples were the people He Himself wanted and called.

When Jesus called, they responded to the Lord's call and came to Him. A disciple, therefore, is not a person who earns that place by his own qualification or merit, but a person who is called according to the will of the Lord and comes in obedience to that call.

[Question] 15. Mark 3:13—what did Jesus do before appointing the twelve disciples?

Jesus first went up on the mountain and then called those He wanted. Those who were called came to Jesus.

Mark 3:13 shows that the beginning of a disciple lies not in a man's choice or volunteering but in the will and the calling of Jesus.

[Question] 16. Mark 3:14–15—for what purpose did Jesus appoint the twelve disciples?

The purpose for which Jesus appointed the twelve disciples was threefold: to have them be with Him, to send them out to preach the gospel, and to give them the power to cast out demons.

First, He meant to have the disciples be with Him. What a disciple needs first is not doing many works but being with Jesus and learning Him. The disciples had to hear the words of Jesus, watch His prayer and His life, and learn at close hand the compassion with which He treated the sick and the outcast. They also had to be prepared as those who would see in person that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior, and testify of Him.

Discipleship training, therefore, was not simply a course in knowledge or methods of evangelism. First came the relationship of receiving the word of Jesus into the heart, abandoning one's own thoughts, and learning the will and the heart of the Lord. If one tries to do the work of God with his own zeal and ability, without fellowship with the Lord, he easily delivers not the gospel but his own thoughts and religious assertions.

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Second, Jesus sent the disciples out to preach the gospel. A disciple is not a person who stays only at Jesus's side enjoying grace, but a person sent to deliver to others the gospel he has learned. Jesus called them not merely to have them enjoy personal blessing, but to have them preach the gospel of the kingdom of God to souls in sin and destruction.

The center of the gospel the disciples were finally to deliver is the salvation Jesus accomplished. Jesus took charge of all the sins of mankind once and for all onto His own body with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. The disciples witnessed this work in person and were established to testify to the world that Jesus is the Son of God, who saved man from all sins with the water and the Spirit.

Third, it was to give them the power to cast out demons. This power was not the disciples' native ability, nor a special skill for exalting themselves before people. It was authority given so that they might rescue those oppressed by Satan, reveal that Jesus is the Son of God, stronger than Satan, and testify that the gospel being delivered is the word of the kingdom of God.

The order shown in the passage is also important. Jesus did not send the disciples into the world at once; He first had them be with Him. Only after they had been with the Lord, learned the word, and been established in faith did He entrust them with the mission of preaching the gospel and give them the needed authority. The work of God, therefore, must not be started from a man's ambition or his own ability, but done relying on the calling, the word, and the authority of Jesus.

The believer today must learn this principle as well. First he must have fellowship with Jesus in the word and plainly believe the salvation He accomplished. After that he must

deliver to others the gospel of the remission of sins he has received, and serve so that souls bound by the lies of Satan may believe the truth. The central mission entrusted to a disciple is not boasting of power or mysterious phenomena, but preaching the gospel that saves people from sin.

Thus Jesus had the twelve disciples be with the Lord and learn Him, be sent into the world to preach the gospel, and take part in the saving work of setting free, with the authority received from the Lord, those oppressed by Satan.

[Question] 17. In Mark 3:16, what new name did Jesus give to Simon?

Jesus added to Simon the name *"Peter."*

[Question] 18. Mark 3:17—what name did Jesus give to James and John, the two sons of Zebedee?

Jesus added to James and John the name *"Boanerges."* It means *"Sons of Thunder."*

[Question] 19. Mark 3:16–19—who were the twelve disciples Jesus appointed, each of them?

The twelve disciples Jesus appointed were not made up only of people with special position or learning. They were ordinary people with different occupations and characters, such as fishermen and a tax collector, and Jesus Himself wanted them, called them, and appointed them as disciples. Looking at

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each of them, centered on what the Bible itself records, it is as follows.

1. Simon Peter

Simon was a fisherman who cast his net on the Sea of Galilee, and the brother of Andrew. Jesus added to him the name *"Peter."* Peter is mentioned first in the list of the twelve disciples, and in many situations he spoke and acted as the representative of the disciples.

He confessed of Jesus, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* and yet he was also rebuked when he tried, with human thinking, to stop the suffering of Jesus. When Jesus was seized he denied Him three times, but the risen Jesus restored him. Afterward he became an apostle who boldly preached the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit. The life of Peter shows that a disciple is established not by a man's strong character or resolve but by the grace and training of the Lord.

2. James the son of Zebedee

James was the son of Zebedee and the brother of John. He was a fisherman mending nets in the boat with his father and the hired servants, but at the call of Jesus he left the boat and his father and followed Him.

Jesus gave James and John the name *"Boanerges,"* that is, *"Sons of Thunder."* This can be understood as a name connected with the strong and hasty temperament of the two. James was one of the core disciples who, with Peter and John, saw at close hand the transfiguration of Jesus and His prayer in Gethsemane. He was later killed with the sword by Herod, becoming one of the comparatively early martyrs among the twelve apostles.

3. John the brother of James

John also was a son of Zebedee and a fisherman of Galilee. Together with his brother James he received the call of Jesus and at once followed Him. He too received the name *"Sons of Thunder,"* and at first his temper was so strong that, together with his brother James, he asked for fire to come down from heaven on those who did not receive Jesus.

But being with Jesus, he learned love and compassion. He often accompanied Peter and James at important moments, and in the early Church he took part with Peter in preaching the gospel and establishing the church.

4. Andrew

Andrew was the brother of Simon Peter and a fisherman of Galilee. He was first listening to John the Baptist and then came to follow Jesus, and when he came to know that Jesus is the Messiah, he found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus.

In the feeding of the five thousand, he introduced to Jesus the boy who had five barley loaves and two fish. He also, together with Philip, delivered to Jesus the request of the Greeks who wanted to meet Him. Andrew was a disciple faithful in connecting others to Jesus rather than putting himself forward.

5. Philip

Philip was from Bethsaida, the same town as Andrew and Peter. Jesus called him in person, saying, *"Follow Me,"* and he at once found Nathanael and told him that they had met the Messiah of whom the Law and the prophets wrote.

Philip showed a practical bent, calculating and confirming. Before the feeding of the five thousand he thought much

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money would be needed, and around the Last Supper he asked Jesus to show them the Father. His understanding was lacking, but at Jesus's side he learned the word and the signs and led others to the Lord.

6. Bartholomew

Bartholomew is plainly in the list of the twelve apostles, but the Bible does not record in detail his occupation, family relations, or concrete deeds.

Because Bartholomew is mentioned together with Philip in the lists of the apostles, the view is widely known that he may be the same person as Nathanael. But the Bible does not directly state that Bartholomew and Nathanael are the same person, so it must not be asserted as settled. What is certain is the fact that he received the call of Jesus and was appointed one of the twelve apostles.

7. Matthew

Matthew was a disciple who had been a tax collector. Since tax collectors of that time collected taxes for Rome, they were often despised by their own people and treated as sinners. But Jesus did not turn away from such a man; He called Matthew as a disciple.

Mark chapter 2 records that the one called at the tax office was Levi the son of Alphaeus, and the Gospel of Matthew records the same situation with the name Matthew. So Levi and Matthew are traditionally understood as the same person. Mark chapter 3 itself, however, does not separately explain that identity. The calling of Matthew shows the fact that Jesus calls by grace even a man despised by people and establishes him as a disciple who preaches the gospel.

8. Thomas

Thomas was also called 'Didymus,' that is, the Twin. He had a loyal side, saying, when Lazarus died, that they should go and die with Jesus; but he also had a bent that could not easily accept what he did not understand.

When he heard the news of the resurrection of Jesus, he said he would not believe without seeing and touching for himself. But after meeting the risen Jesus he confessed, *"My Lord and my God!"* The figure of Thomas shows the course of not hiding his doubt, confirming it before Jesus, and arriving at a plain confession of faith.

9. James the son of Alphaeus

This James is recorded as *"James the son of Alphaeus"* to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee. The Bible does not tell in detail his occupation, the course of his calling, or his personal activities.

We cannot conclude that he was Levi the tax collector's brother merely because both men are described as sons of a man named Alphaeus. He is also a different person from James the brother of Jesus. What the Bible states plainly is the fact that he was one of the twelve disciples whom Jesus Himself chose.

10. Thaddaeus

In Mark and Matthew his name is recorded as Thaddaeus. In the lists of the twelve in Luke and Acts there appears 'Judas the son of James,' and this Judas is generally understood as the same person as Thaddaeus. He is a different disciple from Judas Iscariot.

The Bible does not record in detail the occupation or the life of Thaddaeus. In the Gospel of John it is recorded that

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Judas, not Iscariot, asked Jesus why He would manifest Himself to the disciples and not to the world. He can be understood as the same person as Thaddaeus, but considering the difference of names in the Bible, it must be explained with care.

11. Simon the Cananite

Mark calls him *"Simon the Cananite,"* and Luke records him as *"Simon called the Zealot."* Here *"the Cananite"* is understood not as meaning one of the people of Canaan, but as a title meaning 'a zealous one.'

Whether he actually belonged to the organized Zealot party of that time the Bible does not state plainly. But it is possible that he was a man of strongly zealous disposition or background. That Simon, who could be the political opposite of Matthew, who collected taxes for Rome, entered one community of disciples shows that in Jesus people of different backgrounds can become one through the gospel.

12. Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot was chosen as one of the twelve disciples, went about with Jesus, and took part in the ministry. He kept the money box of the community, but the Bible records that he used to take what was put in it.

He handed Jesus over to the religious leaders for thirty pieces of silver, and Mark identifies him from the beginning as the one *"who also betrayed Him."* Though he was near Jesus like the other disciples, he did not believe the word with his heart and was not changed. The life of Judas Iscariot stands as a solemn warning that belonging to the church community, receiving office, and taking part in outward ministry do not by themselves prove true faith.

The common lesson learned from the twelve disciples

The twelve disciples differed from one another in character, occupation, and background, and they were not perfect people from the beginning. There were the hasty, the doubting, the calculating, and the socially despised. Jesus first had them be with Him and taught them His word and His life, and then sent them out to preach the gospel.

The gospel they testified was the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by taking charge of all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, dying on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins in place of mankind, and rising from the dead. The disciples were established as witnesses of this saving work to preach the gospel to the world.

The qualification of a disciple, therefore, does not lie in natural character or high position and learning. The true disciple is the person who answers the call of Jesus and is with Him, believes with the heart the salvation the Lord accomplished, and delivers to others the gospel he has learned. At the same time, as the case of Judas Iscariot shows, what matters is not stopping at outward office and activity, but believing and obeying the word of God with the heart.

[Question] 20. How does Mark 3:21 state the reason the relatives tried to lay hold of Jesus?

The relatives of Jesus heard it said that *"He is out of His mind,"* and went out to lay hold of Him.

Looking at the preceding verse, Jesus was delivering the word and caring for the people with so great a crowd that He had no leisure even to eat. The relatives did not understand the

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conduct of Jesus, who ministered without rest, or the situation surrounding Him, and judged that He was not in His right mind.

But Jesus had not actually lost His mind. His relatives had not yet realized the fact that He is the Son of God, who came to save man, or His mission. This shows that being in a close fleshly relationship is not itself knowing Jesus rightly; one must believe, through the word of God, who He is and what work He does.

[Question] 21. Mark 3:22—what was the slander of the scribes who came from Jerusalem against Jesus?

The scribes who came down from Jerusalem slandered Jesus, saying that He was possessed by Beelzebub and cast out demons by the power of the ruler of the demons.

That is, they turned the good ministry of Jesus, who saved people from the oppression of demons by the power of the Holy Spirit, upside down into the work of Satan.

[Question] 22. Mark 3:23–27—how did Jesus refute their slander?

Jesus called the scribes and, speaking in parables, asked back, *"How can Satan cast out Satan?"*

First He said that if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand, and if a house is divided against itself, that house also cannot stand. In the same way, if Satan himself cast out the demons on his own side, the forces of Satan could only fight one another and collapse. Therefore the scribes' claim that Jesus cast out demons by the power of the ruler of

the demons did not hold even logically.

Jesus then spoke the parable about the strong man's house. For anyone to enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, he must first bind the strong man. Here the strong man points to Satan, who oppresses people with sin and falsehood, and the stronger One, who binds him and rescues those held captive, points to Jesus.

Therefore Jesus casting out demons was not a work done with Satan's help; it was the work of Jesus, the Son of God, subduing the power of Satan and saving those oppressed by him. The ministry of Jesus was not the result of Satan's kingdom fighting itself, but evidence that the authority of the kingdom of God had come and was tearing down the forces of Satan.

[Question] 23. Mark 3:28–30—what is the sin that is never remitted by God forever?

The sin of which Jesus said that it is never remitted forever is the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, *"all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation."* Verse 30 states plainly the reason He spoke this word: "*because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'*"

The scribes of that time saw Jesus casting out demons and saving people by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet they slandered Him, saying that He was possessed by an unclean spirit and cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. Knowing the good saving work done by the Spirit of God, they turned it

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upside down and called it the work of Satan. This is the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit shown in the passage.

The sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit does not refer only to a momentary doubt, a question arising from ignorance, or an unintended slip of speech. It means the hardened attitude that sees the plain truth of God and yet deliberately refuses it to guard one's own thoughts and interests, defining the testimony of the Holy Spirit as evil and opposing it to the end.

That this sin is not remitted is not because the saving power of Jesus is insufficient. Jesus took charge of all the sins of mankind once and for all with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. That is why Jesus first said, *"all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter."*

But the Holy Spirit testifies so that man may realize and believe this gospel. If one knows that testimony of the Spirit and yet opposes it to the end as the lie of Satan, he comes to refuse the very gospel that brings the remission of sins. It is not that the remission of sins has not been prepared; because he stubbornly rejects the only truth that saves him, he does not receive remission and remains in eternal sin.

The person who fears whether he may have committed the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, and who wants to know and believe the truth, cannot be judged to be in the same hardened state as the scribes. The scribes of the passage did not grieve over their wrong and seek to turn; they deliberately slandered the plain work of God as evil and kept on opposing it.

This word, therefore, is a warning not to condemn the work of God rashly as the work of Satan, but to discern all things by the word of the Scriptures. It also teaches that one must lay down his own judgment and religious obstinacy, and believe

the gospel of the water and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which the Holy Spirit testifies, and so receive the remission of sins.

[Question] 24. Mark 3:31–35—what is the meaning of the words that *"whoever does the will of God"* is His brother and sister and mother?

While the mother and brothers of Jesus were seeking Him outside, Jesus looked at those who sat around Him listening to the word and said, *"whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."*

These words do not mean that Jesus denied His fleshly family or disregarded responsibility for family. He was teaching that blood, nation, religious standing, or the mere fact of having been physically near Jesus cannot form a true family relationship with the Lord. In the kingdom of God, the person who hears and believes the word of God and follows His will becomes the spiritual family of Jesus.

Here, to do the will of God does not mean obtaining salvation by good deeds or religious zeal. The most important will of God is to believe in Jesus Christ, whom God sent, and to receive the salvation He accomplished. Jesus took charge of all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. The person who believes this gospel with the heart has all his sins removed once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

Therefore the starting point of doing the will of God is not putting forward one's own deeds, but laying down one's thoughts and one's righteousness and believing, just as the word says, the salvation God accomplished. After that appears

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the obedience that follows the word of God, serves the gospel, and loves other souls. Such obedience is not the price paid to become the family of Jesus, but the fruit of faith borne by the person who has received the remission of sins and become the family of God.

These words also show the fact that believers who have received the remission of sins form one spiritual family beyond blood, standing, and nation. They must count one another brothers and sisters, carry hardships together, care for one another in love, and join hearts for the gospel. This does not mean that the fleshly family may be neglected; one must fulfill his responsibility to his family while setting the word and the will of God in the highest place.

In the end these words mean that the true relationship with Jesus is formed not by lineage or outward conditions, but by the faith that believes the salvation God accomplished and lives following His word. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit

< Mark 3:1-6 >

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

Judaism and the new teaching of Jesus

The nation of Israel is a nation of Judaism, which believes the Old Testament. The faith that believes in the LORD God centered on the word of the Old Testament Law God gave, that is, the five books of Moses, is called Judaism. The Judaists believed and lived following the Law. But everything Jesus came and said and did differed greatly from Judaism. The words the Lord spoke were a new teaching, unfamiliar to the Judaists,

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and a teaching more perfect than Judaism.

Looking at today's passage, it says, *"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand" (Mark 3:1)*. The man with the withered hand was near Jesus. The people in the synagogue were watching in order to accuse Jesus. They were watching whether He would heal this man's disease on the Sabbath. Jesus, knowing this, had the man with the withered hand stand up, and spoke to them.

On the Sabbath, *"to do good or to do evil"*

Jesus asked, *"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4)* The man with the withered hand was standing and the rest were all sitting, and He asked which is right on the Sabbath: to save a man's life or to kill, to do good or to do evil. But the people were all silent. Then, as it is written, *"And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other."* Jesus healed the man with the withered hand on the spot.

Before this happened, the people were watching intently to see whether Jesus would break the Sabbath. If Jesus broke the Sabbath, they meant to report Him to the authorities, to slander Him and have Him beaten. But before healing the disease, Jesus asked them which is right on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill. When there was no answer to that question, Jesus was filled with indignation and wrath. And saying, stretch out your hand, He healed the man with the withered hand on the spot.

But what did the Pharisees do as soon as Jesus healed him? It says, *"Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted*

with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6). At that time Herod was called the king ruling that region, but in fact he was no more than a tetrarch administering one district of Galilee under the Roman emperor. King in name, he was a man in charge of a small province. It says that the Pharisees plotted with these members of Herod's party to kill Jesus.

Those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit

Today's chapter 3 tells of these things, and at the end it says that whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit does not receive the remission of that sin. Because they blaspheme the work Jesus does, they do not receive remission. You see, Jesus came and showed that keeping the Sabbath is not what matters; healing the sick and saving a dying man is more important. Keeping a certain day is not what matters; it is right to fulfill the purpose of that Sabbath and truly do good. He was saying that it is right to do good—is it right to do evil? So He said to the sick man with the withered hand, stretch out your hand, and the Lord healed him.

Then why did the Pharisees pick a quarrel over this and plot to kill Jesus? Because they meant to find fault and kill Him. It is the same today. Today we too are preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. We deliver this gospel in print and in electronic books. But people watch whether we keep the doctrines of their denominations or not. And just as the Pharisees schemed with the members of Herod's party to kill Jesus, so today also those who hold power within Christianity join hands with their factions and persecute those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, seeking to destroy them.

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We are now preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. We believe in Jesus, and we preach that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and took charge of our sins, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us. When people believe this gospel we preach, they receive the remission of sins; so as a result we are doing a good work. It is enough to believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sins—why must one believe exactly as his denomination says in order to be saved? There is no need for that. If one believes this truth of the water and the Spirit, he receives salvation.

But just as those Pharisees joined hands with the members of Herod's party to kill Jesus, so the established, powerful Christianity and its denominations join hands to hinder the preaching of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord calls such people those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. They have no interest in saving life and doing good; they are interested only in the contest for their own interests. They want only that people submit to the doctrines they have set up, come in, give offerings, sing, and be loyal. They have no interest in believing in Jesus and receiving the remission of sins; rather, they persecute those who so believe. Those who do such things are mostly people who take their fleshly profit within those denominations.

But we have received no restraint. Since we deliver the gospel through paper books, electronic books, and audiobooks, whoever will receive it receives it, and whoever does not want it need not receive it. We do not carry the books to people and press them; people come of themselves, see, and if they believe they receive salvation. If one finds it truly right and believes, that is that; and if one says he will not believe because it differs from what his denomination says, he does not believe—how courteous is this? Some slander us, saying another heresy has

appeared, but I do not know who the heretic really is. Those who slander like this are mostly people who receive their pay within those denominations.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished

In fact such people are nothing, but what they do is the work of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Whoever blasphemes what Jesus did belongs to the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. When Jesus healed the sick, the Judaists looked at Him and said He was demon-possessed. Jesus is the Son of God and God Himself. So He healed the sick, and when He met sinners He said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven you,"* bestowing love and compassion and mercy. Yet because Jesus did not follow Judaism, they drove Him into being a heretic, a demon-possessed man.

You must know that whoever hinders the preaching of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is now committing the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Jesus took charge of the sins of all mankind with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and took charge of all the sins of this world, and carrying the sin of the world He went to the Cross, was nailed to it and shed His blood, and so saved those who believe. Whoever blasphemes that blasphemes what Jesus did, and so commits the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Such a person, therefore, must quickly repent.

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Faith that is not shaken

Why did Mark, the disciple of Jesus, record this? To show us of later times that when we do such righteous work as Jesus did, we receive such persecution and go through such things. So He told us how to conduct ourselves and how to live by faith. In fact, in the text, after the people discussed how to kill Jesus, they killed Him. Now also, many people look on what we do with displeasure, despising it and hindering it in many ways. But because we know this fact, we are not discouraged in the least.

When one first believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sins, his faith is young, and when someone persecutes him his heart shrinks. When people say, you are not saved, you are a heretic, our heart shrivels even though what we believe is true. But when faith grows a little, we can answer back: on the Sabbath, which is right—to kill a man or to save him? It is right to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished and receive the remission of sins, and it is right to preach this gospel and save people from sin—or is it right to hide it? It is right to believe in Jesus, receive the remission of sins, and have no sin—or is it right to have sin?

Though many people seek to trouble us, we are not shaken in the least. If you kill me, do you think you will not die? If you do me harm, do you think you will receive no harm? Do you think God will leave it alone? So we can say. We are spiritually people of faith, so there is nothing to shrink from. They do not even know the meaning of the word baptism and speak only from a dictionary. When I see those who speak to hinder this gospel, laughter rather rises from deep in my heart. If you are so able, then produce the evidence that Jesus did not take charge of our sins by being baptized by John the Baptist, and make your case. Without even that ability, do not merely grumble behind

our backs; produce the evidence that when Jesus was baptized our sins did not pass to Him and that it was a mere ceremony, and make it known to the whole world.

We only do what we are to do

But those who slander others groundlessly and attack persons while not even knowing the meaning of baptism—the intellectuals of the world rather ignore them. If they send absurd things to the people of the world, they only get the rebuke to stop their useless doings. There have been many such people in this world who attacked Jesus. Jesus watched what they did, grieved in His heart, and was angry. His heart was full of desire to judge them at once and take their life, but He said He bears and waits until the day He judges. And He did only what He was to do. So it is with us. We need only do what we are to do.

In any case, we are now preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must know them through the word of the Lord. Those who hinder the servants of God who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the work those servants do are those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit, and they are committing a very great wrong. Jesus says that such people, who hinder those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, are in the wrong, that they are committing the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. You must look carefully once more at whether this word we preach is a word that ruins people, or the word that has people receive the remission of sins and become the people of God. This word is the truth that brings a person the remission of sins, so receive salvation by faith. I want you to join hearts with us and, as workers of the Lord and people of the Lord, live good lives and receive blessing from God. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

This world must abandon religion and hold true faith

< Mark 3:1-6 >

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

Religion is a necessary evil, like opium

Religion is a necessary evil. It is both necessary and at times an evil. Some also say that religion is like opium: once a person falls into it, he can never come out. But before Jesus this religion is a tool of evil. For us men, having a religious mind can be one means of seeking God. Yet if one holds such religion as those Pharisees did, he comes rather to seek to seize and kill Jesus.

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Jesus, who healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath

Today's passage, continuing the word shared in the daytime service, is again about the Sabbath. In the daytime a dispute arose over the disciples of Jesus plucking and eating heads of grain on the Sabbath. Then Jesus asked whether they had not read of David eating the showbread set out in the tabernacle in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and said that the Sabbath was made for man. When Jesus entered the synagogue again, there was a man there whose hand was withered on one side. His hand was so dried up and stiffened that he could not move it. In that synagogue there were also Pharisees. Since that day was the Sabbath, they were keeping their eyes on Jesus, thinking He might heal the man with the withered hand, watching with the intent of catching a fault and accusing Him.

Sure enough, Jesus told the man with the withered hand to stand up in the midst, and asked the people. The Jews used to sit around in a circle in the synagogue and hold their meetings, and Jesus set the man with the withered hand in the very center. Then He asked which is right on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill; but the people could say nothing and kept silent. Jesus saw the evil and venomous thing in their hearts and rebuked them, and then said to the man with the withered hand, *"Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.* The man who had been so stiff he could not straighten his fingers stretched out his hand as he was told, and the hand opened and began to move. Yet because He had healed a disease on the Sabbath, the Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus.

In the eyes of the Pharisees, everything Jesus did was a thorn. Why, of all days, did He enter the synagogue on the Sabbath, set

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up the man with the withered hand, and heal him—there are so many other days, why the Sabbath? As the saying goes, when you hate someone, whatever he does is hateful; with that thorn of hatred lodged in their hearts, everything Jesus did was hateful to them in every point. So they picked quarrels—once over the plucking of the heads of grain, and on another Sabbath over the healing of the man with the withered hand—and the Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus.

Religionists who persecute those who preach the true gospel

Among the things Jesus did after coming to this earth there were many events and many disputes, and at every place where a quarrel and a fight arose with Jesus, there were always the religionists. To their eyes Jesus was hateful. If there were no religion at all, people's hearts would not be softened and they would not even try to live kindly; so there are times when it seems this world needs religion. But seen spiritually, Jesus saved mankind and told us to preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and that gospel is being seriously hindered because of religion. Just as the religionists sought to seize and kill Jesus, so today those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit are a thorn in the eyes of the religionists.

These religionists outwardly make keeping the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments their supreme aim, but in fact they mean to gain their fleshly profit through it. Their aim lies only in gaining the profit of their own flesh. Because their flesh is evil, they use religion to cover their evil, as one covers shame with fig leaves. Therefore, in the eyes of Jesus, they were servants of the Devil. Today also, when one would believe and preach the

gospel of the water and the Spirit, they block it. One brother received a booklet and received the remission of sins, and tried to preach in the church he attended, but the minister blocked him, saying the content was not right, and in disappointment he left the church. Now he is carrying out well the work of preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit. In this way many people count as enemies those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as Jesus looked like an enemy in the eyes of the Pharisees, so those who believe and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit look like enemies in the eyes of the religionists. They think they are keeping the Sabbath well, and rather condemn these people for not keeping the Sabbath.

The true Sabbath is believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Then do we not keep the Sabbath? What is it to keep the Sabbath? It is to believe that the Lord has removed all our sins, and to keep the faith that believes that truth. Is not keeping the rest the Lord has brought into our hearts truly keeping the Sabbath? The Lord took charge of my sins and yours by receiving baptism, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us completely, made us without sin, and gave our hearts rest and peace and strength. He made us children of God, gave us eternal life, and saved us so that we would never again be judged for sin. To believe that and to keep that faith is to keep the true rest. What is wrong with that? Is that not truly keeping the rest?

The Lord saved us completely from sin and destruction with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. To keep the faith that believes what the Lord did, the faith that believes the blessing

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He gave us, is truly to keep the rest. But those people count it important to keep not the invisible, spiritual rest, but the letter and the date.

It is also good to keep the date the Lord appointed for rest, from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. But we too do not deliberately do evil or go out amusing ourselves on the Lord's Day. Rather, on the Lord's Day we gather and worship, hear the word, have fellowship with one another, do good works, and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This, in fact, is keeping the Sabbath. Then what is wrong? Those people count important not the spiritual rest but only the letter and the date—that is what is wrong.

No one can keep the literal Sabbath perfectly

Is there anyone on this earth who can keep the Sabbath perfectly according to the letter? To keep it perfectly from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, one must not even go to a shop to buy a drink. If one would keep it literally, it says you shall not make your cattle or your male servant or your female servant work, nor shall you work. Then even turning on electricity made by generators running at a power plant is breaking the Sabbath, and buying a meal at a restaurant is making another person work, so it is not keeping the Sabbath. For not only must one not work himself; he must not make other people or even animals work. To boil feed for the ox one must light a fire, and even while grazing, if wind and rain come, one must drive the ox in—that too is work. In the old days people rode oxen or horses, so wherever one would go he had to work an animal. Modern man must press the switch of the rice cooker even to cook rice, and when a guest comes he must go to the store to buy at least a

pound or two of meat. Who then can keep the Sabbath perfectly? If one would keep it exactly as the word stands, there is no one.

To keep the Sabbath perfectly, If one is to keep the Sabbath perfectly, one must prepare all the food for two days before sunset on Friday, and on that day must not do so much as sew a garment. I was once a legalist. One day I went fishing at the seaside and my trousers tore. In fact, the fishing itself was already breaking the Sabbath. And asking my wife to sew is also breaking the Sabbath. So I could not even ask her to mend my trousers and passed the day as I was. This is exactly hypocrisy. It is like the blind man who strains out a gnat and swallows a camel. That is why Jesus said to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees that they are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful outside with whitewash, but rotting away within. No one can keep it—that is the point.

What Jesus did in giving us the Sabbath and coming to this earth was to call sinners and make them righteous, and to take the burdens off those who labor and are heavy laden. The burden of sin, the burden of the flesh, and every burden of hardship and suffering in the world—He took them all off by receiving baptism and taking charge of all our sins, dying on the Cross, and rising from the dead. He made us children of God, gave us eternal life, and made us enter the kingdom of heaven to enjoy riches and glory, living forever in rest and peace. This is the true Sabbath. This is the Sabbath—that is, keeping the spiritual Sabbath. Jesus came to this earth to save completely—from all that destruction and death and disease and curse and sin—those sick in heart like the man with the withered hand, those bound by sin, those dying of our sins and the diseases of the flesh and doomed to eternal destruction, and to bring them into the kingdom of God. Only when we believe in Jesus knowing what He did and the purpose for which He came, and believe

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accordingly, do we believe rightly.

Those who abandon Jesus when they come to live well

People did not believe what Jesus came to this earth and did; they kept picking useless quarrels and looked at Jesus strangely by their own standards. Today also, Christians all over the world each follow their own doctrine and serve their own doctrine, and though Jesus has removed all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they persecute those who believe this and those who preach this gospel, just as the religionists persecuted Jesus. They must repent of this and know that it is wrong. Even one who believes in Jesus, if he is not born again, is a religionist. Religion is what a man makes for himself and believes for himself. As these religionists persecuted Jesus, so today also Christian religionists persecute those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

If they too truly desire to obtain salvation, they must know how wrongly they now believe. Believing in Jesus as the founder of a religion, once their flesh is full and comfortable and they become rich and gain the world's honor, they throw Jesus away like an old shoe. They needed Jesus only up to that point. But if one knows and believes that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of mankind, the Creator who made heaven and earth, and the Savior who removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, then from the moment he truly meets Him begins the true life of faith; from then on he does the righteousness of God, serves the Lord, reveals the glory of God, and receives blessing forever. People abandon Jesus because they made Him the founder of a religion of their own thinking and believed and

relied on Him that way. Though it is only the bare beginning, when they become rich, gain honor, their bodies are healthy, and their families are at peace and happy, they give up believing in Jesus.

The believers in Jesus all over the world today are all like this. When people first believe in Jesus, they fall in with religionists and believe the half gospel the religionists deliver, holding Jesus as their savior; then, when they become rich and gain power and become happy, they give up believing in Jesus. They abandon Jesus themselves. Why did such a result come about? It came about because they did not know the righteousness by which Jesus saved us completely with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and thought they were believing in their own way—hence this enormous result.

Why is it that Christianity flourished throughout the world and then sank like a crashing airplane in Europe and America and Asia? If there is revival it ought to keep on reviving without end and revive forever—how can it crash midway? Because they believed religion. Because each thought of Jesus as his savior and believed by himself, because they believed without knowing the righteousness of God, Christianity fell so far. It is so now in our country, and so in all the world. These days, even in countries where Catholics were many, Christianity is rising like fire; people who lived poor, with weak economies, changed their religion to try to live well. Long ago Luther, who had been in Catholicism, refuted what was wrong and carried out the Reformation into Protestant Christianity, but that too was in the end no more than changing religions. People call us protesters, but originally the early Church is the root, and Catholicism and the rest are pseudo-Christianity that came out from under it.

What is spreading through the whole world these days is Pentecostal Spirit-centered theology. Saying, I pray that you

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may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers, it teaches that if you believe in Jesus you are saved, receive material blessing, are healed of disease, and gain power. But when that is achieved, they abandon Jesus. America and Europe have already abandoned Jesus. Because they have enough to live on, their backs are warm and their stomachs are full. On the other hand, the poor countries begin to believe in Jesus in order to live well. So in such countries it is rather easier for us to preach the gospel. But the countries that already counted believing in Jesus as one religion among the world's many religions have abandoned Jesus, so they do not receive well even the booklets we bring, nor read them, but ignore them. Our country too believed in Jesus much when it was poor, but when the economy revived and life grew comfortable, people left the church at their ease and abandoned Jesus. Believing in Jesus as a religion for their own sake, they do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and rather persecute those who know that gospel, seeking to seize and kill them. Even people who believe in Jesus persecute like that those who know the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Abandon religion and hold true faith

You must abandon religion. Those who believe in Jesus must abandon what they know. They must abandon what they know thinly. All that one knows apart from the gospel of the water and the Spirit is false, so it must be abandoned. It is a lie. If one claimed to believe in Jesus and believed in Him as savior without knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he believed indeed, but it was a one-sided love, a religious life of his own. He thought of Jesus as savior by himself and believed by himself,

thinking Jesus died on the Cross for him alone. How could Jesus have died on the Cross only for us just like that? Before He was nailed to the Cross, He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River and received all our sins passed on to Him, and carrying those sins He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so saved us. That is how He saved us; He did not save us by being nailed to the Cross alone. The religious life one has led must be abandoned even now. The Christian believers of the whole world must abandon it even now. Only by abandoning it can they obtain salvation.

Jesus did not give us rest to tell us not to work. He gave it so that we would keep the faith that believes that the Lord removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and saved us completely, so that we would not be robbed of that faith. The person who believes in Jesus must know and believe that the Lord came to us, took charge of our sins by receiving baptism, was nailed to the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved us, and must give thanks to the Lord and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the ends of the earth until the day He comes. Therefore, even on the Sabbath, even on the Lord's Day, it is right to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, do good works, and serve the gospel. Doing nothing is not what is good. Of course we must certainly believe that Jesus is God and the Son of God and our Savior, and it is also right that a person should live uprightly and live according to the Law. But the Law was given partly for us to live by, and also to make us realize our sins; so through the Law one must know he is a sinner, believe in Jesus, know His righteousness and receive the remission of sins, and then give glory to God and do the work of saving people bound in sin. Escaping from religion is truly a great matter. Once a man falls into religion there is no way out, but he must without fail come out of religion.

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If you would obtain salvation from sin, if you would truly come to have not one sin in your heart, you must know and believe that the Lord came to this earth and was baptized by John the Baptist for you, taking charge of your sins. And you must believe that He carried the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross and died, and that He rose from the dead and lives even now and has become our Savior. You must believe all that the Lord came to this earth and did. Then you obtain salvation. Then you become a child of God. Then you become a worker of God, a person qualified to do good work. Religion must be abandoned. It is written, abandon what was learned wrongly and known crudely, and continue in the things you have learned and been assured of. How much labor and power has the Lord wrought for us?

The Lord will say to you: "You who practice lawlessness, I saved you with the gospel of the water and the Spirit—what on earth did you believe? Did you know and believe how I took charge of your sins and how I was judged and saved you?" He will ask. And He will say: "You will say you believed in Me who died nailed to the Cross, but that is a mere theory. If I did not take charge of your sins, was My dying on the Cross some show?" Religion is a necessary evil and like opium. But believing that Jesus Christ saved us is not religion but faith. It is looking upon and believing what God did: that He removed our sins, made us children of God, made us righteous, and gave us eternal life. That is faith and that is blessing. We must become people of faith. We must become true people of faith. We must become those who have truly obtained salvation.

Have you never thought that the Pharisees who appear in the Bible are you yourselves? Christian believers of the whole world, you who believe in Jesus—if you do not receive and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you must know that you are

the same as the Pharisees and the scribes recorded in the Bible, and equally people to be cursed by God. Think deeply on that, and consider well whether the Lord has truly saved you completely with the gospel of the water and the Spirit or not. The Lord said that unless a man is born again of water and the Spirit, he can neither enter nor see the kingdom of God. To be born again of water and the Spirit means to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved. You and I must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, know and believe the love and the good work of the Lord, who removed all our sins, give thanks to God, and become those who preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit and save other souls as well.

And we must do righteous work, preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit and becoming those who save the souls of others also. If we, living in this age like the days of Noah, desire to become those who save such people, be sure to know how the gospel of the water and the Spirit has saved you, confirm it biblically, and so believe. I want the blessing of God to be upon you. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Join your heart to the word of the Lord, agree with it, and be qualified

< Mark 3:1-6 >

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

Jesus, who healed the man with the withered hand

Our Lord spoke in Mark chapter 2 about the heads of grain, and coming to chapter 3 He speaks again about the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus entered the synagogue again to deliver the word, and there was a man there whose hand was withered on one side. The synagogue was a place where people gathered;

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in today's terms we could call it a chapel.

The people were watching whether Jesus would heal that man on the Sabbath, in order to accuse Him. With that sick man whose hand was stiff and hardened before them, the people were thinking that since Jesus had come in, He would heal him even though the day was the Sabbath.

Jesus asked those who were looking on: Which is right on the Sabbath—to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill? The people were all silent, and the man with the withered hand also could say nothing. Jesus grieved that their hearts were hardened, and at last He restored that hand and healed him.

The Bible shows such scenes again and again. Before this, the Pharisees accused the disciples of Jesus for plucking and eating heads of grain, and here they quarrel over the healing of the man with the withered hand, saying no work may be done on the Sabbath. The reason the Bible speaks repeatedly like this is to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit to you and me today. Our Lord came to this earth and told us plainly what kind of person enters the kingdom of heaven.

You must know that you are sick

On that spot the man with the withered hand received healing and went out restored. Our Lord said, I did not come to call the righteous but sinners. That the hand was withered means it was completely dried and twisted, unable to bend or stretch. That He saved such a man—this speaks of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Then what does such a man with a withered, stiffened hand signify? It means he has a disease. There is also a disease in which the body gradually stiffens. There is a disease in which a

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young man, not long after marrying, begins to stiffen until his whole body is rigid, and at last he cannot even pronounce words, conveying his thoughts through a computer and barely speaking. For such a man to be healed, he must first know that he has caught this disease—ah, I have this disease. He must know that not only this arm is failing but the other arm and the legs also keep withering. Only then, when he meets Jesus, can he ask to be healed.

We are seeds of evildoing, conceived in iniquity

Then what does this story of the man with the withered hand coming to Jesus and being healed tell us? This story teaches that you and I, from birth, are beings who cannot do good truly from the heart. We are born with evil from birth—seeds of evildoing that practice evil. A man born with evil, however he tries to do good, cannot do it.

True good can be called a good deed only when one's own heart joins in doing it. Good done to be seen by others, or to display oneself for various reasons, ends up as evil and as fraud. Praise is the same. To sing acknowledging the words of the hymn with my own heart, agreeing and joining with them, is true praise. But if the lips praise God while the heart does not join with the words, that is not true praise, and such a person cannot be called born again.

The heart of the born-again person joins with the words of this praise. Even when he cannot make his voice beautiful, his heart joins with the words, so he truly exalts God, and in exalting Him he himself receives grace. For he believes, as the words say, that he too has received salvation from God and blessing, and that God will care for him hereafter.

David confessed, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5)* Sinful parents bore me; I inherited my parents' sin, was conceived in sin and born in sin, and so I was one who could only break the law of God—this is the confession. You and I also inherited the sin of Adam and Eve through our parents and were born with evil hearts. So we come out of our mother's womb after ten months carrying sin and evil from birth, and growing up we practice sin and evil and bear such fruits. Here our hearts must agree. For Jesus came to save exactly such people.

The Lord who came to call sinners

Jesus did not come to save people who could endure without sinning if they only tried. He said, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mark 2:17)*. In heart and in deed alike, all men are shut up under sin, and you and I are just the same. If we agree in our hearts that our spiritual state is like that man whose hand was withered, we acknowledge that we were born with such sin and evil. Only then can we truly meet the Lord and receive salvation, and only then are we even qualified to believe in the Lord.

If our hands were not withered, if we had no disease, if we had much money and healthy bodies and even social position and honor—if Jesus had come then, would you and I have believed in Him? What would He have had to do with us? For Jesus came to heal the sick and the poor and to remove even the sins of their hearts. The Pharisees had worldly power and honor and money, sound bodies and much learning; counting that because of Jesus their popularity would vanish and they would rather be despised, they became His adversaries.

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Therefore, only when you and I acknowledge the state of which God speaks in the Bible—that we were conceived and born as seeds of evildoing—are we qualified to believe in Jesus. Otherwise we are not qualified. Only the person who acknowledges that he was formed with sin and evil and born on this earth, and that he reproduces them and bears evil fruits, and whose heart agrees with that word, is qualified to believe in Jesus. We must truly become such people.

The faith of the person who humbly acknowledges and agrees

Then our Lord, asking which is right on the Sabbath—to save life or to kill—revealed His own self. Though I came to this earth as a man, borrowing the body of Mary, I am in essence the Creator and your Savior. Though I came as the Son of Man, I am the very One who removes your sins, the Master, and God. This is what He is saying.

Therefore we must know our own state, and when Jesus comes to us, we must receive Him as those qualified to truly need Him. If we had been like the Pharisees in those days, we would not have met the Lord. Today also, the person who counts himself a decent man with no mind to do evil and doing only good finds it hard to meet the Lord. Rather he becomes like the Pharisees, finding the Jesus who comes seeking without rest a nuisance, and standing against Him. Jesus is God and the Savior, the Savior who came to this earth because He pitied us—can it be that one stands against Him? Does it make sense? So do not stand in such an opposing relation to Him.

A fact is a fact, so should we not acknowledge it? It is a fact that Jesus is our Savior, so we must acknowledge it; and it is a

fact that we are sinners, seeds of evildoing, people bound for hell, so should we not acknowledge that too? When we agree with such a humble heart, we are qualified to believe in Jesus, to receive and welcome Him. Then we need only believe in the present tense.

It says of the man with the withered hand, *"He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other" (Mark 3:5)*. The stiffened hand was restored before Jesus into a whole arm. When we come before Him, nothing is impossible and nothing fails. How can we know how sin disappears? If someone asks, how do you know—how do you know that sin disappears?—one must actually experience sin disappearing to know it; it is not something known by fitting doctrines together in one's head. When we know that Jesus is the Christ, who came by water and the Spirit, and receive the fact that Jesus took our sins away and removed them with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross, then the sin that was in the heart really disappears. One knows that the sin that was plainly there is gone.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit: becoming a sinner by the word and righteous by the word

Yet we humans do not regard sin so. Though we have countless sins, we count as sin only what we ourselves feel to be truly wrong. People call this sin by sensation, and they agonize over the sins they feel. But for sin to exist, one must first acknowledge the Law of God. If one has not lived according to the law of God, sin is constituted; and when sin is constituted, he becomes one who has sin.

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The person who has no experience of sin disappearing must start from becoming a sinner by the word of God. When one acknowledges God and holds his life up to the light of God's law, sin is constituted. He did not do what God said to do, and did what God said not to do, so he becomes a sinner. Knowing himself a sinner by the word in this way, he must come to Jesus Christ and know and believe how the Lord saved him. Becoming a sinner by the word and becoming righteous by the word—this is the remission of sins and the blessing God has given.

This remission of sins is not some hot sensation. Our church is quiet even in worship; no one makes a noise claiming tongues or utters strange sounds; it is quiet and courteous. And we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the plainest words. When one hears that word, understands, believes it in his heart, and agrees, that is the remission of sins. The sin that was there is gone. The Bible tells us this.

The four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—record the life of Jesus from His coming to this earth until His ascension. Look at what kind of people Jesus met. He met and healed people with problems—lepers, the man with the withered hand, the sick man of thirty-eight years, the blind, the deaf, the lame—and even the dead. Did you and I have no problems? Could you and I have solved the problems we carry without meeting God? There is no one without problems; everyone has them. Some have problems in the body, some in the mind, some in the heart and in human relationships.

The greatest problem is that we were born with sin from birth. How dreadful a thing is this! Is there even one person on this earth born without sin? Apart from Jesus there is no one. Even the famous philosophers of the world and those called saints all have sin. Before God all alike are born into this earth with sin, and life is developing that sin, committing more sins, and

passing away. That is the figure of you and me.

The question is whether we acknowledge this. To know oneself a person with a problem and so need Jesus, to meet Jesus through the word of God, hear and believe and receive the remission of sins, and reach the kingdom of God—this is what the Bible says. And after receiving the remission of sins, during the time until we go to the Lord, let us believe the Lord well and deliver this news to others also. This is what the Lord says to us human beings.

For me and for you alike, meeting the Lord is a matter of deepest thanks. Having met the Lord, we can live through this rough world smiling now and then. But in the Bible there appear those who oppose without ceasing—the Pharisees. They are hypocrites, people who believe in God yet are not honest before His law, people who do not acknowledge themselves sinners and do not acknowledge that they need the Savior. Are you and I perhaps becoming Pharisees? If one has long been in the church, holds office, and knows much and yet has no power, he must look back at himself. The ability to love people comes after one meets the Lord.

When a person who has not met the Lord says he loves someone, it is in truth liking him because he is needed, and that is not true love. For when the need is gone, he can discard him at any time. As the Lord loved us and saved us, and as we believed in the Lord and the sinner became righteous and obtained eternal life, so sharing what we have received is love. Love wishes the other person well and cherishes him; it does not drag him into what is bad, does not harm him, and does not behave rudely. The person who has met the Lord truly loves. Therefore we must not become Pharisees. There is no telling how many Pharisees there are within this Christianity.

Lastly, the Lord was here delivering the gospel of the water

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and the Spirit to the man with the withered hand. I am the Lord of the Sabbath and God and your Savior; you with the withered hand, come to Me; stretch out your hand—so He said, and healed him. You and I were saved the same way. When the Lord comes to you and me and asks, what problem do you have?—we come to Him saying: I am in anguish because of sin; I want to go to heaven but it does not go as I will; I want to live truthfully but cannot live so; change me, remove my sins, and save me. Then the Lord says: I remit your sins; I have removed them with the water and the blood. We believed this word, received the remission of sins, and became the righteous who have obtained salvation.

The Bible tells this story continually. Such preaching is called gospel preaching. Gospel preaching is the preaching most needed by anyone and everyone. Anyone can say, let us live kindly—one hears it anywhere in the world and in the world's religions. But the Lord solved our problem. He removed our sins, gave us strength to live uprightly, and gave us the blessing of going to the kingdom of God. Delivering this is precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We are hearing the happiest preaching. Since we hear no worldly talk here, we can only give thanks. Are you thankful as well? (Yes!) I will close the message. Hallelujah! ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

By believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Let us not commit the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit

< Mark 3:7-30 >

"But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.' But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known. And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas,

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

The great multitude that followed Jesus

In Mark chapter 2 Jesus healed the paralytic and, conversing with the religionists, said that only when they turned their thoughts could they receive salvation and take the word of truth into their hearts. After the Lord came to this earth and was baptized by John the Baptist, He healed countless sick people during His public ministry. Besides that He worked many signs and wonders, and in particular He healed the demon-possessed

and turned the hearts of people bound in religious life. So a great multitude, hearing of the great things He was doing, came out, and truly many people followed Jesus. We need to understand a little more deeply the fact that so great a multitude followed Him.

Looking at the background of that age, many people lived pressed under heavy burdens, diseases were many, and they were in the plight of sheep without a shepherd. At such a time Jesus appeared, healed diseases, saved the demon-possessed, and even gave them food with the blessing of the five loaves and two fish; therefore the great multitude followed Jesus so eagerly. As the crowds pressed in too greatly, Jesus withdrew to the seaside, had a boat prepared, and going up into that boat He taught the truth concerning the kingdom of heaven. Not only those already healed but also the sick who wanted healing flocked from all over the land, and those suffering from diseases pressed around from every side, wanting to touch Jesus.

Meanwhile the demons within the demon-possessed, whenever they saw Jesus, fell down before Him and cried out that He was the Son of God, and Jesus sternly warned them not to make Him known. The Lord also called the twelve disciples to be with Him, sent them out to preach, and gave them the power to cast out demons, to do that work just as Jesus did. Then, when He entered a house again, the crowd gathered once more, and He had to heal the sick without leisure even to eat.

The relatives and the scribes who opposed Jesus

In this situation the fleshly relatives of Jesus came to lay hold of Him. Saying that in their family there was a man called Jesus who was demon-possessed and out of his mind, even His fleshly relatives came to seize Him. And the scribes who came down

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from Jerusalem—in today's terms, men corresponding to scholars of the Law—spread the groundless rumor that Jesus had Beelzebub and cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. From this point the words the Lord spoke continue to verse 30 of our passage.

The Lord came to this earth, healed diseases, cast out demons, and worked many mighty works; and toward those who slandered that work, saying He was demon-possessed or cast out demons by Beelzebub, the Lord was indignant in heart and spoke very strong words. He rebuked them and gave several examples. He asked how Satan can cast out Satan, and said that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, and a house divided against itself cannot stand. If Satan rises up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but has an end—how then can you say that I cast out demons by the ruler of the demons?

The Lord came to this earth to save sinners, those fallen into destruction. So He said of Himself that He is the Son of God and the Savior of all mankind. He made plain that He is the Savior who came to save those oppressed in spirit and body, sick, and bound for hell because of sin, and that He is a very mighty One.

Only after binding the strong man does one plunder his house

So in verse 27 He said, *"No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house."* Truly, unless one who is stronger enters a house and completely subdues and binds the man in it, he cannot carry out the goods of that house. In the same way the Lord came to this earth as the Savior, as God who made and rules all things, and He suppressed the demons and

cast them out and healed diseases as well. Yet they slandered this work, saying He cast out demons by the ruler of the demons.

We too, hearing such empty words, would grow irritated and annoyed. Jesus bore much and yielded much in other matters, but at the words that He was demon-possessed or cast out demons by the ruler of the demons, His heart was deeply wounded. That is why He spoke the words of verses 28 to 30.

He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never receives remission

The Lord said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter" (Mark 3:28)*, and, *"but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" (Mark 3:29)*. He spoke these words because they kept driving Jesus into being a demon-possessed man, saying He had an unclean spirit. It is exactly as verse 30 says: *"because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"*

All the sins of men and all blasphemies are remitted. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never receives remission forever and is subject to eternal sin. Jesus Christ put on the flesh of man and came to this earth, and upholding the will of the Father He works these works together with the Holy Spirit; when they slander Him as demon-possessed, they end up blaspheming the holy God, the Holy Spirit. They become those who blaspheme the work of God.

When it comes to that, that sin is never remitted forever, and they are subject to eternal sin. All other sins receive remission; but if one despises and blasphemes the work of God, saying that Jesus is demon-possessed and casts out demons by the ruler of

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the demons, then there is no remission. The works the Lord did on this earth are the works God did; if one blasphemes these, that sin is never remitted forever and he receives eternal punishment—this is what He said.

We must apply this word to this present age. Jesus came to this earth, was baptized by John the Baptist and took charge of the sins of all mankind, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us from destruction. If one opposes this fact of the gospel of the water and the Spirit without knowing it, it is rather fortunate; but if one plainly knows this fact and yet opposes and blasphemes it, that belongs to the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Today those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit are preaching this gospel to the people of the whole world; the sin of the person who hinders this, saying it is demon-possession or heresy, is never remitted forever, and he is shut up in eternal sin. Those who so hinder the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that you and I are now delivering to the whole world fall under the sin of those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit. It may seem a small thing, but for those who receive the judgment of that sin there is no way ever again to receive the remission of sins, and only fearful punishment awaits them. With no way of recovery, they enter the fire that is never quenched forever.

Because that punishment is not temporary but eternal, this sin is so fearful. Those who hinder the work of the Holy Spirit, who through the people who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preaching the gospel to the whole world, need only repent quickly; but if they keep on in their stubbornness, they can never receive the remission of sins. We must know how fearful that sin is and how great a punishment it receives. The words the Lord spoke are not the words of man but the truth; if

a blessing, an enormous blessing, and if a curse, an enormous curse. Therefore we must know what the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is and avoid that sin.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true gospel

Our Lord put on the flesh of man and came to this earth, was baptized by John the Baptist and took charge of the sins of mankind once and for all, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead, and so saved us. So He caused those who believe that He removed all the sins of mankind with the gospel of the water and the Spirit to be saved from all sins. The Lord remitted their sins. Now, deliberately to hinder the evangelistic work of those who believe and preach this gospel—that is precisely the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

The sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is hindering the ministry of those who believe and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and keeping others from believing this gospel. The sins a man commits out of lack and weakness are not the problem. Such sins are all remitted by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But the sin of hindering the ministry of the Holy Spirit is different. The Holy Spirit is God; the sin of hindering the ministry of that Spirit is by no means a light sin.

After the Lord remitted all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and rose from the dead and ascended, He sent us the Holy Spirit. On the hearts of those who through the word of God know and believe that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth—those who acknowledge the fact that the Lord has removed all our sins—the Holy Spirit sets His seal.

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Your faith is right, it is right that all your sins have been removed by the gospel of the water and the Spirit—so saying, the Holy Spirit seals that heart and enters it, and the Lord is with them.

But those who commit the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit hinder the ministry that has people believe this gospel and receive the remission of sins. Just as they said Jesus acted that way because He was demon-possessed, so today they call those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit heretics and say they preach heretical doctrine. So they fall into the sin of hindering the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and never receiving remission, they receive eternal punishment and go to hell. Therefore this sin must never be committed.

When we examine the gospel of the water and the Spirit closely, it is what the Lord Himself gave us, and there is nothing wrong in it at all. In the days of the early Church this gospel was preached, but afterward people neither knew it nor preached it, and a half gospel, a corrupted gospel that preaches only the blood of the Cross, has been handed down. It is only that people have not heard it; the true gospel of the water and the Spirit is the work of God, in which the Lord came to this earth, was baptized by John the Baptist and took charge of the sins of mankind once and for all, was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and saved us. The Lord came to this earth to save His people from their sins.

The person who does not believe but hinders this work—the work by which Jesus removed our sins—never receives the remission of sins. The person who does not yet believe may believe hereafter; but the person who knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet hinders and corrupts it never receives remission. A man lives at most seventy or eighty years, or a hundred if he lives long. If in that brief coming and going he hinders this work by which God saved mankind from sin with

the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he hinders what God has done, and so never receives the remission of sins.

The fearful punishment of the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit

So we must never commit this sin, and if we cannot yet believe, we must look again and again. The works of those who today hold the half gospel, believing only in the blood of the Cross, who with sin in their hearts and without even knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit claim to work signs and wonders—those works one may criticize as much as one will, and it does not matter. But the work the Lord truly meant to do in coming to this earth was to make for us and teach us the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

That the Lord healed diseases and cast out demons during His short stay on this earth was in order to save sinners from sin; He did not come only to cure diseases and deliver from demons. He came to save man fundamentally from all sins, to make him a child of God, and to give him the eternal blessing of everlasting life. Therefore this gospel of the water and the Spirit must be believed by all, and a Christian believer must surely believe and preach it. Whoever does not believe this gospel and hinders and opposes those who preach it comes to destruction and receives an enormous curse.

People think far too lightly of the punishment God brings on sin. They take it as though, since countless people go to hell, they will just follow along; but the punishment of sin is suffered each one individually. He said they burn scorching in the fire that is never quenched, suffering forever, and that everyone will be seasoned with fire. Even lying flat on the ground one is hot—

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think of entering into fire and undergoing the punishment of that sin. Would it comfort you that the person next to you suffers with you? When one's own pain is so severe that he grinds his teeth, what comfort could that be?

People take lightly not only the punishment of God but even the blessing by which God remitted our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made us without sin, and made us His children. The Lord endured other things, but when they judged the work He was doing to be the doing of a demon-possessed man, killing Him with their mouths and spreading the rumor, He spoke this word: whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never receives the remission of sins forever and will suffer eternal pain.

Believe and preach this gospel now

In this age I, together with you, preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to all people of the whole world. It does not matter that some call our speech too blunt or unlearned. Man is truly a being who sins, a sinner who sins all his life; and because there is no more honest way to expose that fact, we preach so plainly and so directly. The gospel I preach is not something I invented; it is what God has us preach within us, what the Lord made and delivered to us, so that we knew and believed and received salvation. This, you and I, made disciples of the Lord, have come to deliver to people again.

Now we are delivering this gospel to the whole world through many channels, and some who see it call it heresy and say not even to look at it. But the more they say not to look, the more people come and see; and while some, finding it truly biblical and direct, receive the remission of sins and give thanks,

others join those who oppose the work of the Holy Spirit and oppose it together. I am not saying that they should be cursed; I am telling them this word—that whoever blasphemes the Holy Spirit never receives remission forever—so that they will not commit that sin.

If one does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit we now preach, calling it a wrong gospel, a false gospel, a heretical gospel—up to not believing, it may pass. But if he tells others that it is a heretical faith and hinders them, it comes to pass exactly as this word says. So I say: do not commit this sin. To the person who until now has known the remission of sins only by the blood of the Cross, the gospel of the water and the Spirit sounds new and more concrete; it seems right, and yet differs from what he has believed, so it may be hard to receive at once. Then keep the Bible at your side, search again, and hold it up also to your own heart, and confirm that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth, and believe.

Even if Christianity for two thousand years has believed that the remission of sins comes by the blood of the Cross alone, that is only because people did not know and could not preach it; it does not make the gospel of the water and the Spirit a counterfeit. The true gospel is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The false gospel is the one that leaves out Jesus taking charge of the sins of mankind by being baptized by John the Baptist, and preaches only the blood of the Cross.

After the early Church, through the thousand dark years of the Middle Ages, preaching only the blood of the Cross was called salvation, and what the Reformers came out believing and preaching was also only the blood of the Cross. But they failed to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit because they did not know it, not because it was a false gospel that they refused to believe. The true gospel is the gospel of the water and the

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Spirit, and countless people until now have neither known nor preached it. So even now, when there are those who preach this gospel, one must, like the Bereans, keep the Bible at hand, compare and search whether these things are so, and come to know the fact that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth.

I seem to be preaching only to you, but in truth what the Bible says is what matters most to me. How the situation stands has nothing to do with it; what God says in the Bible is what matters. The Lord is speaking this word today both to those who believe only in the blood of the Cross and to those who oppose the preachers of the gospel of the water and the Spirit: whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never receives remission forever and is subject to eternal sin. Therefore every Christian believer must listen to this word and lay it to heart. One must believe in Jesus Christ, who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, as the Savior, and know and believe the fact that with that gospel He took charge of the sins of mankind once and for all and remitted them.

One must not keep believing only in the blood of the Cross because he did not know, because until now he has known only the blood of the Cross. What countless people have believed until now is not what matters; what is needed is the faith that knows which gospel is the true gospel and believes that gospel. However the neighbor believes, however the Christians of today believe, what God says in the Bible is what matters. So I ask you not to commit this sin, and I want you not to suffer eternal destruction.

Little time is left to this age. The things the word of the Bible foretold—nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, famines and disasters in place after place—are happening all over the world. He said that when these things

begin they suddenly swell like a snowball and only expand, never subsiding. More disasters will come, and people will fall to plagues and die in masses, a third part struck down—so pressing is this last time. He said that when these things begin to happen, know that the time of the Lord's coming is near.

God said He would send the former rain and the latter rain; the days of the early Church were the former rain, and then the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit arose and people received the remission of sins. Now, in the last days, God sends the latter rain, raising up servants who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and having them preach this gospel to the whole world. This is the blessing of God that falls late, the blessing of salvation and the blessing of eternal life. Therefore this gospel must be believed.

Now, if one does not understand, he must ask more and search and come to know and believe. The Lord also said that a man must be born again of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God; so whether the friend beside me believes this gospel or not, whoever has sin in his heart must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He must acknowledge that he is a sinner and believe this gospel, be saved from sin, and obtain eternal life. Now is not the time to weigh how others believe; it is the time for each to believe for himself this gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is being delivered without ceasing, and not to commit the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

He said that the sin of whoever blasphemes the Holy Spirit is never remitted forever and is subject to eternal sin. And apart from believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is no way to come directly before God and receive the remission of sins. God the Father sent His Son to this earth, had Him be baptized by John the Baptist, die on the Cross, and rise again, and so made the gospel of the water and the Spirit and gave it to

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us. Now no one receives the remission of sins one-to-one with God apart from it; through this gospel God gave mankind, one must know that he is a sinner, and know and believe the fact that the Lord removed all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and saved us, and so truly receive salvation.

Living in this age we must not hesitate; you yourselves must believe first, and not only believe but deliver this gospel to others as well. Not many days remain for preaching the gospel. As winter is already at the door and the Beginning of Winter has passed, know that the whole world is changing. You and I, who now believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, are very happy people; whenever the Lord comes, there is no problem for us.

Our one concern is for those who, misled by the words of those who oppose this gospel, oppose it with them, commit the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, and come under eternal punishment. Pitying such people, we are concerned for them; we must pray more, preach this gospel more, and teach and exhort them not to commit this sin. Let us close by taking time to intercede before God for the countless people living on this earth, that God may keep them from committing the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, and that they may believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved, and by praising Him. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The Savior who bound the strong man, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit

< Mark 3:20-30 >

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

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One can see an amazing work and call it the exact opposite

When Jesus entered a house, the multitude gathered again. So many people came to the Lord that there was no leisure even to eat. In the preceding passage Jesus healed those suffering from diseases, and the unclean spirits fell down before Him. Jesus appointed the twelve, had them be with Him, and gave them the power to preach and to cast out demons. Mark chapter 3 shows that the authority of Jesus is not a claim in words only, but real authority that drives out the powers oppressing man.

But not all people arrived at the same conclusion. His relatives came out to lay hold of Him, and the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said that He had Beelzebub and cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. They interpreted the authority of Jesus over demons as resting on the power of Beelzebub and the ruler of the demons.

They were scribes come down from Jerusalem. But religious position itself did not guarantee right judgment. The fact the text records is plain. Though Jesus cast out unclean spirits, they ascribed that authority to Beelzebub and the ruler of the demons. Therefore we must examine whether a judgment agrees with the testimony of the Scriptures, rather than looking at a person's position.

Mark records their accusation and then relays the answer of Jesus in detail. The Lord called the scribes and asked whether Satan can cast out Satan, and said that a kingdom and a house divided against themselves cannot stand. He then made plain that only after first binding the strong man can one carry off the goods of his house. So when we read this passage, we must not merely repeat the scribes' labels, but follow the order of refutation Jesus Himself set out. That order shows plainly why

their accusation does not stand.

This passage asks us what we are looking at, and what we are calling it. It does not mean that we should accept everything as the work of God merely because something amazing has happened outwardly. Neither, on the contrary, may we condemn as evil the salvation grounded on the word of God merely because it differs from our tradition. The standard of discernment must be not a person's fame or our familiarity, but Jesus Christ, whom the Scriptures testify, and the salvation He accomplished.

The Lord's answer: a kingdom divided cannot stand

Jesus called the scribes and, speaking in parables, asked whether Satan can cast out Satan. *"How can Satan cast out Satan?" (Mark 3:23)* Then He made plain that a kingdom and a house divided against themselves cannot stand. The claim that Satan casts out Satan in order to tear down his own forces does not accord with reason.

The Lord went on with the parable of the kingdom and the house. If a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand; if a house is divided against itself, it cannot stand. If Satan also rises up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but comes to an end. The casting out of unclean spirits by Jesus was not an event of Satan attacking his own side. It was the event of One stronger than the power of Satan breaking that force and rescuing the oppressed.

The words of the scribes were not only wrong in logic. Their word was an accusation that tied the Lord of life to the power of an unclean spirit. For they ascribed His casting out of demons to

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Beelzebub and the power of the ruler of the demons. Today we too must beware of calling evil the salvation the Scriptures testify, merely because it differs from our own tradition. When we hear any claim, we must discern it following the testimony of the Scriptures rather than a person's label or rumor.

Today we must not define the gospel only by circulating words or the judgment of the majority. That someone denounces something strongly does not make the denunciation true. We must first examine before the Bible. We must see who Jesus is, how He took charge of the sin of the world by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, what His death on the Cross judged, and what His resurrection confirms. Truth is decided not by the size of the rumor but by what God has done.

The stronger One who entered the strong man's house

Jesus spoke of the strong man's house. *"No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house."* Here, the one who enters the strong man's house and takes out his goods must be stronger than the strong man. That Jesus cast out demons and restored the oppressed shows that the Lord is the Savior stronger than Satan.

This word must not be turned into a formula for personal success or victory in competition. The words about binding the strong man cannot be used like a spell for gaining what I want. The focus of the passage is on the unique authority of Jesus. It is not a story of a man overpowering Satan by his own will and saving himself, but the story of Jesus breaking the power of the enemy and rescuing the person held captive.

The power of Satan deceives people, binds them under sin, and makes them fear death. Man commits sin and yet cannot solve the results of sin by himself. By religious discipline he may mend his conduct a little, but he cannot remove the sins already committed. However he repeats his resolutions, he cannot fundamentally wash the sin that comes out of the heart. Therefore the One we need is not merely a teacher who adds a little advice, but the Savior who breaks the power of sin and death.

Jesus was not One who only spoke from outside Satan's house. He put on the flesh of man, came to this earth, and entered the place where sinners lay. The signs of casting out unclean spirits and healing the sick revealed the fact that the Lord is stronger than the power of oppression. But the center of the salvation the Lord gives does not lie only in curing the diseases of the body. It lies in delivering man fundamentally from all sins and making him a child of God.

When the circumstances of the body improve, one may rejoice for a while; but if the problem of sin and death is not solved, he has not obtained eternal freedom. On the other hand, that disease or hardship remains does not mean the salvation of the Lord is weak. We must not shrink the signs of Jesus into a promise guaranteeing the comforts of this present life. We must see the greater fact the signs point to: that Jesus is the Son of God, who will save those held by sin and death.

The Savior took charge of sin and overcame the judgment

That Jesus can rescue the sinner from the bondage of Satan is not merely because He displayed greater force. The Lord

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solved the problem of sin righteously. Jesus is without sin, but by being baptized by John He took the sins of all mankind onto His own body. This was not simply giving believers an example of water baptism; it was the saving work of receiving the sins of sinners passed on to Him and fulfilling all righteousness.

Jesus carried the sin of the world He had taken on through His baptism and went to the Cross. Since the wages of sin is death, He received in our place the judgment of God upon that sin and shed His blood and died. And He rose from the dead. The baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection are not events separated from one another. They are one complete work: taking charge of sin, receiving the judgment of that sin, and overcoming death, and so saving the sinner wholly.

This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and the way by which the Savior stronger than the strong man delivered us. The ground of accusation that held the sinner the Lord took onto His own body by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and He received all the punishment of that sin on the Cross. The risen Lord has completely overcome the power of sin and death. Therefore salvation is not a prize a man wins by contending with Satan. It is grace received by believing what Jesus accomplished.

The person who believes this gospel with his heart is not merely partially cleared of past sins. In the sin of the world Jesus took charge of are included our fundamental sin and all the sins of our whole life. Because the judgment of that sin was carried out on the Cross, all the sins of the believer are removed once and for all. The person who has received the remission of sins is no longer a sinner with sin left in his heart, but a righteous person whom God has declared righteous. Though the weakness and lack of the flesh remain, the perfect salvation of Jesus does not return to incompleteness.

To the person who has received this remission of sins God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The Holy Spirit is not a human technique that produces special feelings or phenomena. The Holy Spirit testifies of the salvation Jesus accomplished, and guarantees that the believer has become a child of God. Nor is the Holy Spirit received as a reward for service or offerings or fasting. When one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit dwells in that heart.

The passage states plainly the direct reason for the warning

Jesus said that all the sins and blasphemies of men are remitted, but that whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never receives remission forever and is subject to eternal sin. These words are very solemn. But this warning must not be cut off from the passage and used as vague terror. Mark makes plain at once why the Lord spoke this word: *"because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"*

The scribes called the saving work Jesus did by the Holy Spirit the work of an unclean spirit. This is not the same as being slow to understand or having questions. The result of Jesus setting a man free was before them, yet they said that Jesus had an unclean spirit. The warning of the passage is directed precisely at this word and this hardened opposition.

Therefore we must not conclude that someone has committed the eternal sin because he doubted for a moment. The person who hears the gospel for the first time and questions because he does not understand, the person who was taught wrongly but wants to search the Scriptures again, the person who

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in fear worries whether he has blasphemed the Holy Spirit—these must not be condemned rashly. Rather we must explain the passage and the gospel to him calmly and help him confirm it according to the Scriptures.

Neither may the words blasphemy against the Holy Spirit be used as a tool for threatening people we do not like. Questioning a particular leader or organization is not automatically blaspheming the Holy Spirit. The work of distinguishing between man's claims and the word of God is necessary. The standard of the passage is not loyalty to a human organization but the saving work of the Holy Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ.

At the same time, we must not weaken the solemnity of this warning. To know well the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Scriptures testify, and yet to distort it as evil in order to guard one's doctrine and honor, and to block others in an organized way from believing—this is not light. The attitude that erases the baptism Jesus received from John, speaks of the blood of the Cross detached by itself, and drives the whole gospel into heresy must be thoroughly turned from before the Scriptures.

We must distinguish not knowing from deliberately turning it upside down

A person may not know the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John because until now he has heard only of the blood of the Cross. Words heard for the first time can be unfamiliar, and being different from what he has been taught, hard to accept at once. What must be done then is not to rush to denounce, but to open the Bible and examine. One must confirm not what is familiar to many people, but what God has said.

The person who preaches the gospel must also give the other

person room to think. He must not treat questions as rebellion, or declare at once that a person who does not understand is bound for destruction. The Lord brought the words of the scribes into the open and answered them logically. We too must explain, on the ground of the word, the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection, and help people judge for themselves before the Scriptures.

But when the salvation the Scriptures testify is plain, calling it the work of an unclean spirit cannot be handled like lack of knowledge. In the passage the scribes named the authoritative liberation of Jesus evil. We must not take lightly the result of that word, but judge following the testimony of the Scriptures above our own tradition.

We must also examine whether this danger is not in our own hearts. It is easy for us to point only at the hardness of others. But when the gospel tells me to correct my long-held thoughts, do I admit that I can be wrong? When the Scriptures say that my deeds cannot be the merit of salvation, do I lay down my own righteousness? When they testify that Jesus removed all sins once and for all, do I believe the finished work of the Lord above my feelings and experience? To discern the truth is, before any ability to judge others, the attitude that places my own thinking under the word.

The Holy Spirit testifies of the salvation Jesus accomplished

To know the ministry of the Holy Spirit rightly is not to pursue vaguely mysterious power. The Holy Spirit testifies of the salvation Jesus accomplished. He makes us believe the truth that the sinless Jesus was baptized by John and took charge of

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the sin of the world, received its judgment on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again. He dwells in the person who believes this gospel and has received the remission of sins, and testifies that he is a child of God.

Therefore, to claim to exalt the Holy Spirit while erasing the baptism of Jesus, or to pursue only phenomena unrelated to the remission of sins, is not to follow the testimony of the Holy Spirit rightly. A loud voice, a special experience, or an amazing phenomenon cannot in itself be the indispensable evidence of the indwelling of the Spirit. Even the unclean spirits saw Jesus and cried out that He was the Son of God, but that confession was not saving faith. True faith is knowing how Jesus took charge of my sins and was judged for them, and receiving it with the heart.

When the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart, He makes us treasure the gospel and desire that other souls also hear this salvation. Preaching and serving the gospel are not conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit but fruits borne by the person in whom the Spirit dwells. One is not more saved because the results of his evangelism are great, nor is salvation canceled because the results are small. Out of gratitude for the remission of sins and the sonship already received, we deliver the news of salvation.

This distinction is important for guarding the gospel. If works are made the condition of salvation, the perfect work of Jesus is made insufficient. On the other hand, to say that because we are saved we have no responsibility to deliver the truth is to turn away from the fruit of love the Holy Spirit gives. We must rely only on the salvation Jesus accomplished, and, as those who have received that grace, serve so that other souls may hear the gospel without being blocked by false accusations.

Do not stay in fear; come to the Savior

There may be someone who reads this word and fears whether he has perhaps blasphemed the Holy Spirit. To magnify fear is not the purpose of the passage. The passage shows us to whom we must come. We must come to Jesus, who is stronger than Satan—Jesus, who took charge of sin, received the judgment, and rose again. The Lord came to rescue sinners, and He desires that people believe the gospel and receive the remission of sins.

If you acknowledge that you did not know the gospel, hear it again now before the Scriptures. If there is anything you learned wrongly, do not guard your obstinacy but set it right. Believe that Jesus, with the baptism He received from John, took charge of all the sins of your whole life, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. When you believe this completed salvation, all your sins are removed once and for all, and you receive the Holy Spirit as a gift and become a child of God.

The person who has already believed this gospel and received the remission of sins must not be shaken by people's harsh denunciations. Yet neither may he hate or curse those who denounce. If someone has misunderstood on hearing only rumors, we must deliver the word to him calmly. We must pray that he will open the Scriptures, examine, and be saved. Our aim is not to defeat the other person in argument, but that he too may be rescued by the Savior stronger than the strong man.

We who preach the gospel must also take care not to distort the truth ourselves. We must not speak of worldly success or the healing of diseases as if they were the center of salvation in order to draw people. We must not force a particular experience on people as the evidence of receiving the Spirit. We must not

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demand loyalty to men and block questions. We must plainly deliver only what the Scriptures testify: the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection, the remission of sins once and for all, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The scribes saw the work of liberation and called it the work of bondage. We must not follow their way. Let us not turn upside down the salvation the Holy Spirit testifies, calling it evil, but first confirm it in the Scriptures and believe it with the heart. The Lord is not One who rescued people by compromising with Satan. He is the stronger Savior, who broke the power of Satan and brought out the people held in his house.

Now let us lay down fear and rumor and religious respectability. Let us open our hearts before the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Lord accomplished, and believe the remission of sins by which all sins are removed once and for all. The Holy Spirit testifies of this salvation and dwells in the person who has received the remission of sins. And to those who do not yet know, let us deliver this gospel not with condemnation but with truth and love. Jesus, who bound the strong man, is the only Savior, who sets completely free those held by sin and death. ✉

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CHAPTER

4

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Mark Chapter 4

< Mark 4:1-41 >

“And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: ‘Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’ And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’ But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, ‘To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.’’ And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they

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hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.' Also He said to them, 'Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.' Then He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.' And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.' Then He said, 'To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is

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smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.' And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples. On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?' And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, 'Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!'"

1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 4 records how Jesus, through several parables, taught the attitude of hearing the word of the kingdom of God and the process by which that word grows and bears fruit, and then records the event in which He calmed the great windstorm on the sea. Through the parable of the sower, Jesus said that even when the same word is delivered, different results appear according to the state of each person's heart. The seed that fell

by the wayside, on the stony ground, and among the thorns bore no fruit, but the seed that fell on the good ground bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Then, through the parables of the lamp and the measure, He taught that the word we have received must be brought out into the open and heard rightly, and through the parables of the growing seed and the mustard seed He showed the fact that the kingdom of God grows in a way invisible to human eyes and achieves a great result from a small beginning. When evening came, while Jesus and His disciples were crossing the sea by boat, a great windstorm arose, but Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea and calmed them. The disciples, seeing the authority of Jesus, whom even the wind and the sea obey, feared greatly.

1. Jesus teaches the word in parables by the sea (verses 1–2)

When Jesus taught the word again by the sea, a very great multitude gathered to Him. Jesus got into a boat and sat on the sea so that He would not be pressed by the crowd, and the people heard the word on the land by the sea.

Jesus taught many things by parables. A parable is a way of explaining spiritual truth by using the things and events that people can easily meet in daily life. The farmer, the seed sown on the ground, the lamp, the grain, and the mustard seed were objects that the people of that time knew familiarly.

But a parable is not merely a story that explains difficult truth in an interesting way. To the person who wants to hear the word and understand, it reveals the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the person who closes his heart and refuses Jesus, its meaning remains hidden. Therefore the core of a parable lies not in hearing the story, but in receiving into the heart what Jesus is saying through that parable.

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2. The parable of the sower (verses 3–9)

Jesus said, *"Listen!"* and told them that a sower went out to sow. The seed was the same, but different results appeared according to the place where it fell.

Some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured it. Some seed fell on the stony ground with shallow earth, and it sprang up at once, but because its root was not deep, it was scorched and withered away when the sun was up. And some seed fell among the thorns, and because the thorns grew up and choked it, it bore no fruit.

But the seed that fell on the good ground sprang up, grew, and bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. It was not that the results differed because the life in the seeds differed; different results appeared because the state of the ground that received the seed differed.

Jesus said, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* All the people heard the voice of Jesus, but not all of them realized its meaning and received it. The word of God does not end with merely being heard with the ears; its meaning must be received into the heart.

3. The mystery of the kingdom of God and the purpose of the parables (verses 10–12)

When Jesus was alone, the people who were around Him together with the twelve disciples asked Him the meaning of the parables. They did not understand all the content from the beginning; they asked Jesus what they had not understood. The person who realizes the word is not the one who already knows everything, but the one who admits what he does not know and seeks its meaning from Jesus.

Jesus said that the mystery of the kingdom of God had been given to the disciples, but that to those who are outside,

everything is given in parables. This does not mean that Jesus hid the truth in order to deliberately withhold salvation from certain people. Many people of that time did not repent even while watching the words and miracles of Jesus, and the religious leaders were already plotting to kill Jesus.

Quoting the word of Isaiah, Jesus pointed out the state of seeing and yet not perceiving, hearing and yet not understanding. If a person closes his heart and refuses the truth, however much he hears the word, he cannot realize its meaning. The disciples, on the other hand, were lacking and slow to understand, but they remained beside Jesus and asked the meaning of the parables.

The mystery of the kingdom of God is not something discovered by human wisdom or learning alone. The person who hears the word of Jesus in faith and receives it realizes the mystery of the kingdom of God.

4. The word sown on a heart like the wayside (verses 13–15)

Jesus explained that the sower sows the word. The seed is the word of God, and the several kinds of ground where the seed fell represent the different states of heart of the people who hear the word.

That the seed fell by the wayside refers to the person who hears the word but does not receive it into his heart. Because people keep treading on a road, the ground is hardened, and the seed cannot enter into it. Like this, the word cannot enter deeply into a heart hardened by its own thoughts and stubbornness.

If the word does not stay in the heart, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown. Satan not only keeps a person from hearing the word itself, but even when he hears it, Satan makes him count it unimportant or

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think of it as a story that has nothing to do with him.

Fruit is not borne by the mere fact of having heard the word many times. Even when the word of God differs from one's own thought, the attitude is needed of examining oneself by the standard of the word and receiving it.

5. The word sown on hearts like the stony ground and the thorns (verses 16–19)

The seed sown on the stony ground refers to the person who receives the word with gladness at once when he hears it, but who has no root in his heart. Such a person seems to believe the word for a while, but when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he stumbles at once.

Gladness and emotional response are not wrong in themselves. But if one receives the word only with emotion and does not engrave its truth deep in the heart, it is hard to keep the faith when hardship comes. True faith is not something maintained because circumstances are good; it holds fast, even in tribulation, to the fact that the word of God is the truth.

The seed sown among the thorns refers to the person who has heard the word, but in whom the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and various other desires enter and choke the word. He did not refuse the word, but he bears no fruit because of the other things that have occupied his heart.

The cares of the world seize a person's heart with fear about survival and the future, and the deceitfulness of riches makes him think that with money alone he can be safe and happy. The various desires make him count the success, pleasure, and recognition of the world more important than the word. Even when the word has entered the heart, if these things grow together with it, the fruit of the word cannot appear.

6. The word sown on the good ground that bears fruit (verse 20)

That the seed was sown on the good ground refers to the person who hears the word, accepts it, and bears fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. The good ground does not mean a perfect person who has had no problem from the beginning. It means the heart that lays down its own thoughts before the word of God and accepts that word.

Even the seed that fell on the good ground did not bear much fruit right away. First the seed entered the soil and took root, sprang up, and passed through the time of growing. The word also, after being received into the heart, grows through faith and obedience in life and bears fruit.

The amount of fruit can differ from person to person: thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. It is not that everyone must show the same appearance and the same result. What matters is whether one has received the word into the heart and is actually bearing fruit.

Good fruit does not lie only in outward religious acts done to be seen by people. It appears in a life that believes and loves God, holds fast to the word even in hardship, loves and serves other people, and delivers the truth one has received.

7. The parables of the lamp and the measure (verses 21–25)

Jesus said that the purpose of bringing a lamp is not to put it under a basket or under a bed, but to set it on a lampstand. A lamp exists to light its surroundings. What is hidden will be revealed, and what has been kept secret will come to light.

The truth of the kingdom of God may not be plainly visible to everyone right away, but in the end it comes to be revealed. The identity of Jesus and the trueness of His word were plainly revealed through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

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The person who has received the word must likewise not keep that word hidden only in his heart, but reveal it through his life and his testimony.

Jesus said, *"Take heed what you hear."* We must not receive every word indiscriminately, but must hear the word of God attentively and understand it rightly. For according to what one receives into the heart, the direction of one's thought, faith, and life changes.

Jesus also said that with the same measure a person uses, it will be measured to him, and more will be given. The person who counts the word precious and hears it earnestly comes to realize it more deeply, but the person who takes the word lightly loses even what he thought he knew. The attitude with which one faces the word has an important influence on spiritual growth.

8. The parable of the seed that grows by itself (verses 26–29)

Jesus likened the kingdom of God to a seed that sprouts and grows while the man who scattered it on the ground sleeps and rises night and day. The man who sowed the seed does not know all the process through which the seed grows, but the earth makes it yield fruit by itself.

First the blade comes up, then the head appears, and after that the full grain forms in the head. The kingdom of God does not appear in a completed form in a moment, but grows according to the process God has ordained.

Man does the work of sowing the seed and tending it, but he cannot create life. In the same way, the person who delivers the word cannot forcibly change another person's heart. He can have him hear the word and can teach him, but the One who makes that word grow in his heart is God.

When the grain ripens, the sickle is put in and it is

harvested. This shows that the growth of the kingdom of God has an ordained purpose and a time of completion. That growth may look small and slow now, but God finally reaps the fruit.

9. The kingdom of God that grows like a mustard seed (verses 30–34)

Jesus likened the kingdom of God to a mustard seed, which is very small when it is sown on the ground, but which, after growing, shoots out large branches so that the birds can nest under its shade.

The kingdom of God begins in a form that looks small and insignificant in people's eyes. Jesus did not appear leading a political army or the power of the world; at first He preached the word in Galilee together with a small number of disciples. But that word was delivered to countless people and came to have a great influence.

The parable of the mustard seed shows the fact that the power of the kingdom of God is not decided by outward size or splendor. One small seed of the word enters a person's heart and changes his life, and when that person delivers the word to another person in turn, it can lead to greater fruit.

Jesus delivered the word with many parables according to the degree to which the crowd could hear it, and when He was apart with His disciples, He explained everything to them. It was not because the disciples were wiser by nature than the crowd, but because they stayed with Jesus and sought His teaching, that Jesus explained the meaning of the parables to them more deeply.

10. Jesus calms the great windstorm (verses 35–41)

When evening came, Jesus told His disciples to cross over to the other side of the sea. The disciples left the multitude and

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took Jesus along in the boat just as He was. Other boats also went along with them.

During the voyage a great windstorm arose, the waves beat into the boat, and the boat began to fill with water. Unlike the disciples, who felt their lives threatened, Jesus was asleep on a pillow in the stern of the boat. Jesus was with them in the boat, but that did not mean that the windstorm itself did not arise.

The disciples woke Jesus and asked whether He did not care that they were perishing. They saw the wind and the waves before their eyes as greater than the fact that Jesus was with them. Jesus had not forsaken them, but once they were seized by fear, that was how they felt.

Jesus arose, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, *"Peace, be still!"* Then the wind ceased and the sea became completely calm. Jesus asked His disciples why they were so fearful and how it was that they still had no faith.

The disciples were afraid when the windstorm arose, but after the windstorm was calmed, they feared even more greatly before the authority of Jesus. They asked one another, *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"* In the Old Testament, the One who rules the sea and the storm is God. This event shows that Jesus is not a mere teacher or prophet, but the Son of God, who rules even nature.

Faith does not guarantee a life in which no windstorm ever arises. Hardships and fearful things can happen even on the way of following the word of Jesus. But what matters is believing the fact that Jesus is with us and holds the authority to rule every situation. Through the windstorm the disciples saw how lacking their faith was, and at the same time they came to know more deeply who Jesus is.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 4

First, the word of God is the same, but different results appear according to the state of heart of the person who hears it.

Second, if a person hears the word and yet closes his heart with his own thoughts and stubbornness, the word cannot take root, but if he receives it humbly, it bears abundant fruit in his life.

Third, tribulation and persecution, the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and various desires can block the growth of the word that has entered the heart, so we must examine what is ruling our heart.

Fourth, the truth of the kingdom of God is revealed in the end like a lamp, and the person who counts the word precious and hears it attentively comes to realize it more deeply.

Fifth, the word of the kingdom of God grows by the power of God even while man does not know all the process of its growth, and it bears fruit at the ordained time.

Sixth, though the kingdom of God seems to begin in a form as small and insignificant as a mustard seed, it finally grows large enough to embrace many lives.

Seventh, Jesus is the Son of God, who rules even the wind and the sea with His word, and a disciple must believe the presence and authority of Jesus more greatly than the windstorm.

Eighth, windstorms come even on the way of faith, but those windstorms expose our lacking faith and make us realize more deeply who Jesus is.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 4 is the chapter that teaches that when we hear the word of God and receive it with a heart like the good ground, that word grows by the power of God and bears abundant fruit, and that in any windstorm we must believe in and rely on Jesus, who rules the

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wind and the sea.

2) Mark chapter 4 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 4 shows the fact that when the word of God is sown in people's hearts, one heart refuses the word, another receives it for a while, and another bears no fruit because of the cares and desires of the world, but the heart like the good ground receives the word and bears abundant fruit. From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the seed refers to the word of truth by which Jesus has saved sinners. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind; carrying those sins, He was judged, hanging on the Cross; and He rose from the dead and completed salvation. The person who receives this word just as it is, without dividing or altering it with his own thoughts, receives the remission of sins, receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes the good ground. After receiving the remission of sins, the word planted in his heart grows and bears the fruit of faith, and like a lamp he comes to shine the light of the gospel on other souls. The event of the windstorm at the end shows that trials can come even to the saved, but that they must believe in and rely on the fact that Jesus, who saved them, is the almighty God, who rules even the wind and the sea.

1. The One who sows the seed and the seed of the gospel (verses 1–9)

Jesus said that a sower went out to sow. As Jesus Himself explained afterward, the sower is the one who sows the word, and the seed is the word of God. Seen at the level of the gospel

of the water and the Spirit, this seed is the word of life that testifies how Jesus has saved sinners.

Every person is born with sin as a descendant of Adam, and lives all his life committing sins, following the evil thoughts and desires that come out of his heart. The Law of God does not inform us that man can become righteous by himself; it makes us realize the fact that man is a sinner before God and a being who must be judged. The problem of sin cannot be completely solved by good deeds, religious life, or repeated prayers of repentance.

Jesus, the Son of God, had no sin, but He came to this earth to become the sacrificial offering in the place of sinners. Just as in the Old Testament the sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sins onto it, in the New Testament Jesus took over the sins of mankind through John, the representative of all mankind. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all mankind, and to pay the wages of those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and He rose from the dead in three days.

This is the seed of the gospel that is sown in a person's heart. Just as there is life in a seed, in the word of the gospel there is the life that leads sinners to the remission of sins and eternal life. The problem lies not in the seed itself, but in the heart with which a person hears and receives this word.

2. The hardened heart like the wayside (verses 4, 15)

The wayside is ground hardened by people continually treading on it. Even when a seed falls there, it cannot enter into the soil but remains on the surface, and so the birds come and devour it. Jesus explained that being sown by the wayside means that a person hears the word, and yet Satan comes

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immediately and takes away the word sown in his heart.

The heart like the wayside is a heart hardened with its own thoughts, religious knowledge, and preconceptions. Such a person, even when he hears the word, judges by the thoughts he already holds rather than examining what the Bible actually says. When the word of God differs from his own thought, he does not lay down his thought but refuses the word.

Even when told that Jesus has already taken upon Himself all sins, a person may refuse, saying, "How can a man be without sin?" Or, saying that it is enough to believe only in the blood of the Cross, he may not even try to know when Jesus took upon Himself the sins of mankind. Or he may think that he has received the remission of original sin only, and that the sins he commits daily are washed away only when he keeps offering prayers of repentance. Such thoughts keep the word from being received into the heart.

Satan does not use only the method of keeping a person from believing in Jesus at all. He can also keep a person from believing the completed salvation even while calling on the name of Jesus, and make him live with sin still held in his heart. We need the humble heart that does not judge the word by its own thoughts, but receives it as the Bible says.

3. Faith with a shallow root like the stony ground (verses 5–6, 16–17)

The seed that fell on the stony ground sprang up at once because the earth was not deep, but it could not put its root down deep. When the sun rose, it could not endure the heat and withered away. Jesus explained that such a person receives the word with gladness at once when he hears it, but because there is no root in his heart, he stumbles at once when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word.

It is important to be moved and to rejoice on hearing the gospel, but emotional gladness alone cannot take the place of the root of faith. One must know clearly, on the basis of the Bible, why one is a sinner and how Jesus has removed one's sins.

The fact must be established surely in the heart that with the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself all one's sins of the past, the present, and the future, and that He received the judgment of all those sins on the Cross. Without faith grounded on the word, one can easily be shaken when the people around oppose it or attack with wrong teachings.

The root of faith must be put down not into one's own strong will but into the unchanging word of God. Emotions change according to circumstances, but the salvation Jesus has completed does not change. The person who takes the word as a surer standard than his own feelings can keep the faith even in tribulation and persecution.

4. The cares and desires that occupy the heart like the thorns (verses 7, 18–19)

The seed that fell among the thorns did spring up and grow, but the thorns that grew together with it choked its strength, and it bore no fruit. Jesus explained that the thorns are the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and various other desires.

The cares of the world make one see one's livelihood, one's future, and people's evaluations as greater than the gospel. The deceitfulness of riches deceives one into thinking that money and possessions can make a person safe and happy. The various desires make one pursue the satisfaction of the flesh and the success of the world before the will of God.

Riches and daily living are not evil in themselves. A person

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must work, look after his family, and provide what is needed. The problem is that these things become the master of the heart and push out the word. If the heart is captured only by what to eat and drink and how to succeed, believing and serving the gospel can gradually be pushed aside as something secondary.

Fleshly thoughts and desires can arise even in the person who has received the remission of sins. Being saved does not mean that every weakness and desire disappears at once. Therefore we must keep hearing the word, examine what thorns are growing in our heart, and put the will of God before our own thoughts. This is not a work done to maintain the condition of salvation, but keeping the faith so that the fruit of the salvation already received is not blocked.

5. The good ground is the heart that accepts the word of God just as it is (verses 8, 20)

The seed that fell on the good ground sprang up, grew, and bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. The good ground does not refer to a person who is good, perfect, and sinless from the beginning. It refers to the heart that lays down its own thoughts and its own righteousness and accepts the word of God as fact, just as it is.

The person like the good ground first admits before the word of the Law the fact that he is a sinner. He does not assert, “I am better than other people,” or, “I can correct this much sin by myself.” He admits the fact that he was born with sin, that he cannot but commit sins all his life, and that with his own deeds he cannot escape the judgment of God.

At the same time, he also accepts the salvation Jesus has fulfilled, just as the word says. If Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, he believes that Jesus took upon Himself not only his

original sin but also the sins he commits while living and even the sins he will commit in the future. If Jesus carried those sins and was judged on the Cross, he believes that there remains no sin for which he must be judged again. If Jesus rose from the dead, he believes that He is his eternal Savior, who is alive even now.

This faith is not asserting that one is a perfect person who commits no sin. It is believing that, though there are still shortcomings and wrongs in one's deeds, one has become a righteous person without sin before God because Jesus has completely removed all sins. The remission of sins is grounded not on human feelings or merits, but on the salvation Jesus has fulfilled and on the verdict of God.

The true repentance that makes one the good ground is not erasing the sins committed daily, little by little, with prayers of repentance. It is casting away one's own righteousness and wrong faith and returning to the gospel by which Jesus removed all sins once and for all. On the person who believes this gospel and has been washed of all the sins of his heart, the Holy Spirit comes, and He gives him the strength to live following that word.

6. The lamp of the gospel that must be set on the lampstand (verses 21–23)

Jesus said that the purpose of bringing a lamp is not to hide it under a basket or under a bed, but to set it on a lampstand. A lamp lights the darkness and reveals what is hidden.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit reveals what sin is and why sin remains in a person's heart. At the same time, it also makes plain how Jesus removed all those sins with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. When the light of the gospel shines, a person realizes the fact

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that he cannot solve his sins with his own deeds and religious zeal, and he comes to look to the righteousness Jesus has fulfilled.

The person who has received the remission of sins must not keep this lamp hidden only inside his own heart. He must deliver the gospel so that his family, his neighbors, and the people of the whole world can hear the same gospel and receive the remission of sins. Just as a lamp does not shine in order to boast of itself, the purpose of preaching the gospel lies not in displaying a person's knowledge or ability, but in revealing the salvation Jesus has completed.

Preaching the gospel is not a work given only to some people who have special ability. The person who knows how he received the remission of sins can share this truth through everyday conversation and service, through writings and various means of delivery. God sets even a small lamp in a high place and makes it shine its light on many people.

7. We must take heed what and how we hear (verses 24–25)

Jesus said, *"Take heed what you hear."* In hearing the word, both the content and the attitude are important. We must not receive every religious teaching as though it were the word of God, but must confirm what the Bible actually says.

Also, we must not divide and calculate the word with our own thoughts. When the Bible says that Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world, we must not interpret it as though He took upon Himself only a part, dividing it into original sin and personal sins. 'The sin of the world' includes all the sins that mankind will commit until the end of the world.

A person may think, how can future sins not yet committed already be solved? But Jesus is not a creature confined within time; He is the eternal God. He knew the sins of all mankind,

and with one eternal work of salvation He took them all upon Himself and received the judgment for them.

The person who accepts the word just as it is comes to gain clearer faith and realization. On the contrary, if one keeps fitting the word of God to one's own thoughts and doubting it, even the truth one had known can grow dim. Right faith begins not with adding complicated human calculations, but with acknowledging just as it is what God has said.

8. The seed of the gospel that grows even when it is not visible to human eyes (verses 26–29)

Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like a seed growing while the man who sowed it on the ground sleeps and rises night and day. The man who sowed the seed does not know all the process through which that life grows, but first the blade comes up, then the head appears, and finally the full grain forms.

The person who preaches the gospel can sow the seed of the word, but he cannot forcibly change another person's heart. The One who makes a person hear the word, believe, and gain the remission of sins is God. Therefore we should neither be discouraged because no result is visible right away, nor try to make a person believe by force. We must deliver the word of truth accurately and wait for the time when God works.

The faith after one receives the remission of sins also grows in this way. One does not understand every word and live a perfect life of faith from the beginning. On the foundation that Jesus saved him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, he keeps hearing the word, discovers his own weakness, and learns to rely on God.

The Holy Spirit makes the person who has received the remission of sins realize the word in his heart and leads him so

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that his faith grows. As time passes, his thoughts and judgments change, he denies his own will, and the fruit appears of serving other people and preaching the gospel. This growth is not a process for completing salvation, but the process in which the person who has already received perfect salvation matures within that faith.

When the fruit ripens, the time of harvest comes. For each person there is the day when he stands before God, and for the world there is the time when, after the gospel has been preached, the last judgment and the completion of the kingdom of God are fulfilled. Therefore the believer, during the time given to him, must diligently sow the seed of the gospel and bear the fruit of faith.

9. The gospel that achieves great fruit from a small beginning like a mustard seed (verses 30–34)

A mustard seed is very small when it is sown on the ground, but after it grows, it shoots out large branches so that the birds can nest under its shade. Through this parable Jesus said that the kingdom of God begins small and weak in people's eyes but grows greatly by the power of God.

Jesus did not establish the kingdom of God by mobilizing the armies and political power of the world. In the small region of Galilee He taught the word to a few disciples, and He had the gospel preached through those disciples. In people's eyes it was a beginning as small as a mustard seed, but that word was delivered beyond peoples and regions.

The work of one person hearing the gospel and receiving the remission of sins can also look small at first. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon that person's heart and his faith grows, and he in turn preaches the gospel to other people, many souls can gain life. The growth of the kingdom of God cannot be

judged only by the number of people and the outward scale. What matters is whether the seed of the gospel that has life is being sown accurately.

Jesus explained the parables to His disciples separately. It was not because the disciples knew everything well from the beginning, but because they stayed beside Jesus and sought the meaning of the word. Today also, we must not conclude according to our own thoughts about the word we do not understand, but must examine its meaning through the whole Bible.

10. The faith of the disciples and the authority of Jesus revealed in the windstorm (verses 35–41)

Jesus told His disciples to cross over to the other side of the sea. The disciples got into the boat following the word of Jesus, but during the voyage they met a great windstorm. Being with Jesus and obeying His word does not mean that no hardship arises at all.

When the boat was filling with water, the disciples thought they would die. Jesus was in the boat, but because the waves and the wind before their eyes looked so great, they could not believe His word and His power. After rebuking the wind and the sea and calming them, Jesus asked the disciples why they were fearful and how it was that they still had no faith.

To the person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins, there can also come hardships of the body, economic problems, conflicts with people, and opposition met while preaching the gospel. If at such times he relies only on his own strength and calculations, his heart is shaken like the windstorm. But if he remembers who Jesus is, who saved him, he can pass through that hardship by faith.

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Jesus is not only the Savior who took upon Himself the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John and fulfilled salvation with the Cross and the resurrection, but He is also the Creator God, who rules the wind and the sea with His word. The One who saved us from sin and death also has the power to lead and keep the life of the believer.

Faith is not demanding that every problem must be solved in the way and at the time one wants. It is believing and relying on the fact that in any outcome Jesus is with us and leads us with the best will. When hardship comes, we must pray and hold fast to the word, and see the promise of Jesus as greater than the fear of the flesh.

After the windstorm was calmed, the disciples asked, *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"* The core of faith lies not only in experiencing problems being solved, but in realizing more deeply, through such works, the fact that Jesus is the almighty God.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 4 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

First, the seed is the word of God that saves sinners, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth of life by which Jesus took upon Himself the sins of mankind, received the judgment for them, and removed them.

Second, the heart like the wayside is hardened with its own thoughts and religious knowledge and does not receive the gospel, and the heart like the stony ground rejoices for a while with emotion but stumbles before tribulation because it puts no root down into the word.

Third, in the heart like the thorns, the fruit of the word is blocked by the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and various desires, so the believer must keep hearing the word

and guard his heart.

Fourth, the good ground is the heart that accepts just as it is the fact that one is a sinner and the fact that Jesus took upon Himself all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection.

Fifth, true repentance is not washing away sins little by little with daily prayers of repentance, but turning from one's own righteousness and wrong faith and believing the salvation Jesus has completed.

Sixth, the Holy Spirit comes upon the person who has received the remission of sins, and the Holy Spirit makes the word planted in his heart grow, so that it bears the fruits of faith, obedience, and the preaching of the gospel.

Seventh, the lamp of the gospel is not to be hidden away but to be shined on the whole world, and the saved person must deliver the word of life so that other souls can also receive the remission of sins.

Eighth, though the kingdom of God seems to begin small like a mustard seed, through the seed of the gospel that has life it achieves the great fruit of saving many souls.

Ninth, windstorms of life can come even after one is saved, but we must believe in and rely on the fact that Jesus, who saved us, is the almighty God, who rules even the wind and the sea.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 4 is the chapter that teaches that the person who accepts the seed of the gospel, which Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, just as the word says, without putting his own thoughts first, receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, becomes the good ground, and bears the fruits of faith and the preaching of the gospel, and

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that in any windstorm of life we must believe in and rely on Jesus, the almighty Savior. ✉

Mark Chapter 4

Jesus Christ, who sows the seed of the gospel and calms the windstorm

Introduction

Mark chapter 4 is the chapter in which Jesus, through several parables, taught the heart of the person who hears the word of the kingdom of God and the principle by which the gospel grows, and in which, by calming the windstorm, He revealed that He is the Son of God, who rules all things. Even when people hear the same word, different results appear according to the state of their hearts, so the posture with which one hears and receives the word is important.

The seed refers to the word of the gospel that saves sinners. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all mankind; He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross; and He rose again from the dead. The heart like the good ground does not put its own thoughts and circumstances before the word of God, but receives this gospel just as it is. The person who believes the gospel receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and bears the fruit of faith.

The parables of the lamp, the growing seed, and the mustard seed show the fact that the gospel was not given in order to be hidden, and that it grows and spreads widely by the power of God. Just as man cannot make a seed grow, the One

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who makes a soul be born again and makes faith grow is God. The believer must not boast of his own ability, but must faithfully deliver the word and wait for the fruit God will fulfill.

The event of calming the windstorm reveals that Jesus is not merely a teacher who teaches the word, but the Creator, who rules even nature. Windstorms of life come also to the believer, but he must not hastily judge that the Lord is not with him. This chapter leads us to receive the word of the gospel deep into the heart, to bear the fruit of faith, and to trust Jesus Christ, who has solved the problem of sin and judgment, in any circumstance.

Only the person who hears the seed of the gospel, understands it, and lets it take root in his heart bears the fruit of salvation

"And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: 'Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.' And He said to them, 'He who has ears

to hear, let him hear!'" (Mark 4:1–9).

When Jesus taught again by the Sea of Galilee, a great multitude gathered. Because there were so many people, Jesus got into a boat and sat on the sea, and the multitude heard the word on the land at the water's edge. Jesus counted important not the fact itself that many people had gathered, but how they heard and received the word of God.

Jesus taught the mystery of the kingdom of God by using the scenes of farming that people could easily meet in daily life. A parable shows spiritual truth through a familiar story, but if one hears only the outward story and does not realize its meaning, he may gain no profit at all. So Jesus said *"Listen!"* as He began the parable, and He stressed at the end, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

The seeds the farmer sowed were all the same seed. Some fell by the wayside, some on the stony ground, some among the thorns, and some on the good ground. The results differed not because the life-power of the seeds differed from one another, but because the state of the field that received the seed differed. This shows the fact that even when people hear the same word of the gospel, entirely different results appear according to the heart that hears and understands it.

Explaining this parable Himself afterward, Jesus said that the sower sows the word. Therefore the seed is the word of God, and the four kinds of ground represent the different hearts of those who hear the word. This parable is not a lesson about farming; it is the word that shows why, even when people hear the word of heaven, some are saved and some bear no fruit.

At the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the seed is the word of life that delivers how Jesus Christ has saved sinners. In the seed of the gospel there is the power that makes a sinner be born again and makes him a child of God. But if a

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person divides or alters that word with his own thoughts and accepts only the parts that suit him, the life of the gospel cannot take root wholly in his heart.

The first seed fell by the wayside. A road that people keep treading on is hardened firm, and a seed cannot enter into the soil. The seed left on the surface of the ground is easily devoured by the birds that come. This represents the person who hears the word of heaven and yet does not understand it, and so has the word snatched away by Satan.

The person like the wayside hears the word with his ears, but does not acknowledge in his heart what it says to him. He may memorize the Bible as knowledge and remember the content of sermons, yet he does not realize what kind of being he is before God. He counts himself better than other people and thinks his own judgment and religious experience more right than the word, so the gospel cannot enter his heart.

To understand the word does not stop at grasping the sentences and doctrines of the Bible with the head. It is to admit that one was born with sin as a descendant of Adam, that one cannot but commit sins with the heart and with deeds all one's life, and that one cannot escape the judgment of God with one's own good deeds and prayers of repentance. Together with this, it is to accept as one's own salvation the word that Jesus took upon Himself all one's sins with the baptism He received from John.

Satan not only keeps people from hearing the word, but also keeps them from understanding it even when they hear it. He makes them receive the Bible only as religious knowledge and makes them satisfied with the mere fact that they know the Cross of Jesus. But if one does not know why Jesus went to the Jordan River and how He took upon Himself all the sins of mankind, one cannot fully realize the meaning of the judgment

He received on the Cross either.

To turn from the heart like the wayside, one must fear God and lay down one's own thoughts. One must cast away the stubbornness that insists on being right, and when the word of God judges one to be a sinner, one must admit it as it is. When a person humbles his heart before the word and receives the gospel that the Holy Spirit makes him realize, the hardened heart is plowed and becomes a field the seed can enter.

The second seed fell on the stony ground with shallow earth. Because there was a little soil on the surface, the seed sprang up at once, but under it lay a hard layer of stone. The sprout whose root could not go down deep failed to draw water when the sun rose and the heat grew strong, and it withered away. The mere fact that a sprout came up quickly did not mean it would live to the end and bear fruit.

The person like the stony ground can rejoice at once when he hears the gospel. Hearing that his sins have been removed, he may be moved emotionally and say that he has been saved. But because deep in his heart he still holds his own thoughts and his own will, the word cannot take root. When he suffers tribulation or persecution because of the gospel, and the time comes when he must deny his own thoughts, he casts away the word and stumbles.

The gladness and hot emotion felt at first cannot take the place of the faith of salvation. Human emotions change easily according to circumstances and other people's words. The root of faith must be put down not into emotions or special experiences, but into the written word: that Jesus took upon Himself all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

Even after hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit,

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one must keep learning and holding fast to the word of God. The person who has received the remission of sins must be supplied with the food of the word within the church, and must find and cast away the wrong thoughts and stubbornness remaining in him. The church itself does not save people, but it is the community that helps the saved learn the word, exhort one another, and put the root of faith down deep.

If one is satisfied with the mere fact of having once heard the gospel and does not receive the other words of God, faith can hardly grow. When tribulation and persecution come, one must not lean on one's own will but return to the word that saved him. Even when the heart and circumstances are shaken, we must hold fast by faith to the fact that the salvation Jesus completed does not change.

The third seed fell among the thorns. The seed sprouted and grew, but the thorns grew together with it. The thorns took away the sunlight, the water, and the nourishment and choked the strength of the grain, and in the end kept it from bearing fruit. Even when a person seems to have heard the word and not refused it, if he leaves as they are the other things that occupy his heart, he cannot arrive at the fruit of salvation.

The thorns represent the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and various other desires. It is not wrong to prepare what to eat and how to live, and to fulfill one's responsibility for family and work. The problem is that such things take the higher place in the heart than the word of God. If a person casts away the gospel for fear of losing riches and success, then to that person the world has become a more important master than God.

Cares and desires may not appear from the beginning in a huge form. If one keeps small worries and worldly desires in the heart, they grow like thorns and gradually block the word.

Therefore the believer must keep examining what his heart is seized by, and when cares arise he must pray, and when the temptation of riches comes he must choose the word of God.

The word that the seed fallen among the thorns bore no fruit must not be interpreted merely as meaning that a saved person did little service. If a person, though he heard the word, finally casts away the gospel and denies the Lord because of the cares and desires of the world, he cannot be called the good ground that bore the fruit of salvation. More than the first interest and gladness, what matters is believing the word of God with the heart and holding fast to it to the end.

The fourth seed fell on the good ground, grew, flourished, and bore fruit. The good ground does not mean a person who has no sin from the beginning and whose character is more excellent than other people's. It means the heart that lays down its own thoughts before the word of God, and hears and understands just as it is what that word says about its sin and its salvation.

The person like the good ground first admits his own sinfulness. He does not hide the fact that in his heart there are evil thoughts, greed, and hatred; he realizes that there is nothing good in him and that the grace of God is absolutely necessary for him. He does not trust himself, but accepts as right the judgment and the salvation God has spoken.

That person believes with the heart the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself all his sins of the past, the present, and the future with the baptism He received from John, that carrying those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and that He completed salvation by rising from the dead in three days. When one accepts this word just as it is, as the righteousness God has fulfilled, without mixing it with human merits or other religious teachings, one receives the remission of all sins and

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receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

That the good ground receives the word and bears fruit does not mean that a person is saved by piling up many good deeds. Just as a seed grows and bears fruit because there is life in it, the Holy Spirit works in the person who has believed the word of the gospel and received the remission of sins, and makes him bear fruit. Obedience, love, thanksgiving, and the preaching of the gospel are not the price paid to gain salvation, but the results shown by the life that has been saved.

The seed that fell on the good ground bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Not every good ground bore the same amount of fruit, but not one ended without fruit. The growth of faith, the mission entrusted, and the fruit of souls gained through the gospel can differ from one saved person to another. Rather than comparing one another's portions to boast or to condemn, each must be faithful to the word he has received.

The first fruit of the good ground is believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receiving the remission of sins, and becoming a child of God. After that, faith grows following the word planted in the heart, the fruit of the Spirit appears, and it leads to the fruit of preaching the gospel to other people so that still other souls are saved. The seed of the gospel that entered one person's heart becomes a seed that delivers life to many other people.

Even in the person who has become the good ground, thoughts like stones and thorns can appear again. Even after being saved, one's own righteousness and stubbornness, the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches try to occupy the heart. Therefore we must keep hearing the word of God, deny our own thoughts, and receive the exhortation of the church. When the heart is plowed with the word and the thorns

are removed, faith grows healthily and bears abundant fruit.

The seed of the gospel is the complete word that Jesus saved every sinner with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who delivers the gospel must not take out one part of this or add man's deeds as a condition of salvation. He must deliver accurately the salvation God has fulfilled, and teach calmly so that the hearer understands that word and believes it with the heart.

The sower cannot completely judge in advance, by outward appearance alone, which heart is the good ground. Therefore we must not limit the objects of gospel preaching by looking at people's origins, their past, or their present reactions. Just as the seed was sown in many places, we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to everyone, and rely on the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes people understand the word and makes life grow.

Nor do we need to doubt the power of the word because the results of preaching the gospel are not all the same. Some may not understand, some may rejoice for a while, and some may love the world more and leave. The preacher must not try to hold people by force, but must sow the seed of the gospel accurately, and help the person who has received the word keep putting down the root of faith.

The word *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* is a warning not to let the word of God pass lightly by. The fact that one has heard the word much or attended church long does not make a person the good ground. With a heart that fears God, one must realize what the word is saying to oneself, and exalt the word of God above one's own thoughts.

This passage makes us look back at what kind of field our heart is. We must examine whether we are blocking the gospel

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with our own righteousness and stubbornness, whether we remain only in emotional gladness, and whether the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches are choking the word. The person who denies himself and hears, understands, and believes with the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ has completed, receives the remission of all sins and bears the abundant fruit of salvation, faith, and the preaching of the gospel in the Holy Spirit.

The mystery of the kingdom of God is opened to the heart that hears the word, understands it, and receives it, and it bears abundant fruit

"But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, 'To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'' And He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of

riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.'" (Mark 4:10–20).

After Jesus spoke the parable of the sower to the multitude, when He was alone, the twelve disciples and those who followed Him asked the meaning of the parable. They, too, had not understood every word exactly from the beginning. But they did not pass over it without understanding; they came to Jesus and asked. The right attitude in hearing the word of God is not to pretend to know what one does not know, but to keep asking and learning in order to understand its meaning.

The great multitude also heard the same parable, but not all of them asked its meaning. Some heard only the story and went away, but those who followed Jesus wanted to know the will of the kingdom of God contained in the word. Here appears the difference between the person who hears the word and lets it pass as nothing much, and the person who comes to the Lord to understand its meaning.

Jesus said, *"To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables."* In the Bible, a mystery does not mean secret knowledge that people have found out with their own wisdom, or a hidden method handed down to only a few. It refers to the truth of salvation that God had kept hidden and then revealed through Jesus Christ at the time He ordained. The way into the kingdom of God is not discovered by human philosophy and religious training; it can be known only when God shows it through the word.

Knowing the mystery of the kingdom of God does not depend on a person's intellectual ability or schooling. God

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must give the word by grace, and the Holy Spirit must make one realize its meaning. Yet man also has the responsibility of hearing that word humbly, laying down his own thoughts, and receiving it in faith. The disciples received the mystery not because they were perfect, but because they came to Jesus wanting to know His word.

On the other hand, Jesus said that to those who are outside, everything is spoken in parables. Here, those outside do not simply mean the people who were outside the house, or a particular people. Even a person near Jesus, if he holds to his own thoughts and does not receive the word, is a person outside the will of the kingdom of God. Conversely, even a sinner who was far away can come into the kingdom of God if he hears the word and believes the gospel.

Jesus said that people see and yet do not perceive, hear and yet do not understand, and so do not turn and receive the remission of sins. This does not mean that God blocks, without any reason, the person who sincerely seeks salvation. It means that to the person who hears the word of God repeatedly and yet refuses it with his own righteousness and stubbornness, the parable comes to play the role of judgment that hides the truth. The same word becomes the light of salvation to the humble, but to the obstinate it becomes a word they cannot understand.

Even though God desires to save sinners, if a person does not admit his sin and refuses the gospel, he cannot receive the remission of sins. To turn is not merely to correct a few habits of living; it is to turn from one's own judgment and wrong faith. One must cast away the thought that one can become righteous by oneself, and accept the word that Jesus took upon Himself all one's sins with the baptism He received from John.

A parable hides the word, and at the same time it exposes the heart of the one who hears. The person who wants to know

the truth asks the meaning of the parable and comes nearer, but the person who wants to keep his own thoughts goes away without understanding. Therefore, when we do not understand the word, we must not judge that the Bible is wrong or interpret it according to our own thoughts, but must humble our hearts before God and seek the meaning of the word.

Jesus asked how, if they did not know the parable of the sower, they would know all the parables. This parable is the foundational parable showing how the word of the kingdom of God is delivered and what responses it causes in people's hearts. If one does not know the state of the heart that hears the word, one easily interprets the other parables also with one's own thoughts.

Jesus explained directly, *"The sower sows the word."* The one who sows the seed refers first to Jesus, who preaches the word, and afterward it applies also to the disciples and to every preacher who delivers the gospel received from Jesus. The preacher is not a person who plants his own experiences and ideas, but a person who sows accurately the word God has given.

The center of the word to be delivered is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ has fulfilled. Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist; carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment of sin in our place; and He completed salvation by rising from the dead in three days. When one hears this word, understands it, and believes it, one receives the remission of sins and enters the kingdom of God.

The first is the person who received the word by the wayside. Because the wayside is trodden continually by people, it has become hard, and the seed cannot enter the soil. Like this,

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the person whose heart is hardened with his own righteousness and preconceptions does not apply the word to himself even when he hears it. Because he hears the gospel only as one piece of religious knowledge, the word cannot enter into his heart.

To understand the word does not stop at knowing the meaning of the sentences. It is to admit the fact that one was born with sin, that one cannot but keep committing sins with the heart and with deeds, and that one cannot escape the judgment of God by one's own deeds. And it is to realize and believe with the heart how the sinless Son of God took upon Himself one's sins and removed them.

When a person hears the word, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown. He hinders people from hearing the word, makes them fall into other thoughts and forget it even when they hear it, and corrupts the gospel through wrong religious teachings. In particular, he can make people think that knowing only the Cross of Jesus is enough, so that they fail to realize the fact that Jesus took upon Himself their sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist.

In order not to be robbed of the word by Satan, we must keep the word we have heard in the heart and confirm it through the Bible. We must not be satisfied with the mere fact of having attended worship or heard a sermon, but must think about what that word says concerning our sin and our salvation. Even when it differs from our own thought, we must admit that the word of God is right.

The second is the person who received the word on the stony ground. When he hears the word, he receives it at once with gladness. Hearing the news that his sins have disappeared, he may be moved and say that he has been saved. But because he has left as it is the stone of his own righteousness and stubbornness in his heart, the word cannot put down a deep

root.

The problem of the stony ground is not that the first response was slow or that the gladness was lacking. At first, rather, he responded quickly and gladly. The problem is that he did not receive the word as the ground of his eternal faith, but only as an emotional comfort. When the emotion cools and something happens that requires him to give up his own thoughts, he can cast away even the gospel together with it.

"When tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake" is the time that exposes where the root of one's faith lies. Family and the people around may oppose the gospel, or one may suffer loss and hardship because of believing the gospel. At such a time, if one counts people's recognition and a comfortable life more important than the word, one soon stumbles. More than the fact of having rejoiced for a while, what matters is the faith that holds fast to the word of salvation even in tribulation.

The root of faith must go down not into one's own resolution or emotion, but into the unchanging word of salvation that Jesus fulfilled with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Even when our heart and circumstances are shaken, the fact that Jesus has removed all sins does not change. If one believes this word with the heart and holds it fast, one keeps the faith even in tribulation and persecution.

After hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one must keep learning the written word of God. Even the person who has received the remission of sins needs the training of being supplied with the food of the word within the church, hearing exhortation, and denying his own thoughts. The church does not save people, but it is the community that helps the saved put down the root of faith deep and grow in the gospel.

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The third is the person who received the word among the thorns. He hears the word, but the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other desires enter his heart. It looks as though the word and the thorns grow together, but the thorns increasingly choke the strength, and in the end they keep the word from bearing fruit.

The cares of the world must be distinguished from the normal responsibility of thinking about what to eat and how to live. Looking after one's family and one's work is a necessary thing. But if a person casts away the gospel because of the problem of making a living, or gives up following the word of God, then care has become the master of his heart. When one tries to solve by one's own strength alone what one ought to entrust to God, care blocks the word.

"*The deceitfulness of riches*" is the trick that promises the safety and happiness that riches cannot give. Money itself is not evil, but if one relies on riches more than on God, one comes to leave the way of the gospel. Chasing after more possessions and success, people's recognition and the pleasure of the flesh, the desire that at first looked small can come to occupy the whole heart.

That the seed fallen among the thorns bore no fruit does not simply mean that the amount of one's service or preaching was small. If a person, though he heard the word, finally forsakes the gospel because of cares and desires, he cannot be called the good ground that bore the fruit of salvation. We must not try to serve the gospel and the world as masters at the same time, but must settle in the heart what we will believe and follow.

Cares and the deceitfulness of riches keep coming even to the saved person. Therefore we must not leave the thorns growing in the heart as they are, but must discern them with the word. When we are anxious, we must pray to God, who saved

us, and when the temptation of riches comes, we must believe the fact that the eternal kingdom of God is more precious than the possessions of the world.

The fourth is the person who received the word on the good ground. Jesus explained the good ground as those who "*hear the word, accept it,*" and bear fruit. The good ground is not a person who has no sin from the beginning and whose character is perfect, but the person who, with a heart that fears God, lays down his own thoughts and accepts the word as fact, just as it is.

The person like the good ground first admits his real state before the word. He realizes that in him there are evil thoughts, greed, and hatred, and that he can never become righteous by himself. He does not defend or hide his sinful self, but accepts as right the judgment God has pronounced. Such a person comes to seek not his own merit but the Savior.

He believes as his own salvation the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself all his sins of the past, the present, and the future with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, that He received all the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and that He rose from the dead. When one accepts the righteousness God has fulfilled just as it is, without adding man's merit or religious deeds, one receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

The fruit of the good ground does not mean that a person piles up many good deeds and so gains salvation. It is that the seed of the gospel enters the heart and brings forth the remission of sins and the life of being born again, and that the Holy Spirit changes that person's life. Fruit is not the price paid to gain salvation, but the result of having truly received the gospel.

In the fruit there is first the fruit of salvation, in which one

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receives the remission of sins and becomes a child of God. After that appears the fruit of a life that obeys the word, loves its neighbors, and serves the gospel. And one also comes to bear the fruit of preaching, in which other souls receive the remission of sins through the gospel one has delivered.

The seed that fell on the good ground bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Not everyone bears the same amount of fruit, but the good ground bears fruit without fail. Since the mission entrusted to each person, the speed of growth, and the results of preaching the gospel can differ, we must not compare ourselves with one another to boast or to be discouraged.

Even after becoming the good ground, one must keep hearing the word and guarding the heart. One must remove with the word the stone of one's own righteousness and stubbornness, and keep the thorns of cares and the deceitfulness of riches from growing. The saved person must not lean on his own strength, but must receive the word of the church and the guidance of the Holy Spirit and put the root of faith down deep.

This passage teaches that realizing the mystery of the kingdom of God does not lie in mere Bible knowledge. A person must admit his own sinfulness before the word, and receive with the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ has completed. Even when people hear the same word, the one who holds to his own thoughts bears no fruit, but the one who hears the word, understands it, and believes receives the remission of all sins and bears the abundant fruit of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold in the Holy Spirit.

The lamp of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not to be hidden away but to be shined on the whole world

"Also He said to them, 'Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.' Then He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him'" (Mark 4:21–25).

This word follows the parable of the sower and its interpretation. The person who has heard the word with a heart like the good ground and received it bears fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Now Jesus teaches that the person who has received the word of the gospel and gained the remission of sins must not hide that light but shine it on other people. Hearing the word and preaching the gospel are joined to each other.

Jesus asked the purpose for which a person brings a lamp. The lamp of that time was used by putting oil in a vessel and lighting a wick. If one lights a lamp and covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, it cannot give its light properly. A lamp must be set on a lampstand so that it lights the whole house.

The "*basket*" in the text means a vessel for measuring the amount of grain. If such a vessel is put over a lighted lamp, not only is the light covered, but the flame can also go out. The *"bed"* refers to the place where a person lies or sits. If a lamp is put under it, the light is likewise covered. The original

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purpose of bringing a lamp is not to hide it, but to set it in a high place and light the surroundings.

In this parable, the lamp first refers to Jesus Christ, who came into the world, and to the word of truth He preached. Jesus is the light, who lights the darkness of sin and falsehood and shows the way of life. Man cannot fully know, with his own wisdom, the sin of his heart and the way of salvation, but when the word of Jesus shines, he comes to know what kind of sinner he is and how he must be saved.

The lamp applies also to the believer who delivers to the world the gospel he received from Jesus. The believer does not create a new light out of himself. He receives the light of Jesus Christ and shines it on other people. Therefore the person who preaches the gospel must not exalt himself, but must plainly reveal the salvation Jesus has fulfilled.

The center of the lamp that is the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the fact that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. Carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment of sin in our place, and He completed salvation by rising from the dead in three days. This word is the light that shines the way of the remission of sins and eternal life on the people who are in the darkness of sin and judgment.

The light of the gospel first exposes a person's hidden sins. A person can show a good and godly appearance outwardly while hiding the evil thoughts, greed, and hatred of his heart. But when the word of God shines into the heart, the fact is exposed that he was born with sin and is a being who can never become righteous by himself. Only when one admits one's own sinfulness can one also realize the need of the Savior.

But the light of the gospel does not end with exposing sin

and driving a person into despair. It also makes plain the fact that Jesus has already taken upon Himself all those sins and received their judgment. The light does not only say, "You are a sinner and must perish"; it testifies, "Jesus Christ has removed all your sins, so believe this salvation."

The word *"there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light"* shows that the mystery of the kingdom of God will not remain hidden forever. The ministry of Jesus and the meaning of the gospel seemed at first to be hidden within parables, but they were to be plainly revealed through the Cross and the resurrection and preached to the whole world through the disciples.

This word also teaches that a person's heart and deeds cannot be hidden before God forever. Even the sins and hypocrisy hidden from people are exposed before the light of God. But when sin is exposed, if one does not hide it or make excuses, but believes the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself even that sin with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, one is washed of all sins.

The person who has received the remission of sins must not keep this light of the gospel hidden only in his own heart. He may be afraid of the reactions of family and neighbors, and may keep silent for fear of suffering loss because of the gospel. But just as one does not light a lamp and put it under a vessel or a bed, the word of salvation God has made us realize must be delivered to the people who are still in darkness.

To reveal the gospel is not to display one's own godliness and knowledge. Nor is it to argue in order to defeat people or to force them to believe. It is to testify calmly, with the word of God, how one received the remission of sins, and to help the other person also hear and believe the salvation Jesus has

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fulfilled. Using words and life, printed matter and various means of delivery, we can make the light of the gospel shine widely.

Jesus said again, *"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."* In understanding the parable of the lamp also, the heart that hears the word is important. A person can hear the gospel and yet receive only the parts that fit his own thoughts and throw away the parts that make him uncomfortable. Therefore we must not stop at hearing with the ears, but must realize what God is saying and receive it with the heart.

The word *"Take heed what you hear"* means to pay attention both to the content of the teaching one hears and to the attitude of hearing. We must not believe every religious word unconditionally, but must discern by the written Bible whether it is the true gospel. At the same time, once we have confirmed that it is the word of God, we must not alter it with our own thoughts but receive it as it is.

Even while hearing the word that Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, people try to divide sin with their own thoughts. They may calculate that He took upon Himself only original sin, and that the sins committed daily must be washed by prayers of repentance, or that the future sins not yet committed are not included. But if Jesus said that He took upon Himself all the sins of this world, we must believe that He took upon Himself all sins: past, present, and future.

Because Jesus is the eternal God, He is not One who, like man, is bound in time and handles sins one by one by calculation. He took upon Himself at once all the sins mankind would commit in the world, and He paid the price of all those sins on the Cross. If a person divides the salvation of God with his own limited thoughts, he cannot believe the complete

remission of sins and keeps living as a sinner.

The word *"With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given"* shows that how earnestly and with what faith one receives the word of God is important. If one doubts and shrinks the word by one's own standard, one cannot realize its meaning more deeply. But if one acknowledges the word of God as right and receives it in faith, the Holy Spirit gives more abundant realization and faith.

This word does not mean that a person receives salvation in proportion to the merits he has piled up. Salvation is received by faith in the grace Jesus Christ has completed. It means, rather, that the results differ between the person who takes the word lightly and refuses it with his own thoughts, and the person who fears God and keeps the word in his heart.

In the word *"whoever has, to him more will be given,"* what one has is first the faith that has received the word of God. The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins keeps hearing the word and obeying, and so gains deeper faith and realization and the fruit of preaching the gospel. Because he counts precious and uses the word he already has, God entrusts him with more work and gives him the strength to live by faith.

On the contrary, *"whoever does not have"* is the person who heard the word but did not receive it with the heart. Even if he seems to have Bible knowledge and religious experience, if he has no heart that believes the gospel, in the end he loses even what he seemed to know. If one keeps refusing the word, the heart grows more hardened, and the ability to discern the true gospel from false teaching also grows weak.

To the person who has received the remission of sins also, this word becomes a warning. If, thinking he already knows the

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gospel, he neglects hearing the word and does not share the grace he has received, his faith cannot grow, and he can lose the opportunities and the fruit of serving the gospel. This does not mean that the salvation he received is canceled; it is the exhortation not to neglect the word he has received but to keep using it in faith.

Preaching the gospel is not a condition for obtaining the remission of sins. First one must believe the salvation Jesus fulfilled with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, receive the remission of all sins, and receive the Holy Spirit. After that, in thanksgiving for the life and grace one has received, one shines the light of the gospel on other people.

This passage teaches that hearing the gospel and delivering it must go together. We must take heed what we hear, receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit accurately, and neither divide the word we have received with our own thoughts nor hide it. The believer must become not a lamp that exalts itself, but a lampstand that lifts high the salvation of Jesus Christ, serving so that the people still in the darkness of sin and falsehood may see the gospel and receive the remission of all their sins.

The seed of the gospel grows by the power of God and bears fruit when the time comes, even though man does not know all the process

"And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the

blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come'" (Mark 4:26–29).

This parable follows the parable of the sower and the word of the lamp. Jesus taught that the word of the gospel must be heard and received with a heart like the good ground, and that the person who has received the remission of sins must not hide the light of the gospel but shine it on other people. Now He speaks of how the sown seed of the gospel grows and bears the fruit of the kingdom of God.

What the farmer must do first is sow good seed on the ground. One cannot expect fruit to appear without sowing the seed. In the same way, if the word of the gospel is not delivered to a person's heart, he cannot know what he must believe. God saves sinners not through human wisdom and emotion, but through the seed that is the word.

That a man sows seed on the ground represents the saved person delivering the gospel to another soul. The preacher must not deliver his own philosophy and religious experience. He must deliver accurately, according to the written word, how Jesus Christ has saved sinners.

The seed of the gospel is the word that Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John, that carrying those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place, and that He completed salvation by rising from the dead in three days. When this seed is sown in the heart and the hearer receives it just as it is, he receives the remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

After sowing the seed, the farmer sleeps at night and rises by day, continuing his daily life. During that time the seed sprouts and grows in the ground, but the farmer cannot see with

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his eyes all the process in which the life moves. Nor is it the farmer who makes the husk of the seed open, the root go down, and the sprout come up.

The word *"he himself does not know how"* does not mean that the farmer neglects his farming without any interest. The farmer tends the field and does what is needed, but he cannot put life into the seed or draw out the sprout by his own strength. Jesus teaches that the preacher of the gospel can deliver the word, but he cannot create the very life that makes a person born again.

The preacher can explain the Bible to the other person, answer his questions, and let him hear the gospel repeatedly. But he cannot force open a person's heart or make him receive the Holy Spirit by human persuasion. The One who makes him realize the word, raises faith, and gives new life is God. Therefore, after preaching the gospel, we must pray and wait for the Holy Spirit to work through that word.

The power that saves a person lies not in the preacher's eloquence but in the gospel accomplished with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. Because the power of life is in the seed of the gospel itself, what matters is delivering that word accurately. If the preacher, to win people's interest, takes out the parts of the gospel that look uncomfortable or mixes in man's merit, he is not sowing the pure seed of life.

The word "*the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head"* does not mean that a person's heart produces salvation and faith by itself without God. Just as God ordained the principle of life by which a seed grows, the One who works in a person's heart through the word of the gospel is also God. In man's eyes the seed seems to grow by itself, but that life and growth are

accomplished by the power of God.

The preacher of the gospel must not boast that he himself has saved a person. Just as the one who sowed the seed did not create the life, the preacher is only an instrument God has used. Conversely, if the other person does not believe right away after one has preached the gospel, one need not be excessively discouraged either. No one can fully know when and how the word that has entered a heart will sprout.

Yet neither must we deliver just any word carelessly and think that God will take care of it. As the farmer sows good seed rightly, the preacher must deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit plainly. He must look after the understanding of the person who heard the gospel, and help him with patience so that he can realize his own sin and the saving work of Jesus.

At the moment one believes the word of the gospel, the remission of sins is accomplished completely. Because Jesus already took upon Himself all sins with the baptism He received from John and paid their full price on the Cross, sin does not disappear little by little. When one believes this fact with the heart, one receives the remission of all sins once and for all and immediately becomes a child of God.

But the process in which faith grows and the fruit of life appears after one receives the remission of sins can be gradual. Jesus said, *"first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head."* Just as a seed does not become fully ripened grain the moment it is sown, the saved person also grows in faith as he learns the word and receives the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We must not demand of a person whose sprout has just come up the faith and conduct of a mature workman right away. Young faith needs the food of the word and care. The church must not condemn the weak or force fruit to be produced, but

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must keep supplying the word of the gospel, exhort with love, and give faith the time to grow.

At the same time, we must not be satisfied with the first response that a sprout has come up. A living seed grows from the blade to the head, and from the head to the full grain. The person who has received the remission of sins must keep hearing the word, deny his own thoughts, and serve the gospel in union with the church. In that process the Holy Spirit changes his thoughts, his judgments, and his life to fit the word.

The faith that Jesus completely saved him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection becomes the root of growth. The saved person does not think he has become a sinner again every time he sees the lack in his deeds; he returns to the word of the completed salvation. On that sure gospel he admits and corrects his wrongs and learns to live by faith.

The growth of faith is not merely an increase in the amount of visible religious activity. It must appear as trusting the word of God more deeply, laying down one's own righteousness and desires, loving the weak, and serving the gospel. It also leads to the fruit of delivering the salvation one has received to other people, so that still other souls receive the remission of sins.

The speed of growth and the appearance of fruit can differ from person to person. One person learns quickly, and another needs a long time. We must not be proud or discouraged by comparing ourselves with other people, but must examine whether the word planted in each heart is actually taking root and growing into the head and the full grain.

The believer must not act as though he were the master who makes another person's faith grow. Leaders and preachers have the responsibility of helping and exhorting with the word, but they cannot take the place of the Holy Spirit. We must not

subject a person to human authority, but must help him believe the word of God for himself and live following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The word *"when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come"* means that the history of the kingdom of God does not continue without purpose but moves toward its ordained completion. As the farmer waits for the grain to ripen and then harvests, God bears long until the gospel is preached and the souls to be saved bear fruit. But when the time of harvest comes, He settles the account without fail.

The harvest makes us think of the day when one person's life ends and he stands before God, and ultimately it points to the judgment of God and the completion of salvation that will be fulfilled at the end of the world. The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins enters the eternal kingdom of God like the grain gathered into the barn of God. The person in whom sin remains because he refused the gospel to the end must receive the judgment for his sins.

Man cannot fix the time of the harvest or force it forward. As the farmer does not hastily put the sickle to unripened grain, God knows the exact time and waits. The believer, rather than calculating the last day at will or falling into fear, must faithfully sow the seed of the gospel entrusted to him today and bear the fruit of faith.

This passage shows together the responsibility of man and the work of God in preaching the gospel. Man must sow the seed, but he cannot make life; he must tend with the word, but he cannot make it grow by his own strength. The preacher delivers the gospel accurately, prays, and waits, and God makes that word realized through the Holy Spirit and makes

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the sinner born again.

God saves one soul through the small seed of the gospel, and makes him grow into a workman who preaches the gospel to still other people. Even if the result looks small and invisible now, there is no need to be discouraged. If we keep sowing the pure gospel of the water and the Spirit, at the time God has ordained, the blade, the head, and the full grain will appear, and He will fulfill an abundant harvest.

The kingdom of God starts small like a mustard seed, but grows with the gospel of life and gives salvation and rest to many souls

"Then He said, 'To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade'" (Mark 4:30–32).

Jesus asked with what He should liken the kingdom of God, so that the people could understand it, and then spoke of one mustard seed. Because the kingdom of God is not like the visible kingdoms of the world, it cannot be explained by human political power or military force. Jesus showed the beginning and the growth of the kingdom of God through the way a small but living seed grows.

The word *"It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth"* means that the beginning of the kingdom of God looks very small and insignificant in people's eyes. The mustard seed was known as

a very small seed among the seeds people of that time sowed in fields and gardens. It was a seed so small that it could easily be lost even on one's palm, but inside it there was the life that would grow.

When Jesus began to preach the kingdom of God, its appearance also looked very small. Jesus did not appear with a worldly palace or an army. In the region of Galilee He called ordinary fishermen and a tax collector as His disciples and taught the word to a small number of people. The religious leaders and the men of power of that time did not count Jesus and His disciples as anything much.

But the power of the kingdom of God did not lie in outward scale or worldly authority. Just as there is life inside the small mustard seed, in the word Jesus preached there was the life that saves sinners and makes them children of God. It looked weak in people's eyes, but that word was to be preached to the whole world and to make countless people the people of the kingdom of God.

In this parable, the mustard seed makes us think of the gospel of the kingdom of God, the gospel of the water and the Spirit fulfilled through Jesus Christ. The content of the gospel can look simple and insignificant in the eyes of the people of the world. For it does not present a complicated theory like the wisdom and philosophy of the world, but tells us to believe just as it is what God has done for sinners.

But in this small seed of the gospel there is the power to save every sinner. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John; carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment in our place; and He completed salvation by rising from the dead in three days. The person who believes this word with the heart receives the

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remission of all sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God.

When a person first hears the gospel, he may not know all its worth and power. He hears the fact that Jesus has removed all his sins and receives it with the heart because it is the truth of the Bible, but he may not know how greatly that faith will change his life from then on. It is like not being able to see with the eyes, when first sowing a mustard seed, how large it will grow.

The word *"but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade"* shows that in the gospel of the kingdom of God there is life that actually grows. Just as a seed does not grow if it stays only in the hand without being sown in the ground, the gospel also must be received into a person's heart for the work of life to appear. If one keeps it only as Bible knowledge or tries to substitute another person's faith for one's own, one cannot enjoy the life of the kingdom of God.

The gospel that must be planted in a person's heart is the whole word of salvation accomplished with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. If one believes that Jesus took upon Himself only original sin and that the sins committed daily must be washed by one's own prayers of repentance, one has not received just as it is the gospel by which He took upon Himself all the sins of this world. We must not divide the salvation God has fulfilled with human thoughts, but must believe it just as the word says.

When one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one receives the remission of all the sins of the heart once and for all, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within. This is the work in which the kingdom of God begins in one person's

heart. Before, sin, condemnation, and the fear of death ruled the heart, but now the word of God and the Holy Spirit rule that person.

That the kingdom of God grows does not mean that the remission of sins is completed little by little. The remission of sins is received once and for all when one believes the completed gospel. It is that afterward the saved person keeps hearing the word and receives the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and his faith and life grow. The faith that was like a small sprout grows into the faith of a workman who can serve the gospel and embrace other people.

God preaches the gospel to still other souls through the one person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The faith that began in one person's heart can spread to his family and neighbors, to other regions and countries. As the seed of the gospel accomplished with the baptism Jesus received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection keeps being planted in other hearts, the kingdom of God expands.

Therefore the growth of the kingdom of God does not mean only that the buildings, finances, and numbers of a church grow larger. Even if the outward organization grows greatly, if the true gospel is not preached and no one receives the remission of sins, it cannot be said that the life of the mustard seed has grown. The true growth of the kingdom of God lies in people believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receiving the remission of sins, and being born again of the Spirit.

Conversely, it is not that there is no work of God just because the beginning is small and the visible results are few. Preaching the gospel to one person, handing over one gospel book, and having one conversation may look as small as a mustard seed. But if that word is planted in the field of a good heart, it can save one soul, and it can lead to the great fruit of

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that person preaching the gospel to many other people in turn.

The word that *"the birds of the air may nest under its shade"* shows the mustard seed, once so small, grown until it gives rest and shelter to other lives. In the earlier parable of the sower, the birds referred to Satan, who snatches away the word, but a bird does not necessarily carry the same meaning in every parable. Here it represents the wide influence of the kingdom of God, under whose large branches and shade many lives come to dwell.

The people who were under the condemnation of Satan and the heavy burden of sin gain true rest in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus took upon Himself all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid their price on the Cross, the person who believes this gospel no longer needs to struggle to wash his sins with his own deeds. Within the completed righteousness of God, he puts off the fear of condemnation and enjoys spiritual rest.

The person and the church whose faith has grown must, like the large branches and the shade, prepare the place where other souls can hear the gospel, be protected, and grow. We must not condemn the person who has newly received the remission of sins or subject him to our own authority, but must nurture him with the word and help him keep the faith even in hardship. Yet we must not forget that the source that gives people salvation and rest is not a leader or an organization but Jesus Christ.

Nor must we confuse the parable of the mustard seed with the word about the size of an individual's faith. In another passage of the Bible there is the word about faith as small as a mustard seed, but here Jesus explains how the kingdom of God begins and grows. The center lies not in man exercising great power, but in the fact that in the gospel of the kingdom of God,

which looks small, there are amazing life and expanding power.

The preacher of the gospel must believe the power of the gospel itself rather than relying on worldly power and splendid methods to gather people. If one is ashamed of the gospel or thinks it too simple and adds human philosophy and religious decoration to it, one covers the seed of life. We must deliver accurately and plainly how Jesus removed all sins.

Also, the believer need not be discouraged that his present appearance is small and lacking. Just as the mustard seed does not shoot out large branches at once but grows after being planted in the ground, the saved person also grows as he keeps hearing the word within the church and serving the gospel. God nurtures the weak with the word and the Holy Spirit and makes them workmen who embrace and help many souls.

This passage teaches us not to despise the beginning of the kingdom of God. The gospel of the water and the Spirit looks small and simple compared with the wisdom of the world, but it holds the power of life that makes a sinner a righteous person and changes a slave of Satan into a child of God. If we believe this gospel with the heart and keep delivering it to other people, God will make the small mustard seed grow like a tree with large branches, and many souls will receive the remission of sins and eternal rest in Christ.

Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables and explained the meaning fully to the disciples who came near

"And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all

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things to His disciples" (Mark 4:33–34).

Jesus taught the mystery of the kingdom of God through the parable of the sower, the parable of the lamp, the parable of the growing seed, and the parable of the mustard seed. Mark tells us that Jesus spoke with many parables besides those recorded. Jesus did not speak only abstract doctrine; He explained spiritual truth using the things people easily meet in daily life, such as seed and field, lamp and grain.

The word *"with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it"* shows that Jesus taught considering the circumstances of the hearers and the degree to which they could understand. Not everyone could understand the deep truth of the kingdom of God at once. Jesus knew their weakness and led them to the truth step by step through familiar things.

This does not mean that Jesus spoke only as much as people liked to hear, or that He weakened the truth of God. The content of the truth did not change, but He fitted the way of delivering it to the level of the hearers. Jesus began from what people could understand now, and led them to realize their sins, the salvation of God, and the mystery of the kingdom of God.

The person who preaches the gospel must also follow this teaching of Jesus. We must explain the gospel in words the other person can understand, examining how much he knows the Bible and what wrong thoughts he holds. But we must not take out sin and judgment or shrink the content of the salvation Jesus fulfilled on the ground of explaining easily. Even when using easy expressions, the righteousness of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be delivered accurately.

Verse 34 tells us that Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables, and when He was alone, He explained everything to His disciples. This does not mean that Jesus unconditionally

hid the truth from everyone. There were people who heard the parables of Jesus and went away finding only the outward story interesting, but there were also disciples who remained beside Jesus and asked, wanting to know the meaning.

The parable revealed the truth and at the same time showed the heart of the person hearing the word. The hardened person heard only a story about seed and field and went away, but the person who longed for the word came near to Jesus, wanting to know what that parable meant. Though they heard the same word, the results that appeared differed between the person who held to his own thoughts and the person who wanted to learn the will of God.

The disciples also did not understand every parable by themselves from the beginning. They had been called by Jesus and were following Him, but they did not know what the parable of the sower meant, so they asked Jesus. Jesus did not rebuke their ignorance and leave them; He explained fully the meaning contained in the parable. A true disciple is not a person who already knows everything, but a person who admits what he does not know and learns from the Lord.

The word *"when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples"* shows that the authority to interpret the word of God belongs to Jesus. The meaning of the Bible is not decided at will according to human imagination or philosophy. It must be understood according to the meaning Jesus Himself made plain and the gospel the whole Bible testifies to. Attaching groundless spiritual meanings to every detail of a parable is not right interpretation.

Nor did Jesus explain separately to His disciples in order to make a secret doctrine that only a few should know. The disciples were afterward to deliver the word they had learned from the Lord to all the people of the world. The meaning of

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the parables Jesus explained was recorded in the Gospels also so that everyone today can read, realize, and believe it.

To realize the word of God, a humble heart is needed. If a person puts forward his own knowledge and religious experience, even when he hears the word he easily thinks he already knows it. But if he does not know what kind of sinner he is before God and why he cannot escape from sin by himself, he cannot rightly understand the need of the gospel either. We must lay our thoughts down under the word and ask God to teach us.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit also is not established in the heart merely by reading the Bible a few times or memorizing the sentences of doctrine. A person must first realize the fact that he is a being who keeps committing sins with his heart and his deeds and cannot avoid the judgment of God. And he must learn exactly through the word why the sinless Son of God came to this earth in the flesh and why the baptism He received from John was necessary.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body. Then, carrying those sins, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving the punishment of sin in our place; He was buried, and He rose from the dead in three days. This salvation, fulfilled with the water, the blood, and the Spirit, is not a religious interpretation men have made; it is the history of salvation God has revealed through the Bible.

If a person does not understand the relation between the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the Cross, he may keep suffering because of the sin remaining in his heart even while looking only to the blood of the Cross. Through His baptism Jesus actually took over our sins, and on the Cross He paid the wages of those sins completely. The person who

believes this fact with the heart receives the remission of all sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God.

The Holy Spirit helps a person realize and believe the word of God. But to seek the teaching of the Holy Spirit does not mean leaving the Bible and waiting only for some mysterious voice. Through the written word, the Holy Spirit makes us realize what Jesus fulfilled with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, and makes us believe that truth with the heart.

Salvation is not a reward given only to the person who has piled up enough knowledge to understand the gospel completely. The person who sincerely believes the gospel that Jesus solved all his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection soon receives the remission of sins. Yet even after being saved, one must keep learning the word of God so that one's faith becomes clearer and firmer.

The person who teaches the word must not think he has fulfilled his responsibility because he explained it once. Just as Jesus spoke in parables fitted to the circumstances of the multitude and explained the meaning again to His disciples, the person who delivers the gospel must also watch whether the other person has actually understood, and explain with patience. In particular, he must teach plainly, on the basis of the Bible, how the baptism of Jesus and the Cross are joined together and have removed all the sins of the sinner.

The person who learns the word also must not hide what he has not understood out of shame. As the disciples asked Jesus and heard His interpretation, we must ask what we do not know, and go over the word we have heard, comparing it with the Bible. When the word of the gospel does not stop at a

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moment's emotion but takes deep root in the heart, we keep the faith even in trials and hardship.

This passage teaches that realizing the gospel does not depend on a person's intellectual ability or religious career. If one hears the word lightly and goes away, only the outside of the parable remains, but the person who admits his ignorance and comes near to Jesus learns the truth of the kingdom of God contained in it. God makes plain the will of salvation through the Bible to the person who humbly seeks the word.

Therefore the believer must not stop, thinking he already knows the word, but must keep learning the righteousness of God, which Jesus Christ fulfilled with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, and establish it firmly in his heart. He must also unfold and deliver the gospel he has realized with patience and love, so that other people too can understand it. When the person who has learned from the Lord delivers the gospel accurately to other people in turn, the word of the kingdom of God spreads more widely.

The power of Jesus revealed in the windstorm shows that He is the Son of God, who saves us from sin, judgment, and death

"On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' Then He arose and rebuked the

wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?' And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, 'Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!'" (Mark 4:35–41).

Jesus taught the word of the kingdom of God with many parables to the multitude gathered by the sea through the day. When evening came, He said to His disciples, *"Let us cross over to the other side."* This voyage was begun not at the disciples' own discretion, but in obedience to the word of Jesus. The fact that the disciples met the windstorm did not mean they had gone astray into a wrong way against the will of the Lord.

This fact shows that hardship can come even to the person who obeys the will of God. People easily think that if they believe the Lord, no suffering will happen in their lives. But even on the way of getting into the boat with Jesus and going in obedience to His word, the windstorm arose. We must not conclude, merely from meeting hardship, that we have been forsaken by God or are going a wrong way.

The word *"when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him"* shows that Jesus crossed over directly from the boat in which He had been teaching. Other boats also set out together, so this event was not a hidden thing experienced only by Jesus and the twelve disciples. Many people witnessed the great windstorm and the sea becoming calm.

The Sea of Galilee was a place where strong wind and waves could arise suddenly when cold air came down from the high ground around it. But the windstorm of this day was so fierce that the boat was filling with water. Among the disciples were fishermen who had worked long on that sea, but their experience and skill alone could not solve the situation. They

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fell into the desperate fear that they might die.

This scene shows the fact that human ability and experience have plain limits. Ordinarily people think they can live by their own knowledge and talents, but when they meet what human strength cannot solve, their weakness is exposed. Not only disease and disaster, but still more the problems of sin, the judgment of God, and death can never be solved by human effort. A sinner cannot save his soul with his own good deeds and religious zeal.

Though the great windstorm arose and the boat was full of water, Jesus was asleep on a pillow in the stern. That Jesus slept because He was weary shows that He is true man, who came to this earth in the same flesh as ours. Though Jesus is the Son of God, He actually experienced hunger, thirst, and weariness. He came among us in the flesh in order to save sinners.

But the fact that Jesus was asleep did not mean that He was ignorant of the disciples' danger or was not caring for their lives. The boat Jesus was in could not sink by the windstorm apart from the plan of God. Jesus had already said, *"Let us cross over to the other side."* The disciples, looking only at the waves before their eyes, forgot who was with them and what He had said.

The disciples woke Jesus and said, *"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"* This was a cry for help, but in it there was also the complaint that Jesus was not looking after them. When fear rules the heart, a person can think that the Lord has forsaken him even while the Lord is with him. He sees his present circumstances as greater than the love and the promise of God.

Jesus awoke, first rebuked the wind, and commanded the sea, *"Peace, be still!"* Jesus did not wait long for the wind to

die down, nor did He use any tool. When He spoke, the wind ceased at once and the sea became completely calm. Nature obeyed the word of Jesus.

Even when a great wind stops, the waves usually keep churning for a while. But the text tells us that the wind ceased and *"there was a great calm"* on the sea. This shows that it was not a matter of the weather happening to improve, but a miracle accomplished by the word of Jesus. Jesus is the Creator God, who made the wind and the sea and rules them.

The Old Testament testifies that the One who rules the waves of the sea and stills the storm is the LORD God. Therefore the event in which Jesus calmed the wind and the sea with His word alone reveals that He is not merely an excellent teacher or prophet but God. As declared in the first verse of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

After making the sea calm, Jesus said to His disciples, *"Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"* He was not rebuking merely the emotion of feeling danger or being startled. The disciples had until then watched Jesus heal the sick and cast out demons, but before the windstorm they did not believe His power and His word.

Faith is not persuading oneself that there is no dangerous situation. Even when the windstorm actually blows and the boat fills with water, it is believing the fact that Jesus is with us and that His word and power are greater than the wind and the sea. When the believer meets what he cannot solve by his own strength, he must not hold only to human methods, but must pray to the Lord and rely on Him.

This does not mean that if we believe and pray, every problem will surely disappear at the time and in the way we want. Sometimes the Lord calms the windstorm at once, and sometimes He gives the strength to endure in the midst of the

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windstorm and a way of escape. What matters is not that there is no hardship, but the faith that in any circumstance Jesus is with us and is holding His people.

We must not interpret this historical event by forcibly attaching spiritual meanings to every detail. But the appearance of the disciples, who could do nothing before the windstorm, makes us think of the helplessness of man standing before sin, judgment, and death. Every person must receive the judgment of God because of sin, but with his own merits and the works of the Law he cannot escape that judgment.

Jesus came into the world in the flesh in order to save such sinners. The sinless Lord took upon Himself the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John. Then, carrying those sins, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving in our place all the punishment and judgment of sin; He was buried, and He rose from the dead in three days.

Just as Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea and made them calm, with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection He has completely solved the problem of sin and judgment, which the sinner could never solve. The One who calmed the windstorm and the One who removed our sins are the same Son of God, Jesus Christ. Therefore salvation is obtained not by trusting one's own righteous deeds but by believing the righteousness of God, which Jesus has fulfilled.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took over our sins, and on the Cross He paid all the wages of those sins. The person who believes this fact with the heart receives the remission of all sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the saved person, and whenever he meets hardship, the Holy Spirit

reminds him of the fact that he is a child of God and of the salvation Jesus Christ has fulfilled.

It is not that the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit meets no windstorm of life. Even after being saved, one can meet disease and economic hardship, conflicts in relationships, and persecution because of the gospel. But the faith that one has been saved from eternal sin and judgment with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection gives the heart a peace that the circumstances of the world cannot give.

The disciples, seeing the sea become calm, rather feared greatly and said, *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"* At first they feared because of the windstorm, but now they feared before the power of Jesus, who subdues even nature. This was the fear of danger changed into amazement and awe before the divine power of Jesus.

The question of the disciples is also the question given to everyone who reads the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is not merely a teacher who gives help in a crisis; He is the Son of God, who rules the wind and the sea and saves sinners from eternal destruction. If one seeks Jesus only as the One who solves practical problems, one can miss the greatest and most important salvation He has fulfilled.

The believer must not hastily complain that the Lord is not looking after him when he meets hardship. He must trust the word of the Lord more than the visible circumstances and ask for help in prayer. Also, he must not surrender his heart to his own thoughts and the fear of the flesh, but must set his heart to follow the will of God and keep walking by faith.

Hardships like a great windstorm can come also to the church. The way of preaching the gospel may be blocked, believers may be tested, and problems hard to solve by human

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strength may arise. At such times the church must not rely only on the means of the world and human ability, but must pray together and hold fast to the word of the Lord. As Jesus was in the boat, the Lord is with the church that believes and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This passage teaches that faith is knowing who Jesus is and relying on His word and His salvation. The Son of God, who rules the wind and the sea, has removed all our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. Therefore, whatever windstorm we meet, we must set our hearts firmly on this gospel, pray to the Lord, and live by faith to the end. ✉

Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 4

[Question] 1. Explain what each of the parables recorded in Mark chapter 4 is saying.

In Mark chapter 4, Jesus taught the mystery of the kingdom of God through parables drawn from things people could easily meet in daily life, such as seed and ground, a lamp, grain, and a mustard seed. These parables show how the word of God is received in a person's heart, how the gospel is preached and grows, and what fruit it achieves in the end.

1. The parable of the sower and the four kinds of ground (verses 1–20)

The sower sowed the same seed, but entirely different results appeared according to the state of the ground where the seed fell. Jesus explained that the seed is *"the word."* Therefore the center of this parable lies not in the word of God being lacking or different, but in the state of heart of the person who hears and receives that word.

The seed that fell by the wayside refers to the person who hears the word but does not receive it with the heart. Just as a road is hardened by being trodden by people, the word cannot enter a heart hardened with its own thoughts, religious preconceptions, and the teachings of the world. Then Satan comes immediately and takes away the word sown in that heart.

The seed that fell on the stony ground refers to the person who receives the word with gladness at once when he hears it,

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but who has no root in his heart, so that when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he soon stumbles. The stones can be seen as representing the thoughts and righteousness of one's own that one holds more firmly than the word of God, and the sins one has not admitted but kept hidden. Just as the stones must be picked out of a field for the seed to take deep root, a person must examine his heart and deeds before the word of the Law and admit as sin what God calls sin. Only when one does not hide one's sinfulness and helplessness before the Lord but brings them out, and admits that one cannot save oneself from sin, can one wholly receive the salvation given through the word. This does not mean washing away sins by the act of confessing them one by one; it means casting away one's own righteousness and preparing the heart to believe the remission of sins God has fulfilled.

The seed that fell among the thorns refers to the person who has heard the word, but the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other desires enter and choke the word, so that he bears no fruit. This does not mean that thinking about the needs of living or using riches is itself a sin. But when the success, cares, and desires of the world take a higher place in the heart than the word, the faith that believes and follows the gospel loses its strength.

The seed that fell on the good ground refers to the person who hears the word, accepts it, and bears fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. The good ground does not mean a person who is originally sinless or of excellent character. It is the heart that, when God speaks about its sin and its salvation, does not put forward its own thoughts but acknowledges and accepts the word just as it is.

The good heart-field accepts the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind with the baptism He

received from John, that He died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins in our place, and that He rose from the dead. When one believes this gospel, all sins disappear once and for all, and one receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God. After that, the life of living by the word, serving the gospel, and leading other souls to salvation appears as the fruit of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Such fruit is not a condition for obtaining salvation, but the result of faith borne by the person who has received the remission of sins.

2. The parable of the lamp (verses 21–23)

The purpose of bringing a lamp is not to hide it under a basket or under a bed, but to set it on a lampstand and light the surroundings. This lamp refers to the word of the kingdom of God and the light of the gospel.

The salvation Jesus Christ has fulfilled is not a secret that only some people should know and keep hidden. It must be revealed and delivered to the whole world so that the people in darkness can see their sins and the way of salvation. Therefore the person who has received the remission of sins must not be ashamed of the gospel or keep it only in his own heart, but must deliver it plainly so that other people can also see that light and be saved.

The word *"there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light"* also shows that the mystery of the kingdom of God will be plainly revealed and preached through Jesus. To set the lamp of the gospel on the lampstand means the mission of making known to the world the salvation God has fulfilled.

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3. The parabolic teaching about the measure (verses 24, 25)

The word *"With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you"* teaches, in this context, with what posture we hear and receive the word of God.

To the person who counts the word precious, receives it in faith, and wants to realize its meaning, deeper realization and faith are given. But the person who judges the word with his own thoughts, takes it lightly, and does not receive it loses even what he thought he knew.

Therefore, when we hear the word, we must not merely try to gain knowledge or to judge other people, but must receive it as the word God is speaking to us ourselves. The more faith and obedience there is in receiving the word, the more abundantly we come to realize the mystery of the kingdom of God.

4. The parable of the seed that grows by itself (verses 26–29)

After a man sows seed on the ground, while he sleeps and rises night and day, the seed sprouts and grows, but the sower does not know all of how it grows. The earth bears fruit: first the blade comes up, then the head appears, and after that the full grain forms in the head.

This parable teaches the fact that the life and growth of the kingdom of God are accomplished not by human ability, but by the word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Man can deliver the seed of the gospel, but the One who changes a person's heart through that word and makes faith grow is God.

Even after one believes the gospel and receives the remission of sins, faith does not appear in a completed form all at once. While one keeps hearing the word within the church and serving God, one's thoughts, judgments, and life are gradually changed to fit the word. At first one is like a weak

sprout, but when one takes root in the word, the head appears, and finally one bears the fruit of faith like the full grain.

That the sickle is put in when the fruit is ripe means that God reaps the fruit at the time He has ordained. In each person's life of faith there is a time of fruit, and ultimately there comes the time of the last harvest, when the kingdom of God is completed and salvation and judgment are made plain.

5. The parable of the mustard seed (verses 30–32)

A mustard seed is very small when it is sown on the ground, but after it is sown, it grows greatly and shoots out large branches. This parable shows the fact that although the kingdom of God and the gospel look small and insignificant at first, inside them there is great and amazing power of life.

The gospel ministry Jesus began and His few disciples looked very small in the eyes of the world of that time. But the gospel is planted in people's hearts, makes them receive the remission of sins, forms the people of God and the church, and spreads out into the whole world.

The seed of the gospel planted in one person's heart also looks small at first. But when he believes the word, keeps being nurtured within the church, and serves the gospel, his faith grows and he becomes a workman of the kingdom of God, and it even reaches the point where other souls hear the gospel he delivers and obtain salvation. The word that the birds of the air nest under its shade shows the kingdom of God spreading widely, so that many people gain life and rest within it.

The overall lesson

The parables of Mark chapter 4 teach that the kingdom of God begins with the sowing of the seed of the word, that the results differ according to the heart that receives that word, that

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the light of the gospel is preached to the world, and that it grows by the power of God and finally reaches abundant fruit and harvest.

Therefore a person must lay down his own thoughts and righteousness before the word of God, admit his sins and his helplessness, and become a good heart-field. And after believing the gospel of the remission of sins God has fulfilled and receiving the Holy Spirit, he must not hide the lamp of the gospel but shine it on other people, and keep growing in the word and bearing the fruit of faith.

[Question] 2. Mark 4:1—where was the place where Jesus taught the multitude?

Jesus taught the multitude by the sea. When many people gathered, Jesus got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the multitude stood on the land by the sea and heard the word.

The text shows that Jesus used the boat like a pulpit so that many people could hear the word.

[Question] 3. According to Mark 4:2 and 10–12, why did Jesus teach in parables?

Jesus taught the truth of the kingdom of God through familiar scenes of daily life, such as seed and field. But the purpose of the parables did not lie only in delivering difficult content easily. In the parables the function of revealing the mystery of the kingdom of God and the function of hiding it were together.

To the disciples, who were with Jesus and asked the

meaning of the parables, He unfolded and explained the mystery of the kingdom of God. They were not people who understood everything from the beginning, but they received the word of Jesus as the word of God and came to the Lord wanting to know its meaning. To such people, who seek the word and receive it, the parable became a channel for realizing the truth of the kingdom of God.

On the other hand, to the people who did not believe in Jesus but held to their own thoughts and religious righteousness, judging the word and opposing it, everything remained as parables. Hearing the parables, they saw the outward content but did not know its spiritual meaning, and hearing with their ears they did not understand. Here, *"those who are outside"* does not simply mean everyone other than the twelve disciples; it refers to the people who do not come near to Jesus to seek the word but remain, in their hearts, outside the Lord and His word.

The word *"Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them"* does not mean that God blocks, without cause, the person who wants to be saved. It means that toward the obstinate person who keeps refusing and opposing the word, God leaves him in the heart he insists on, so that the parable comes to function as judgment. To the person who does not believe the word of God and yet wants only to know the mystery of salvation, that truth is hidden; but to the person who lays down his own thoughts and wants to receive the word, its meaning is made plain.

Therefore Jesus taught in parables in order to make those whose hearts were prepared realize the mystery of the kingdom of God, and to leave the truth hidden from those who refused the word and stubbornly opposed it. Even hearing the same parable, the person who receives the word like a good heart-

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field obtains the remission of sins and abundant fruit, but the person who hears with a hardened heart cannot realize its meaning.

[Question] 4. Mark 4:3—who does the sower in the parable refer to?

In the parable, the sower refers first to Jesus Christ, who preaches the word of God. Jesus came to this earth and preached to people the word of the kingdom of God and of salvation.

In a broader sense, it also refers to the disciples and the workers of the gospel who have received from Jesus the mission of preaching the gospel and deliver the word of God. The sower is not a person who creates life in the word, but a person who faithfully delivers the seed of the gospel God has given into people's hearts.

[Question] 5. Mark 4:3–20—what lessons can we gain from the parable of the seed sown on the four kinds of ground?

Jesus said that the sower sowed the same seed, but different results appeared according to the state of the ground where the seed fell. As Jesus Himself explained, the seed means the word of God, and the four kinds of ground refer to the different states of heart of the people who hear that word.

This parable teaches that the fault does not lie in the seed of the gospel, but that the fruit of salvation and faith differs according to the heart with which one hears and receives the word.

1. The heart like the wayside

The wayside is a place where the ground has been hardened by many people treading on it. Even when the seed falls there, it cannot enter the soil but lies on the surface, and so the birds come and devour it. Jesus explained this as Satan coming immediately, when a person has heard the word, and taking away the word sown in his heart.

The heart like the wayside is a heart hardened with human thoughts, the teachings of the world, religious preconceptions, and its own judgments. Even when such a person hears the word of God, he does not receive it as the word given to himself, but judges it by his own knowledge and experience, so the word cannot enter his heart.

Therefore, when we hear the word, we must lay down the stubbornness that says, "This is what I think," and acknowledge that it is right because God has said it. When God says that evil thoughts and many sins come out of a person's heart, we must not apply that word only to other people but receive it as our own actual state. If one does not receive the word with the heart, Satan takes it away through doubt and false teachings.

2. The heart like the stony ground

The seed that fell on the stony ground sprang up quickly because the earth was shallow, but it could not put its root down deep. When the sun rose, it was scorched and withered. Like this, the person like the stony ground receives the word with gladness at once when he hears it, but because there is no root of the word in his heart, he soon stumbles when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word.

In the stony ground, stones that are not visible on the surface lie buried under the soil. These can be seen as referring

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to the sins hidden in the heart, one's own righteousness, stubbornness, and wrong thoughts. Even when one seems outwardly to receive the word gladly, if one does not admit it when God points out one's actual state, the word cannot take deep root.

Just as a farmer plows the field, finds the stones, and picks them out, a person must carefully examine his heart and deeds before the word of God. He must admit as sin what God calls sin, and bring the evil heart and wrong deeds he has kept hidden out before the Lord. He must cast away the self-righteousness that says, "I am basically good and only need to correct a little," and admit that he cannot remove his sins by himself and that he is a person who absolutely needs the salvation of God. This is like picking the stones out of the heart-field.

The remission of sins is not accomplished by the act of finding and confessing or abandoning one's sins one by one. To pick out the stones means to admit one's true self before the word, to cast away one's own righteousness and stubbornness, and to accept the salvation God has fulfilled. Also, even after receiving the remission of sins, when wrong thoughts and living are exposed through the word, one must admit them and turn, so that faith can take deep root.

Faith must not put its root down into momentary gladness or emotional experience. It must take root in the written word of God and in the salvation Jesus Christ has fulfilled. Only then, even when tribulation and persecution, changes of circumstances and feelings come, one does not stumble but keeps the faith.

3. The heart like the thorny ground

The seed that fell among the thorns also sprouted and grew,

but the thorns grew together with it and choked the strength of the seed, so it bore no fruit. Jesus explained these thorns as the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and various other desires.

Fulfilling the responsibilities of living and seeking the riches one needs are not wrong in themselves. But when the problem of making a living, anxiety about the future, the desire to gain much riches, and the mind to rise high in the world take a higher place than the word of God, such things become thorns and block the life and power of the word.

The person like the thorny ground tries to hold the word and the world at the same time. He does not say outright that he will cast away the word, but in actual living he counts cares, riches, and desires more important, so he cannot serve the gospel and bears no fruit of faith.

Therefore the believer must entrust the cares of living to God and must not make riches and success the master of his life. He must think first of the kingdom of God and the gospel, and use the things of the world as instruments God has entrusted to him. He must not leave the thorns of desire growing in his heart, but must discern them with the word and remove them.

4. The heart like the good ground

The seed that fell on the good ground grew, flourished, and bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Jesus explained the good ground as the person who hears the word, accepts it, and bears fruit.

The good ground does not mean a person who has no sin from the beginning or whose character and conduct are especially excellent. It is the heart that lays down its own thoughts and righteousness before the word of God, and

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acknowledges and accepts just as it is what God says about its sin and its salvation.

The good heart-field admits that it cannot escape the judgment of sin and cannot remove sin by itself. And it believes just as it is the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, that He died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins in our place, and that He rose from the dead. When one believes this gospel, all sins disappear once and for all, and one receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God.

The first fruit borne in the good ground is believing the word of God and obtaining the remission of sins and eternal life. After that appear the fruits of living by the word, uniting with the church, serving the gospel, and delivering the word of salvation to other people. The word thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold shows that although each person's circumstances and entrusted work are not the same, fruit surely follows the faith that has truly received the word.

Such fruit is not a merit or condition for obtaining salvation. One does not receive the remission of sins by good deeds and service; it is the result of faith that the person who has received the remission of sins by believing the gospel bears with the life of the word.

The overall lesson

The parable of the four kinds of ground teaches that merely hearing the word of God with the ears is not enough, and that one must receive it with the heart and believe it. Even when people hear the same word, abundant fruit does not appear in a heart hardened with its own thoughts and religious stubbornness, a heart that keeps sin and self-righteousness

hidden, or a heart seized by the cares and desires of the world.

Therefore we must examine our heart before the word of God, admit sin as sin, and cast away our own righteousness and stubbornness. And we must believe, just as the word says, the salvation God has fulfilled through Jesus Christ. When that gospel takes deep root in the heart, we keep the faith even in tribulation and temptation and bear the abundant fruit that pleases God.

[Question] 6. Mark 4:4, 15—who does the seed that fell by the wayside refer to, and what became of it?

The seed that fell by the wayside refers to the person who hears the word of God but does not receive it with the heart. He is a person whose heart has been hardened with his own thoughts, the teachings of the world, religious preconceptions, and stubbornness, just as a road becomes hard when people keep treading on it.

When the seed could not enter the hard ground and lay on the surface, the birds came and devoured it. Jesus explained this as Satan coming immediately, when a person has heard the word, and taking away the word sown in his heart.

If one hears the word of God only as someone else’s story or as mere religious knowledge and holds to one’s own judgment, the gospel cannot take root in the heart. Therefore, when God speaks about our sin and our salvation, we must lay down our own thoughts and receive it as the word given to us ourselves.

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[Question] 7. Mark 4:5–6, 16–17—who does the seed sown on the stony ground refer to, and why did it wither away?

The seed sown on the stony ground refers to the person who receives the word of God with gladness at once when he hears it, but in whose heart that word does not take deep root.

The stony ground is not a place with no soil at all; it has a thin layer of soil on the surface, but under it there are many stones, so the root cannot go down deep. The seed quickly sprouted in the shallow soil, but the root could not go down deep enough to gain water and nourishment. So when the sun rose, it could not endure the hot heat, and it was scorched and withered away.

Jesus explained this as the person who hears the word, receives it at once with gladness, and endures for a time, but stumbles as soon as tribulation or persecution arises because of the word. Here the sun is something necessary for making a plant grow, but to a plant with no root it becomes a trial hard to endure. Like this, tribulation and persecution expose the reality of faith. The person in whose heart the word has taken deep root keeps the faith even in hardship, but the person who has stayed only in emotional gladness or shallow knowledge casts away the word when circumstances become hard.

The stones can be seen as referring to the sins hidden in the heart, one's own righteousness, stubbornness, and wrong thoughts. One hears the word gladly on the outside, but if, when God points out one's sins and one's actual state, one does not admit them but hides them, the gospel cannot enter deep into the heart. Holding one's own judgment and one's existing religious thoughts more firmly than the word of God also becomes a stone that blocks the root from going down.

Just as a farmer plows the field, uncovers the stones, and picks them out one by one, a person must examine his heart before the Law and the word of God. When God says that evil thoughts, greed, pride, and blasphemy are sins, he must admit, "Such sins are in my heart too, and I have actually lived committing such wrongs." He must not hide his sins or dress himself up as a good person, but bring them out before the Lord, and admit that he cannot solve the problem of sin by himself. Admitting one's sins and one's helplessness like this, and casting away one's own righteousness and stubbornness, is like picking the stones out of the heart-field.

But the act itself of admitting and confessing sins does not remove sin. A person's admitting his sins is the posture of heart for accepting the salvation God has prepared. The person who has admitted the actual state of his sin believes with the heart the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, that He died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins in our place, and that He rose from the dead, and so he receives the remission of sins. By believing this gospel, all sins disappear once and for all and he becomes a child of God.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, when one's own thoughts and wrong living are exposed through the word, one must admit them, cast them away, and follow the word. This is not a deed done to receive the remission of sins again, but obedience for believing firmly the salvation already received and putting the root of faith down still deeper.

Therefore the fundamental reason the seed on the stony ground withered away was not that there was a problem with the seed of the word, but that because of the stones it could not put its root down deep. For faith not to stay in momentary emotion or shallow knowledge, one must admit one's sins and

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thoughts before the word and put down a sure root into the salvation Jesus Christ has fulfilled. Then, even when tribulation and persecution come because of the word, one does not stumble but keeps the faith to the end.

[Question] 8. Mark 4:7, 18–19—by what was the seed sown among the thorns blocked, so that it bore no fruit?

The seed sown among the thorns did hear the word, but it bore no fruit because the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other desires entered and choked the word.

The seed itself had life, so it sprouted and grew, but the thornbushes also grew together with it, robbing the seed of its strength and blocking the sunlight and nourishment. Like this, even when a person hears the word of God, if his heart is seized by the things of the world, the word cannot fully govern that person's faith and life.

1. The cares of the world

The cares of the world are the heart that worries excessively about what to eat and drink, how to live, and what will become of one's future circumstances. Preparing responsibly for living and being seized by cares are different things. If one is caught by cares, one sees the circumstances before one's eyes as greater than the promise of God, and keeps putting off believing and following the word.

If one is caught by the fear that believing the gospel might spoil one's relationships with people, bring loss in living or in business, or leave one wondering how to live from now on, one cannot fully receive even the word one has realized to be the

truth. Such cares become the very thorns that block the word.

2. The deceitfulness of riches

"The deceitfulness of riches" means riches deceiving a person as though they would guarantee him happiness and safety. Riches and labor are not wrong in themselves. Riches are needed for living, and they can also be used for doing the work God has entrusted and for serving the gospel.

But if one relies on riches more than on God and makes possessing more the purpose of life, the heart comes to be dragged along by riches. If one abandons the word, worship, and the serving of the gospel in order to gain money, or fears the material loss that may come when one follows the truth, the deceitfulness of riches is blocking the word.

Riches are an instrument a person should use; they must not become the master that rules a person's heart. If God gives much, we should use much for the gospel, and if He gives little, we should give thanks in the given circumstances and keep following the Lord.

3. The other desires

The other desires include not only riches but also the various cravings the heart wants: honor and position, success and pleasure, people's recognition and the satisfaction of the flesh. When the mind that wants to do this and to gain that, to rise higher than others and to enjoy more, goes ahead of the word, the fruit of faith is blocked.

Desire looks like a small thorn at first, but if left alone it grows and occupies the whole heart. In the end it makes one choose what one wants oneself rather than what the Lord wants, and makes one live for one's own satisfaction rather than serving the gospel.

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What it means to remove the thorns

To remove the thorns does not mean casting away all living and riches or doing no work in the world. It means settling clearly who is the master of the heart, and putting the word of God and His kingdom before cares, riches, and desires.

When the cares and covetousness of the heart are exposed through the word, we must admit them and entrust them to God. Believing that the Lord is the One responsible for our life, we must use our riches, time, and talents not only for our own desires but for serving the gospel and other people.

Therefore the lesson of the thorny ground is that we must not be satisfied with the mere fact of having heard the word. We must keep examining ourselves with the word so that the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and various desires do not occupy the heart, and must put the kingdom of God in the foremost place of life. Only then is the life of the word not blocked, and we can bear the fruits of faith, obedience, and the preaching of the gospel.

[Question] 9. Mark 4:8, 20—who does the seed sown on the good ground refer to, and how much fruit did it bear?

The seed sown on the good ground refers to the person who hears the word of God and receives it with the heart. That seed grew and flourished and bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

The good ground does not mean a person who is sinless from the beginning or whose character and conduct are especially excellent. It means the person whose heart is prepared to acknowledge and accept the word of God as fact,

without putting forward his own thoughts and religious righteousness, when God speaks about his sin and his salvation.

The person with a good heart-field does not deny or hide it when the Law points out that his heart and deeds are sinful. He admits that in him there are evil thoughts, greed, pride, blasphemy, and many other sins, and that he can neither remove those sins nor escape the judgment of sin by himself. Admitting one's actual state before the word like this and seeking the salvation of God is the heart like the good ground.

The good heart-field also accepts the way of salvation God has prepared just as it is, without changing it with its own thoughts. It believes with the heart the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, that He died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins in our place, and that He rose from the dead. When one believes this gospel, all sins disappear once and for all, and one receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God.

The most fundamental fruit borne in the good ground is believing the word and obtaining the remission of sins and eternal life. After that, the fruit continues into the life of following the word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and denying one's own thoughts, the life of uniting with the church and serving the gospel, and the life of delivering the word of salvation to other people so that they too receive the remission of sins.

The word thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold shows the fact that fruit surely follows the person who has truly received the word. The size of the fruit can appear differently according to each person's circumstances, the growth of his faith, the office entrusted to him, and the portion of his service. But this does not mean that the degree of the remission of sins differs.

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Whoever believes the gospel receives the remission of all his sins completely; it means that the fruits of faith, obedience, and gospel ministry that appear after one is saved can differ from one another.

Therefore the lesson of the good ground is not that a person makes good fruit with his own efforts and good deeds and so is saved. It is that when one receives the word of God with the heart, the life of that word saves and changes the person and makes him bear abundant fruit. What a person needs is not to hold to his own thoughts, but to open his heart before the word of God and believe and follow that word.

[Question] 10. Mark 4:8, 20—what can we learn from the fruit the good ground bore?

That the seed fallen on the good ground grew and flourished and bore fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold teaches us the fact that when a person receives the word of God with the heart, the life of that word saves and changes him and surely makes him bear fruit.

1. Fruit comes from the life of the seed

The good ground bore much fruit not because the ground created life by itself, but because there was life in the seed planted in it. Like this, the fruit of faith does not begin first from a person's resolution or good deeds, but from the word of God.

The most important thing a person must do is not to strive to become holy by his own strength, but to receive the word of God with the heart and believe it. When the word enters the heart, that word and the Holy Spirit change the person's

thoughts and life and make him bear fruit.

2. The first fruit is the remission of sins and eternal life

The good heart-field admits that it cannot remove its sins by itself, and accepts the salvation God has fulfilled through Jesus Christ. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind, and He died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins, and He rose from the dead.

When one believes this gospel, all sins disappear once and for all, and one receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God. Therefore the most fundamental fruit the seed of the word bears is that a person receives the remission of sins, obtains eternal life, and becomes a righteous person.

3. The fruit of life follows the faith of the saved

After one receives the remission of sins, the fruit of obedience appears, the desire to live following the word of God. Before, one lived following one's own thoughts and desires, but now, through the word, one admits one's wrongs and turns, and comes to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Uniting with the church, loving the brothers and sisters, looking after those in hardship, and faithfully carrying out the work entrusted to us are also fruits of faith. In particular, delivering the gospel of the remission of sins one has received to another person so that he too is saved is a very precious fruit. Just as one seed bears many seeds, when one person believes the gospel and delivers it to another, more souls gain life.

4. The portions of fruit differ, but salvation is the same

All the good ground bore fruit, but some bore thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold. This shows that the

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office and circumstances each believer has received, the growth of his faith, and the portion of his service can differ from one another.

One person preaches the gospel to many people, and another helps the gospel ministry in an unseen place. The shape and portion of the fruit can differ, but all are precious fruits that come from the life God has given.

But thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold do not mean degrees of the remission of sins or differences of salvation. Whoever believes the salvation Jesus Christ has fulfilled receives the remission of all his sins completely. The remission of sins is complete and the same, but the fruits of obedience and service borne after one is saved can appear differently.

5. Fruit is not the condition of salvation but the result of being saved

Good conduct and service for the gospel are not merits that buy salvation. A person receives the remission of sins not by deeds but by believing the salvation God has fulfilled. Fruit is not a condition for being saved, but the result that appears in the person who has believed the word and gained new life.

Therefore the believer must not be proud or discouraged, comparing the size of his fruit with other people's. In the place entrusted to him, he must keep hearing the word and obeying, and faithfully bear fruit according to the portion God has given.

In the end, the fruit of the good ground shows the fact that the faith that has truly received the word of God is never in vain. The word saves a person from sin, makes faith grow, changes his life, and leads him to the abundant fruit of preaching the gospel to other souls.

[Question] 11. Mark 4:9—what does the word of Jesus, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* teach us?

The word *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* is not simply telling us to hear a sound with the ears of the flesh; it is the call to realize with the heart the spiritual meaning contained in the word of Jesus and to believe and receive it.

The people who heard the parables of Jesus all heard the same words, but not all of them realized the meaning. The person whose heart was hardened with his own thoughts and religious preconceptions could not receive the word even when he heard it, but the person who, like the disciples, came to Jesus wanting to know the meaning of the word learned the meaning of the parables.

Therefore *"ears to hear"* does not mean special knowledge or outstanding wisdom. It means the humble heart that lays down its own thoughts and righteousness before the word of God and wants to acknowledge and accept as fact what God says. We must believe as it is not only the word that points out our sins but also the gospel of the remission of sins God has fulfilled.

Also, truly hearing the word does not end with knowing its content. It must lead to keeping the word heard in the heart and believing it, admitting and turning when our wrongs are exposed, and following the will of God in life. If one hears and still holds to one's own thoughts, the word is taken away like the seed fallen by the wayside.

Therefore this word teaches that the person who hears the word of God has a responsibility. We must not judge the word lightly or apply it only to others, but must receive it as the word given to us ourselves. The person who so believes and follows

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the word bears the fruit of salvation and faith like the good ground.

[Question] 12. Mark 4:10–12—why did Jesus tell the mystery of the kingdom of God to those outside only in parables?

Jesus spoke the mystery of the kingdom of God to those outside only in parables in order to make the truth plain to those who believe the word and seek its meaning, but to hide its meaning from those who harden their hearts, refuse the word, and oppose it.

Here, *"those who are outside"* does not simply mean everyone other than the twelve disciples, or the Gentiles. It refers to the people who hear the word of Jesus and yet will not believe, who hold to their own thoughts and religious righteousness and remain spiritually outside the Lord. On the other hand, the people who were with the twelve disciples did not understand the parables all at once, but they came to Jesus and asked, wanting to know their meaning. To them Jesus unfolded and explained the mystery of the kingdom of God.

Therefore the parable has two functions. To the person who receives the word humbly, it becomes revelation that makes him realize the truth of the kingdom of God, but to the person who judges the word and opposes it, it becomes judgment that keeps him from understanding even when he hears.

The word *"Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them"* does not mean that God blocks, without cause, the person who sincerely seeks salvation. It contains the judgmental meaning that when a person keeps refusing and blaspheming the word of God and insists on his obstinacy, God

does not force him to realize but leaves him in that state.

In the end, the mystery of the kingdom of God is not given automatically to the person with much knowledge or high religious position. It is made plain to the person who lays down his own thoughts, comes to Jesus to seek the word, and believes and receives with the heart the word he has heard.

[Question] 13. Explain what the *"lamp"* of Mark 4:21 means.

The text does not directly define in one word what the *"lamp"* refers to. But when we look at the context before and after, we can understand that the lamp refers to the word of the kingdom of God and the light of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ has fulfilled.

As a lamp lights the darkness, the word of the gospel exposes a person's sins and the state of his heart, and lights the way of receiving the remission of sins and entering the kingdom of God. The salvation Jesus has fulfilled is the very light that drives out the darkness of sin and false religion.

A person brings a lamp not to hide it under a basket or under a bed, but to set it on a lampstand and shine it on many people. Like this, the purpose for which God made the gospel plain is not to have only the believers keep it in their hearts, but to have it delivered to all the people of the world so that they too can see the light of salvation and receive the remission of sins.

The light of the lamp itself comes not from human wisdom or good deeds but from Jesus Christ and the salvation He has fulfilled. The believer who has received the remission of sins is not the one who creates that light, but the one who has received

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the mission of lifting the lamp of the gospel high and shining it on other people.

Therefore the lamp of verse 21 means the gospel of salvation that cannot be hidden away, and to set the lamp on the lampstand means to deliver that gospel plainly to the world without being ashamed of it.

[Question] 14. Mark 4:21–25—what spiritual lessons does the parable of the lamp give us?

The text does not directly define in one word what the lamp refers to. But when we examine the context that follows the parable of the sower and the teaching about the kingdom of God, we can understand that the lamp refers to the word of the kingdom of God, especially the light of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ has fulfilled.

1. The gospel is not for hiding but for revealing plainly

A person brings a lamp not to keep it hidden under a basket or under a bed, but to set it on a lampstand and light the surroundings. Like this, the purpose for which God gave the gospel is not to have only a few people know it and keep it hidden in their hearts, but to have it plainly delivered to the whole world darkened by sin.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind onto His own body, and He died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins, and He rose from the dead. When one believes this word of salvation, all sins disappear once and for all, and one receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God. This gospel is the light of the lamp that saves people from sin and

spiritual darkness.

Therefore the believer who has received the remission of sins must not be ashamed of the gospel he has received or keep it to himself. He must deliver it plainly through words and writings, through his life and various ways of preaching, so that other people can also see the light of the gospel and receive the remission of sins.

2. The hidden salvation of the kingdom of God must be revealed to the world

The word of verse 22, "*there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light,*" teaches that the mystery of the kingdom of God will be made plain through Jesus Christ and preached to the world.

The truth of the remission of sins, which had been hidden in types and shadows in the sacrifices and prophecies of the Old Testament, actually appeared through the saving work Jesus performed. Therefore the gospel must not be hidden again by human religious knowledge or delivered only in part; it must be made fully plain and delivered just as God has fulfilled it.

We must not interpret this word only as meaning that every personal secret or hidden deed will surely be disclosed before the people of the world. We can also gain the general lesson that nothing is hidden before God, but the center of this context lies in the fact that the salvation of the kingdom of God and the light of the gospel come to be revealed.

3. The person who has received the gospel receives the mission of shining the light

The light of the lamp itself comes from Jesus Christ and the gospel He has fulfilled. It is not that the believer saves the

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world with his own wisdom or good conduct. The person who has received the remission of sins plays the role of a lampstand, holding the light of the gospel and shining it on the world.

To set the lamp on the lampstand means to carry out that mission faithfully in the place where one can deliver the gospel. Not only the person who preaches the gospel, but also the person who helps the preaching of the gospel with prayer, with material things, with service, and with various talents, participates together in lifting the lamp high.

The good conduct of the believer is also an important fruit that keeps the light of the gospel from being covered or dishonored. But good deeds themselves are not the gospel that removes a person's sins. The light that saves a person is only the word of the remission of sins that Jesus Christ has fulfilled, and the believer's life must become the fruit that shows that this gospel is true.

4. We must take heed what and how we hear

Following the parable of the lamp, Jesus said, *"Take heed what you hear."* This means that the attitude of hearing the word of God is very important.

If one judges the word with one's own thoughts and picks out only the parts one needs, one cannot fully realize the light of the gospel. On the contrary, if one counts the word of God precious, and believes and receives it because God has said it even when it does not fit one's own thoughts, one gains deeper realization and faith.

Therefore, when we hear the word, we must not be satisfied with the mere fact of having heard many sermons. We must examine whether that word is the fact recorded in the Bible, and if it is the true word, we must believe it with the heart and apply it to our lives.

5. According to how we measure the word, we receive more or lose

The word *"With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given"* is not limited, in this context, to the problem of judging other people. It teaches with what value we regard the word of God and with what posture we receive it.

To the person who counts the word of God precious and believes it, and delivers the gospel he has received to other people and serves it, greater realization and faith, and opportunities and grace to serve the gospel, are given. The word *"whoever has, to him more will be given"* means that the person who has received the word and kept it in faith comes to gain more abundant spiritual benefit.

On the other hand, the person who takes the word lightly, judges it with his own thoughts, and does not receive it loses even what he thought he knew. The word *"whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away"* is a solemn warning that if one hears the gospel and does not believe, one loses even the opportunity to realize that word and the spiritual benefit.

The overall lesson

The parable of the lamp teaches that we must believe with the heart the gospel of the remission of sins God has plainly revealed, and must deliver that light to other people as well. It also shows that according to the heart with which we hear and receive the word of God, we can gain more abundant faith and realization, or we can be robbed even of the word we have heard.

Therefore the believer must not hide the lamp of the gospel but set it high on the lampstand. He must plainly deliver to the

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world the word of salvation he has received, and must hear the word preciously and obey it, faithfully carrying out the mission of light God has entrusted to him.

[Question] 15. Mark 4:22—explain the meaning contained in the word, *"there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light."*

This word means that the mystery of the kingdom of God and the gospel of salvation do not remain hidden forever, but will be plainly revealed at the time God has ordained and preached to the whole world.

In the verse before, Jesus said that a lamp is not put under a basket or under a bed but set on a lampstand. Just as the purpose of lighting a lamp lies in revealing the light, the purpose for which God gave the gospel lies not in hiding it but in having people hear it, believe it, and be saved.

At that time Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables and explained their meaning separately to His disciples. But the mystery of the kingdom of God He made known to the disciples was not a secret they alone were to keep. After Jesus fulfilled the work of salvation, it had to be plainly preached to the world through the disciples.

The truth of salvation that had been hidden in types and shadows in the sacrifices and prophecies of the Old Testament also actually appeared through Jesus Christ. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind, and He died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins, and He rose from the dead. With this, the way God saves people from sin was completely revealed.

Therefore the gospel that saves people from sin must not be covered again by human religious interpretation or delivered only in part. We must deliver all of it—Jesus taking upon Himself our sins, the judgment of the Cross, and the resurrection—so that people fully know and believe the salvation God has fulfilled.

From this word we can also gain the general lesson that a person's heart and deeds cannot be hidden before God. The thoughts and deeds a person hides are exposed before God. But the central meaning in the direct context of the text lies not in personal secrets being disclosed, but in the salvation of the kingdom of God and the light of the gospel, once hidden, being plainly revealed.

In the end, verse 22 means that the truth of salvation God has fulfilled cannot be kept hidden, and that the person who has received the gospel must plainly reveal and deliver it to the whole world.

[Question] 16. What does Mark 4:24 say our measuring brings about?

Jesus said, *"With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given."* This means that according to the standard and posture with which we hear and receive the word of God, we come to gain the corresponding result.

To the person who counts the word of God precious, receives it in faith, and wants to obey its meaning, more realization and faith are given. To the person who delivers the gospel he has received to others and serves it, the grace and opportunity to know the gospel more deeply and serve it are

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also added.

On the contrary, if one takes the word of God lightly or judges it with one's own thoughts and knowledge and does not receive it, to that degree one fails to realize the meaning of the word and gains no spiritual benefit.

Therefore the *"measure"* spoken of here is not limited to the problem of judging other people. Connected with the word just before it, *"Take heed what you hear,"* it refers to the heart with which we hear, weigh, and receive the word of God. The person who measures the word preciously receives more abundantly, but the person who counts the word as nothing loses even what he has.

[Question] 17. Mark 4:25—what does the word, *"whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him,"* mean?

Here, *"whoever has"* is not the person who has much riches or position, but the person who has received the word of God into his heart and kept it in faith. *"Whoever does not have"* means the person who heard the word but did not believe it, judged it with his own thoughts, and did not keep it in his heart.

To the person who believes the word, counts it precious, and obeys it, the wisdom and faith to realize the truth of the kingdom of God are given more abundantly. The more he delivers the gospel he has received to other people and serves, the more deeply he understands the word, and the mission God entrusts and the spiritual benefit are also added. This is the meaning of the word *"whoever has, to him more will be given."*

On the contrary, the person who hears the word and yet

takes it lightly or does not receive it loses even the knowledge and realization he thought he had. Even when the opportunity to hear the gospel is given, if one does not believe, Satan takes that word away, so in the end one gains no fruit of salvation and faith at all. This is the warning, *"whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."*

This word does not mean that a person receives more salvation by piling up his own merits. It means that the person who receives the word of God in faith enjoys the life and grace of that word more abundantly, but the person who refuses the word loses even the realization and opportunities he has already received.

Therefore we must not hear the word of God only with the ears or hold it only as knowledge. We must believe the word we have heard with the heart, keep it, and obey it. To the person who receives the word preciously, more abundant realization and the fruit of faith are given.

[Question] 18. Mark 4:26–29—what can we learn from the parable of the seed that grows even while the farmer sleeps?

This parable teaches us the fact that the kingdom of God is like a man sowing seed on the ground, and that the life and power by which the seed grows come not from the farmer but from God.

After sowing the seed, the farmer sleeps at night and goes about his daily life by day. During that time the seed sprouts and grows, but the farmer neither knows all the process of that life nor produces it himself. Like this, man can preach the gospel, but the One who makes a person's heart realize the

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word, gives faith, and makes life grow is God.

1. Preaching the gospel is the work of sowing the seed

As the farmer sows seed on the ground, the believer must deliver the word of God and the gospel of the remission of sins into other people's hearts. The life that can save a person lies not in the preacher's wisdom or eloquence but in the word of the gospel itself.

Therefore the person who delivers the gospel must not mix in his own thoughts or human teachings, but must deliver accurately and faithfully the word of salvation God has fulfilled. Just as a sprout comes up only when the seed is sown in the ground, a person receives the remission of sins when he hears the gospel and believes it with the heart.

2. The One who saves and changes a person is God

The farmer can sow the seed, but he cannot create life inside the seed or force the sprout to come out. Like this, the preacher can explain the gospel and exhort, but he cannot make another person born again or manufacture faith for him with his own strength.

The One who makes the hearer's heart realize, makes him believe that word and receive the remission of sins, and gives him new life by the Holy Spirit is God. Therefore we must not be discouraged when a visible result does not appear immediately after we preach the gospel. We must pray that the seed of the word may work in his heart, and wait for God's time.

3. That the farmer sleeps does not mean irresponsible neglect

The word that the seed grows while the farmer sleeps and

rises does not mean that the person who has preached the gospel need do nothing. The farmer sows the seed and does what is needed, but he knows that making life grow is beyond his ability, and he waits.

The worker of the gospel also must fulfill his responsibility of delivering the word, teaching continually, praying, and looking after people. But he must not try to produce the result with his own strength or forcibly change a person; he must rely on God. Man's responsibility is to sow the seed faithfully and tend it, and the One who makes it grow is God.

4. Faith grows through a definite process

The text says that the earth yields fruit by itself: *"first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head."* This shows the fact that the growth of faith is usually not completed at once but is accomplished following a definite process and order.

That a person has believed the gospel and received the remission of sins does not mean that he immediately realizes every word deeply and lives a perfect life of faith. At first he can be weak like a young sprout and have much he does not know. But if he keeps hearing and learning the word within the church and serving the gospel, his thoughts and judgments are changed to follow the word, and his faith also grows step by step.

Therefore we must not hastily judge or discourage the person whose faith is young. Until the blade becomes the head and the full grain forms in the head, we must nurture him with the word, wait, and help him. At the same time, the believer himself must not be satisfied with his present faith, but must keep learning the word and obeying it.

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5. The growth of faith continues even when it is not visible

While the seed is in the soil, there seems to be no outward change. But inside the seed, the work of life is going on. Like this, even when no immediately visible change appears after the word of God is planted in the heart, if one believes the word and keeps hearing it, the Holy Spirit changes that person's heart and thoughts.

One comes to see one's own lack that one did not see before, one's ears are opened to discern the word, and one comes to count the will of God and the gospel more precious than one's own desires. Such change is not something a person produces with his own strength; it is the result that appears as the life of the word and the Spirit grows.

6. The full grain means the fruit of faith

Just as the seed grows and forms the full grain, the person who has received the word of the gospel comes to bear the fruits of faith and obedience. Uniting with the church, loving other people, faithfully carrying out the work entrusted to him, and delivering the gospel of the remission of sins he has received to other people are included in this fruit.

This fruit is not a merit for obtaining salvation. It is the result of salvation that appears in the person who has believed the word of God and gained new life. As a living seed grows and bears fruit, the faith that has received the gospel with the heart also bears the fruits of life and gospel ministry.

7. The time of harvest surely comes

When the fruit ripens, the farmer at once puts in the sickle, because the time of harvest has come. This word shows that God reaps the fruit of faith at the time He has ordained.

For each person, there is the time when the believer finishes

the mission entrusted to him on this earth and stands before the Lord. More widely, after the gospel is preached to the world, there comes the time of the last harvest, when God gathers the saved righteous and judges the world. Even if the history of the kingdom of God seems to go on small and slow now, it surely reaches the completion God has ordained.

Therefore this parable teaches us not to be hasty or discouraged, looking only at the results before our eyes, when we preach the gospel and serve in faith. We must faithfully sow the seed of the word and look after people, believing and waiting, for the One who gives life, makes faith grow, and finally reaps the fruit is God.

[Question] 19. Mark 4:26–27—to what did Jesus liken the kingdom of God?

Jesus likened the kingdom of God to a man sowing seed on the ground, and the seed sprouting and growing while he sleeps and rises night and day.

The sower does not know all of how the seed grows, but the seed sprouts and grows in the ground by the power of life. This shows that the work of delivering the seed of the gospel is done by man, but the One who saves people through that word and makes faith grow is God.

[Question] 20. Mark 4:28—what does the word that the earth yields fruit by itself teach us?

The word "*the earth yields crops by itself*" teaches us that the life of the kingdom of God and the growth of faith are not

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manufactured by human ability, but are accomplished by the power of life God has put in the word.

Here, the word *"by itself"* does not mean that the ground or the seed grows by its own strength apart from God. It means that even though the farmer does not create the life of the seed or force the sprout to come out, the fruit grows through the life God has given the seed and the conditions He has prepared in the ground.

Like this, the person who preaches the gospel can sow the seed of the word, teach, and tend it, but the One who makes a person's heart realize, makes him believe the gospel of the remission of sins, and makes his faith grow is God. Therefore the preacher or teacher must not try to produce the result with his own ability, but must do his entrusted work faithfully and rely on God.

Also, that the fruit grows as *"first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head"* shows that there is a process in the growth of faith. Even after one believes the gospel and receives the remission of sins, while one keeps hearing the word, being nurtured within the church, and serving the gospel, the Holy Spirit gradually changes that person's thoughts and life.

This word does not mean that we need do nothing. A person must hear the word, believe and obey it, and keep sowing and tending the seed of the gospel. But we must believe that the One who gives life, makes it grow, and finally makes it bear fruit is God, and we must not be impatient or put forward our own merits.

[Question] 21. Explain what the *"harvest"* of Mark 4:29 means.

In the parable, the time of *"harvest"* means the time when the grain is fully ripe and the farmer puts in the sickle and gathers it. Spiritually, it means that after the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached and the fruit of faith has ripened, God reaps that fruit at the time He has ordained.

In one's personal faith, it can be connected with the time when the person who has believed the gospel and received the remission of sins grows in the word, carries out his entrusted mission, and stands before the Lord. God knows and reaps the fruits of faith, obedience, and gospel ministry the believer has borne.

But the ultimate meaning of the *"harvest"* is the completion of the kingdom of God and the last judgment that will be fulfilled at the end of the world. God gathers into His eternal kingdom the righteous, who have believed the gospel and received the remission of sins, and brings down the judgment of sin on those who have refused the gospel to the end.

Just as one does not harvest as soon as the seed is sown, but waits until the grain ripens, God bears long so that the gospel may be preached to the whole world and the people to be saved may hear the word. But when the ordained time comes, He surely harvests.

Therefore this word teaches the fact that even though the history of the kingdom of God looks slow, it is surely completed. The believer must not try to fix the time of the harvest himself or be discouraged that no result is visible before his eyes, but must believe God's ordained time and keep sowing the seed of the gospel and bearing the fruit of faith.

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[Question] 22. What does the ‘parable of the mustard seed’ of Mark 4:31–32 stress?

The parable of the mustard seed stresses the fact that although the kingdom of God and the gospel look very small and insignificant at first, the power of life God has given is in them, so that they finally grow greatly and give life and rest to many people.

1. The kingdom of God begins from a small seed

The mustard seed is a very small seed when it is sown on the ground. Like this, the gospel ministry Jesus began also looked small and weak in the eyes of the world of that time. The disciples who followed Jesus were few, and most of them were not people of high name or power in society.

But the kingdom of God began not with the power of the world, much riches, or human wisdom, but with the word of the gospel Jesus Christ preached. God fulfills His great and eternal kingdom through the seed of the gospel that looks small.

2. The mustard seed shows the living seed of the gospel

Just as the mustard seed, small as it is, has inside it the life that will grow, the word of the gospel looks simple and insignificant in the eyes of the world, but it holds the power of God that saves people from sin.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind, and He died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins, and He rose from the dead. The person who believes this gospel with the heart has all his sins disappear once and for all, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God. Like this, when one small seed of the gospel

is planted in a person's heart, the kingdom of God is established in that person.

3. The gospel spreads out greatly into the whole world

The mustard seed, after being sown, grows greater than all herbs and shoots out large branches. This shows that the gospel, entrusted at first to a few disciples, would be preached not only in Jerusalem and Judea but to the whole world.

The person who believes the gospel and receives the remission of sins delivers the gospel to another person in turn, and that person also is saved and delivers it to still another, and so the kingdom of God keeps expanding. Just as many seeds come from one seed, the gospel planted in one person's heart is delivered to countless souls and forms the people of God.

4. One person's faith also grows step by step

The parable of the mustard seed also shows how an individual's faith grows. When one first believes the gospel, one's faith can be small, the word one knows little, and one's life of faith weak. But if one keeps hearing and learning the word within the church and serving the gospel, faith grows step by step.

The person who at first only received help, as his faith grows, becomes a person who looks after others, preaches the gospel, and takes up and serves the work of the kingdom of God. Such growth is accomplished not by a person's will or ability alone, but by the word of the gospel and the Holy Spirit working within him.

5. Many people gain life and rest in the gospel

The word that the mustard seed shoots out large branches so that the birds of the air nest under its shade shows the

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kingdom of God growing so that many people gain life and rest within it.

People who suffered and wandered because of sin hear the gospel, receive the remission of sins, and come into the church of God. They receive protection and nurture by the word, and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of God together with the believing brothers and sisters. And the person whose faith has grown first comes to play the role of a large branch that helps other souls rest and grow in the gospel.

The overall point stressed

What the parable of the mustard seed stresses does not lie simply in the outward scale of the church or the number of people growing large. It lies in the kingdom of God expanding as each person receives the remission of sins by the life of the gospel, grows in faith, and delivers the gospel to still other souls.

Therefore, even when the work of the gospel looks small at first and no fruit seems visible, we must not despise it or be discouraged. Just as in the small mustard seed there is the life that will grow into a great tree, in the true word of the gospel there is the power to save people, make faith grow, and establish the kingdom of God in the whole world.

[Question] 23. Mark 4:31–32—what is the meaning of Jesus likening the kingdom of God to a mustard seed?

Jesus likened the kingdom of God to a mustard seed in order to teach that although the kingdom of God and the gospel look very small and weak at first, the power of life God has

given is in them, so that they finally grow greatly.

Because the gospel ministry of Jesus began with a few disciples, it looked insignificant in the eyes of the world. But people believed the gospel they preached and received the remission of sins, and they delivered that gospel to still other people in turn, and so the kingdom of God came to spread out into the whole world.

It is the same in one person's heart. When one first believes the gospel, one's faith can be small and weak like a mustard seed. But if one keeps hearing and learning the word within the church and serving the gospel, one's faith grows, and one becomes a workman of the kingdom of God, who looks after other people and preaches the gospel.

The picture of the mustard seed growing, shooting out large branches, and the birds of the air nesting under its shade shows the gospel being preached widely, so that many people receive the remission of sins and gain life, protection, and rest within the kingdom of God and the church.

Therefore this parable means that we must not despise the kingdom of God or be discouraged because its beginning is small. The growth of the kingdom of God is accomplished not by the power of the world or human ability, but by the life in the word of the gospel and by the work of God.

[Question] 24. Mark 4:33–34—in what way did Jesus deliver the word to the multitude?

Jesus taught the word of God using many parables, according to the degree to which the multitude was able to hear it. He spoke the truth of the kingdom of God through things people easily meet in daily life, such as seed and field, lamp

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and mustard seed.

When He spoke to the multitude, He did not speak without a parable, but when Jesus and His disciples were alone, He unfolded and explained to them all the spiritual meaning of the parables.

This shows that the parable also played the role of exposing the heart of the person hearing the word. To the person who heard the word lightly, the parable remained only a story, but the disciples, who came to Jesus wanting to know its meaning, heard the detailed explanation and realized the mystery of the kingdom of God.

[Question] 25. According to Mark 4:35, at what time did Jesus and the disciples meet the windstorm?

It was on the evening of the same day, when Jesus had taught the multitude many parables by the sea, that Jesus and the disciples met the windstorm while crossing the sea.

Jesus said to the disciples, *"Let us cross over to the other side,"* and after the disciples took Jesus along in the boat as He was and set out, a great windstorm arose.

[Question] 26. Mark 4:35–41—what lessons does the event of calming the sea give us?

The event in which Jesus rebuked the windstorm and calmed the sea shows that Jesus is the almighty God, who rules all the things of nature. It also gives the lesson that hardships like a windstorm can come even on the way of following the

Lord, but the believer must believe the Lord, who is with him, and His word more than the circumstances before his eyes.

1. A windstorm can arise even on the way one goes with Jesus

The disciples did not get into the boat and go at their own will. Because Jesus said, *"Let us cross over to the other side,"* they set out following that word. Yet they met a great windstorm on the sea, and the boat became so filled with water that it was in danger of sinking.

This shows that following the will of God does not mean that there is always no hardship and everything goes only comfortably. To the person who has received the remission of sins and follows the Lord, there can also come disease and economic hardship, conflicts with people, persecution received while preaching the gospel, and various trials. Unexpected problems can arise also in the course of the church serving the gospel.

Therefore we must not conclude, merely because hardship has arisen, that God has forsaken us or that we are going a wrong way. More important than the fact that there is a windstorm is the fact that Jesus was with them in that boat.

2. Jesus sleeping shows His true humanity

After teaching the great multitude through the day, Jesus was asleep on a pillow in the stern of the boat. This shows that Jesus, as true man who came in the flesh, experienced weariness and sleep.

But that He woke and ruled the wind and the sea with one word shows that He is not a mere man but true God. In Jesus, true humanity and complete divinity appear together.

That Jesus was asleep did not mean that He did not know

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the disciples' situation or was not caring for them. Even when the Lord seems not to be working at once, He knows the situation and holds the authority to rule all things.

3. Jesus is the Creator, who rules all the things of nature

When Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the sea, *"Peace, be still!"* the wind ceased and the sea became completely calm. Man cannot stop the fierce wind and waves with a word, but the things of nature obeyed the command of the Creator at once.

This reveals that Jesus is not merely a prophet with the power to heal the sick and cast out demons, but God, who made the wind and the sea and rules them. The disciples' words, *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"* are the core question of this event.

Jesus, who saved us from sin, is not a weak human being or the founder of a religion. Jesus is the Son of God, who took upon Himself all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross receiving the judgment of those sins, and rose from the dead. We must believe the fact that the One who saved us is the almighty God, who rules heaven and earth and all things.

4. Fear arises when one sees the circumstances as greater than the word of the Lord

Among the disciples were fishermen who had long worked on the sea. But even with their experience and skill they could not overcome the windstorm. When the boat was filling with water, they thought they were going to die and were greatly afraid.

The disciples woke Jesus and said, *"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"* This was a cry asking for help, but at the same time it carried the complaint that Jesus was not

looking after them.

After calming the windstorm, Jesus rebuked them, saying, *"Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"* The disciples saw the windstorm as great, but they did not sufficiently believe Jesus, who had said, *"Let us cross over to the other side,"* and His authority.

Faith is not thinking of the dangerous reality as though it did not exist. It is acknowledging the size of the windstorm and yet relying on the Lord, who is greater than it, and on His unchanging word. Circumstances and feelings can be shaken, but the word of God does not change.

5. In hardship we must not rely only on human means but ask the Lord

When the disciples could no longer keep the boat safe by their own strength, they woke Jesus. Their words were mixed with fear and complaint, but they did know that the One to ask for help was Jesus.

The believer also, when a problem too hard to bear comes, must not rely only on his own thoughts and human methods. He must admit his weakness, ask the Lord for help, and pray. He must examine through the word what the will of God is, and ask for the strength and wisdom to act according to that will.

Yet this event is not a promise that if we only pray, every problem will disappear at once in the way and at the time we want. Sometimes the Lord calms the windstorm at once, and sometimes He gives the faith and wisdom to endure in the midst of the windstorm. What matters is not that man decides the method of solving the problem, but that we believe the Lord, the Sovereign, and entrust ourselves to His will.

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6. The windstorm exposes the reality of faith and makes it grow

On a calm sea, the disciples could easily think they had faith. But when the great windstorm arose, the fear and unbelief in their hearts were exposed. The windstorm became not so much a thing to destroy the disciples as a test that exposed how much they knew and believed Jesus.

Through this event the disciples came to know more plainly that their faith was lacking and that Jesus is God, who rules even nature. Like this, the believer also, passing through hardship, realizes that he can do nothing by his own strength, and comes to rely on the Lord all the more with the word and prayer.

Faith is not a state of never meeting hardship; it grows as one knows and relies on the Lord in hardship. Remembering the works the Lord did before, we must entrust the present problem also to the almighty Lord and follow the word to the end.

7. Fear of circumstances must be changed into awe toward the Lord

When the windstorm arose, the disciples feared the wind and the waves. But after the sea became calm, they saw the authority of Jesus and feared exceedingly. The first fear was the terror that they might die, but the later fear was the amazement and awe that asked, “Who can this be?”

The believer must not fear the circumstances of the world and people more than God. We must stand in awe of the Lord, whom even the wind and the sea obey, and count His word highest. The more plainly we know who the Lord is, the smaller the fear of circumstances becomes and the greater the faith that relies on God grows.

The overall lesson

The event of calming the sea teaches the fact that a windstorm can come even on the way one goes with the Lord, but that no windstorm can break down the word and the plan of the Lord. Jesus is true man, who is with us, and at the same time the Creator God, who rules the wind and the sea.

Therefore, when hardship comes, the believer must not complain that the Lord is not looking after him, but must hold fast to the word, pray, and rely on the almighty Lord. Whether the Lord removes the problem or gives the strength to pass through it, we must pass through the windstorm with the faith that He is with us to the end and fulfills His good will.

[Question] 27. Explain what the *"boat"* Jesus rode in Mark 4:36 represents.

In the text, the *"boat"* means first the actual boat Jesus and His disciples were riding to cross the Sea of Galilee. So the text itself does not directly interpret the boat as a particular spiritual object.

But when we apply this event spiritually, the boat in which Jesus and the disciples rode together can be seen as representing the church of God, which passes through the world carrying Jesus. Just as Jesus and several disciples were together in the boat, the church is the community in which the believers who have received the remission of sins unite around the Lord and go toward the kingdom of God.

Just as the boat met a great windstorm and waves while crossing the sea, the church also can meet persecution and opposition, material hardship, and various inner problems in the course of going forward preaching the gospel. That the

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Lord is with us does not mean that no windstorm arises at all. But no windstorm is greater than the authority of Jesus, the Master of the church.

Just as the disciples in the boat were not to act each on his own but had to rely on Jesus together, believers also, when hardship comes, must not hold each to his own thoughts or blame one another, but must unite in the word and prayer. They must ask the Lord, the Head of the church, for help and follow His guidance.

This boat can also be applied to one person's life of faith. The believer does not cross the windstorms of life by his own strength alone, but must live believing in and relying on the Lord, who is with him.

Therefore the boat of verse 36 is an actual boat in the text, but spiritually it can be understood as showing the church, which carries Jesus and passes through the windstorms of the world toward the kingdom of God, and the faith journey of the believer.

[Question] 28. Explain the characteristics of the Sea of Galilee, the background of Mark 4:37.

The Sea of Galilee is called a *"sea"* by name, but it is actually a large freshwater lake into which the water of the Jordan River flows. Its surface lies in a deep basin about 210 meters below sea level, and it is surrounded by high mountains and hills.

The valleys of this region serve as passages through which the wind coming down from the heights passes quickly toward the lake. Because the wind can grow stronger as it passes between the narrow valleys and mountains, a strong squall and

high waves can suddenly arise on the comparatively calm lake.

Since the Sea of Galilee lies in a low basin surrounded by mountains, it is terrain where the cold air of the high regions and the warm air near the lake meet, so that sudden changes of weather easily occur. Because of these geographical characteristics, it is known as a place where sudden and fierce windstorms arise.

That verse 37 says *"a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling"* fits well with these characteristics of the Sea of Galilee. The windstorm of that day was so fierce that even the disciples who had long worked as fishermen feared death.

But the fact that windstorms can occur on the Sea of Galilee only explains the natural background. That Jesus stopped the wind with one word and made the sea completely calm at once is a miracle that goes beyond any explanation of natural phenomena and shows that He is the Creator God, who rules the wind and the sea.

[Question] 29. Mark 4:37—what was the crisis the disciples met in the middle of the Sea of Galilee?

While crossing the Sea of Galilee, the disciples met a great windstorm and fierce waves. The waves kept beating into the boat, water came in, and finally the boat was filling with water.

Because of this, it became a very urgent situation in which the boat could sink and the disciples could drown. It was a crisis so serious that even the disciples who had experience working on the sea felt they could not solve it with their own strength and skill.

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[Question] 30. Mark 4:38—what spiritual meaning is contained in the sight of Jesus sleeping on a pillow in the windstorm?

The sight of Jesus sleeping in the windstorm shows first that Jesus is true man, who came in a true body. Because Jesus was bodily weary after teaching the great multitude that day, He was asleep on a pillow in the stern of the boat.

At the same time, this sight shows that Jesus was not afraid of the windstorm. To the disciples it was a great crisis in which the boat seemed about to sink, but to Jesus, who made the wind and the sea and rules them, that windstorm was not a threat beyond control. Jesus was at peace within the will and the authority of God the Father.

That Jesus was sleeping does not mean that He did not know the disciples' danger or was not caring for them. Seeing Jesus doing nothing, the disciples complained, *"do You not care that we are perishing?"* But the Lord was with them in the same boat, and after He arose, He calmed the wind and the sea with one word.

This teaches the believer that even at times when the Lord seems silent or not working, He has not left or lost interest. Even when the answer seems delayed, the Lord knows all our circumstances and works according to His ordained time and way.

Also, the disciples saw the windstorm before their eyes as great, but did not sufficiently believe the authority of Jesus, who was with them in the boat. Faith is not being at peace only when there is no windstorm; it is believing the fact that even in the windstorm the Lord is with us and rules everything.

Therefore this scene gives the lesson that when hardship comes, we must not complain that the Lord has forsaken us,

but must ask for help, waking the Lord, as it were, with the word and prayer, and rely on Him. Whether the Lord removes the windstorm at once or gives us the strength to pass through it, the believer must keep the peace of his heart by believing the Lord's presence and His sovereignty.

[Question] 31. Mark 4:38—what did the disciples cry out as they woke Jesus?

The disciples woke Jesus and cried out as follows.

"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

Seized by the fear that the boat was full of water and they might die, the disciples asked Jesus for help. But in those words there were also the complaint and unbelief that Jesus was not looking after their crisis.

[Question] 32. What lessons does the attitude of the disciples shown in Mark 4:38 give us?

When the disciples met the great windstorm and waves and could not solve the crisis by their own strength, they woke the sleeping Jesus and asked for help. In this appearance there are both a point we should imitate and a point we should guard against.

First, that the disciples woke Jesus was an act of admitting their helplessness and asking the Lord for help. Even the disciples with experience of working on the sea could do nothing before the windstorm. Like this, the believer also, when he meets a problem he cannot bear, must not rely only on his own strength and human methods, but must come to the

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Lord, tell Him his situation, and pray.

But in the words *"do You not care that we are perishing?"* there were also the complaint and unbelief that Jesus was not looking after them. The disciples saw the windstorm before their eyes as great, but did not sufficiently believe the authority of Jesus, who was in the same boat with them, and the word He had spoken, *"Let us cross over to the other side."*

This appearance gives the lesson that when hardship comes and the Lord seems silent, we must not judge that He has forsaken us or is not looking after us. Even when the answer seems delayed, the Lord knows all our circumstances and works according to His ordained time and way.

Therefore the believer does not need to hide his fear in a crisis or pretend it does not exist, but he must not be seized by fear and doubt the love and faithfulness of the Lord. He must honestly tell the Lord his weakness, yet ask for help not with complaint but with faith.

In the end, the attitude of the disciples teaches that crying out to the Lord in a crisis is right, but that doubting the Lord's word and His presence while looking only at the circumstances before one's eyes is a faithless attitude. True faith is not thinking there is no windstorm, but relying on the Lord, who is greater than the windstorm.

[Question] 33. Mark 4:39—what did Jesus say to the sea as He rebuked the wind?

Rebuking the wind, Jesus said to the sea as follows.

"Peace, be still!"

When Jesus spoke, the wind ceased and the sea became completely calm. This shows that even the wind and the sea

obey the command of Jesus, and that Jesus is the Creator God, who rules all the things of nature.

[Question] 34. Mark 4:40—what did the word of Jesus, *"Why are you so fearful?"* rebuke?

Jesus rebuked not the disciples' feeling of danger itself, but their being seized by the windstorm before their eyes and failing to believe His word, His authority, and His presence. The word Jesus then added, *"How is it that you have no faith?"* shows the reason plainly.

Before setting out, Jesus had said, *"Let us cross over to the other side."* The disciples had heard that word, and Jesus was in the same boat, but when the great windstorm arose, they saw the wind and the waves as greater than the word of the Lord. In the end they concluded that they were going to die, and thought that Jesus was not looking after them.

Therefore what Jesus rebuked was the following attitudes.

Believing the circumstances before their eyes more than the word of Jesus; thinking they had been forsaken even while Jesus was with them; not knowing the authority of the Lord, who rules the wind and the sea; and being seized by fear and complaint in the crisis rather than asking for help in faith.

The disciples' act itself of waking Jesus and asking for help was not wrong. The believer must pray to the Lord and ask for help when he meets a crisis. But the attitude of doubting the Lord's love and care and complaining, as in the words *"do You not care that we are perishing?"* is the appearance of lacking faith.

Faith is not denying the dangerous reality or taking no measures at all. It is doing responsibly what must be done, and

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yet believing the Lord, who is greater than the problem, and seeking His will and His help. The Lord may remove the windstorm at once, or He may give the strength and wisdom to pass through the windstorm.

In the end, the word *"Why are you so fearful?"* rebuked the unbelief that let the fear of circumstances rule the heart and forgot the word and the authority of the Lord. The believer must look not at the size of the windstorm but at who the Lord is, who is with him, and must pass through hardship by faith.

[Question] 35. Mark 4:41—why did the disciples come to fear exceedingly?

The disciples feared exceedingly because they saw Jesus stop the wind with one word and make the sea completely calm.

When the windstorm arose, they were afraid because of the danger that they might die, but after the sea became calm, they feared as they saw the amazing authority by which even the wind and the sea obeyed the word of Jesus. This was not so much simple terror as the amazement and awe that arose as they began to realize anew who Jesus is.

The disciples said to one another, *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"* They were following Jesus as their Teacher, but they did not yet fully know that He is God, who made all the things of nature and rules them.

Therefore the reason the disciples feared exceedingly was that, seeing even the wind and the sea obey the command of Jesus at once, they came to realize that Jesus, who was with them, holds the authority of the Creator God.

[Question] 36. Mark 4:41—what do the disciples' words, "*Who can this be,*" reveal?

The words *"Who can this be"* reveal that although the disciples were following Jesus, they did not yet fully know His true identity and authority.

The disciples called Jesus Teacher, heard His word, and also experienced many miracles. But when they saw Jesus rule even the wind and the sea with one word, they began to realize that He is far greater than they had thought until then.

The wind and the sea do not obey a man's command. Yet when Jesus said, *"Peace, be still!"* the wind ceased and the sea became completely calm. Through this, it was revealed that Jesus is not a mere prophet or an able teacher, but the Creator God, who made all the things of nature and rules them.

Therefore in the disciples' words there appears the lack of faith that did not yet clearly know who Jesus is, and at the same time there are also the amazement and awe of witnessing His divine authority and beginning to know Jesus anew. They were going about with Jesus, but through this event they came to realize more deeply that the One in the same boat with them is the Almighty, who subdues even the wind and the sea.

This word gives us the lesson that we too must not know Jesus merely as One who helps in hard times or as a teacher who gives excellent teaching. Jesus is the almighty Son of God, whom even the wind and the sea obey, and the Creator, whose word all creatures must obey.

In the end, the question *"Who can this be"* is also an important question the whole Gospel of Mark throws to its readers. We must know rightly through the word who Jesus is, and believe in and rely on Him as our Savior and God. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Our life of faith seen through the parable of the sower

< Mark 4:1-9 >

"And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: 'Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.' And He said to them, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

The life of faith spoken of in the parable of the sower

How are you? Today the Lord has spoken to us, through the parable of the sower, about what our life of faith ought to be. He explained it with a parable from farming: in verse 3 He said,

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"Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow" (Mark 4:3), and then He speaks of the seed falling on several kinds of ground. With this parable of the sower, the Lord explained that the life of faith, in which we believe in God, receive salvation, and live on, is like farming.

When spring comes, a farmer plows up the field, makes furrows, sows the seed, and covers it lightly with soil. He does not cover it too deep, and when the rain falls and soaks it well and he gives it water, in time the sprout comes up and grows. After that, when he weeds the field and gives it fertilizer, he gathers in the fruit in autumn: this is the law of farming. The word is that our believing in God, receiving salvation, and living the life of faith are also like this. The reason the Lord took the work of farming as His parable is that it very much resembles our receiving salvation and living the life of faith, and so He drew on that resemblance to explain it.

Without a root, it withers and dies

When the seed is sown, there are hinderers. Before the seed is buried in the ground, the scattered seed is surely pecked up by sparrows and other birds. He also said, *"Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away" (Mark 4:5–6)*. Here the Lord speaks together of the soil and the root in farming.

A place where the earth is not deep is a place with many stones underneath and only a light covering of soil over them. When a seed falls there, at first the sprout comes up, but though the root tries to go down after the moisture, it is blocked by the

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stones and cannot go down deep. Since it cannot take root, when the sun beats down hot it cannot draw up the moisture from below, and in the end it droops and withers away and dies. The seed sown in the field where the earth is not deep can never bear fruit.

What does this tell us? When we first hear the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we all receive it. We all receive the word that Jesus came to this earth as the Savior, was baptized by John the Baptist at the age of thirty, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us. Since it is not bad news, anyone receives it. Now here, the field means a person's heart.

When one receives the gospel into one's heart without admitting before the Lord the worldly greed and the many sins and desires within, receiving only the good news, there is no root, and so it withers away. One has received the gospel, but as one follows the Lord one goes through all kinds of hardship and hears unpleasant words, and one's sins and desires and shortcomings, even the very root of sin, are exposed. Originally we are sinners who must be saved, and our heart is a seed of evildoers. What come out of a person's heart are evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, wickedness, and every filthy thing; twelve kinds of sin are teeming in the heart.

Yet one hides that teeming mass and speaks only a little of what shows, admitting only about as much as, "I am a little evil," and so receives the gospel. Even after receiving it, this sinful nature keeps rising up vigorously in the heart, and because of it the gospel by which the Lord saved us cannot exert its strength. The desire to commit sin, the lustful heart, the perverse heart, and the deceiving heart boil up inside like a seething pot, so that one cannot overcome them, and as the years pass one cannot endure. This is because we do not properly admit our own true selves.

We bear fruit when we admit ourselves

When what is not good rises up inside us—whenever the Lord says that I am truly lustful, filthy, selfish, a murderer, an adulterer, evil and perverse in my thoughts—we must admit that it is so. When we so admit, and yet hold fast that 'nevertheless the Lord has saved me,' our faith grows all the deeper. If we do not admit ourselves, in the end we cannot bear the fruit of faith. It is not that we bear full fruit and go to Heaven just because we know the gospel.

When the sinful nature rises up inside us, we ought to teach ourselves, but instead we rush in trying to teach the other person. When the Lord says, you are an adulterer and a perverse man, we talk back—how could a person of such fine character and wisdom as I do such things?—and we try to teach our brothers and sisters to do this and to do that. But whenever our own lack is exposed, we must admit our own selves.

At first we merely received the gospel without properly admitting our sins. But when, every time the sinful nature inside us is exposed, we admit that the Lord came to this earth to save me, filthy and ugly, who could not but go to hell, and saved me, and when we admit what the Lord has done, we bear true fruit. For our faith to become whole, we must be able to see our own true form. When, as we live on, we admit ever more deeply that the Lord, to save such a person as me, came in human flesh, was baptized by John the Baptist to take charge of my sins, died hanging on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved me, the faith of us who are saved grows all the firmer.

When we become such people, then as we serve the gospel and follow the Lord on this earth, even if, because of the sinful nature that rises in the heart against our will, we fail to profit the Lord's work and do evil and receive rebuke, we accept

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everything, saying, “Whatever rebuke or discipline I receive, it is right. Nevertheless the Lord has saved me.” And therefore we bear the fruit of faith. There is no one who is saved merely by hearing the gospel for a moment and knowing, ‘Ah, so that is how it is.’ Even while following the Lord we must still keep admitting ourselves again and again, and the things we have not yet admitted are endless—so what is there to be so dignified and so superior about?

Good ground is something we go on making

Then is there a field that is good from the beginning? No. That is why the one who farms weeds his field. When the seed lies in the furrow and the young sprout comes up, in a little while weeds grow up with it, and he must pull those weeds out. After pulling the weeds he fills in more good soil on top, and as the plant grows he weeds again and draws good soil up to bank around it. Then the root feeds on the nourishment of the soil, stretches upward, and bears strong fruit.

So it is not that salvation is accomplished at once because we have heard the gospel, because we know it. The person who stops at knowing it like a mathematical formula—this is this and that is that—can know the gospel exactly and still go to hell. Leaving the stony field inside as it is, without admitting oneself, means precisely our sinful nature. When we admit this fact, that stone rots and becomes soil, but if we do not admit it, it still bears the result of blocking the moisture.

Indeed the word says, *“But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred” (Mark 4:8)*. Only when it falls on good ground does it bear such fruit. So we

must make good ground for ourselves, and making good ground is precisely acknowledging the word of God. When those who have gone before have fellowship with us and point out some part, admitting that it is so—that is the process of becoming good ground.

Even after hearing the gospel, whenever it is exposed—your heart is deceitful, it is filthy, it steals, it is lustful—whenever someone points it out, we must admit before the Lord that it is so. Not before people, but before the Lord we must admit it. The Lord took charge of my sins with His baptism for my sake, hung on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved me—how then could I assert my own rightness? When we enter into such admitting, the root goes down deep into the word of the Lord, and once it has drawn up the nourishment and grown to a certain point, it endures most droughts and floods. Because the root is planted deep, it stands firm through the rainy season and through the midsummer drought.

When we read the word of the Lord, we think: ah, so this is that word—I have heard it and known it and believed it, so it is finished. But it is not so. The one who really knows is the one who believes the word and follows it. Since we have eyes, we read the same words and know what they are saying; but the one who properly knows the depth of that word actually follows the Lord, and such people never stay in theory alone. Those who were in the church and went out when they were tested were all people who stayed in theory alone. Even while committing theft himself, when he is pointed out, such a person rushes back demanding whether there is any evidence.

But people speak with evidence, and yet they also know by the mere voice and know by the very look of the eyes. The Holy Spirit knows even the deep things of God. So I must admit before God, and you must admit before God. Why do people say that

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they themselves are clean and point their fingers at the other person as filthy, while never admitting their own selves before God? That is the very faith that defrauds God.

We break our pride and seek the will of God

Whenever our lack is exposed, we must admit ourselves. When we admit, the root goes deep into the word, and we die with the Lord and live with the Lord; and even if my appearance is wretchedly broken down, if it profits the kingdom of the Lord and only the Lord's will is accomplished, we become a grain of wheat and become fertilizer. This is the life of faith and the life of the saved person. The person who thinks, I received the remission of sins many years ago, I am a decent person, I am far better than you—he is still far from it, and he is no different from the seed sown on the stony field or on the thornbush. In a little while, when he receives a rebuke, he quits it all, kicks it away, and walks out; that is not the fruit of saved faith, nor is it faith like the seed sown on good ground.

If, in our life of faith, we act stubbornly, put forward our pride, and do not acknowledge the word of God, nothing of the will of God is accomplished. If you and I each pursue only our own profit, can the gospel be served and preached? It cannot. If each one takes all the profit for himself, nothing of the kingdom of God will be accomplished. But if, by my becoming a grain of wheat and not asserting my own rights, the gospel is preached well, then we gladly do so.

Even now I always consult with those who work with me. I ask, how would it be good to do this work, and what do you think?—and we communicate with one another, agree to fulfill this aim in this way, and all run together toward that aim with

glad hearts. The aim of the life of faith does not hang on whether everything is fulfilled according to my stubbornness and my wishes. Even in small matters there is nothing for me to set up my pride over as though I were right; if only we go safely and soundly and the will of God alone is accomplished, that is enough. What is our aim, and the aim of the church? It is only that the will of God be accomplished well.

I do not even handle the church's accounts myself; I set a person over them and entrust them. Because in my heart too there is a mind that would steal if the chance arose, I avoid such a position. With what we have worked together and offered we do mission work and give accounting reports, so there is nothing hidden or fabricated—it is all fact; and since no one has lined a back pocket, we are upright before God. When money comes to me I spend it all; I can live well even without money, but if I keep money in hand it soon disappears, so when there is need I speak of it openly and use it. I too am such a seed and such a person, and you are just the same; before God, you and I alike must all admit it.

There are many who cannot break the filthy things that rise up inside, and their pride. Even between husband and wife people quarrel over who is the better one, and that pride is a truly filthy thing. If one says, yes, you are the better one; it is because I fell short and failed to love you that your heart was hurt; I am sorry—and bows his head and pats the other's shoulder, will it not all melt away like snow in spring? To seize the other's weakness and say, if you wrong me I will not do for you what you want, is the filthiest thing before God. Nowhere in the Bible does it say to seize a brother and press him down, nor does it say a sister is lesser than a brother; when we respect each other, we receive respect from each other.

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The person who admits himself daily

We must not only know the word of God but admit it. How many desires are in our hearts? Are not those desires all desires toward sin? It is the mind to prosper more and rise higher than the other person, to enjoy and to lord it over others—where is the mind to serve and to make the other person prosper? That is possible only for Jesus; but when the Holy Spirit comes into us, and we submit to the word of God, admit our own evil, and admit that the Lord has saved such people as us, the Holy Spirit governs our hearts and makes us have the heart and the thoughts and the conduct that desire the other person's good.

Therefore, to live the life of faith, the root must grow up enough to endure whatever hardship or pressure of circumstances may come, and to have that faith we must admit all the sins hidden in our own hearts. Even after receiving salvation we must admit them. Does the saved person have no filthy thoughts? They still teem like seething maggots; and yet if we do not admit them and point our fingers at the other person, the fruit of righteousness is not borne, the Lord does not receive glory, we fail to love one another—and the mind of the flesh is death.

When God tells us, both spiritually and in the flesh, you are such a person, we must admit it all. When we admit it, the gospel of the water and the Spirit enters deep into our hearts, blossoms, and bears fruit, and the Holy Spirit governs us. Why does the work of the gospel not arise, and the work of righteousness not arise? It is because people do not admit themselves and count themselves passable—but what is a passable person? I too, believing and following the Lord, at first thought I was fairly decent, and breaking my heart was hard; but if it profited the kingdom of the Lord, I had only to break my heart, and once I

had broken it, from then on it became rather easy.

As we live the life of faith, the older we grow, the more the desires of the world keep rising up and showing themselves in our deeds, and we keep being pointed out. Each time we must admit ourselves; but if, to evade it, one plays tricks, does not acknowledge the word of God, and puts forward one's own rightness and superiority, one comes to say that the church is unrighteous and wrong and that oneself is right, and one leaves the church and in the end comes to ruin. We must not deceive before God.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just. Dear fellow believers, how much must we admit, admitting and admitting again? Not once or twice or three times, but sixty times, six hundred times—we must admit daily. The Apostle Paul said that he died daily, and that is precisely this admitting. Even when our own thought rises up, if the will of God says that is not it, then we put ourselves to death and let only the will of God be accomplished; and then, by the Holy Spirit, we give thanks together with the Lord and receive blessing.

If, living day by day and week by week, we daily admit whatever of our own selves is exposed, how much will we have admitted while a month, six months, a year, and many years pass? Then at last we can no longer assert how fine we are, and as the things we admit grow many, we become generous toward the other person. It is in me and it is in you too—but the Lord has removed all that sin; you also are such a person, but the Lord has removed it all—so we come to say. And so, wholly believing, exalting, and praising the Lord alone, and asking the Lord for what we need and seeking His help—this is the whole life of faith.

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God, who looks at the center of the heart

We must trim not our outward appearance and shell, but our hearts. God looks at the center of our hearts, and He looks at whether or not we acknowledge the word of God with the heart. He looks at that center: how much we admit before God the evil that rises up in us, and how much we acknowledge the things God has done to save us. For the sisters to cultivate beauty is a beautiful thing, and there is nothing to quarrel over outward forms with a legalistic attitude that says everything is forbidden. God counts right those who so acknowledge with the heart, and with them He does the work of God, blesses them, and accomplishes the will of God.

Therefore we must first of all become people who admit. I hope you will hold the negative things and wrong appearances that arise in your life up to the word of God, and become people who admit that it is all true. If one does not admit but keeps refusing and trying to hide, then like the seed planted in the stony field, one grows a little and then dries up yellow under the hot sunlight, shrivels, and dies, and becomes one who quits the life of faith midway and kicks it away. The person who does not admit himself does not last long. The person who, when receiving the gospel, admits once that he is a person who cannot but go to hell, and after that admits no more, does not last long; in a little while he soon disappears.

Some think that once they receive the gospel, they have at once become whole. But though one has received it, if one's inside is full of desire and one follows that desire, one dies; in a little while one betrays the gospel and goes out. It is possible only when the seed lies on good ground, and no one is prepared from the beginning. Yet some are prepared, and the one who knows that he is a person who cannot but go to hell profits

greatly. The great majority have never once thought that they are going to hell, and those born and raised inside the church are all the more so.

Many have heard the gospel and many believe, but those who really enter the kingdom of the Lord are a very small few. Do not be overconfident, saying, I believe, so I will surely go to Heaven, and I am perfect. Even that is possible only while one keeps receiving the word preached within the church, while the Holy Spirit points out the heart, and while those who have gone before lead the way; if one goes outside the church, cannot hear the word, and cannot receive the fellowship of the Spirit, it is the end.

Therefore we must admit ourselves from the time we first hear the gospel. When the word says, you are a seed of evildoers, you are an adulterer, you are a fornicator—if we say, that is right, it is true, I am such a person until the day I die; and when it says, yet the Lord has saved you—if we say, truly You have saved me, I believe in You—then that faith is the faith God acknowledges. Since we were saved by wholly believing, holding, and acknowledging the work of the Lord, who saved us though we had no rightness of our own, we can have our faith acknowledged by God.

Dear fellow believers, when we become people who admit ourselves, we receive by faith all the blessings God has promised. Now let us have a time of prayer, thinking on the word we have heard and asking to become people who acknowledge the word of God. God, make us people who admit all the words with which You point us out. Whenever what is wrong is exposed in our lives, make us admit it in the light of Your word; make us admit daily and hold fast and believe, so that we not only receive salvation but also live as servants of God. Give us faith, and give us the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We give thanks and pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Take heed not to stumble over the deceitfulness of riches

< Mark 4:10-20 >

"But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, 'To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'' And He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.'"

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The Lord's own interpretation of the four fields

This is the word in which the Lord Himself interpreted these four fields. The seed sown by the wayside is the one from whom, when he hears the word, Satan comes at once and takes that word away; and the seed sown on the stony ground is the one who believes in Jesus and receives Him as his Savior, and then, when tribulation and persecution come because of the word, soon betrays Him and stumbles. Third, the seed sown among the thorns is the one in whom the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other desires enter and choke the word, so that he becomes unfruitful; and the seed sown on good ground is the one who hears the word, accepts it, and bears fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Jesus Himself interpreted it this way, so this is a truly exact word.

This age we now live in is by no means a hard age; rather, it is an age in which believing in Jesus is exceedingly easy. It is an age in which anyone can hear the word of God, in which whoever will believe can believe with the heart as much as he pleases, in which whoever will be saved can be saved, and in which whoever will live the life of faith can live it freely. Living in such a good age, what is truly worrying is precisely this third field, the word about the one sown among the thorns.

The third field: the deceitfulness of riches

The people who belong to this third field are those seized by the cares of the world—how shall I live in the world, what shall I eat, how shall I stay healthy, how shall I keep my future secure—and they are also those who receive the deceitfulness of riches, that is, the temptation of material things. When one

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receives this temptation of riches and that covetousness enters the heart, it blocks the word of God. Whatever God says, such a person does not believe that word, but pours all his thought into material things and his own way of living, trying to fill the covetousness in his heart, and in the end his faith becomes a faith that bears no fruit.

On the other hand, the last good field among the four is the one who hears the word and receives it just purely. This person receives the word with the heart and receives the remission of sins, and in his life of faith he bears much fruit, gives glory to God, and enters Heaven. So even when we hear the same word of God, hearing and believing the same gospel of the water and the Spirit, it is as though three or so out of four fall away and about one bears fruit: some fall away midway and some bear fruit to the end. Of course this is not a matter of numbers, for all ten people may receive it well; the point is that among the four fields, only the good field bears such abundant fruit.

The days given to us

You and I are standing even now before the temptation of this third field. We easily fall into the cares of how to live in the world, what to eat and what to put on, and into the deceitfulness of riches—how to gather much money and live well without worry for the future—and so, chasing that covetousness, we fail to bear the fruit of faith. It is a word we know very well, but we must surely engrave it on our hearts once again. I once reckoned up the coming ten years: a year is three hundred sixty-five days, so ten years is three thousand six hundred fifty days. If we just count them off they seem to pass quickly, but reckoned in days they are a solidly great number of days; time does not fly so fast

after all—rather, they were ample days in which there is much to do and much can be done.

So if I were told that I have three thousand six hundred fifty days left on this earth, what would I do? I would set up the whole framework of the works we are now doing, equip a system so that the churches of the whole country can serve this gospel of the water and the Spirit well, raise up workers, and supply what each person needs according to his age and his faith—there is truly much to do and much to accomplish. Even if a man lives to a hundred, that is thirty-six thousand five hundred days, and if I live ten years more, I live three thousand six hundred fifty days more. If I work together with you through those three thousand six hundred fifty days, how much of the gospel of the water and the Spirit can we preach? And how much will this world change after ten years—perhaps by then all kinds of restraints will make even the preaching of this gospel difficult. So we must not spend these days given to us in vain, but live carefully, so as not to become those sown among the thorns, so as not to stumble over the deceitfulness of riches.

Riches replace God

Even if I have kept my faith until now, if I covet riches and begin to divert money and pocket it, that is not simply diverting money: it is changing gods; it is replacing God. At first it is only using a little for one's own needs, but as one keeps pocketing money and the money grows, one comes to rely on that money, and at last one comes to call that money one's god. That is why God said, you shall have no other gods before Me, and you shall not make or set up or serve idols: this is the word that you must not take anything other than God as your god—I am the LORD

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God, so do not make for yourself another god. Therefore, if we would be caught by this no longer, we must become those who, like the seed sown on good ground, receive purely whatever God says, just as He says it, and bear fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

The Apostle Paul also said that he had kept his faith until he went before the Lord, and I truly wish that we might all become such people. But there are those who, having received the same salvation, stumble like the seed sown on the stony ground before their life is over. When one believes in Jesus there are many persecutions and many hardships; even among us now, many have quit because they were called heretics, pointed at by relatives and family and friends, and suffered losses—and many, having overcome all that well, have quit instead because of covetousness. To be unfruitful, to bear no fruit, means that one has failed to believe in and follow God as God to the end: one received the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but midway one exchanged one's God—one replaced Him.

The Lord loved us and the Lord saved us—that is certain, and we believed it too; but if, even after believing, we say we do not know the Lord, the Lord also says, then I do not know you. So He said that at the judgment He will say, since you said on this earth that you did not know Me, I also will say before the angels that I do not know that person—and this is a truly fitting word. We commonly say, I have already believed, so whatever anyone says I will go to Heaven; the Lord saved me and I believe with my heart, so I can go. But the Lord does not speak only so. If you say you do not know Me, and replace Me because of riches, and believe money as your god, then even though I saved you, I also will say I do not know you.

Of course we may love riches and may use them as we need them; riches are useful and necessary. But to rely on them

wholly and live by them is not fitting for a person of faith. It is we who are weak and stumble; it is not God who is wrong. If anything is lacking in our eating, our clothing, our drinking, and our spending, we may freely tell God and ask and so live. When we are worn out and weary with work, wanting to get some fresh air and catch our breath a little is also something we may freely ask of God and do. But if one says, I will not serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and I will only gather money and live well by myself alone, that is replacing God; that person is the unfruitful one, and the place he finally reaches is destruction.

Therefore the Lord told us to go the narrow way, and to take heed lest, having once believed, we betray and fall away again. In the parable of the talents also, to the one who, like the man who received one talent, hid it away in his heart and did not bring it out, and did not strive to trade and gain with it, He says: when did I save you? You say you believe Me, yet you say you do not know Me; you have switched gods and serve material things as your god—then I too am not your God; serve that thing you serve. The Apostle Paul, on the other hand, said after he met the Lord that he was a debtor to all, to Greeks and to barbarians, to the civilized and to all people—when did he ever borrow money from them? God had told him to preach this gospel to them also, so the obligation to deliver that gospel was precisely his debt: before preaching, the debt remains, and once he has preached, that debt is gone—a word on that level.

I do not want anyone to live the life of faith by compulsion. If we have truly believed—and since we are lacking, as the Lord's Prayer teaches us to pray, do not lead us into temptation—we can always fall into hardship because we have no money, because our body is weak, because our faith is small; and at such times the word tells us to pray to the Lord for help. We must pray and receive help and must believe, and we live

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not alone but together with the church.

A life that does not store up money

What we must beware of is betraying like the stony field because someone hates us, and betraying the Lord while madly serving money as a god. The wayside field is the person with no interest at all: a preacher comes and tells him that Jesus took charge of the sin of the world for him, and passes on; then someone else comes alongside and says that is heresy, and it simply ends there—he heard the gospel, but there is no fruit at all. But we are not in that state; we are people who have already believed, come into the church, and lived the life of faith and served. So what remains for us, on the bad side, are these two dangers: the stony field and the thorny field. Could we fail to believe in the Lord because hardship comes? Could we stop doing the work of God and stop following because hardship comes?

We are weak ones who can fall into that, so at such times we must think deeply for a moment. Of course, when such things strike us, we too will be shaken; but being shaken and utterly casting the Lord away, saying we do not know Him, are different. Bowing the head and asking, Lord, enable me to do this work, when we cannot do it, and deliberately saying, I am too weary, I will quit and live only for myself—are these not plainly different? You and I have not yet completely escaped these two dangers; there is no one—not I, not you, not anyone—who can guarantee, I have certainly escaped the temptation of material things.

That is why I entrust the material things to the accountant to manage, and have him report not only to me but also to those who have gone before, for I fear that I too may fall into this. If

you earned money and the churches of the whole country all brought it to me saying, Pastor, use it as you see fit, I would not want that, nor would it be right; so the offerings too must not be brought to me directly but put into the offering box without fail, for the accountant to sort out, spend properly where it should be spent, and then only report. Even if someone comes with a bundle of money saying he will offer it to me, I decline it—stop trying to make me stumble. Personally I do not need much money; if I begin to hold much money, ride a fine car, and live only for myself, I will soon be tripped up and become a worldly cult leader who has nothing to do with the Lord.

So we have set up our various works and companies all in the names of our workers, and set up officers under them in each department, so that I do not bear the responsibility alone but we bear it together. I have taken no office in them under my own name; fearing I might lay a hand on them, I simply do not do it. I am satisfied if I eat three meals a day; but since one cannot live on rice alone, I drink coffee with those who work with me and share tasty snacks, get the sea breeze once or twice a year, and since a car, clothes, and medicine must be there at least in some measure, to be equipped with that much and live is only proper. But if I try to pile up more than that under my own name, the heart begins to change strangely; one must know how to stop exactly there.

In the early days, when we started the church, there were many who brought their offerings directly to me, but I did not let them do it. In those days we had no money and no one was earning; whenever we gathered, in our need we cried out to God in prayer for two hours or so at a time. We put together what money there was, bought flour and potatoes, and barely got through a week, and when it was not enough we went out together to catch fish and gather mugwort—yet I never said we

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had no money. Even so, I know that I too am a person who can stumble here at any time.

How riches break a person down

What a person must beware of most is riches; when it comes to stumbling over the covetousness of riches, almost everyone stumbles. Even if someone brings you twenty or thirty million won a month to spend, you cannot spend it all, so it piles up little by little: in a year it becomes two or three hundred million, and in ten years it becomes three billion. Then before you know it the heart swells and the person changes strangely. At first, when there are two or three hundred thousand won in your pocket, the heart is sturdy: if someone says, treat us, you are willing to pay gladly at any time, and even want to—just that much is truly good. But when that money becomes three million, the heart begins to change: where shall I spend this? I must keep it safely.

When it becomes six million, the treating stops and there is nothing to be had from him; when it becomes sixty million he grows stingier; and when it becomes six hundred million his eye for people changes—he regards others like beggars, his body stiffens, and he begins to be haughty. When it reaches a billion, no one can exhort that person any more, and no word enters his ears. Thus, as riches increase, a person no longer sees people as people, but looks down on them like beasts and counts them a lower class different in kind from himself—this is precisely the appearance of one who has stumbled over the deceitfulness of riches. Is having much money good, or not good? If it is spent much for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it would be good; but if an individual grips it without the faith to bear it, it utterly ruins the person instead.

When one has no money at all, the heart is uneasy; but with just the right amount, some two hundred thousand won, when someone says, treat us this once, you can do it, and the heart is sturdy; more than that is not needed, and if there is more, the heart strangely grows haughty instead. I too, when a little money comes in, wonder what to do with it, and the treat I meant to give I sometimes cannot give because I begrudge it, and as time passes I share it out little by little here and there. If we grip riches like this, we feel good because of them and come to rely on them, so we must truly beware of the temptation of riches. Therefore, when there is such a thing, we must put it right out; when money comes to me I put it straight out, and so to this day I have kept hardly any property under my name, and if anyone tells me to give something up, I can transfer the deed at once into the names of our workers.

Ordinarily people like to bring all the money to the head and put all the property in his name, but I do not do so. Even this chapel is not under my name but under the names of our workers; I will not put such a building under my name. At one time I even swelled with the thought, how good it would be to sell this chapel and serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit greatly with the money; but when I actually reckoned it up, the taxes on a sale were so heavy that we could not sell it, and so we decided to keep using it comfortably as our chapel just as it is. If I had lived pocketing property like that, I might already have taken it and left you; it is because I store up nothing under my own name that I have come this far without being caught by the deceitfulness of riches.

I am very glad when money gathers like this. If we spend this money once greatly for the Lord, how much will we serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit; and if we print books with a large sum, how many can we print and preach this gospel to the

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whole world? I always live swelling with that hope. There is a scene like this in a movie: a man, running a factory that made war supplies, drew out the Jews who were being dragged off to death and made them workers in his factory, and so saved their lives. When the war ended and they were set free, at the last parting he looked at his ring and his watch and wept, regretting: if I had sold these I could have saved a few more people, yet I kept them to the end—what a foolish man I am. And in later days the many people he had saved remembered him and were thankful.

Every time I watch that last scene I gain much instruction. If we do not pocket money and spend it only for ourselves, but earn and gather doggedly and live serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can save many people of the world like that little Schindler; but if each one relies on money and stores it up only for himself, we cannot save the people of the whole world. Therefore we must live like little Schindlers. I truly want to serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit generously and to make our eating and living generous as well. In the old days we worshiped, ate, and slept inside a building of less than thirty pyeong, sparing even our food; but now I do not want to live going hungry—I want us to eat well and live well.

At our conferences I know the young workers wait to eat something good for once, so I rejoice more in feeding them full and sharing together than in a table set for me; we have come at least that far, and must we not eat well to work well? Since the meat of the world is stacked with antibiotics and harmful to the body, we even raise animals ourselves for that reason, so that our family may stay healthy on pure food. So the point is to eat well and live well, to serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit much, and to earn much money as well—only, let us not make just one person well-off, but make all alike well-off together, and raise

our standard of living and of culture step by step. Living with that aim, money can hardly be left lying in surplus; but one thing is plain: comparing ten years ago with now, we eat far better and our standard of living has risen.

Receive the word simply

If one stores up much money for oneself, one comes to lean on that money without knowing it. Faith means relying on the Lord: when we say, Lord, help me, I believe, please help me, the Lord helps us; but when one has much money, one comes to rely on that money and changes strangely. That is why the Apostle Paul said that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: money itself is not the root of evil, but for the person who counts riches too precious, it brings the result of replacing God, and so it becomes the axis of evil. Therefore we must gather money and spend it on serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit and on our living well together, and reinvest what remains, spending it on saving still more people.

The person who truly lives the life of faith well is the one who, when the word of God comes, receives it as it is, believes that word, and lives by it; the life of faith is truly simple. When God says something, receiving it—that is the life of faith; then one does not stumble, and one goes forward together with the church, together with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, together with the Lord. I have lived until now without storing up under my own name and will live so hereafter, for living with property piled under my name is the more uncomfortable way. If I stored up property, the brothers and sisters would begin to look at me strangely—we earned the money and brought it, and he has put it all under his own name; is he not a thief?—and from

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then on the sermons would not enter their hearts, and their faith would not grow.

Therefore this word does not apply to just one person: each of us must look back at himself before God, realizing that if we are blocked by the deceitfulness of riches and store up money under our own names, disaster follows. You may perhaps think, I have not a penny, so there is nothing for me to stumble over in the deceitfulness of riches; but someday the chance for much money will come to you too. Even one who cannot handle money directly now may well become a company head and handle riches, so from the time we have no money we must engrave this on our hearts and exercise self-control, not storing up riches for ourselves. For without our knowing it, we come to lean on those riches.

The word of God is not a matter of knowing only. We must ask what this word is saying to me now and how I am living now; we must not let the word pass in one ear and out the other, but look back and ask, am I perhaps being blocked by the deceitfulness of riches and stumbling? We must all eat well and live well together, not earning alone and spending alone, but many of us gathering little by little, spending it where it is right, and sharing it and using it well; if one earns alone and spends alone it is always lacking, but if many join strength we bear fruit abundantly. God will give us richly, enough to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world until the Lord comes and still have plenty left over—I know this and I believe it.

The system is already all in place; we have only to run it by faith just as it is. With this spirit and this faith let us engrave this word on our hearts and live without stumbling over riches. As I close the message, let us pray together, thinking on the word we have heard, asking that we may not stumble over riches and may

not stumble over tribulation and persecution.

When we hear the word of God, enable us to receive it really simply, just as it sounds, and believe it and live by it. Give us pure hearts, and keep our hearts, that we may truly not stumble over riches, and not stumble over tribulation and persecution. Let us serve no other god before God, but worship, love, honor, and serve Christ, the King of kings, and bless us to live serving and worshiping the Lord forever, until the day the Lord comes. We give thanks and pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The seed sown on the stony ground

< Mark 4:1-9 >

"And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: 'Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.' And He said to them, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

The seed that fell on the stony ground

Today the Lord spoke in the parable of the sower. When the sower went out and sowed the seed, some fell by the wayside and the birds came and devoured it, and some fell on the stony ground where the earth was shallow. The seed that fell on the

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stony ground sprang up at once because the earth was not deep, but after the sun rose, having no root, it was scorched and withered and died. Today I want to speak about this seed that fell on the stony ground. The seed here is the word of God; as the Lord unfolded it afterward, to sow the seed is to sow the word. The word that fell by the wayside was devoured by the birds and bore no fruit, and the word that fell on the stony ground with shallow earth could not take root and withered and died after the sun rose—so what we are to give heed to today is this stony ground.

The evil thoughts that come out of a person

In a person there are two things. One is the desire in his own heart, and the other is the desire to be seen by others. The stony ground means that when the farmer sowed the seed, the seed fell where only a very thin layer of soil covered the ground. Lightly covered with soil, it soon sprouts, but underneath lies the bed of stones, so the root cannot go down deep, and it dries up and dies. This stony ground is precisely the desire that you and I carry, and by this desire people die like this.

After receiving the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where do many people die? They die following that desire in their own hearts. Then what, concretely, is that desire? In Mark chapter 7 the Lord Himself told us. *"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man" (Mark 7:20).* And He said, *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders" (Mark 7:21).*

Here we see that at the root of man, his thoughts are evil. The thoughts of your flesh and mine are all evil. We are selfish, seeking only our own greed and following only our own desires,

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so our thoughts are evil, and we are also lustful. And there is a thieving heart without ceasing: the mind that says, what is mine is mine, and what is yours I also want to make mine. Besides, there is a murderous heart, wanting to strike at the other person if he so much as gets in the way. This is the very stony ground where the seed fell and bore no fruit. A person is born carrying this character from birth; man is a seed of evildoers. These evil thoughts and fornications and thefts and murders fill the inside like so many stones, for we are born carrying them from birth. That is why nothing in this world is as filthy as man—so evil is the inside of man that one might say, if only there were no people, this world would rather be paradise.

The desires that remain even after we are saved

Then, when we hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, do these sins all drain away and disappear? No. They do not drain away and disappear; they remain as they are. In that state, we are saved by believing the fact that the Lord took charge of all the sins in my heart and the sins I have done, all these sins, and removed them, and so saved me. Then, once we are saved, does this sinful nature disappear? It does not disappear. The sinful nature remains as it is in the flesh even after we are saved. Dear fellow believers, the thieving is still there, the murderous heart is still there, the lust is still there, and the evil thoughts are still there. Are they still there, or not? They are still there. It is surely so even with the saved; all of this remains just the same.

But after hearing and believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there are those who follow this evil in their own hearts, and those who do not. The person who follows the Lord by faith admits it all. Because I am so filthy and lustful, a murderer and

a thief, I cannot follow my own thoughts and cannot follow my own desires—so he gives himself up and follows the Lord. There are those who have so denied themselves and given up, choosing to follow the Lord. So there are those who follow the Lord and those who do not, and it is decided by whether one follows what is in one's own heart or not.

Even on stony ground with shallow earth, when the seed falls, the sprout comes up. But to live, the root must pierce down under the stones and be planted where there are soil and moisture. It must draw up that moisture and nourishment to live, and then it can fully live and bear fruit. That is why we come to church daily; that is why we hear the word several times a week, and read the word, and pray, and serve the Lord. The person who keeps hearing the word like this and receiving it lives; the person who admits his own evil, acknowledges that the Lord is right, denies himself, and follows the Lord lives. But the person who does not deny himself dies—no one is an exception; it is the same for all.

The life that denies itself and follows the Lord

People love that stony-ground desire of theirs only too much. Even after being saved, even inside the church, there are many who try to fulfill their own desires. When I see such a person, I know. To the person who tries to fulfill his own desire, no great work can be entrusted, and such a person dies in the end. Even the saved are all the same in this.

Let us read on through verses 22 and 23. *"Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:22)*, *"All these evil things come from within and defile a man" (Mark 7:23)*. Is covetousness there, or not? It is there. But though it is there, if I

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follow myself I perish, so we follow the work that pleases the Lord. We subject ourselves to it and serve that work, and thereby we bear the fruit of righteousness and receive the Lord's help. Receiving that grace He supplies in due season, led by the Holy Spirit, we bear fruit, and so we live well.

If you follow your own desire, at first it looks good. But from then on the problems begin. From then on you must live by your own strength alone, and you must not even think of looking toward Heaven. For the person who does not deny himself cannot enter Heaven. This is exactly like the man who received one talent. The person who hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit and hides it away in his heart and lives after his own desires is the very man who buried the one talent in the ground, and that man is caught by the charge of insolence. The person who does not deny himself cannot enter Heaven, and this is the same for everyone without exception.

There is the person who quickly admits that he himself is filthy and evil and worthless, and says, because I am such a person, I will not follow myself but follow the Lord. The person who does not follow his own thoughts but follows what the Lord says, receiving the Lord's decision as his own decision and following it, lives. But the person who follows his own thoughts cannot enter Heaven and cannot even live the life of faith. It is not that I forbid him; it does not fit his own will, so he cannot do it himself. The Apostle James said that faith accompanies works: if we have truly believed, how can we not serve the Lord, and how can we not do what the Lord has commanded? If we only take the salvation the Lord has given, dust off our hands, and say, see you in Heaven, who will preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit on this earth? The Lord has had those who are saved first preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to others.

This is a matter of turning the whole direction of one's life.

Before, we lived for ourselves, for our own happiness, but now we are told to live for others—to make a U-turn and live for others. So it is truly hard to break one's heart. But is this not the right thing? If, when I break my heart and follow the Lord's will, other people are saved and my life also becomes happy—if, setting my own happiness aside, the will of God is accomplished—ought we not gladly do so?

So I know how hard it was until I resolved to break my pride and follow the Lord. When one breaks one's own pride, it is hard enough to take away one's appetite. But we break it for the Lord's sake. And having once broken it, I cannot tell you how comfortable it is. Even in dealing with people I have become able to deal very gently. In the old days a murderous edge hung about my heart, but now laughter comes out instead. Since I follow not my own will but the will of God, the evil vanishes from the heart. Living with the heart set on the other's good, that others may be saved and live the life of faith well, I can meet anyone without hesitation, and my conscience has nothing that snags it.

Giving ourselves to the Lord is no loss

Let me compare this to investment. In anything, if you put in a large stake at the start, that much money goes out, so in others' eyes it looks like loss and folly. Money was not earned but went out, so the person who thinks only of what has gone out before his eyes does not even begin. People look only at what is going out right now and say he is crazy, say he cannot even do arithmetic; but when the years pass, they come to know it was by no means a foolish thing. Once you invest properly and set up the frame, from just a year later it begins to come back month

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by month, and as the years go by, far more than what was first put in keeps coming back. But if you begrudge that stake and never invest at all, there is nothing to come in monthly and nothing to come in yearly hereafter.

Dear fellow believers, the life of faith is exactly like this. After meeting the Lord, we must decide whether we will serve the Lord or not, whether we will give ourselves to the Lord or not. The moment we do not want it and quit and grow distant from the Lord, everything is finished. We reckon of ourselves, I have believed the gospel, so I will go to Heaven; but what does the word actually say? Works must follow faith. Dear fellow believers, this is not something done by compulsion. If someone ordered it by force, who would do it? It is not because you are fools that we tell you to serve the Lord: it is because everyone who gives himself to the Lord receives blessing beyond all comparison with living for himself. It is because it is a business that leaves a profit that we tell you to give—do you see this profit?

Though I live for myself, though I follow my own desire, there is nothing to salvage. Though I invest in myself and chase my own desire, there is nothing at all to salvage. It is fortunate if I do not end in prison, fortunate if I am not cursed, fortunate if I am not pointed at by people. But what happens if I follow the Lord? My life is lacking and nothing at all, but when I offer it to the Lord, the Holy Spirit rejoices and the Lord rejoices, and everything I do becomes a work by which other souls are saved. Through the small things I do, other people are saved and come to live the life of faith well—how precious a thing is this? Not earning some money year by year, but giving myself to that work of saving souls—what life is more profitable than this? And the Lord supplies what my flesh needs in due season, so though it is hard at first, later my life itself becomes ever more glorious and blessed, like the rising sun. So the question is how you will make

this choice.

The Lord does not tell us to live by force according to His will against our will; He tells us to turn from the road on which we have lived as we pleased, and now to do what the Lord directs. Before, we lived for ourselves and for our own happiness, but now He tells us to turn our direction and live for others, that other souls may be saved. Now, when we meet people after they have met the Lord, two things appear. In the person who has not broken himself, that inner self shows itself just as it is, so that he cannot receive people but pushes them away—that is the self. But the person who has broken himself, though his outward look and words seem rough, when you meet him and talk with him, his heart is very soft; the person who has broken himself becomes such a gentle person.

I too met the Lord and offered myself, but at first I could not offer myself wholly. So it was hard to follow the Lord. But even when I lived for myself, there was nothing I gained. In the Psalms it says that to be a doorkeeper in the house of God is better than to dwell in the tents of the wicked, and I set my heart to live so. And today I have become one blessed to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit with you throughout the whole world. That you do this work with me, that you have given yourselves to the Lord and been raised as workers—though the world does not recognize it, before God it is truly tremendous. The world may recognize the name of a seminary, but when you go out into the world, they look at where the workers were raised and what those workers do; to raise up workers who give themselves and work for the gospel is truly precious.

Dear fellow believers, serving the Lord is exactly the same as this. When we give ourselves up and serve the Lord, blessing comes in. The blessing of our flesh comes in, the blessing of faith comes in, the blessing of the fruit of the Spirit comes in,

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and the blessing of the fruit of the salvation of souls comes in. Everyone who gives himself to the Lord receives a hundred-million-fold blessing compared with living for himself, and leaves a profit. Dear fellow believers, do you see this profit? Therefore giving ourselves to the Lord is never a loss. So I have found by living, and so the word of the Bible says: when we give ourselves to the Lord, we gain the benefit of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold, and we never suffer loss. It is absolutely no loss.

The glory of living as the Lord's servant

Yet some say that if there is to be a loss they will not do it at all, and there are still many who have not given themselves to the Lord and have not broken their hearts. To such people I do not entrust the main ministry. Such a person you know at a glance. If you entrust a ministry to a person who has not given himself, he tells others to serve him instead, and will not do the work. In the world such a person may gain his profit, but in the church of God he is not waited on.

Meeting the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not hard, nor is serving that gospel. The question is whether from now on one lives for the Lord or lives for oneself. Whatever work one does, one must settle whether one will do it for the preaching of the gospel, to serve the Lord, or for oneself. I once said this plainly to one of our workers. You are about to do this work: settle first whether you are going to do it to serve the preaching of the gospel, or for your own self. If you do it for yourself, however well it goes it is nothing, and the better it goes the more it is nothing; but if from the start you do it for the preaching of the gospel, the situation differs and the blessing you will receive

hereafter differs. So settle your heart: will you do it for yourself, or for the preaching of the gospel?

There is knowing the gospel, and there is delivering it through books; but offering one's very life is yet another thing. However many angles we preach the gospel from and however many books we bring out, the offering of one's own life is not automatically contained in that. Our brothers and sisters all give themselves up and live for the Lord. People who come from anywhere in the world, seeing that there are those living for the Lord like this, are utterly amazed, even saying that the faith of overseas missionaries is nothing compared with this life. So after meeting the Lord, one must surely resolve what the life of giving oneself to the Lord is; and this is not for a few people only—hereafter it is the same for all the workers and the district leaders as well.

The word of God does not work by knowing alone; it must be applied to life. As the seed that fell on the stony ground with shallow earth sprouts but withers and dies because the root cannot go deep, is not our heart also stony ground? Therefore we must keep going down by the word. Our heart must keep going down under the word: we must grasp what the word says, believe it, and offer ourselves; and if that does not work, we must make ourselves into soil. Only when we put our own heart to death and make it the nourishment, and follow the Lord, do we bear fruit, and only so do we become the Lord's true workers.

Therefore the answer does not lie in saying one's own thought is right or oneself alone is clever; the answer lies with the Lord. What matters is what the Creator, who made you and me, the Lord, who saved you and me, has said. We must set our focus there and follow that word. As the hymn also says, what does this worthless body, which only errs without the Lord, gain by striving unto death for its own desire, and what good has it

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done to others? I lived keeping my stubbornness and my pride alive, for my own aims, and gained nothing; but when I offered myself to the Lord, it is this comfortable and this blessed. I give myself up and follow the Lord, and I never count this a loss. I broke my stubbornness and broke my pride and threw a few things away, and there could be no such comfort as this.

People, while calling themselves servants of the Lord, seek instead to be served. But that is a worldly thought. A servant is one who does as the master bids: he does not seek to be waited on in a high seat, but stays in a low seat with those who do the rough work, and serves them. And whose servant is this servant? He is the servant of Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, so the Lord's servant is glorious. Not just any servant, but the servant of Him who is Lord of lords—how could that servant not be glorious? Can just anyone become the Lord's servant? Only the person who has given himself becomes the Lord's servant, and I want you and me to be such people. That I have become what I am is because of the Lord, and that you have now become what you are is because of the Lord: because of the Lord we have become children of God, become workers, become the blessed, become people blessed like Abraham. You also are being raised up as such people in the Lord, and the person who gives himself to the Lord receives this many blessings.

Dear fellow believers, the gospel we all know, and we can summarize it well, as though writing a report. But is that the answer? The Lord said to follow Him—if the disciples had not followed the Lord, would the gospel have been preached to this day? If I, having met the Lord, had followed my own desire, could you have met the Lord? Though you wished to work there would be no place to work; it is because those who went before gave themselves to the Lord and laid the foundation that you have a place to work and such a church for the life of faith, and

those who come after see it and follow. It is not because we speak well that people follow. Dear fellow believers, giving yourself to the Lord is absolutely no loss: the person who does not give himself can gain nothing, and the person who gives himself to the Lord gains much.

Set your heart

Dear fellow believers, why do people die? They receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and yet they follow their own desire—that is why they die. If one casts away one's own desire and admits it, and says, I will follow as the Lord has commanded, it becomes different, and then reward and meaning also come. Living this way is one lifetime and living that way is one lifetime—why choose the road of dying for nothing? The time of the Lord's coming is all but here, and yet among you there are still those who have not set their hearts, and who only draw up life-plans for how to live for themselves out there. Dear fellow believers, you must reckon well. You must choose one of the two: give up Heaven and live after your own desire, or give up your own desire and follow the Lord. The word says that the one who knows and does not do will be beaten with many stripes.

If one hopes for Heaven and yet does not serve the Lord, knowing and yet not serving, then, to put it bluntly, one is severely beaten. Set your heart. If you cannot set it, then rather quit the life of faith and try living for yourselves alone. I do not say this so that you will become so; I am telling you that if you invest only for yourselves there is nothing to salvage, and if you give yourselves to the Lord there is much to gain. This is exactly like doing business. Dear fellow believers, is this business a loss? My offering of myself looks like loss at first but is never loss;

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when one gives oneself up and serves the Lord, it surely comes in.

The kingdom of God is like a merchant seeking fine pearls: when he finds a costly pearl in a field, he sells all his possessions and buys that field. Is not the Lord that costly pearl? The merchant who gave himself wholly to the Lord has struck a great bargain. Dear fellow believers, we ourselves are that merchant who struck the bargain, and I am the living witness of it. I have lived it, and it is so. Do you want to be happy? Then serve the Lord and give yourself to the Lord. It is truly simple. Dear fellow believers, do you see what I am saying? Do you believe?

I tell you to set your heart—have you set it? Whether you set your heart or not, the day passes; whether you set it or not, the day passes just the same. Living this way is one whole life and living that way is one whole life; if you put yourself into what is worthless, it becomes still more worthless, and if you put yourself into what is worthy, though the beginning is small, the end shines like the rising sun.

Dear fellow believers, born once into this life, such a life though it is, we have met the Lord, and the Lord has saved you and me; shall we not then give ourselves to the Lord, glorify the Lord, and receive this blessing of living well ourselves? Dear fellow believers, how blessed and profitable a life is this? Those who turn many to righteousness will be like the stars of heaven—this is the word of the Lord. Not a star of this world, but a star of heaven.

I ask that God may give you the precious blessing and the faith of giving yourselves to the Lord, and I believe He has already given it. I will close the message here. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Admit your evil now and live by faith

< Mark 4:1-9 >

"And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: 'Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.' And He said to them, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

The work we do and the parable of the sower

It is good to see you. There are many who have newly come and sit here in front, and I am truly glad to see you. It seems not long since I held a conference here, but they tell me several months have already passed—time flows truly fast. The days of

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our lives are seventy years, and if by reason of strength eighty, yet what remains of them is labor and sorrow; our life is this short and fleeting, but how blessed it is to live each day of it walking with the Lord. I live working with you for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and from long ago I have prayed and prepared to preach this gospel overseas as well.

There is a word I want without fail to say to anyone who would work with me. For whom are you doing this work—are you doing it for your food, clothing, and shelter, or for this gospel? This I want to settle plainly before we pass on. If this is not plain, then however hard he works now, it has little meaning: if it goes well, he thinks he did well, and it ends there; and if it goes badly, he is so disappointed that he falls. But if he sets and fixes his heart that he does this work for the Lord and for the preaching of the gospel, God helps him and the work becomes easier: if it does not go well, he has only to pray, and if it goes well, he has only to give thanks.

I have hope for the future. At first it will be small and hard to begin, but once it begins, I believe God will open the way as He has planned. So we pray that He will hold back war and let us preach the gospel to the whole world; and since the One who governs history is our God, I believe He will answer this prayer, and I give thanks. Today Jesus spoke the parable of the sower. When the sower sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, some on the stony ground with shallow earth, some among the thorns, and some on the good ground—that is, there are four fields: the wayside field, the stony field, the thorn field, and the good field.

A heart like the wayside field

First, the wayside field. The wayside field means the seed

fell on ground not plowed up, ground trodden smooth and hard. The seed that cannot be covered with soil has no crack in which to take root, and the birds soon come and pick it up and eat it—that is, Satan comes and takes that word away. Once, when I went to a conference somewhere, a sister heard the word and confessed that this gospel of the water and the Spirit was right and that what the minister of her church said was wrong. But when she went home and met the minister of her church and its people again, she turned right around and fell away.

Her heart was like hard ground not plowed up, and there was no crack for the word to lodge deep. To receive the gospel, the field must be plowed up, the weeds and stones cleared away, and then the seed sown, covered with soil, and watered; but sown just so on the slick, hard ground, no sooner was it sown than Satan came and picked it up and ate it. On ground too hard the seed cannot be covered with soil, so the birds eat it, and even if it tries to take root it is scorched to death under the blazing sun—this is the wayside field.

The stony field with shallow earth

The word I want to deliver today is this second one, the stony ground with shallow earth. Because the earth is not deep, the sprout comes up at once, but after the sun rises it is scorched, and having no root, it withers away. To farm a long-fallow field, one must first cut the trees, dig out the roots, pick out the stones, plow it deep and make the soil fine, and then cut furrows and sow the seed. This far is man's part, and the making of it grow is Another's part; only when it is farmed so does the farming succeed. Spiritual farming is like this too, and our serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit as workers and living by faith

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is like this too.

But when a big stone comes up as one plows the field, there is the person who does not dig it out and throw it away, but covers it over with soil and hides it. Then, when one plows just a little deeper, that stone catches again. Our heart is like this too: if we do not dig out the sins and desires inside and set them out before the Lord, but hide them, they rise again at any time and trip us. So the stone is not something to hide but something to bring to light and admit.

When we preach the gospel, we must plow the man deep and show him what kind of being he is: you are one who carries such sins, one who opposes God, one who can only go to hell. Then he realizes his state and looks to the Lord Jesus, is saved by faith in Jesus, who is the Christ, and, lacking though he is, runs on by that faith—this is the normal way. But when the seed falls where the earth is shallow, the sprout comes up, yet with rock beneath it can put its root down no further, and with no moisture supplied it rises a little and then withers and dies under the hot sun and wind. This is the state many among us are now in spiritually.

When one first hears the gospel, one realizes that one is a person who can only go to hell, one who aches because of his sins and is good for nothing. One even counts oneself a person who, if placed in the church of the kingdom of God, would only defile the church; and yet, if the Lord loved me and saved me, then I will believe it—so one follows the Lord. But that order and process have been shortened too much: roughly, man is originally such a being, and the Lord took this sin away with the water and the blood and saved us—so it ends, and the seed is planted, yes, but planted in a shallow heart. The gospel is glad news like dynamite, so one receives it with thanks; but afterward, when one serves the Lord, the desires in the heart keep catching like stones. And in that stony field there is no moisture of the

true truth, so if one sucks at it, one dies instead.

So the root must go down further, but it does not go down well. Therefore, even then, one must truly look back at oneself and run on with this faith: I am this worthless, one who can only go to hell, and yet the Lord loved me and took charge of my sins and saved me. Even that stony field, if one makes faith in the Lord its fertilizer, receives the supply of the word, and goes forward united with the Lord, it will do; but this does not go well, and so there are quite a few among us who serve the Lord and yet struggle. The seed planted in the stony field sprouts at first but withers and dies later—that is exactly this word.

The evil thoughts inside us

Dear fellow believers, we have received the gospel, but our own desires are so many—what shall we do? These desires we carry from birth; there is not a single person born without them. In Mark chapter 7 Jesus said, *"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man" (Mark 7:20)*, and, *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man" (Mark 7:21–23)*. Man's thoughts are always evil: even in the days of Noah, every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually, and there is no one who has not inherited this just as it is.

The thought of the flesh wholly opposes God and follows its own selfishness: whatever becomes of God, so long as I live well and I am happy, that is enough. With the evil thoughts, the fornications, the thefts, and the murders—these four alone—we are people who would more than deserve hell; we could earn a

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thousand licenses for going to hell. The thieving heart is the heart that calls even what is God's its own; it is because we have together fixed our aim and serve the gospel that we live even this well—otherwise there would be no hope.

Here is something the person who preaches the gospel must keep in mind. If, at the first meeting, you flatten a person's dignity outright—you are a sinner and one bound for hell—he shuts his heart and turns away, asking how you could know him. So at first one rather builds the other person up kindly and opens the conversation, and then delivers how the Lord took charge of his sins like this, and how God loved him and saved him; it is hard to walk through the order exactly. But if one does not admit and confess what is inside oneself, and does not settle before God whether one is right or not, the stone inside attacks us at any time. It gives us pain and wounds, makes us oppose God, and makes us harden completely into our own greed and our own thoughts.

Admit your evil even now

Therefore we must admit it from now on at least. We are in fact people who would more than deserve hell, people whose thoughts are evil, people who, far from fearing God, seek Him only when we need Him. Even now, after long years of the life of faith, we must admit, I am such a person; what we have believed we have believed, and having met the Lord we have met Him, but to follow the Lord by faith through the rest of our days and keep that faith, this admitting must be there. Then, whenever it rises up inside, we can hold fast: I am such a one, and yet the Lord has saved me and loved me.

Since He loved me even so, how could I betray the Lord? It

is more right that the Lord understands me than that I understand myself, and it profits me more that the Lord understands me when I have submitted to Him than that I gain my own profit for myself. When we follow with such faith, we follow until the day the Lord comes, and this word teaches us that way of faith.

I know well why you struggle. When we trace back over our past, there is much we believed too easily and took too lightly; many believed through the pain of admitting themselves, but many also passed by admitting only that one thing. Just look at the thefts and fornications and murders of Mark chapter 7—how often such things surge up in us moment by moment even now. Still we believe the Lord, so we often live praying, Lord, I am truly evil; hold back this problem and solve it for me. Though it is twenty and more years since we met the Lord, and for some nearly thirty, if we still find it hard to follow, it is because we have not truly admitted with the heart that we are such people, and so we struggle each time this stone inside catches us again and again.

When money becomes the master, there are two kings

Is there anyone at all who does not covet money? But from the moment you grip money in your hand and clutch it as your own, the master changes. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: and from then on the master changes, and when the master changes, however much we say we believe, the Lord parts from us, who have set up another household. What the Lord hates most is our setting another god before Him: God cannot be two, and the master cannot be two.

Dear fellow believers, who is Jesus Christ, who saved us?

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Jesus means the Savior, and Christ means the Anointed One, the King of kings. He was anointed as Prophet, High Priest, and King—not just any king, but the King of kings and the Lord of lords; and when we believe in that King of kings, submit and obey and uphold His will, He receives glory and we are made glorious. But if we take that money, which is nothing at all, as our own and follow it, from then on there are two kings and two masters.

Then the Holy Spirit works in us no longer. It is exactly like Saul, who was chosen by the Lord and set up as king, and yet, to keep his kingship and win the people's favor, did the priest's part as he pleased; with this one thing alone we can only leave the Lord completely and become His adversary. You may ask why I speak of this only now, but in the early days it was hard to say all this. Though I preached with all my strength until my throat burst—until I had to have throat surgery—people would not listen well; yet even now, though the ground is a thin stony field, the seed has been planted and the sprout has come up—how fortunate is that?

Faith covers everything

As a plant cannot by itself turn a stone into soil, we cannot remove the rock and the gravel inside us by our own strength. Inside there may even be a great mass of rock, so removing it on our side is impossible; we must admit that in us there are rock and gravel and stones, and confess that faith before the Lord. That I am a sinner is faith, and that I am one bound for hell is also faith; when we admit this, the Lord says that even so He has saved us.

When it comes to that, all that gravel and those stones and

that rock become the under-fertilizer instead. Since we can no longer set any hope on ourselves, it becomes the driving power that makes us exalt, praise, and follow the Lord all the more. Faith wraps and covers everything; faith solves everything and lets us run toward the Lord. Dear fellow believers, is it not so? The more a person knows his own lack, the more he serves the Lord by faith.

How could I have none? I too am a person of many lacks and faults; but when I look at the other person and simply know and accept him—he grew up without love in such and such circumstances—it is nothing at all. At first people look at whether a face is handsome or plain, but later they look at the person's character and the center of his heart. However handsome he is, if his bearing is not warm and generous it is of no use; and if his heart is soft and generous, that person comes to look handsome instead.

So when we do not collide with one another, but accept the other—so he too has such a side—there remains nothing to judge and condemn him for. You are lacking and I am lacking, but we who serve the Lord by faith are precious, you and I alike; lacking as we are, we accept one another and live together. Dear fellow believers, even this stone becomes soil by faith and becomes a stepping-stone instead. Before the Lord, you and I being just what we are, there is nothing at all to put forward about what we do well or badly.

There is only the heart that acknowledges the word of the Lord. I am one who harbors evil thoughts, a fornicator, a thief, a murderer—we acknowledge that word of Mark chapter 7 just as it is. Then, even when we commit sins on this earth and what is evil inside is exposed and we collide with one another, if only we can see ourselves rightly, the disaster turns and becomes a blessing. Lord, I am such a person. Such things keep rising and

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I do not change; and yet I know that the Lord has loved me and has removed my sins.

Lord, You are truly my King, my Savior, and my God; where is there one as beautiful as You, one as truly fit to be King as You, and where in all the world is there one truly fit to be God? Therefore I would serve You and follow You with the faith that believes in You; help me and keep me, and bless us that Your will may be accomplished through us. When we are so, this becomes the whole faith in which the Lord delights.

Dear fellow believers, how courteous the Lord is to us! He teaches us everything so that we may receive the remission of sins, teaches us that we are exactly such people; and when that is not enough, He teaches us again with the parable of the four fields, and speaks to us again through other events—truly a kind teacher and a tender friend. As a married couple does not work by one side only giving orders, but by helping each other's lack, holding each other up, and bearing with each other, so we too, so united, follow the Lord. Rather than putting first whether things go well or badly, we do our best and then entrust the rest to the Lord and pray; the Lord has always gone before, prepared everything, and helped us.

Even to a person on the very brink of hell, at the point of death, there are many who will not hear this word to the end. But some say it is right: I am like the man who fell among robbers; I thought I lived uprightly, but hearing the word of God, I am worthless, one bound for hell. And such a you the Lord loved: with the water and the blood He took charge of your sins, died hanging on the Cross, and rose again and saved you. If you believe and hold this gospel of the water and the Spirit, you receive the remission of sins and go to the kingdom of God; and if you live longer on this earth, you can do the Lord's work—the person who so believes becomes the Lord's truly faithful

workman.

This does not mean one comes to work better; it means the heart becomes good. Whether I did much work today or little, if I can say, I did the work of God, then when I lie down to sleep my heart is at peace; but if I lived not for the Lord but for myself, sleep will not come, and how tormenting it is. With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation—so we must first acknowledge with the heart. Long ago Luther, to remove his sins, crawled up and down the steps on his knees, striving unto death, yet his sins did not disappear; only when he read the word that the just shall live by faith did he realize that it is by faith—every problem of life is solved only in the faith that believes in the Lord.

This sinful nature we carry, as through one man's offense all became sinners, is inherited, and no one is without it; the only difference is whether it shows itself quickly or slowly. So let us not try to hide it—it is not something hiding will fix—but admit before God that we are sinful beings, and so live. If we keep hiding it and saying we are not so, we must manage ourselves constantly—how tormenting and wearisome! I have followed the Lord until now, and perhaps it is just because I am a man with nothing to boast of that I could follow the Lord this far. Those with much to boast of have often fallen away midway; but before the Lord, even the plainest, if only he believes—the Lord has loved me and loved you—follows to the end.

It is nothing complicated. We admit that we are a stony field, admit that in my heart there are many such desires and I am not upright, and that only the Lord is upright and right and the truth. When we say, the Lord has saved me, so now I live not for myself but, lacking as I am, for the Lord, the Lord leads us, accomplishes His will through us, keeps your homes, and blesses you. This is done with the heart: with the heart we must

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hear the word of God, believe it, and first acknowledge it.

From the time I first met the Lord and was born again, I knew I was one bound for hell, and even now I admit that I am such a person; and yet the Lord has made me able to follow and serve Him. He has given faith, and the Holy Spirit governs my heart, and He is doing the same with you, and so we have lived until now—thanks be to the Lord. What I want without fail to say to you is this: even at this hour, let us properly admit what we have admitted too little, and live by faith.

When what is inside rises up again, let us not take it for the truth and hold it, going back and forth between the Lord and ourselves in double torment; when we set our heart firmly and live, happiness comes to us. To live, we live with the Lord, and to die, we die with the Lord; if things go well, it is through the Lord, and if they do not, it is through the Lord—when we would be such people, the Lord truly takes charge of everything and bears the responsibility. So I have experienced until now, and so I believe He will do hereafter. Dear fellow believers, thank you. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Who is this, whom even the wind and the sea obey

< Mark 4:35-41 >

"On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side.' Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?' And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, 'Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!'"

As the day was drawing to evening, Jesus told His disciples to cross over to the other side of the sea. The disciples took Jesus along in the boat just as He was and set out. Jesus first said, let us cross over, and the disciples set out by boat. And on that way they met a great windstorm.

We easily think that if we follow the will of God there should be no hardship at all. If circumstances run smoothly, we conclude it is the right way, and if an unexpected problem arises, we conclude it is the wrong way. But this text does not allow

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such reckoning. The disciples were following the word of the Lord, and yet a great windstorm arose. The waves beat into the boat, and the boat was filling with water. The storm struck even the boat that had Jesus in it.

This event is not a promise that for the believer every problem will disappear at once. Nor is it a formula that if we believe the Lord we will not fall sick, will not suffer loss, and will always succeed in what we plan. Rather, the text exposes, in the midst of the windstorm, with whom the disciples were, and how much they believed His word. The Lord is greater than the windstorm, and He teaches the disciples to look at the One who spoke rather than at the size of the situation.

The word given before the windstorm

Look at the order of the text. Before the windstorm, there was the word. *"Let us cross over to the other side" (Mark 4:35)*. Before setting out, the Lord told the disciples the destination. The disciples heard that word, but when the wind grew fierce and the water rose, their hearts were stolen by the circumstances before their eyes. The water that had come into the boat was real, and the danger of death was not light. But even within that real danger, the word the Lord had spoken had not vanished.

Faith is not self-suggestion, which calls danger no danger. Nor is it the attitude that insists there is no water when the boat is full of it. Faith is seeing the visible circumstances as they are, and yet acknowledging that those circumstances can never hold final authority over the word of the Lord. What countermeasures the disciples took at that moment the text does not record. What is plain is that the water filled the boat, that they woke Jesus and asked whether He did not care that they were perishing, and that

the Lord asked them about their faith.

To us also a word has been given first. God has saved sinners, has made believers His children, and never forgets His own people. But when hardship strikes, we hear the sound of the waves as louder than the word. Economic hardship, disease, conflicts in relationships, and blocked ministry are realities that cannot be ignored. When that reality fills our heart, we feel abandoned and alone even though the Lord is with us. What is needed then is not groundless optimism, but turning the heart back to the Lord, who has already spoken.

The Lord's word, let us cross over, did not mean that the disciples knew every detail of what lay ahead. They did not know when the wind would blow, how high the waves would rise, or how far their strength would hold. Faith is not moving only after predicting every future and confirming safety. It is believing the fact that the One who spoke is faithful, and taking the step entrusted for today. There is much we do not know, but who the Lord is we know plainly through the word.

The sleeping Jesus and the fearful disciples

While the windstorm was rising, Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. The text records that Jesus was actually with them in the boat and actually slept. At the very moment the disciples were afraid, the Lord was not outside the boat. That there was no visible response did not mean the Lord had left.

The disciples appealed to Jesus, asking whether He did not care that they were perishing. After stilling the wind, Jesus asked why they were so fearful and how it was that they had no faith. With this actual cry and this question, the text lays bare the disciples' fear and the problem of their faith.

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We too can ask the same questions as we pray. Why does He not answer now; why does He leave the problem to grow this big; does He really care for me? When such questions arise, there is no need to hide our feelings and pretend to have fine faith. Like the disciples, we must come to the Lord and ask for help. But we must not let our feelings decide the character of the Lord. We must not pass the verdict that the Lord is indifferent just because the answer has not come at the time we wanted.

The Lord heard the disciples' cry, arose, rebuked the wind, and commanded the sea: *"Peace, be still!" (Mark 4:39)* After that word the wind ceased and the sea became completely calm. It was not that the disciples pooled their strength and barely subdued the waves. Nature submitted at once to the command of Jesus.

The wind and the sea that obey His command

Man can observe the direction of the wind and learn the skill of handling a boat. He can build breakwaters and use weather information to lessen the danger. But he cannot stop a great windstorm with one word and make the heaving sea completely calm. The fact that the wind and the sea obeyed the word of Jesus shows that His authority is on an entirely different level from human ability.

The question the disciples threw out at the end opens the center of the text. *"Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:41)* Their final question was aimed not at the cause of the storm but at who Jesus is. At first the fear that they might die ruled their hearts, but after the sea became calm, they felt a deeper fear before the authority of Jesus. A revelation greater than the solving of the problem stood before them.

Jesus is not merely an able teacher who gives help at the moment of crisis. He is the Creator God, whose word the wind and the sea obey. Because He is the One who brought all things into being, all things are under His command. The disciples had heard the teaching of Jesus and seen many things, but through this event they newly faced how great the authority is of the One riding in the boat with them.

We also, while confessing Jesus as the Savior, who has given us the remission of sins, can in actual life think of Him as One who gives only small help. What we can solve we grip ourselves, and we hand over to the Lord only what is utterly beyond us. We count experience and calculation more certain than the word of the Lord, and when circumstances turn against us we despair as though everything were finished. This is not only because the problem is big, but because we do not sufficiently trust with the heart who the Lord is.

The faith that Jesus is God does not show itself in a loud voice or a strong personality. Nor is it dressing oneself up as a person without any fear at all. It shows itself in carrying our fear to the Lord when fear comes, and in trusting the word of the Lord more than the waves before our eyes. It is not insisting that we must obtain the result we want, but entrusting our circumstances and the outcome to the Lord, who governs all things.

The Lord's question is aimed at the disciples' hearts more than at the sea

After making the wind and the sea calm, Jesus asked the disciples, *"Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"* The Lord did not rebuke them as though there had been no danger at all. Nor did He say that no water had come into the

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boat. He asked why, within real danger, they had been gripped by fear without faith.

The sea had already become calm, but in the disciples' hearts there was a problem that had to be dealt with more deeply. Faith does not grow automatically just because the outward storm falls quiet. Even if one problem is solved today, when another comes tomorrow we can fear again. The text records that Jesus, who changed the situation, asked the disciples about their faith. The disciples, having seen that authority, asked one another who He is.

Our prayers often stop at the request, 'Lord, make this wind stop.' Of course we can and must pray for help in hardship. But Jesus asked the disciples, "*Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"* Before this question we must examine what we hear as loudest when hardship arises, and whether we believe who Jesus is according to the word of the Bible.

Having faith does not mean being always composed, without any wave of emotion. The disciples woke Jesus; and Jesus, after stilling the wind and the sea, asked them why they were afraid and how they had no faith. The disciples feared exceedingly and asked one another who this is, whom even the wind and the sea obey. We too must admit the lack of our faith, and before this recorded question examine again who the Lord is.

Faith in the Lord grows through experience, but experience itself is not the ground of faith. If we will believe the Lord only when we see many amazing things, then on the day no miracle is visible, faith too disappears. What the disciples had to hold fast were the word spoken before the windstorm came and Jesus Himself, who spoke it. The ground of our faith also is not the changing circumstances, but the Lord revealed in the Bible and His unchanging word.

The Savior greater than sin and death

We must not turn the event of calming the wind and the sea into a promise of instant solutions to every problem of our lives. But this event shows plainly who Jesus is. He is not One pressed down by the power of any creature, but God, who rules all things. And this almighty One came to this earth in a human body to save sinners.

Our deepest crisis is not only economic want or the failure before our eyes. It is the problem of sin before God, and of the judgment and death that follow that sin. Just as man cannot master all the powers of nature by effort, he cannot remove the judgment of sin by his own deeds. Though he piles up good works and burns with religious zeal, the sins already committed do not disappear. Before sin and death, human ability strikes its limit.

To save that sinner, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and took upon Himself the sin of the world. And on the Cross He received the judgment of those sins and actually died, and in three days He rose from the dead. With the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, Jesus overcame the power of sin and death and accomplished salvation wholly. He who commanded the sea did not entrust our salvation to anyone else, but completed it Himself.

The person who believes this gospel with the heart receives the remission of sins, by which all sins disappear once and for all, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again. He becomes a child of God and a righteous person with no sin in his heart. The resurrection of Jesus is not merely a symbol that hope comes after despair. It is the saving event in which Jesus, who had died, actually rose again, and the confirmation that the salvation Jesus fulfilled is complete. It also gives the believer

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new life and the hope of the coming resurrection of the body.

Therefore the saint does not lose hope even before the shadow of death. This does not mean that the Lord heals every disease immediately or removes bodily death at once. Even the person who has received the remission of sins can weaken in the flesh and finally die. But to the person who belongs to the risen Lord, death is not the final master. The Lord will raise him up at the last day and let him enjoy eternal life. The present windstorm cannot cancel this promise.

Because the ground of salvation lies in the Lord's completed work, the fact of the remission of sins is not shaken even when our feelings heave. We are not more saved because our heart is bold today, nor does the salvation of Jesus become incomplete because we are afraid tomorrow. We do not deny our feelings, but neither do we seat our feelings as the judge of the gospel. We confirm by the word what Jesus has done, and hold it fast by faith.

A life that walks believing in the almighty Lord

In the life of faith after receiving the remission of sins, there are still windstorms. There are times when the weakness of the flesh is exposed, when the work entrusted exceeds our strength, and when we are afraid to go forward. At such times we must not only try to enlarge our willpower, but must remember who it is who saved us. Jesus, who saved me, is God, whom even the wind and the sea obey.

This faith does not justify recklessness. To leap into danger without any plan and say God will solve it is not faith. For the work entrusted to us we must examine and prepare, consult with others, and act responsibly. But even after every preparation,

there are things human strength cannot control. Then, not gripping the outcome like an idol, but seeking the Lord's wisdom and help and doing the work given us—that is faith.

Prayer is not a technique for forcing the sleeping Lord to move. It is the relationship in which we believe the Lord, who is with us, and tell Him our needs. Even when, like the disciples, nothing but urgent words come out, go to the Lord. Only do not stay in the fear that the Lord is not caring for you, but remember the love He has already shown through the Cross and the resurrection. He who for our sake was baptized in the Jordan River to take charge of our sins, was judged, and rose from the dead does not forget His own children.

The person who believes the Lord walks not because there is no hardship, but because the Lord is greater than the hardship. Sometimes the sea grows calm at once, and sometimes He gives strength to endure in the midst of the storm. Sometimes He changes the road and leads us, and sometimes He fulfills His will in a way we did not expect. In every case the authority and goodness of the Lord do not change. Faith is not commanding the Lord as to the method, but entrusting ourselves to the Lord's method.

Obedience and service are not conditions that pay the price of salvation. We do not become children of God by achieving many bold things. Having believed the salvation Jesus fulfilled, received the remission of sins, and become children, we follow the will of the Lord in thanksgiving. Service and endurance and the preaching of the gospel are not a price paid to maintain salvation, but the fruit of faith the Holy Spirit makes us bear. Therefore do not boast of your faith because a work went well, and do not doubt even your salvation because a work was blocked.

Those who have boarded the boat together are also necessary

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to one another. If in fear one tries to bear everything alone, even a small problem feels larger. The saints can share their hearts within the word, pray for one another, and seek wisdom. But the number of the community or the ability of people is not the final hope. It is not that the will of God is accomplished only when there are many people, nor does the power of the Lord shrink because the people are few. The Head of the church is the almighty Lord.

When we preach the gospel also, we must not rely only on eloquence or the size of an organization. The One who brings a sinner to life is God, and we are those who faithfully deliver the gospel He has fulfilled. Though the results are not quickly visible, we must not be discouraged, nor try to force visible responses into being. We must believe the Lord, who has spoken, serve with long patience, and ask the Holy Spirit to work in people's hearts.

On the way to the other side

The disciples, passing through the windstorm, came to carry a greater question about Jesus. The storm exposed their lacking faith, but at the same time it became the place where they saw the authority of Jesus. The hardships of our lives too cannot be called good in themselves, but in them the Lord exposes what we are believing and teaches us by the word. He lifts the eyes that saw only circumstances, and makes us see who the Lord is.

It may feel as though the water is rising in your boat right now. You may have used every means you can and found no solution, and though you pray, the Lord may seem to keep silent. Do not conclude then that the Lord has left. Go to the Lord carrying your fear as it is, but remember the word given first and

the gospel He has completed. The word of the Lord does not become small because the sound of the wind is loud.

We cannot promise that the Lord will still every windstorm at the moment we wish. The text also does not say that every affliction of every believer ends at once. But we boldly proclaim that the One whom even the wind and the sea obey is with us, and that He, greater than sin and death, has completed salvation. He is God in every situation, and His word does not change.

Beloved saints, do not let fear be the last word of your faith. Ask who Jesus is. He is the Savior, who was baptized by John the Baptist to take charge of all our sins, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. He is God, who made all things and rules them. The person who believes this gospel and has received the remission of sins is not a forsaken person even in the windstorm.

Today the Lord speaks to us also. He asks, why are you so fearful; how is it that you have no faith? Do not hear this question only as condemnation; hear it as the voice calling us to deeper faith. Let us admit that our faith is lacking, turn our eyes from the situation before us, and set them on the Lord. Let us do the duty we can do, entrust the outcome to the Lord, give thanks for the salvation we have received, and obey step by step.

The One who spoke before the windstorm, the One who was with them in the windstorm, the One who made the sea calm with His word—He is our Lord. Believe Him and cross to the other side. Rely on the Lord not only when the sea is calm but also inside the rocking boat. Looking to Jesus, who takes responsibility even for our life and our resurrection at the last, I ask you not to stay in fear but to walk by faith the way entrusted to you. ✉

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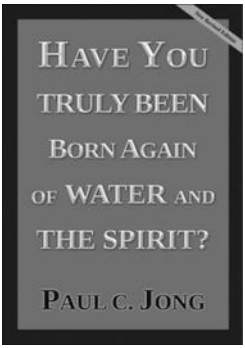

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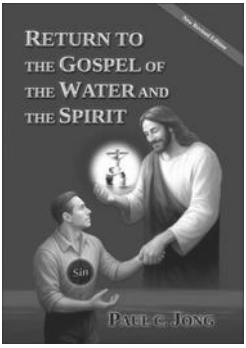

Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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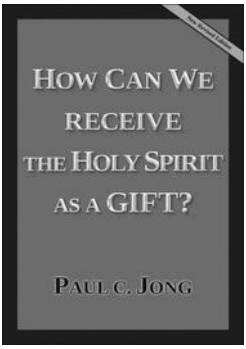
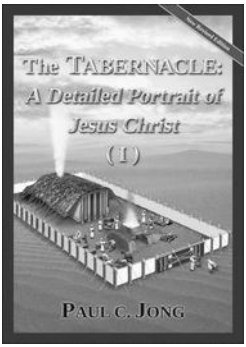


In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]



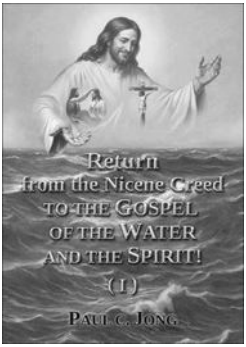
How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

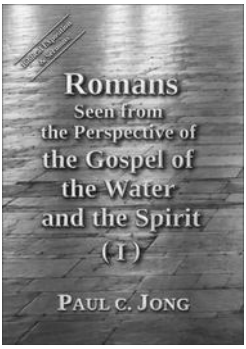
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

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,

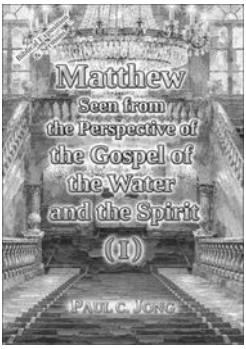
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of 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)



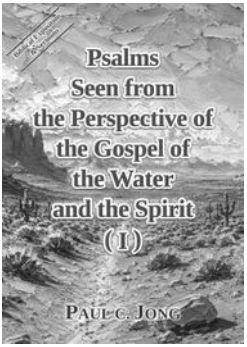
Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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!

Psalm seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)

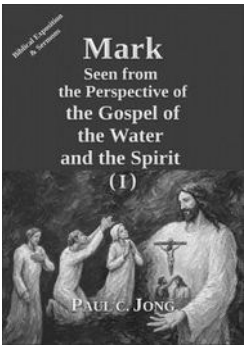


For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come.

This book is a biblical exposition that unfolds the Psalms from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. David's songs are not an outpouring of emotion but the confession of a righteous man who has received the remission of sins, a prophetic praise that looked up to the Christ who is to come. The blessing, righteousness, and peace of the Psalms do not come from human goodness but from the salvation God accomplished in Christ.

Beneath it all flows a single gospel. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the cross, and rose from the dead to make us righteous. When you open the Psalms with this gospel, the old songs come alive as your own confession, and this book leads you to the blessed place of those clothed in the righteousness of God.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



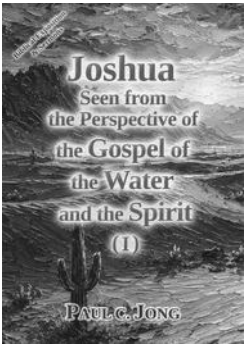
Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

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!

Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)

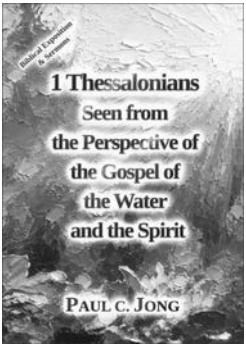


The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy the remission of sins and true rest.

This book explains Joshua chapters 1 through 12 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. From the death of Moses and the crossing of the Jordan to the fall of Jericho and the defeat of the kings of Canaan, Joshua points to Jesus Christ the Savior. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from death to complete salvation.

Discover the true victory that is obtained not by human strength but by believing the Word of God. Lay down your own righteousness, rise again from failure, be united with the Church of God, and walk boldly in the rest and the spiritual inheritance God has already given.

1 Thessalonians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



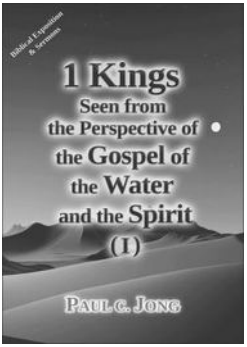
The young church in Thessalonica, established not long before, might well have collapsed under the persecution that pressed in from every side; yet with firm faith, love, and hope it carried the gospel throughout the whole region. What kept these weak people from falling? It was not a religion delivered in word only, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which came in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.

This book opens the five chapters of First Thessalonians anew with that very gospel. It is the gospel by which Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and bore the sin of the world, was judged in our place for that sin on the cross, and rose again from death, delivering us from sin and death. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the power of God that turns a sinner into a righteous one, and turns the fear of death into living hope.

If you desire a faith unshaken in the last days, open this book. Here is the sure word by which you receive the remission of sins—life and true comfort for you.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

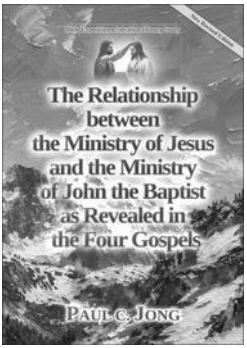


Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures forever.

This book reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit contained in the Temple and its furnishings. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete salvation.

Do not rely on your own wisdom and your own kingdom. Use the wisdom, wealth, and time you have received for the gospel and for souls, and serve Jesus Christ as the King of your heart, building the house of God.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels



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.

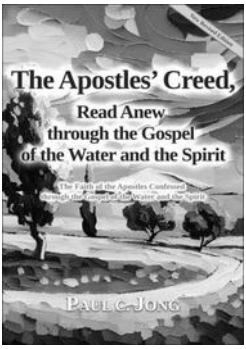
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through 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]

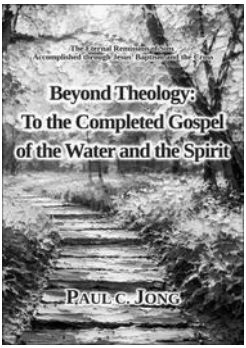


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission 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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Pastor PAUL C. JONG

Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he suffered for a long time because his problem of sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this agony, he came to believe that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world through His baptism by John the Baptist, and subsequently bore the judgment in our place on the cross.

For the past 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. The compilation of these manuscripts has given rise to today's 'Biblical Exposition Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit.'

His works, comprising an ongoing 90-volume series, have been translated into more than 110 languages and are read in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available for free at www.bjnewlife.org, while physical books can be purchased on Amazon.

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

The Gospel of Mark, seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The same gospel is preached, so why do some believe it while others reject it?

Chapter 1 shows that the work of salvation began when John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord and Jesus was baptized by him.

In chapter 2, Jesus first proclaims the remission of sins to the paralytic and makes clear that He came to call not the righteous, but sinners.

The man with the withered hand in chapter 3 could do nothing by himself, yet he stretched out his hand as Jesus told him and was healed; but those who had religious knowledge put their own thoughts first and blasphemed the work of the Holy Spirit as the work of Satan.

The good ground in chapter 4 is not a heart that is inherently good, but a heart that lays down its own thoughts and receives the salvation of God.

The salvation from sin that God accomplished was fulfilled when Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again. In a heart where this gospel is planted, the Word grows and bears fruit and becomes a lamp that shines on other souls.

The Lord who ruled the wind and the sea is the King of kings and God. Cast away religious knowledge and your own thoughts, believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and enjoy true rest.

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